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Teacher educators as disruptors: Redesigning courses in teacher preparation programs to prepare white preservice teachers

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Abstract

Many institutions of higher education, and their teacher preparation programs, have mission or core value statements that include terms such as *diversity*, *equity*, or *social justice*. The terms are meant to suggest an inclusive approach but it's often difficult to see how those terms are operationalized. As two Black pre-tenure faculty members working in predominantly white institutions (PWIs), we have pushed our teacher preparation programs to go beyond putting keywords in mission statements and provide ways to follow through so future teachers can enact the concepts in their classrooms. We use Self-Study in Teacher Education Practices (S-STEP) and Critical Race Theory (CRT) to make meaning of our own narratives, the systems that negatively impact people of color, and signaling words within our teacher preparation programs. We use the data from our personal narratives to discuss ways junior faculty can act as disruptors to ensure white preservice teachers are better prepared for the field.

Keywords: Critical Race Theory, diversity, preservice teachers

Introduction

I don't understand why we had to complete our student teaching in urban school districts. Why can't we teach other students, like in suburban or rural areas?

—a student in Dr. Porcher's Urban Social Justice Teacher Education Program

Words like *diversity, inclusion, equity, or social justice* frequently appear in the mission statements of universities and teacher preparation programs like ours. Including the words, though, doesn't ensure preservice teachers will develop the deep understanding of the concepts needed to enact them in their future classrooms. Without specific actions from their professors, the words will remain abstract concepts, disconnected from the future teachers', and their future students', lives.

White, monolingual cis-gender women make up 76% of the teaching force (Ingersoll et al., 2018) and many of them share that they feel ill-prepared to teach students of color and/or students in urban schools (Bazemore-Bertrand & Handsfield, 2019). Despite these gaps, whiteness remains the norm for curriculum, expectations, and standards in most education programs (Tanner, 2017). Cook (2013) observed, "Many teacher education programs reinforce and reify the very systems of white supremacy and ethnocentrism that they purport to prepare teachers to resist" (p. 46). While there are some institutions of higher education that have increased their attention to diversity that extends beyond whiteness (Williams & Clowney, 2007), addressing diversity is merely a start. Absent the action steps to prepare preservice teachers for the diversity in today's classroom, these statements remain merely words on a page or website.

As Black women teaching at predominantly white institutions (PWI), we've identified ways to disrupt the norms of whiteness and move beyond mission statements to prepare preservice teachers to be equity-oriented, social justice-minded, critical educators. Specifically, we've identified how redesigning our courses to better prepare our mostly white future teachers and how instructors can use their identity to shape that redesign.

There is risk involved when faculty of color draw attention to how teacher preparation programs are held accountable for their mission statements. Meacham and Barratt (2003) offered, "An institution's mission statement represents a consensus on campus-wide values, expectations for student learning and development, and a statement of campus priorities for many years ahead" (p. 6). These risks include being passed over for tenure, not receiving merit increases, missed opportunities for funding or advancement, and even termination. We believe, though, the risks are worth it if we are to truly represent our disciplines and enact our institutions' mission statements.

A 2012 study of 80 higher education institutions' mission statements found that 75% referenced diversity, but only 19% defined diversity in racial or ethnic terms (Wilson & Meyer, 2012). There is limited research on how colleges of education go beyond the words in their mission statement and embodying those words in their courses and instruction. Our experiences in the field has shown us that if our students, who are almost all white, are going to be successful teachers for students of color, they need to be able to define and describe what these words look like in practice.

Preparing White Preservice Teachers to Teach Students of Color in Urban Schools

Explicitly preparing white preservice teachers to teach students of color is necessary to interrupt patterns of bias in classrooms. Annamma and Winn (2019) began their call for action in teacher education by offering, “Teacher education programs often focus on preparing preservice teachers to become teaching professionals and leaders committed to advocating for students, yet pervasive deficit mindsets reinforce and (re)produce societal inequities” (p. 1). To interrupt these deficit mindsets, scholars offer different approaches including teaching future teachers to be socially just, socio-politically conscious, and offer culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995), teach from a position of cultural responsiveness (Gay, 2010), or offer culturally sustaining instruction (Paris & Alim, 2017). Explicit approaches are essential as preservice teachers’ attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions are largely constructed by their own school experiences, the communities they live in, and the media they consume (e.g., Bazemore-Bertrand & Handsfield, 2019; Emdin, 2016; Howard & Milner, 2014).

