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Navigating Black Identity Development: The Power of Interactive Multicultural Read-Alouds with Elementary-Aged Children

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Article

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Abstract: Racial identity development in young children is influenced by interactions with teachers and curriculum in schools. This article, using the framework of critical race theory, critical literacy, and critical pedagogy, explores how three elementary-aged Black children view their own identity development. Specifically, observing how children interact with Movement-Oriented Civil Rights-Themed Children's Literature (MO-CRiTLit) in the context of a non-traditional summer literacy program, Freedom Schools, to influence their Black identity. Professional development and preservice teacher preparation are needed to support teachers as they navigate through learning about pedagogical practices that increase student engagement.

Keywords: critical literacy; Civil Rights; Black identity; children

1. Introduction

The central question addressed by the Supreme Court during the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* (1954) [1] was whether the segregation of children in public schools based on their race, deprived minoritized children of equal educational opportunities when everything else was equal [2–4]. This question has been, and continues to be, answered in the negative, as evidenced in an educational system in which Children of Color are repeatedly reported to have lower reading and numeracy scores in comparison to their white peers. In 2003, Education Trust, Inc. reported that, nationally, fourth-grade African-Americans fell behind their white peers in reading. In fact, 61% of fourth-grade African-Americans were below basic scores in reading compared to 26% of fourth-grade white Americans [5] (p. 1). These statistics attest to the reality that, even after the 1954 ruling of *Brown*, U.S. schools continue to marginalize minoritized students. With persistent failure of only racially diverse and working-class students, the system must instead consider how race and culture influence the educational outcome of all students.

Our current educational system, where many African-American students are failing, often puts the blame on, perceived, "unsupportive" parents, "lazy" students, and media influences [4]. However, an examination of the historical structure of schools and the biases that are perpetuated within the education system is necessary in order to understand why this blame is constantly and inaccurately associated with specific groups of students, particularly People of Color and the poor. Research suggests that Black children suffer most in schools due to power structures in which school staff, who are overwhelmingly white and ill-prepared to affirm students who are racially and culturally different from themselves, have the power to label, classify, and define these students. These white school staff also often do not have the best intentions for these students [4,6–8]. Children of Color and poor children, especially working-class Black children, also disproportionately attend poorly resourced schools with inexperienced teachers, many of whom are also un/under-certified, -credentialed, and/or

-licensed [9]. Moreover, these teachers often rely on the scripted programs that are provided to deliver the content and instruction without considering the structure of the curricula.

This study explored the interactions during read-alouds of multicultural children's literature influenced the racial identity development of seven self-identified Black elementary aged children. Specifically, the primary research questions considered were: *How does movement-oriented Civil Rights-themed children's literature influence the racial identity development of Black elementary-aged children?* and, *How are critical pedagogy and multicultural literature used in conjunction to provide students a foundation to make connection, address disconnections, and dialogue about topics with other students their age?* These questions were informed by this study's literature review.

2. Literature Review

Increasingly for the past ten years, research findings have shown that the nation's teaching force fails to reflect the cultural diversity represented among students [10–12]. The majority of teacher candidates are European American, at least middle-class, monolingual English speakers, and have had very few prior substantive experiences interacting with diverse populations, and, therefore, may, in some senses, view diversity in negative or inaccurate ways [13–15]. Additionally, new teachers remain dependent on the scripted and one-size-fits-all curricula that does not include a wide range of differentiated directives for various dimensions of student diversity; this leaves little room for teachers to promote critical appreciation for differences among students, much less to affirm these differences though their own creative teaching practices. When teachers lack understanding of diversity issues it can negatively affect the educational success of their students [16,17]. The review of literature on racial identity development, critical race theory, critical pedagogy and critical literacy informed this research.

2.1. Black Identity Development

The topic of identity development often elicits resistance from educators, especially when the focus of learning about identity is on race and racism [18]. Although there are various other models of racial identity development (notably [19]), this study draws from one that explicitly discusses the racial identity of Black Americans in a sociopolitical, rather than psychosocial, context: Jackson's (1976) Black Identity Development (BID) model [20]. This model is relevant for this study due to its sociopolitical tethering, coupled with its use of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's as a key historical reference point. This BID model emerged from this movement and had particular relevance to the racism experienced during it by many Black/African-Americans in the United States (Jackson, 1976). Furthermore, Jackson relates that the intention of the BID model was to establish:

> . . . a framework to understand the different ways that Black people were responding to this era of civil rights; to understand how this change was influencing the thinking and behavior of Black people; and to examine the way that Black identity was evolving or developing as a result. [20] (pp. 36–37)

This framework is vital to the study's focus on examining the different ways that elementary-aged Black children respond to today's Civil Rights issues as they are connected to this past. This model aided in identifying how the critical pedagogical engagement of MO-CRiTLit influences the identity development of Black children and how, in turn, these children's academic performance is impacted.

