

The aesthetics of white racism in pre-service teacher education: a critical race theory perspective

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The authors use critical race theory (CRT) and critical race feminism (CRF) as a lens for analyzing and grappling with White students' resistance to learning about and deconstructing systems of oppression. The authors build on the work of critical scholars whose work exposes the ways in which White pre-service teachers resist counter-hegemonic pedagogical approaches and subject matter. In the so-called 'post-racial' era, these ways of resisting have become more virulent and structural in nature, thereby institutionalizing racism. Included in the article are excerpts from the authors' end of the academic year teaching evaluations. The excerpted comments serve as evidence that students use evaluations as weapons to speak back to and against, not only to anti-racist philosophies, but counter-hegemonic narratives that represent the diversity of their future teaching experiences. Both faculty members are formally trained in social work, multicultural education, and educational policy. Finally, using CRT and CRF the authors argue that cultural hegemony is institutionalized when White students are afforded the privilege to evaluate Black female professors without academic departments and universities critically assessing the role that racism and sexism play in student feedback. Our use of CRT and CRF make transparent the ways in which White students' resistance as cultural hegemony is institutionalized in their evaluations of experiences in social foundations courses. The article has implications for teacher education programs, higher education policy, and social foundations of education.

Keywords: critical race theory; critical race feminism; pre-service education; aesthetics of racism

I believe the instructor was very unprofessional not only in her teaching but what she talked about in class. She talked all about smoking weed and breastfeeding her baby and even went as far as talking about her nipple hanging off. It was very awkward and I do not believe instructors should talk like that in front of their students. (Student comment)

Our notions of race (and its use) are so complex that even when it fails to 'make sense' we continue to employ and deploy it. I want to argue, then, that our conceptions of race, even in a postmodern and/or postcolonial world, are more

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embedded and fixed than in a previous age. However, this embeddedness or 'fixedness' has required new language and constructions of race so that denotations are submerged and hidden in ways that are offensive though without identification (Ladson-Billings 2009, 18–19).

More than a century ago W.E.B. Du Bois (1903) warned that the most pervasive threat to democracy is America's fanatical obsession with race. The aftermath of the first elected African American president has ushered in post-racial doublespeak convoluting already complicated issues of racism. In this article, the authors use critical race theory (CRT) and critical race feminism (CRF) as a lens for analyzing and grappling with White students' resistance to learning about and deconstructing systems of oppression. More specifically, it is argued that pre-service teachers not only enact silence as a weapon against raced scholars, but they also perform simulated tolerance, which is harmful to students and professors.

The authors build on the work of critical scholars whose work exposes the ways in which White pre-service teachers resist counter-hegemonic pedagogical approaches and subject matter. In the so-called 'post-racial' era, these ways of resisting have become more virulent and structural in nature, thereby institutionalizing racism. Included in the article are excerpts from the authors' end of the academic year teaching evaluations. The excerpted comments serve as evidence that students use evaluations as weapons to speak back to and against, not only to anti-racist philosophies, but counter-hegemonic narratives that represent the diversity of their future teaching experiences.

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In a democracy it has been determined that education, and higher education, in particular, play a major role in helping societies meet the demands of a post-industrial economy and in promoting the development of skills which potentially promote social equity. Acknowledging the role that higher education will play in forwarding the values and economic demands of a democracy, many institutions of higher education have done much to improve upon student diversity, with special attention given to the recruitment of students from racial/ethnic backgrounds, lower-income families and communities, and first generation college student populations. Sadly, retention of students of color has been a major challenge for many traditionally white colleges and

universities. To help meet the demands of educating diverse population groups, many institutions of higher education have also placed more efforts on hiring faculty of color and non-traditional faculty to further demonstrate a commitment to diversity in postsecondary education, as well as in a democracy.