Moreover, in many cases, white preservice teachers have negative attitudes of urban students and schools (Hampton et al., 2008). In another study, Waddell (2011) explored preservice teachers’ perceptions of urban school settings in a community that had undergone changes in racial and socioeconomic demographics and recommended teacher preparation programs offer opportunities for preservice teachers to “cross cultural borders to gain a broad and deep understanding of urban students and schools” (p. 24). After spending time in communities and examining attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions, many of their common misperceptions were modified and resolved. The study concluded that creating opportunities and carefully designed experiences outside the educational classroom can heighten learning and have a significant impact on preparing preservice teachers to teach in urban school settings.

Researchers emphasize the importance of teachers and preservice teachers getting to know their students outside of school and opportunities to work and socialize within the urban communities (Cooper, 2007; Emdin, 2016; Love, 2019). With this in mind, we have focused our course redesign on exposing students to urban communities as part of their teacher preparation. We believe this exposure is important because it provides preservice teachers with an opportunity to gain insight into the assets of urban communities that they’ve likely only previously seen from a deficit perspective. Through these interactive and engaging experiences in urban communities, we guide our preservice teachers to center equity, social justice, and diversity in their lives. It’s important to us, though, these experiences do not feel contrived. The next section highlights how we used Critical Race Theory (CRT) to share our narratives about the ways in which we have intentionally become disruptors within our teacher education programs.

Critical Race Theory and Teacher Candidates' Perceptions of Students of Color

We used CRT as a way to make meaning of our and our students’ dispositions, the systems which negatively impact people of color, and the gap between the language of mission statements and what happens in the teacher preparation programs. We see clear

connections between our goals as disruptors and the four tenets of CRT. The first tenet is that racism is a normal fact of daily life in American society because the “assumptions of White superiority are ingrained in political, legal, and educational structures and they are unrecognizable” (Taylor, 2009, p. 2). As an example, we are both junior faculty in the racial minority serving as professors at PWIs that have only ever had white male presidents. We are two of only a few faculty of color in our respective institutions. This power structure that reifies whiteness is both overt and covert in every space we enter.

The second tenet of CRT is Bell’s (1980) theory of interest convergence. Interest convergence is when the interests of minoritized groups in gaining racial equality are only accommodated when they have converged with the interests of powerful whites. Due to the steady increase of students of color in public schools, and the consistency in the whiteness of the teaching population, there is an ongoing discourse and effort to prepare teachers to teach students of color. There is a concerted effort needed for preparing teachers to teach students of color that teacher education programs can no longer ignore. This has now become their focus to keep their doors open and to be responsive to the changing demographics of public schools.

Taylor (2009) describes the third tenet of CRT as historical context. It reminds us that race is complex, and we cannot ignore or disregard the historic conflict in which the construct originated. Examples of this can be seen in our institutions, despite being in two different regions of the country. Our programs’ demographics mirror the demographic patterns seen in the American teaching profession, dominated by white women, as do their histories. As an example, it’s not uncommon to find some departments at large universities with teaching programs refuse to enroll Black students until the late 1970s (Stalter, 2018) or for the demographics of a college to be dramatically different than the demographics of the state where the school is located (Read & Barrish, 2018). The mere fact that we are one of the few Black professors at our institutions, which have existed for longer than 100 years, cannot be overlooked and is essential to disrupting patterns in teacher education.