2.2. Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) seeks to foreground the experiences of People of Color relative to the law to reveal the embedded racism within it. Williams (1991) [21] asserts that

> the simple matter of the color of one's skin so profoundly affects the way one is treated,
>
> so radically shapes what one is allowed to think and feel about this society, that the decision to generalize from this division is valid (p. 256).

This holds true in the context of education as well. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) [8] are credited with being the first educational scholars to apply CRT to the field of education, specifically to pedagogical practices, finding that persistent educational problems, notably the racial achievement gap, can be explained by the revelation that embedded within educational policy, as well as practice, is racial bias. Through a CRT lens, practitioners who serve Children of Color and, thus, who need to know how to affirm them daily, learn to see these children through asset, not deficit lenses; that is, children's persistent educational failure is not a function of their "culture," but rather of systemic oppression designed to protect white privilege, in this case, educational privilege. Thus, changing the educational future of these children becomes tethered to culturally responsive practice, not cultural assimilation.

2.3. Critical Pedagogy

Kincheloe (2008) argues that, because there is constant change in social issues and related theoretical insights, critical pedagogy is always evolving [22]. Critical pedagogy is rooted in critical theory and refers to systems of actions and beliefs that are focused on social justice [23–25]. Critical pedagogy is practiced in varying contexts around the world. In education, educator critical consciousness must exist before critical pedagogy can be enacted. Gay and Kirkland (2003) explain that teachers who know who they are culturally, understand the sociopolitical contexts in which they teach, and can recognize and question how their assumptions and prior knowledge may impact the students they teach possess critical consciousness and leverage that consciousness in developing critical pedagogical practice [26]. When teaching is coupled with critical self-reflection, there is constant transformation and improvement of self and one's teaching reality [26,27]. This task is not simple for teachers. Too often, teachers, all of whom have been inculcated by dominant ideologies, especially when those ideologies serve their interests, begin to view themselves and their students through oppressor lenses [22,28]. Although the demographics of U.S. classrooms are becoming more diverse, the curriculum remains heavily defined by European and European American cultural norms, experiences, and contributions [29]. As dominant ideologies play out—covertly or overtly—in the context of a classroom, youth from non-dominant or marginalized communities are confronted by the power of the dominant group. Consequently, they are influenced by the myths of those in power. Kincheloe (2008) describes one such myth as the notion that "African Americans and other non-white people are not as intelligent as individuals from European backgrounds ... " [22] (p. 73). Even when this and other myths are exposed and challenged by critically conscious pedagogists. On at least a daily basis, most African-American children have long been, and continue to be, educated in a manner that implies this myth holds truth. For this reason, promoting widespread development of teacher critical consciousness and subsequent alignment of this consciousness with critical pedagogical practice is vital to changing the educational picture of Black children and youth.

2.4. Critical Literacy

Critical literacy is related to critical pedagogy and the social justice work of Paulo Freire [28]. Freire's work brought change to poverty-stricken areas in Brazil through a movement that empowered poor and otherwise disenfranchised adults to question social structures that conditioned them to remain in disempowered spaces. Literacy education was the first key factor enabling these adults to begin to face, question, and challenge the status quo [30]. But mere literacy—functional literacy—was not enough to bring about transformational change. Additionally, Freire and Macedo [31] argue that literacy education should not only provide basic reading, writing, and numeracy skills, rather it must also be characterized by "a set of practices that functions to either empower or disempower people" [31] (p. 187). According to Freire and Macedo, true literacy is reflected in the ability to read "the word *and* the world" [31] (p. 8). From these ideas, the concept of *critical* literacy formally emerges. But, as previously noted with respect to the historical development of critical pedagogy, the notion of critical literacy predates its codification. For example, in 1977, Foucault described a form of critical literacy in his work exploring and encouraging disruption of power relations in society [32]. Further,

as critical literacy is rooted in the struggle of historically marginalized people to become educated, it is clearly also implied in the work of Marcus Garvey and Frederick Douglass [33]. A critical literacy framework encourages teachers of Black children to reconsider literacy instruction as "problem posing" education, where the relationships between hegemony, power, and literacy are questioned, at the same time that literacy skills are being taught and learned [34].

3. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study drew from five areas of research, the first four include Black Identity Development (BID), Critical Race Theory (CRT), Critical Pedagogy, and Critical Literacy. Each of these areas are broad, complex and aligns with many different fields of study, including education. The fifth element of the conceptual framework for this study was drawn from the Freedom Schools program, created during the Civil Rights Movement and continuing today through the Children's Defense Fund Freedom Schools Program model. All five of these dimensions were integrated relative to education to create a unique analytical lens through which furthering understanding of literary interactions of Black youth with Movement-Oriented Civil Rights-Themed Literature (MO-CRiTLit) could be pursued through the study. MO-CRiTLit is a term coined in previous work to describe a specific type of literature under the umbrella of children's literature [35]. This literature includes multicultural children's literature that focuses on historically underrepresented people who organize to create change through movement-oriented social action.

4. Methodology

This paper is derived from a multiple case study which explored the Black identity development of elementary-aged children and their engagement with Civil Rights literature.

4.1. Context

This study took place in a suburban elementary school setting in a metropolitan area of the Southern United States at one individual CDF Freedom School Program site. The CDF Freedom Schools Program serves more than 12,375 children in 96 cities and 29 states and Washington, D.C. during the summer months [36] (para. 4). This particular site served a total of 100 scholars, ranging from kindergarten to eighth grade.

4.2. Participants

The participants of the larger multiple case study included parents, a servant leader intern, and elementary-aged Black children. All participants in this study self-identified as Black. A total of eight parent participants and seven child participants in grades 3–5 participated in this study. This particular age group was selected due to their familiarity with school, thus the greater likelihood that they would have a longer attention span [37], greater ability to articulate their experiences with literature, and more time in traditional schooling from which they could make comparisons to their Freedom Schools' experience. Each of these participant attributes contributed to the rich cases.

This paper concentrates on three of the seven child participants from the larger multiple case study. Each of the individual participants experienced their own transaction with the literature, thus making their own meaning from the text [38]. The three participants discussed further varied in terms of their racial identity development, thus providing an illustration of the impact the engagement with Civil Rights literature had on their individual identities.

4.3. Data Collection and Analysis

To achieve the purpose of this study, interviews, observations, and video recordings were gathered and a systematic approach to managing the coding process was identified. After the initial review of the interviews, data was coded. In the first level, open coding was used to identify the initial themes

that appeared in the data. During the second level, axial coding was used to find connections between themes. During this process, the conceptual framework guided the analysis.

5. Findings

Each of the cases, which made up the multiple case study, aided in the process of identification of key themes that were common across the participants' educational experiences. In an effort to present a range of the identity development, three child participants will be presented to understand the process and the interaction with MO-CRiTLit. The purpose of the selection of the three cases provides opportunity to showcase three different cases at different stages of the BID model [20]. However, it is important to disclose that all participants demonstrated progress in their identity development through the interaction with the MO-CRiTLit.

The presentation of the findings includes three cases; Dre, Alexis, and Jeremiah. The qualitative nature of the study illustrates a self-description of the participant, their personal recounting to the Freedom Schools Program, their placement on the BID model, and their connection to MO-CRiTLit. All participant names are pseudonyms.

5.1. Dre

Dre, an 11-year-old male who had most recently completed the fifth grade is the oldest of three children of a single mother. Dre demonstrated a strong sense of independence. Unfortunately, for Dre, he did not have many interactions with his father despite his father living in a nearby neighborhood. He considered himself to be a good reader and said his mother and grandmother taught him to read before he went to kindergarten. During the initial interview, Dre used descriptive words to describe himself: "tall, big head, and red hair maybe or kinda colorful hair." In describing his classmates, he responded simply stating that they were "intelligent" and said his classmates looked mostly like him. After a thoughtful pause, Dre began to describe his skin tone stating that it is "light" and proceeded to say that if someone asked him what race he was he would identify as Black. Dre was the most racially affirmed participant of this study beginning at the *resistance stage* and moving on the continuum to the *redefinition stage* on the BID model.