Colleges of education have been on the forefront of hiring faculty of color to assist in teaching, mentoring and research roles. For example, according to a National Center for Educational Statistics (US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics 2009) report, racial/ethnic minorities made up nearly 17% of total US faculty. Even though Whites (80%) made up the majority of faculty, approximately 7% of faculty were Black, 6% were Asian/Pacific Islander, 4% were Latino/a, and 1% were American Indian/Alaska Native. Education and the social sciences are the two fields where Blacks are more likely to be employed full-time as instructors.

In fact, following Whites (83%), Blacks (6.6%) constitute the second largest group of full-time faculty and instructional staff in education programs (US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics 2005). In lieu of the emphasis placed on diversifying institutions of higher education and teacher education programs, in particular, not enough attention has been given to how Black faculty experience and cope with White racism in the classroom and in the evaluative process. Empirical studies indicate that Black faculty at predominately white institutions experience higher levels of alienation (Butner, Burley, and Marbley 2000), race related micro-aggression in and outside the classroom (Constantine et al. 2008) and marginalization (Collins 1998). These unique experiences are exacerbated when Black faculty, like ourselves, are points of entry in the struggle for racial equity in education. We argue here that it is inevitable that teacher education programs with a democratic and social justice perspective in mind acknowledge the veneers of White supremacy through silence and the power of the pen.

Points of entry: developmental or white racism

Critical race scholar Gloria Ladson-Billings (1996) in *Silence as Weapons: Challenges of a Black Professor Teaching White Students*, begins the article discussing her reflections on presenting at a professional development workshop for educational faculty. The scholar reports that many of the male faculty felt that her discussion was too political. Ladson-Billings then goes on to explain her reflections on how her White students, with presumably less power than faculty, must have felt about her discussions on race, class, and gender in past courses she taught. Then the scholar goes on to explain what it must be like for students to be informed about issues of race, class, and gender by someone perceived to be at the lower end of the social structure.

As explained by Ladson-Billings (1996), the conventional role of teacher affords power and control, regardless of their race, class, or gender. Interestingly enough, Ladson-Billings (1996) found that the teachers presumed power led to many of the White students enacting silence 'as a weapon or way to defy and deny the legitimacy of the teacher and/or the knowledge' (82). In contrast, it was found that students of color tended to be more vocal in class discussions concerning issues of race and racism. In Ladson-Billings (1996) experience, the more vocal students of color became in class, the more White students exercised silence. Consequently, one main problem with silence as a weapon is that it leads to miscommunication between the instructor and students. When students fail to raise questions, respond to questions, or participate in class dialogue, the assumption by the professor is that students comprehend, consent, or are in agreement with course major points of discussion.

Even though Ladson-Billings (1996) outlines several recommendations for those teaching multicultural perspectives, in this article we are concerned with the specific recommendation that instructors explore what is *not* being said by students during class time. We raise the following questions: What is the message behind pre-service teachers' unwillingness to speak candidly and actively engage in uncomfortable conversations about race and educational equity? What does students' invoked silence truly represent about race relations and cross-cultural dialogue? What are the underlying institutional messages conveyed by pre-service teachers unwillingness to speak candidly and actively engage in uncomfortable conversations about race and educational equity? And, how does the anonymity offered in, and perceived objectivity of, the evaluation process become another form of weaponry to assert White power and privilege?

Through a critical race theory (CRT) lens we attempt to examine that murky space between student silences in social foundations courses taught by two Black female professors and cultural hegemony in educational contexts. At many predominately White institutions of higher education the racial and ethnic composition of the faculty has not mirrored the student demographics (Constantine et al. 2008). Many Black professors, like us, are points of entry in the struggle for racial equity in programs of education. We argue here that it is inevitable that teacher education programs that have chosen to adopt a democratic and social justice focus acknowledge the veneers of White supremacy as witnessed through silence (e.g. students withdrawal from meaningful dialogue on race and class) and the power of the pen (e.g. students lambasting faculty on comment sections of evaluations).