The final tenet of CRT is use of dominant narratives. The purpose of narratives in CRT is to “redirect the dominant gaze, to make it see from a new point of view what has been there all along” (Taylor, 2009, p. 8). As such, CRT gives voice to people of color about their experiences with racism and challenges the experiences of whites as the standard. Taylor (2009) summarizes CRT scholars work and offers:

One powerful way to challenge the dominant mindset of society--the shared stereotypes, beliefs, and understandings-- is the telling of stories. Stories can not only challenge the status quo, but they can help build consensus and create a shared, common understanding (p. 122).

These four tenets informed how we approach our course redesigns and this project.

Method

Structure and Setting

This study uses Self-Study in Teacher Education Practices (S-STEP), a type of practitioner inquiry undertaken by teacher educators with the dual purpose of improving

their practice while also acknowledging their role in teacher learning in the larger project of preparing high-quality teachers to teach in urban schools (Sharkey, 2018). The S-STEP approach is rooted in action research and reflective practice, particularly from a critical, social justice perspective (Sharkey, 2018; Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2015). It has made a contribution to the scholarship of teacher education pedagogies and practices (Loughran, 2014; Sharkey, 2018; Zeichner, 2007). Through our narratives, we highlight and examine the redesign of our courses, with hopes that there is space to critique the teacher preparation program and propose changes to embody the mission statements in our actions as faculty that in turn, transfers to our students. Utilizing narratives provides the opportunity to elevate our voices as Black faculty, and for the teacher preparation program to learn about shifting from talking to the action of diversity, inclusion, and social justice.

Dr. Bertrand's Setting

My University is a large public university located in the Midwest region of the United States. According to the written goals of my department, my program will: (1) Support, recruit, and retain educators (faculty and students) who work to eliminate systemic inequities and promote inclusion in education; (2) Prepare students, faculty, and staff to utilize pedagogically-driven and culturally responsive practices for teaching with technology; and (3) Establish opportunities for COE students, faculty, and staff to learn about and engage in efforts that promote equity and inclusion in education and communities that are historically marginalized.

Dr. Porcher's Setting

I am a teacher educator at a public Research 1 (R1) institution on the East Coast. The course I chose to focus on for this article is housed in the Graduate School of Education (GSE). I am a member of the Learning and Teaching Department, specifically in the urban social justice teacher education program. According to my program's goals, our aim is to develop a generation of teachers with the skills and dispositions to teach all students and learn from them and their communities. Teachers prepared at the GSE are expected to critically analyze the social politics of urban, rural, and suburban schools and use that analysis to inform their teaching practice toward the empowerment of children and youth.

Both of our programs theoretically indicate a focus on equity, diversity, and social justice; however, as illustrated in the opening quote and our narratives below, this is not the case in practice. We made conscious decisions as Black pre-tenure faculty to engage in the disruptive practice of course redesign for diversity, equity, and inclusion and be the change we wanted to see in our teacher education programs.

Our Narratives: Before the Course (Re)design

While we are at two different institutions and in two different roles, we both observed a significant gap between theory and practice regarding equity and diversity. This is evident by how diversity and inclusion are part of the mission of our programs, yet whiteness is reflected in the population, curricula, teaching and assessment practices,

teacher-student interactions, and decision-making of both institutions (Gorski, 2009). Understanding teacher preparation has a responsibility to prepare preservice teachers to teach *all* students, we have used disruptive practice in order to challenge the norm at our institutions.

Dr. Bertrand's Experience Before the Course (Re)design

I am a Tenure-Track Assistant Professor of Elementary Education, which means I am charged with maintaining an active scholarship agenda, teaching, and participating in service at the departmental, university, state, and/or national levels. I serve as a generalist, a professor who can teach a variety of courses, which provides the opportunity to teach a foundation of education course during students' junior year and first semester in the elementary education program. While I teach other courses, the course that I teach every semester is a foundation course titled, *Elementary Education: Practices & Issues*. This course is the first course that preservice teachers take in the Elementary Education program and provides an overview of teaching in an elementary classroom. Once I was assigned the course, the faculty course leader provided me with the course syllabus, calendar, readings, assignments, and rubrics. The course objectives are to:

- Plan and write developmentally appropriate standards-based lesson plans for elementary students. Use instructional strategies that will meet the needs of diverse students.
- Identify issues affecting elementary education and critically analyze the implications these issues have on the practice of educating elementary students.
- Describe the diverse needs and backgrounds of elementary students and make recommendations and accommodation for differentiating classroom instruction and management as necessary to meet those needs.