While enrolled in the Freedom Schools program, Dre was one of the most active read-aloud participants. The use of culturally relevant texts allowed Dre to make connections with the lessons and stories shared during the program. Dre describes an example of this connection in his description of *Reflections of a Black Cowboy* [39], his favorite text from the program: ". . . it talks about his life and how he loses his father. . . He missed him and they used to do everything together." It was evident that Dre was interested in building a closer relationship with his father. Furthermore, Dre actively sought out mentorship from male staff members throughout the Freedom Schools Program.

5.2. Alexis

Alexis, a nine-year-old female who had most recently completed third grade is one of three children. Her twin brother Alex was also a participant in this study. Alexis described herself by beginning with her hair: "I would say my hair is out. Like this, like it's in an afro or it's curly. If I was meeting you today I'd say my nails are pink and I'm in a pink jacket." She continued to describe herself using physical attributes, but later in the interview she began connecting her identity to others with similar racial characteristics. She began to discuss her emotions about the media and news coverage of the church shootings in Charleston, South Carolina. At this point, Alexis added more detail to her own racial identity explaining her feelings of sadness saying: ". . . they're African-American and I am too." Although her identification was not explicitly salient, Alexis was able to feel a connection to the victims through her interactions with media outlets. In the initial stage, Alexis was positioned in the *passive acceptance stage* and demonstrated growth on the BID model to the *resistance stage* by the end of the study.

During Freedom Schools, Alexis often used a critical lens and questioned what was being presented in the texts. During an observation of a conversation during the read-aloud of *Separate is Never Equal* [40], Alexis questioned why segregation had to exist. She said for the first time she had learned that segregation was not only about Blacks and whites but detailed more as she added:

> I learned something, that not only African-Americans were segregated from white people that Mexicans was too. . .That just because you're a different color and you're from different places don't mean you're gonna get the same equalness of other people.

The interactions with MO-CRiTLit offered an additional perspective that was new to Alexis and afforded her the opportunity to engage critically with the text.

5.3. Jeremiah

Jeremiah, a nine-year-old male had most recently completed the third grade after having to repeat second grade due to low performance as a result of incomplete work. Jeremiah displayed a sense of shyness when interacting with other children and adults. He described himself as smart, kind, and nervous he continued stating: "Someone that has thin hair and big eyelashes aaaaannnnd a blue coat." He added, "No one ever talk[s] to me and when they see me, they look away . . . That's why I always wear this jacket with my hood on always looking down." Jeremiah was the least racially affirmed participant in this study as he was in the *active acceptance stage* at the beginning. Through observations and continued interaction with peers, staff, and literature, Jeremiah progressed on the BID model continuum and moved more towards the *acceptance stage*.

Jeremiah was able to recall details from the texts and described *Separate is Never Equal* [40] as his favorite. Jeremiah continued to explain what he learned from this specific book as he explained: ". . .it teach me that Blacks can do anything they want to . . . And it doesn't matter [what] your skin color [is]." In further discussing the Civil Rights issues that society is facing today, Jeremiah believed the news was important to watch and it provided information on current events. He added that some of the stories included people going to jail and men escaping from prison, which showed that his viewing was current based on the events in the local community. After he discussed the general topics he further exclaimed: "And the police are mean . . . Cause they tell you stuff that's not/they don't care if you're Black or they don't care if you're proud . . ." Jeremiah believed he would never be proud to be Black and said: "When you're Black people always pick on you. . . [For instance] cause how my face look." The Freedom Schools Program and culturally relevant curriculum helped him break down barriers within himself, and although he wasn't outwardly "proud" of his Blackness, he was envious of those who participated in the Civil Rights movement.

5.4. Cross-Case Analysis

Analysis of the data process involved coding and cross-case analysis to identify similarities and differences in the participants' cases. These themes will be discussed relative to the conceptual framework on Black Identity Development, Critical Race Theory, Critical Pedagogy and Critical Literacy The following five themes were prevalent: parental roles in development, early literacy development, motivation to read, standardization of literacy curriculum in traditional schooling (scripted programs), and the historical teaching of the Civil Rights movement.