There is a considerable body of literature which discusses the ways in which historically marginalized students resist hegemonic indoctrination of education and schooling (Freire 1970; Delpit 1996; Nieto 2004; McLaren 1989; Fordham and Ogbu 1986; Fine 1991). In academic research and discourse Black and Latino/a urban students' forms of resistance is perceived as quixotic and require the need for more productive strategies and techniques for academic

engagement. Conversely, White student resistance is troublesome, because it goes unacknowledged and lacks critical analysis. White student resistance to alternative ways of knowing and theorizing with the social world is presumed to be innocent and non-threatening to their own academic achievement, as well as to the professional growth and career outcomes of faculty.

African American scholars have been wrestling for quite some time with what we refer to as the *aesthetics of White students' resistance*. Stated differently, Black scholars who teach pre-service and in-service teachers have long grappled with the ways in which White students resist dialogue and coursework that moves beyond simplistic additive multicultural and conventional social foundations approaches; and, instead adopt pedagogical approaches that work to counter hegemonic spheres of knowing and understanding society which informs education and schooling.

King (1991), for instance, used the term 'dysconscious racism' to explain White students' resistance to her social foundations course. King explains that dysconsciousness is an impairment of the consciousness brought on by the internalization of uncritical perceptions, beliefs and values that maintain unequal racialized power relations. Dysconscious racism, a form of racism is ontologically teethered to White supremacy which prevents students from distinguishing between racist justifications that maintain the racialized status quo and their own biases. Courses and/or dialogues which aggravate and challenge these deeply held convictions are met with resistance expressed as guilt and hostility. King (1991) argues that institutions must include the impact of dysconsciousness in its social justice commitments. King's (1991) dysconscious racism concept is prolific in aiding in the epistemological understanding of *White student resistance*.

Alternatively, Tatum's (1992) psychology background offers a different understanding of White student resistance to critical pedagogy in student's academic development. By reconstructing Helms stages of White middle class identity development, Tatum (1992) asserts that White students are overexposed to White superiority 'smog,' which brings about the passive internalization of racial stereotypes. Tatum (1997) model is somewhat valuable in further understanding the ways racism is replicated on the psyche. However, emphasis on White student resistance along a life-span continuum mystifies the ways in which this resistance as cultural hegemony is supported and reinforced at the micro- and macro-level. Coupled together King (1991) and Ladson-Billing's (1996) scholarly observations elicit sincere discourse that unveils the often impermeable ways in which White superiority and Black inferiority are institutionally guarded and protected in pre-service teacher development, and later, educational practice.

Here we aver that White student resistance is a form of structural violence institutionalized in faculty assessment. Consequently, even curricular and pedagogies that were intended to challenge hegemonic practices and belief systems in the educational system are no longer safe spaces (Henry 1993) for

critical discourse and reflection. From a CRT standpoint, Black students, in particular, and other non-White students are the most vulnerable to academic underachievement without a formal (protected) space to openly and systematically challenge racism inside and outside of schools. Many colleges and universities rely heavily upon student evaluations to determine faculty teaching effectiveness to influence tenure and promotion; therefore, it is essential to critically analyze and contextualize students' evaluation of female faculty of color.

A critical race theory perspective: teaching while black (TWB)

We argue here that White pre-service teachers resistance to critical race standpoints, and hostility (as silence) toward those whom deliver the message (Williams and Evans-Winters 2005), is a danger to teacher candidates' professional growth, faculty of color, and the future of children whom they will one day teach. Pre-service teachers internalized notions of race and White racial superiority is of concern to critical race scholars and feminist in education (Henry 1993). CRT provides a point of departure from narratives of innocence that serve to protect institutional liberalism in education programs. Scholars in education point out the relevancy of CRT to educational policy, curriculum, assessment, and discourse.

CRT has five tenets that are germane to educational research, curriculum and policy formation and critique (Ladson-Billings and Tate 1995). CRT postulates: (1) that race and racism are central, endemic, permanent and essential in defining and explaining how US society functions; (2) challenges dominant ideologies and claims of race neutrality, objectivity, meritocracy, color-blindness and equal opportunity; (3) is activist in nature and propagates a commitment to social justice; (4) centers the experiences and voices of the marginalized and oppressed; and (5) is necessarily interdisciplinary in scope and function (Delgado Bernal 2002; Delgado and Stefancic 2000; Solorzano and Yosso 2002).