As I began to review the materials that I was given, I realized that the course provided an overall introduction to teaching in elementary schools, but failed to address diversity, social justice, equity, or inclusion. The course materials did not reflect people of color and the previously assigned course readings were written only by white scholars or authors. Several of the assignments perpetuated biases and stereotypes (e.g., case study assignment that required preservice teachers to write about a student in their clinical placements without addressing deficit perspectives or how biases/stereotypes may impact their perceptions), and none of the course topics listed on the course calendar addressed students from racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds. Also, preservice teachers were not guaranteed to have clinical placements to practice teaching in racially and socioeconomically diverse schools. This was disheartening because, as a former elementary teacher that has taught in racially and socioeconomically diverse schools, I am acutely aware that there is a need for teacher education courses to focus on preparing preservice teachers for diverse schools which include how to create equitable learning environments. There are twelve or more sections of this course offered every Fall semester and two sections every Spring semester. The majority of these sections use the same syllabus which were centering

white pedagogical practices, course calendar, readings, and assignments that I was given to use before I redesigned the course.

As a teacher educator that strives to be social justice-oriented, equity-minded, and culturally responsive, I could not perpetuate the standard norms of whiteness that have been in place prior to my arrival. It was necessary to make changes that would prepare preservice teachers for the realities of today's urban classrooms. Further, as a Black pre-tenure faculty member, I acknowledged that the academy was not built for me and that I must be careful in my decision-making in order to survive (i.e. maintain my position) in this field. I often compared myself to being in academia to a game of chess; I have to be strategic and make the right moves to stay in the game. I was afraid to take my course in a different direction, and contemplated the possible consequences to my career and relationships of making these changes, however, I had to stay committed to what I believed in and who I am.

I carefully planned the conversation I would have with the faculty course leader to construct a plan that I hoped would have as minimal an impact on my career as possible while pushing for the changes I knew were necessary. I scheduled a meeting and discussed with the faculty course leader that the existing course did not represent who I am given its lack of content and assignments that focused on equity and social justice. I explained how I envisioned a course that focused on preservice teachers' understanding of what is needed in order to be effective with racially and socioeconomically diverse students in today's classrooms. I did not receive direct criticism but was asked follow up questions and for more details. I explained how much of the content centered the white perspective and did not provide preservice teachers who are white an opportunity to think about their past, first-hand experiences. I detailed how preservice teachers need an understanding of equity and how to create an equitable learning environment to be effective teachers. That would not happen if they were not exposed to racially, ethnically, linguistically, socioeconomically diverse students. It was frustrating to explain this, given the diversity of today's classrooms (NCES, 2014) and I left the meeting confident I had done the right thing by discussing the need to disrupt the norms and practices that were centered in whiteness. This is what the CRT framework supports and what scholars (Emdin, 2016; Gorski, 2009; Howard & Milner, 2014; Milner, 2010) have found necessary in order to prepare preservice teachers to be responsive to the needs of racially, ethnically, and socioeconomically diverse students. I was prepared to go ahead with my changes.

Dr. Porcher's Experience Before the Course (Re)design

I am now at a different institution, but at the time of this narrative, I was an assistant professor of professional (PoP) practice, partner leader and interim director of clinical experience at an R1 university. PoPs bridge theory and practice by bringing "real world" contexts into university classrooms. Turner (1967) defines PoPs as liminal figures that occupy a middle group between business or industry and academia. Sometimes PoPs are also identified as scholar-practitioners based on their engagement in research. Ramsay and Brua (2017) argued that PoPs are uniquely qualified and are aggressively sought after because of their extensive experience in their career field. We are challenged to leverage our

knowledge of our industry or professional culture in service to the new academic culture (Ramsay & Brua, 2017).