For the purposes of this work, the focus on motivation to read, standardization of curriculum in schools and the historical teaching of the Civil Rights movement are emphasized to support the argument that the traditional curriculum does not focus on the historical teaching of the Civil Rights movement.

5.4.1. Motivation to Read

All participants described having a strong motivation to read and on average considered themselves good readers. The data revealed that having the option to choose the text provided participants with

more motivation to read. There was a common preference for certain texts among participants with the series *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* [41], *Dork Diaries* [42], and *Captain Underpants* [43] being the most prominent during traditional school settings. The participants stated the Freedom School's classroom culture and setting contributed to their growth and development as readers. Generally stating their shared literacy experiences with MO-CRiTLit fully engaged the emersion of their motivation to read. Furthermore, participants read using a critical literacy lens where they were encouraged to analyze the text, question whose voice was silenced, and connect to the literature.

5.4.2. Standardization of Literacy Curriculum in Traditional Schooling

All of the participants reported having experienced learning from their teachers through a "scripted" standardized curriculum; that is, their teachers used predetermined and preassembled curriculum to deliver content. More specifically, participants mentioned their literacy curriculum as being leveled and scripted, which has resulted in a skewed view of their literacy achievement and educational expectations caused by a force adoption of high-stakes assessments. For example, Dre and Jeremiah detailed their interpretation of the classroom libraries as:

> Dre: like they label the books and they [teachers] tell you what level you [are] on and that's what category you go to [choose a book from].

> Jeremiah: there are books that's not really chapter books . . . but there are levels of books like level A, B, C, or level O or P.

From their interpretation of the libraries and standardized curriculum, they reported having a lack of interest in the lesson activities and books due to the uninteresting story lines.

Furthermore, it was also believed that the texts in their classrooms were likely from a Eurocentric perspective because they had difficulty making even superficial connections with the text in general, and the characters in it specifically. The absence of these connections, along with their racial group not represented in the text left participants with a lack of interaction with multicultural children's literature in their traditional school curriculum, in contrast to the opposite experience with the Freedom School texts. Freire (1983) promoted the theory that culturally relevant reading material should be included in literacy instruction and pedagogical practices in order to engage students in the learning process as well as transforming individuals from learners to thinkers [44].

5.4.3. Historical Teaching of the Civil Rights Movement

The child participants related learning through the use of MO-CRiTLit as a true, authentic, and rich depiction of historically underrepresented People of Color during the Civil Rights Movement. While the National Council for the Social Studies' (NCSS) [45] National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies have included U.S. History/Civil Rights content for decades (1992), and the Common Core States Standards Initiative [46] established Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies in 2010, the Southern Poverty Law Center (2014) reported, through examination of individual state standards, that there is still a need for integration of a more critically conscious approach to Civil Rights education if student knowledge on the Civil Rights Movement is to become meaningfully *movement-oriented* [47].

During this study, child participants discussed their appreciation for historical content knowledge, especially during the interactive read-alouds. The participants addressed the difference that influenced their learning was the freedom to question during the dialogue around literature. Many of the topics introduced through the literature included, marriage equality, segregation, and the history of slavery. These discussions between the scholars and servant leader intern generated a progressive learning cycle that supported their cultural awareness and academic enrichment.

Drawing upon the newfound knowledge of historical events of the Civil Rights Movement during the 1960s, the participants suggested that inequities and Civil Rights issues remain today. Dre explained this idea: ". . . Now they're [Blacks and whites] treated equally sometimes. Except like when whites

are killing Black people for no reason and stuff like that." The participants used the space provided in the Freedom Schools setting to dialogue about the topics, ask questions, and fully engage in discussion to gain an understanding.

Each of the themes is relevant to understanding how children used MO-CRiTLit to influence their identity development. Through their engagement with MO-CRiTLit and the historical teaching of the Civil Rights movement, their motivation to read increases and progress in the development in their racial identity is evident. In contrast, traditional schooling and scripted programs negatively impact their racial identity development and could decrease their motivation to read, thus having an unfavorable outcome on student achievement.