Drawing from a CRT framework, we posit that racism is normal and deeply entrenched in the social fabric of teacher education preparation programs and higher education. Racism affects relationships, choices, and practices inside and outside of the academy; and, it is recycled and re-consumed in school practices and beliefs, co-constructing a new generation of raced subjects (Goldberg 1993). Therefore, the task of the CRT in educational contexts is to expose racism and describe how it manifests and mutates in classroom discourse and institutional practices. The role of the critical race feminist is to examine and expose processes by which racism and sexism intersect to shape Black women's experiences in educational environments. CRF focuses on the lives of women of color who face multiple forms of discrimination, due to the intersections of race, class, and gender within a system of white male patriarchy and racist oppression.

Thus, CRF advocates for theories and practices that simultaneously study and combat gender and racial oppression (Austin 1995; Crenshaw 1995; Wing 1999, 2000). Berry (2005) states, 'As an African American female, I am more than just the sum of collective parts: African American, female, teacher-educator, scholar, daughter, sister, friend, etc. I am one indivisible being (Wing 1997). My life experiences and multiple identities are intertwined, interconnected' (47). In agreement with critical race feminist's scholars Berry (2005) and Austin (1995), we use CRF to examine raced and gendered interactions and practices within teacher education classrooms, keeping in mind that the Black female scholar (and students) bring their entire lived experiences and raced, class, and gendered histories into classroom discourse.

Another characteristic of CRT and CRF is its use of storytelling and narratives to forefront the voices of the traditionally marginalized in society. Collectively, marginalized voices serve as a platform to showcase alternative ways of experiencing the social world (in this case, the experiences of two Black female professors teaching predominately White teacher education candidates). We attempt to contextualize students' evaluative comments, from a raced and gendered perspective. As articulated by Ladson-Billings (2009), 'The primary reason, then, that stories, or narratives, are deemed important among CRT scholars is that they add necessary contextual contours to the seeming "objectivity" of positivist perspectives' (22). By displaying two Black female instructors' students' feedback side-by-side, we expose the commonality of students' racist's beliefs and micro-aggressions (Solorzano, Ceja, and Yosso 2000) directed at faculty of color. The excerpted student comments serve as exhibits and testimonies to demonstrate that academic spaces continue to be hostile and contested sites disguised as White youth innocence.

The (de)evaluation of Black women's bodies and minds

To begin with, both instructors' *foundations of education* courses were comprised of primarily White students. Three students self-identified as non-White, including one biracial (Black and White) woman, one Asian American (reared in a White family) woman, and a Latina woman. According to students' self-reports most of the students were reared in middle-income suburban families, with a few students reared in rural school communities. Using qualitative methods, we selected evaluation comments, based on shared themes within and across both faculty members student evaluations and written narrative reports.

First, looking our students' written comments on the evaluations, we noticed that respondents' knee-jerk reaction was to color their African American female professors as 'racist.' The two comments below are exemplary of students' efforts to convince a presumably sympathetic White reader that their Black female professors are discriminatory toward White students:

Our instructor was VERY VERY BIASED!!! She is very rude. I really wish that I would have taken this class with another professor because I feel that she is racist toward her Caucasian students. (PTH's student's comments)

White resistance is demonstrated in the above student excerpt when the student attempts to slander the professor's character. For instance, the respondent aims to discount the credibility of the professor by describing the professor as biased and racist. The purpose of attacking the Black woman's credibility at the onset is to win over potential (White) readers as allies. Then, the student attempts to attribute the professor's undesirable attitude and behavior to being 'racist toward Caucasian students.' Moreover, apparent in the response is that the student believed more could have been learned from another professor, which suggests that whenever African American female faculty attempt to raise critical discourse around issues of race and racism in schooling, which is a core tenet of CRT in education, she is routinely viewed as a biased and racist. Such a subjective response threatens the future well-being of the raced scholar any potential dismantling of racism in the education and schooling.