In this role, I was responsible for developing and maintaining community-university partnerships, securing clinical placements, observing students in their clinical experiences, and teaching courses. I was a faculty member in the urban social justice teacher education program, more specifically, the English Education program. I was responsible for teaching one course per semester. I taught one English methods course for secondary students and a community-engaged course per semester. Inspired by Clark et al. (2016)'s observation that "the intentional engagement of community wisdom and expertise in the training of teachers" (p. 6) is essential, I wanted to find a way to incorporate a democratic model, based in design and engagement activities that are beneficial for the university, the district and the local community.

I was assigned to teach the *Students, Communities and Social Justice* course, a capstone course for the teacher education program (Porcher et al., 2020). This course makes the following assumptions:

- Student learning is situated within and actively connected to the school and the broader community. As such, teachers must seek opportunities to learn from and with community members outside of school.
- Public education has the potential to be a site for social change and equity. It is the only institution in the U.S. that is universally available to all students from diverse cultural, linguistic, and economic backgrounds. As such, teachers must see themselves as embedded in a larger community. As members of—perhaps multiple—broader communities, teachers must be able to notice and question their own assumptions and prejudices in order to be able to recognize the potential impact of those assumptions and prejudices on students, communities, and professional practice.
- Teachers have a responsibility to work alongside students, families, and communities to actively participate in creating and perpetuating a just, humane, and democratic society. As such, teachers need to understand how who we are, impacts how we teach and how we make alliances with community stakeholders, inside and outside of the school building (Porcher et al., 2020).

The course learning objectives are that students will:

- work alongside community members to jointly develop a program of engagement,
- engage in meaningful interactions with members of a community other than school personnel, and
- interact with students, community members, family members both with the presence of a GSE instructor and also independently without GSE instructor mediation.

I was given the existing syllabi but was told I could develop the course in the way that I choose. When reviewing the documentation, I noticed the course, as written, contributed to the long-standing pattern of universities that do research "on" communities as opposed to "with" communities. Furthermore, universities perpetuate the idea of sending well-meaning students to "serve" while completely dismissing or being unaware of community-

led problem-solving efforts (Porcher et al., 2020). Pushing against the norm of research on communities requires a paradigm shift that provides the opportunity to build trust with communities. For example, the courses were created by professors without the input of the community, they're based on the research of the professors masqueraded as the needs of the community, community engagement means voyeuristic activities, etc.

I immediately wondered about community engagement. I knew teachers had a responsibility to work alongside students, families, and communities, so why weren't the community members a part of the designing of each course? As a teacher educator, I knew I could not expect future teachers to build relationships and work alongside communities when we don't model this engagement in our programs. I also wondered why community members weren't teaching the course given the outcomes. It was my goal to make the course come alive, and not just look good on paper. I knew that in the revision of the course, I would have to model social justice in my words and actions.

Becoming Disruptors

As teacher educators, we recognized our preservice teachers lacked preparedness due to whiteness as a normative standard. As we considered what specific changes we wanted to make to our courses, we knew we had to attend to our preservice teachers' prior experiences and the new experiences they would need to create a foundation for being a successful teacher of children of color. We returned to our institution's mission statements and considered how much we were willing to sacrifice to make sure our preservice teachers gained experience in our courses to help them think critically and move towards an equity-minded mindset. We anchored ourselves with the reminder of the lives of the children they would be teaching and designed our courses such that our students would have the space to:

- unpack self through an archeological dig (Sealey-Ruiz, 2018);
- explore the assets and conditions (Love, 2019) of communities and students of color through community-university engagement (Clark et al., 2015); and
- design using culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1995) and culturally sustaining practices (Paris, 2012).