6. Discussion

The argument for Civil Rights literature in traditional schools is powerful given what is known about the power of such literature in positively impacting identity development [48]. In examining and documenting how MO-CRiTLit positively influenced the racial identity of Black children in the context of the non-traditional school setting of the CDF Freedom Schools program, this study amplifies the power of that argument. Each participant had their own unique experience with MO-CRiTLit, which influenced their Black identity. For example, Jeremiah, a quiet student with no observable behavioral issues, still had self-identity issues, especially about his physical image. He described white ideals as being 'better' and suggested that his view of being Black will never be positive because he believed that: "Blacks do not have fun and are also not allowed to have pets" linking these attributes to whites. Despite Jeremiah's views and negative thoughts, the books from Freedom Schools allowed him to see Black people in a positive way. The diversity in the literature provided various opportunities for all participants to connect at different levels.

This research has added to the existing research on multicultural education and teacher pedagogical practices around curriculum development in PK-12 classrooms [29,49], where a majority of the teachers are white and where there is an increasingly diverse student population [50,51]. While all participants described an enriching learning experience during the Freedom Schools program due to the building of knowledge and cultural understandings, it still remains that this setting is a non-traditional learning environment. Freedom Schools provides a platform for culturally relevant pedagogical practices and curricula that are inclusive of building a classroom culture that support student achievement and influence their motivation to read. While this type of educational experience may not be able to be fully achieved in a traditional classroom during a regular academic year, critical curricular components can be integrated into the traditional curricula to increase student identity development and academic achievement during the traditional school experiences.

7. Conclusions

Years after the 1954 landmark of *Brown*, children continue to be faced with segregation in schools and inequities in education. Minority children are failing and are situated in what is one of the most common phrases in the literature, the achievement gap [9,27,52]. Black and Latino students continue to fall behind their white peers in reading and numeracy and are placed in special education programs at twice the rate of their white peers [53] (p. 123), [54] (p. 41). The system has historically structured schools where the curriculum focuses on white ideals, affirming white children, and thriving on educational success for this particular group of students.

Teacher candidates and in-service teachers must be prepared through teacher education programs and on-going professional development to enter diverse classrooms. This study documented the impact that the access to critical interactive read-alouds can have on Black students' positive racial identity development. The participants were afforded opportunities to dialogue about critical topics, critically understand historical periods, and critically explore their own Black identity development. As a result, participants developed age-appropriate critical agency for participation in today's Civil Rights Movement, a goal of which is for Black children to view themselves positively.

The findings reveal that there is a need for multicultural education across traditional schooling practices to ensure a more equitable education for all children, but especially for Children of Color who are faced with institutionalized racial stigmas. Culturally relevant pedagogy [13,47,55–57] must play a central role in classrooms. The practice of teaching that openly addresses issues of power structures and racism in schools helps to ensure that all students are receiving an equitable education. Critical pedagogical practices are a main component to ensuring a more robust education for Children of Color. Moreover, teachers must examine their own identity, acknowledge their own biases, and identify how their place of authority has influence on students. Additionally, teachers must also examine the content of the material that is being delivered. Due to the overarching reality of pre-packaged curriculum that is widely Eurocentric in values, teachers must address the needs of their Students of Color by supplementing the curriculum with resources that allow children to see themselves in print.

Research around critical literacy empowers children to question the text. Children's literature is a tool that teachers can use to connect students to historical and real-life events. Specifically, using authentic MO-CRiTLit throughout the duration of the year as opposed to specific times of the year (i.e., holidays, heroic birthdays, Black History month, etc.) increases awareness and appreciation for literature, thus leading to a greater motivation to read. With the use of a critical literacy framework, students will recognize and question power structures in classrooms, schools, and society as a whole. Through the process of teaching the mechanics of reading, self-efficacy and agency are developed; encouraging young people to be change agents.

Finally, "quality teacher preparation depends on quality teacher educators" [58] (p. 524), yet little attention has been given to teacher educators, particularly those who apply a multicultural approach or perspective to the scripted standardized curriculum. Professional development must be continuous for not only teacher candidates and in-service teachers but for teacher educators alike. Being abreast to the changes in PK-12 settings will increase teacher educators' knowledge and practice when serving teacher candidates.

A career in teaching is widely characterized as rewarding [15]. *The question is, for whom?* Teachers, especially white teachers, must enter the field with a sense of fearlessness about pedagogically engaging questions of power, privilege, and injustices with children, especially Children of Color, most especially Black children. When children have educational spaces to openly, critically dialogue about societal issues that impact their development, the field of teaching rewards them as well.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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