Similar to the above commentary, when reviewing the evaluations, we noticed that students tended to imagine us as antagonistic. For example, another student from a different class writes:

Dr. W was a difficult professor to work with. At times, it felt as though she was being racist against white people when she was explaining a theory or topic. I'm not sure if this was intended, but I know that it made myself and other classmates extremely uncomfortable and visibly upset. (VEW's student comment)

The belief that the Black female professor is antagonistic stems from a historically-grounded stereotypical belief that Black women are angry, bitter, hostile, overbearing and contemptible. The depiction of Black women as overbearing stemmed from Whites need to rationalize the mistreatment of Black women during and after slavery (Austin 1995). The rationalization was that the Black woman's body needed to be contained, for her own good and the good of society (or the White race). Unlike the first student's comments (PTH's student), in the second example above (from VEW's student) the respondent did not hesitate to suggest to the reader that the course's professor is a racist.

Wrapped in a cloth of innocence, the respondent paints a picture of herself/himself and other members of her (social/racial) class as victims of this 'difficult professor.' We find it fascinating that the student claimed to recognize his or her classmates' discomfort with racialized discourse; however, the student in no way commented on how the professor may have experienced teaching raced-based information and knowledge before a majority White audience. The student's own power and privilege goes unacknowledged in the assessment process. The lack of acknowledgement certainly has implications for critical race and feminist pedagogies in teacher education.

Along the same continuum, another observation fraught with White student resistance is commentators' efforts to gain the sympathies of White allies. In both of the aforementioned comments, the (de)racialized commentary served the purpose of convincing potential White allies or empathizers of the instructors' lack of concern for White students' emotional and educational needs. We also discovered that to justify remarks that the professor is racist, respondents methodically aimed to paint the professor as less than competent.

Dr. W was a very poor instructor. I was looking forward to learning about teaching students of a diverse background and instead only learned about teaching African American students. I feel there are many other cultures and races to learn about as well. I also feel that Dr. W was very biased on African American education and was racist on Caucasian individuals. (VEW's student comment)

The instructor is described at onset as a 'poor instructor,' not simply because of content delivery or choice of content, but because the teacher failed to 'teach about students of a diverse background.' Quite often pre-service teachers assume African American female professors have some special formula for teaching students of color. However, we firmly believe that it is our role in foundation of education course to introduce students to the social, historical, political, and economic trends influencing the education of US American students. Yet, many White middle class students have come to see their Black professors as *just* experts on Black education or minority education. Many of the students refused to view us as competent, skilled, and knowledgeable interdisciplinary scholars well-versed across various subjects and population groups. Any pre-packaged curriculum or essentialized discourse of non-White students' living and schooling experiences serves to further marginalize racial/ethnic minority students, as well as bastardize foundations of education courses (Evans-Winters 2009).

Nonetheless, students expected us to produce a prepackaged toolkit for teaching students of color. Ironically, course discussions and readings did focus on culturally diverse student groups, including topics on the education of lower-income/working-class students (Freire 1970); Blacks, Latino/as, Native Americans, and Asian students (Spring 2004); Indigenous students (Delpit 1996); female students of color (Evans-Winters 2005); and, contemporary student culture(s) (Giroux 2008; Buckingham 2003). Moreover, VEW students served nearly 30 hours in a community-based organization working with predominately lower-income African American and Latino/a students. Furthermore, the Director of the organization was a biracial woman, who identified as Latina and Asian American. In other words, from our point of view, the students received a holistic perspective of the *schooling* of US students; however, many of the pre-service teachers could not psychologically see beyond their instructors' Black female bodies; thus, they perceived everything they learned to be *only* about African American education. For example, one student wrote:

Dr. H knows a lot of information but she is not willing to accept others opinions (Even though she may ask for them.) I did not like this professor. She is a very intelligent and experienced woman, but she is so swayed by her African American background. She frequently had to bring up the black experience and how they suffer. This bothered me because she did not talk about any other group and made herself seem the only victim. She understands diversity from all her experiences, but she is so biased that my learning was severely hindered. (PTH's student comment)

In the above comment, the student respondent admits that her professor is intelligent and well experienced. However, according to the student, the professor's 'black experience' is depicted as an impediment to her ability to transfer knowledge; hence, making the class into a 'joke.' From the student's perspective, like many of his colleagues, the Black female professor's Black frame of reference is deemed inappropriate and less than civilized. Therefore, the Black female professor is judged based on and from a White frame of reference at all times.