These elements of our course design disrupted the "one size fits all" curricula that are often taught in teacher preparation programs. Through the courses, our students would critically reflect on their identities, the ways in which they show up in classrooms and communities, the ways in which their actions and mindsets impact their students and communities, and explore strategies for dismantling racist ideologies and systems that prevent students of color from being and learning in their future urban classrooms. Furthermore, we were explicit about the use of signal words and their connection to interest convergence for their institutions. We worked to elevate narratives and experiences of people of color through in the course design and then stepped in front of our students to begin the work of disrupting whiteness.

Dr. Bertrand as a Disruptor

Disrupting a system that was not built by me or for me was a challenge because of the risk involved. I was a Black woman and pre-tenure professor intentionally addressing topics that white preservice teachers might find uncomfortable. I decided that to begin this work, I had to build a community and have students do what I refer to as “self-work.” I spent the first three weeks of class building community by using activities such as *I Wish My Professor Knew*, an adapted version of Kyle Schwartz’s (2016) *I Wish My Teacher Knew*. This activity provided preservice teachers the opportunity to share what they wanted me to know about them that would help their learning. My students and I also participated in class circles where students could respond to different prompts including, “How do you believe you show up in the world?”, “Describe students who attend urban schools using one word”, “How do you feel about teaching in a diverse classroom?”, and “What do you believe you need to know in order to feel like an effective teacher in a diverse classroom?”.

I was very transparent with my students and shared my personal and professional journey as a way to model opening up. While building community, I guided them through “self-work” using Sealey-Ruiz’s (2018) work on unpacking self through an archaeological dig. Preservice teachers were assigned a *photovoice* project (Wang et al., 1997) that challenged them to think of who they are and what experiences and influences have contributed to their identity. This assignment pushed my preservice teachers to critically reflect and led to critical conversations that addressed biases and stereotypes towards racially and socioeconomically diverse students. The process of “self-work” is continuous and contact with students since my courses ended has shown many of them make the choice to do this work daily.

In addition to the *photovoice* project, I asked students to complete a case study on a student that is racially different than themselves. I wanted my preservice teachers to spend time with the student for at least six weeks and get to know the student as a full person. I required them to collect data on the students’ grades and behavior but also their observations on how other people perceive the student. My goal was to get preservice teachers to understand the value and importance of building relationships with students and understanding the whole child. One of the preservice teachers expressed,

“Getting to spend time and work with a student over the course of many weeks was eye-opening. I will be honest and say that just based on appearance and how I typically view students who attend schools like this I would have never probably gotten to see how smart this student is and all they bring into the classroom.”

It is implicit biases and thoughts like this that preservice teachers have that I want to disrupt and this assignment allowed me to do so.

The *Elementary Education: Practices and Issues* course is paired with *Elementary Education Clinical I*. Preservice teachers are required to complete two full days a week of clinical hours at an elementary school site. In order to ensure that students were in an environment to learn what I was teaching in the *Elementary Education: Practice and Issues* regarding social justice, equity, and diversity I placed them in urban schools where more than 70% of the population is both racially and economically diverse. Most of the preservice teachers have not had the opportunity to teach in these schools, therefore I had to prepare

them by addressing topics such as systemic inequities, bias, stereotypes, and how to identify the assets of a community. I designed course discussions focused on the challenges that students of color that attend urban schools encounter and how teachers use deficit-based instructional strategies that further marginalize children of color in urban communities (Payne, 2008). I then shared with preservice teachers asset-based approaches to address students' challenges related to systemic inequities (Farinde-Wy et al., 2017).

I was intentional about preservice teachers not just making judgments about the schools and communities, but actually immersing themselves and finding the assets of the community (Love, 2019). I accompanied students into the community to meet community leaders, as well as visit community organizations that serve the students and families of the schools where they were assigned. The community immersion in the course provided preservice teachers an opportunity to learn how to privilege the knowledge, cultures, and assets inherent in the communities where they would engage in their clinical experience (Waddell, 2013). This was a different approach than what has been done in this course and it required my students to think about the role their identity plays in how they view schools and communities. These experiences served to disrupt the regular teacher preparation course that intentionally and unintentionally perpetuated whiteness through curricular models and teacher educator approaches (Sleeter, 2017).

Dr. Porcher as a Disruptor

Historically in teacher preparation, engagement with surrounding community school districts and/or interactions with the community have focused specifically on securing clinical placements for their students in their program or research efforts that benefit faculty members. This has served as a one-directional relationship, with maybe some incidental opportunities for students to become full-time teachers in their district or the community members to receive a 'service' on behalf of a faculty member. As a Black woman from a historically and intentionally marginalized community, I experienced the ways in which my community was preyed upon for the benefit of universities. When I enter schools and communities to observe and engage with preservice teachers, I see students and communities that mirror the ones that I grew up in. The work that I do as a teacher educator is serious and important to my identity.

I recognized immediately that the *Students, Communities and Social Justice* course needed design input from community members, both the university community and the local community. In an effort to model critical service-learning (Mitchell, 2016), specifically, developing authentic relationships and repositioning power and privilege as a faculty member, connecting with university staff that specializes in community-university partnerships was my first priority (Porcher et al., 2020). I reached out to the associate director and program coordinator of the community-based research service and began the journey of modeling inclusion. I wanted to disrupt the notion that higher education work as more valuable than others and worked to situate the community members as experts with experiences that held more weight than those of us in higher education.

The coordinator was able to identify organizations where students could contribute. They set up and accompanied me to meetings and helped me establish trust with the

community (Porcher et al., 2020). They gave me articles to read to ensure that I had a strong understanding of community engagement and critical service learning. Based on the readings, the discussions, and notes from meetings with the community partners, we collectively began to construct a course overview.

We focused on engaging preservice teachers in developing an understanding of the ways in which the community impacts schools. The framework of the course included engaging in an archeological dig of self (Sealey-Ruiz, 2018), exploring the assets and conditions (Love, 2019) of the community, and finally, engaging in critical service learning. The archeological dig involved an exploration of self and whiteness in American society. An example from the course activities, of interrogating one's racial identity, is for students to identify the pivotal moment in their life when they recognized their race. This activity is influenced by Morrison's (2007) literary criticism that highlights the 'profound revelation' when one recognizes that they are Black. This activity allows students to engage in the archaeological dig of self (Sealey-Ruiz, 2018). The course begins with unpacking self, as the most important aspect of this work, beyond pedagogical practices. The 'self-work' has to be the foundation of learning and teaching as if left unpacked and explored, it has the power to negatively impact the lives of students (Sealey-Ruiz, 2018). This is a disruption in teacher preparation because it shifts from just words like diversity, inclusion, equity, or social justice, to students exploring what those words look like in practice. Students cannot see the importance of diversity, inclusion, equity and/or social justice if they do not know who they are and the privileges that they have that may contribute to lack of diversity, inclusion, equity and/or social justice.

The second aspect of the framework of the course is the exploration of the community involves studying the history of the community, along with the ways the demographics and infrastructure changed over time. An example of the exploration of the assets and conditions of the community is to engage in a community learning walk led by a community member. This demonstrates a disruption as many of our students never walk beyond the university community because of their deficit perspectives of communities of color. Similar to findings of researchers in the aforementioned literature (Hampton et al., 2008; Wadell, 2011), we assumed that our students benefited most from this disruption because they had previously never engaged with communities different from them. For many, this may have been because of deficit perspectives, biases, and stereotypes (Hampton et al., 2008; Wadell, 2011). This community learning walk provides the opportunity for students to begin to explore the assets of the community. Furthermore, the conditions that are created by the presence of the university such as gentrification, redlining, and revitalization that negatively impacts the community.