Metaphorically speaking, our identity as African American women colored students' judgment, which ultimately blocked students' ability to objectively evaluate us as instructors. Stated more critically, many students only can see the social world as White and non-White; therefore, even the other racial/ethnic groups they read about and engaged with over the course of the semester had been categorized as Black. Even more, the comments above show no appreciation for the socio-cultural experiences of African American students. In actuality, the student (PTH's student comment) indirectly admits to resisting learning from this professor, because of the instructor's assumed preferential treatment of her own group. In the student's words, 'She is so biased that my learning was severely hindered.' The written statement not only devalues the instructor's knowledge base, but it also belittles the experiences of the Black educational experience in the US. Even more significant, the comment further illustrates that when Black female faculty do attempt to engage students in discussions about issues affecting African American education in particular, we are inevitably judged as biased and partaking in processes of indoctrination (i.e. the comment 'making us think the way she does').

Speaking theoretically and pedagogically, critical race feminists are further set up to fail, when students insinuate that they somehow fear the professor and cannot openly express their desires and perspectives. The student below convincingly describes how the professor was somehow causing her mental and physical anguish:

She talked about her experiences in school and then glared at us as if we did something wrong and then shakes her head. My stomach would get upset every Tuesday and Thursday walking to class. (PTH's student comment)

By deliberately representing the Black female professor as irate and overly emotional (read: irrational), it becomes easier for the student respondent to

convince the reader that the instructor is not capable of being a *rational* representative of the professoriate class.

While I do feel as if I learned several things this semester, I do not believe that any of it was a result of anything that Dr. V did. I am disappointed that my parents had to pay nearly \$1000 to take this class while my teacher did nothing. (VEW's student comment)

Another theme that stood out in students' comments is the idea that an African American woman did not possess the capacity to be a professor. This theme was tightly intertwined with a theme of whiteness as property (Harris 1993). For example, the aforementioned student response explicitly indicates that new knowledge was ascertained over the course of the semester. However, the student attempted to make clear that this new knowledge was not a 'result of anything that Dr. V did.' Even though both professors of the courses single-handedly selected the course reading materials, assignments, and field placement locations, it was not conceived that the Black female professor had anything of value to offer to a student.

As explained by Harris (1993), whiteness is a form of property or capital in the US cultural context. Whiteness affords one access to better neighborhoods, schools, teachers, curriculum, and instruction. In higher education, and through the evaluation process, whiteness yields credibility. This student weighed the cost of the class against the Black woman's material presence. For instance, shown above, it was not unusual for students to avoid referring to us as professor or doctor. Above, one professor's (VEW) status was even demoted to 'teacher.' Since we both have worked in K-12 environments and are advocates of teaching as a profession, we have no issue with the title of teacher itself. Yet, one has to wonder if a White male professor would be referred to as a teacher, especially in formal spaces, like the evaluation process. The commentary alludes to the question: 'How dare this Black woman come in and think she can teach me anything?' We argue that many students felt like they bought and owned our bodies; therefore, they believed that they should be able to dictate what is to be taught and how it is to be taught. Another example from PTH's student:

She made her opinions known about racial issues. This is not a bad thing, but she tended to make me feel uncomfortable during her frequent tangents on how white teachers discriminate against those of color. Some do, I agree. However, she made it seem as though we were all going to be that way just because everyone in the class was white. (PTH, student comment)

Here, like in all previous comments, the White student is depicted as apolitical and intellectually competent, while the Black professor is portrayed as racially intolerant and a simpleton. Ingeniously, the student is able to claim intellectual superiority over the professor, by stating 'I learned something, but

it definitely had nothing to do with this professor.' In sum, as evidenced by the extracted comments, the professors are consistently characterized as incompetent, of little value, and lazy (i.e. 'teacher did nothing').