The final aspect of the course framework is engagement in critical service learning. Mitchell (2008) identifies three components of critical service-learning: redistribution of privilege and power, societal change, and authentic relationships. The actual course content was co-taught by myself, the representatives from the community research center, and community partners including representatives from a community health center, a gifted and talented program at the local school district, a community senior citizen resource center, and a community-led health organization. The students engaged in critical service learning

by engaging in a critical-service learning project designed by the community partners (Porcher et al., 2020). It marked a redistribution of power because the community members determined the focus. The course or the critical service learning projects were not driven by my interests or my students' idea of service. The projects ranged from collaboratively developing training modules for volunteers at the community health center, engaging in literacy practices with families at the community health center, designing a community cultural heritage day, researching tenant-landlord associations to support community tenants, and analyzing community data focused on health disparities. All the projects required direct engagement with the community which assisted in developing authentic relationships.

My goal was for preservice teachers to leave my course with developed insight, understanding, and set of skills in interacting and engaging with their students' communities that they could use in their own classrooms. I wanted to model disrupting and decentering whiteness by embracing inclusion and diversity. I wanted to interrupt the pattern of higher education not valuing community expertise and experiences.

Implications of Disruptive Practices

Our experiences offer a number of ways for teacher educators to disrupt practices at their institutions, as well as recommendations for teacher preparation programs on how to move past using particular words in their mission statements, to actually do the work necessary to prepare preservice teachers to teach students of color. We can first recommend practices for navigating disrupting norms as pre-tenure faculty.

- Explore your own identity as a faculty member. Some questions to consider are, who are you? How do you show up in the world? How do you show up at your institution? What are the challenges of how you show up based on your rank as a junior faculty member? What power and privileges do you have?
- Provide the opportunity for students to explore their own identities and positionalities as the foundation of any course that you teach. Preservice teachers cannot teach anyone if they are not aware of who they are. Teaching is not just about strategies but about self-work, too.
- Provide the opportunity for students to explore both the conditions and assets of the community to avoid perpetuating stereotypes about students and their communities.
- Prepare students to be flexible as conditions can change in schools and in the community work and to be process oriented.
- Ensure that students understand that they do not just arrive as a culturally relevant teacher, they must continuously choose culturally relevant practices.

The next list consists of our recommended lists of practices, based on our experiences and CRT framework for teacher education program leaders who are offered to hold programs accountable to their own, their Department/College, and/or their University mission statements. The list includes:

- Have critical conversations with white faculty members about the lack of diversity of the faculty and students. Ensure that there is a plan in place to not only increase

diverse students and faculty but support them as they become part of the teacher preparation program.

- If there are diverse faculty members and students, have critical conversations with them about representation and power within the teacher preparation program.
- Perform an equity audit of courses and provide training for faculty members to ensure that there is an agreed understanding and enactment of all the words in their mission and value statements throughout their programs.

Conclusion

While redesigning courses and disrupting teacher education is not an easy task, it is necessary if we want to guarantee that preservice teachers are prepared to teach students who often do not look like them or share similar racial, ethnic, and/or cultural backgrounds. In the *Elementary Education: Practices and Issues* course, the students did not understand equity or what it looks like in a classroom, nor did they understand how biases and stereotypes of students of color impact their teaching. At the end of the semester, several students shared how this course opened their minds and really helped them to address some of their biases and recognize their privilege. One student wrote an email where she expressed, “I honestly had no idea that I was in school and some of my peers weren’t afforded the same opportunities. I am committing to make sure that I center equity and do all I can to make sure that students of color have the educational experience they deserve.” In the *Students, Communities and Social Justice* course, the students were not aware of urban social justice program and articulated this feedback about the course after the r(e)design:

“Learning how to facilitate productive discussion about race and equity in the classroom; I really liked that we had the opportunity to work alongside community organizations for critical service learning. I believe that everyone should be somehow involved in the community they are observing or student teaching at from the beginning of the program, and not only for this class.”

If we are going to move past just saying the right thing and actually doing the right thing in University mission statements and in teacher preparation programs and really take action to prepare preservice teachers for racially and socioeconomically diverse schools, we must examine the ways in which we teach and redesign our courses to better prepare preservice teachers. We must disrupt the norms in teacher preparation and become teacher educators as disruptors.

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