In addition, we commonly read stereotypical comments that have a long tradition of being associated with African Americans. For example, students used descriptive words like 'unorganized,' 'always late' and, one student even mentioned that their professor simply 'did not show up' to class. As Payne (1984) claims, in the US often conventional wisdom and folklore impede on the educational sector. We learned through our students' comments that everyday stereotypes and myths of Black people spilled over into students' consciousness and flowed loosely out onto the pages of the formal evaluations. As part of White students' resistance strategies to discussing and reflecting on issues of race and racism in education, Black women are caricaturized, disgraced, slandered and castigated, initially through group silence and then publicly (due to a sense of anonymity and White empathy).

Finally, we realize that there are possible limitations to our analysis. For instance, we admit that not all White pre-service teachers who participated in our courses over the years share the sentiments expressed above. Included in the end of the year evaluation and in Informal evaluations, such as emails and face-to-face conversations, we received positive feedback on the subject of our teaching styles, pedagogical strategies, dispositions, and content selection. We also received constructive critical feedback from student participants that was helpful in developing our teaching practices. Also, it is important to point out that a majority of students completed the quantitative portion of course evaluations, without offering any additional qualitative feedback. Interestingly enough, many of the quantitative rankings were less critical of the instructors' performance, content, material, and overall course delivery than the qualitative section on the evaluations.

Thirdly, the analysis may be flawed, because in this discussion we have been describing our university's department use of online course evaluations. With online course evaluations, the evaluation process is unsupervised and students are sent (via email) an electronic link to access and complete the evaluation using an online survey. Ironically, students are allowed even more anonymity than is traditionally offered in in-class distributed evaluations, as well as more time and space to articulate judgments. Even though it is beyond the scope of this article to assess the possible strengths or limitations of online evaluations, suffice it to say, that scholars are just now beginning to explore the link between online anonymity and the internet as a breeding ground for racist narrative (see Nakamura 2009 and Brown 2009 for more thorough discussion). We witnessed firsthand how students are able to manipulate online evaluations to express overtly racist ideologies:

- (1) We discovered that on both faculty members' evaluations there were more student responses yielded than there were the actual number of

students enrolled in the courses. The administration assumed that respondents accessed and completed the online evaluation more than once accidentally. However, we assert that students intentionally accessed the online system with the malicious intent to comment multiple times. Again, we believe it was an intentional (c)overact of racism.

- (2) Due to similarities across the embellished qualitative comments, once more it is our belief that a group of students collectively collaborated on their calculated statements while completing the online evaluations. In our opinion, we view this collective gathering as an electronic lynching, masked as student naivety. On the surface, together the excessive numerical responses and similarly themed evaluative responses appeared as technical or procedural flaws; however, we interpret these 'glitches' in the system as White student resistance as trickery. And, truth be told, if it was not for our critical race lens, the students criticisms would have been decontextualized, and ultimately, read as truth.

Discussion

Despite the fact that both faculty members are formally trained social workers with long histories of teaching experience in 'multicultural' education, we were not able to buffer White student resistance. Together, we have more than 30 years of experience in community development, individual and group facilitation, and child development. Yet, we were not prepared for the backlash of White student agitation with our courses' subject matter and our own bodies. In the shadow of the election of the US's first African American president, we have witnessed firsthand resurgence of race-based animosity and indifference to racial inequality.

Both of these attributes of US culture are distinguishing characteristics of the so-called post-racial era. These deeply entrenched aspects of US culture are produced, as well as, reformulated in institutions of higher education, in particular, schools of education. Paradoxically, camouflaged in the language of democratic ideals and attempts to create just communities, are methods and processes which continue to institutionalize cultural hegemony. We assert that persistent marginalization, through micro-aggressions from colleagues and students, experiences of alienation, and scholarly devaluation, are all factors that contribute to the 'thinning' of Black faculty from the post-secondary terrain. The contemporary socio-political and economic climate is bringing about an aesthetic shift in how the resistance of White students inter-operates with social and cultural hegemony to confound an already distressed area.

Aesthetics conceptualized in its general sense embodies the philosophy of values and the psycho-cultural, emotional process by which importance and worth is assigned. From our critical race perspective, we interpret White student resistance as aesthetically linked to deficit ways of knowing about racial/ethnic minority student groups. Deficit was of theorizing and engaging

in knowledge(s) about students of color is viewed as cultural hegemony, from our raced, classed, and gendered perspective. White student diversity knowledge constructed in teacher education courses that borrow from deficit or difference models only serve to re-enforce pathological and deficit models. When Black female faculty challenge and counteract hegemonic beliefs about diverse student groups, we experience a backlash in the form of White student resistance. Students' resistance (to language and knowledge(s) that celebrate alternative ways of knowing and engaging the social world) becomes institutionalized in African American faculty assessment. Student evaluations have the capacity to be developmental and helpful, but for African American faculty the process can be perjurious and rapacious.

The aesthetics of White student resistance, when engaged in courses which situate them in the dialectical tensions of race, class, gender and ability valuation, relies on oppressive ways of knowing to evaluate these experiences. The vast majority of the comments cited reek of collective despotism and racially constructed stereotypes aimed at Black professors constructed as the 'outsider.' Four underlying themes emerge from the analysis of the course evaluations:

- First and foremost, students' initial reaction to having an African American professor created cognitive dissonance externalized as hegemonic resistance. For many students, a perceived shift in power dynamics created a psycho-social and cultural conundrum. To settle the conundrum, many students explained away discomfort by deciding that the professors had to be racist. The problem was not with society or students themselves, but with the racially bias and discriminatory Black professors.
- Secondly, as evidenced in the extracted comments, the professors are consistently characterized as incompetent or intellectually hindered by their racial/ethnic identity. To emphasize these messages students relied on stereotypes of Black women to interpret and articulate their perceptions and feelings about the professors. Students demonstrated resistance by characterizing the professor as antagonistic.
- Another emergent theme was students' ability to divorce any learning experienced through the courses from the professors' actions and ideas. We found a discovered among the student respondents a deeply held belief that Black female professors do not possess the intellectual capacity to facilitate learning, because of Black myopia. White student resistance was exercised also by directly and indirectly asserting that their professors were not fit for the professoriate. Of course, this stance can only be supported if the students held the belief that educational spaces were meant to be White occupied spaces exclusively (e.g. Whiteness as property).
- The final overarching theme is that students operate under the assumption and knowledge that their statements will be consumed and validated through the evaluation process itself. This is accomplished by making it

appear as if the Black female professor herself is responsible for the students' deeply held racist conventions. Here is when White student resistance is digested, recycled, and institutionalized, by those whom have the authority to critically question, challenge, and reject students' racist and sexist narratives.

Aesthetically speaking

As discussed there is a significant body of literature written about the ways and reasons why White students resist social justice and/or counter-hegemonic approaches to teaching and learning. From these dialogues we began to question the ways in which White students' evaluative resistance further institutionalizes White supremacy as a socially constructed hegemonic invention. Consistent with the prevailing body of literature on White student resistance, our course evaluations denoted that student resistance stemmed from our explicit messages of social justice and the perceived threat to White privilege and power. It is the latter that necessitates additional critical analysis. These points of resistance were confounded by the sensory responses to our mere presence in a perceived seat of power within the institution. Our institutional presence and perceived power triggered sensory discord in the continuity of hegemonic privilege.

Transparent in our course evaluations: White superiority, as an undergirding notion and practice in US social institutions, informed students' assessment of our course content, delivery, and professional knowledge-base. In the spirit of the truth-telling traditions of CRF and CRT, we unequivocally assert that students assigned a subjective aesthetical value to our African American femaleness, which they perceived as threatening, and thereby, substandard. In essence, White students' experiences with the course content and pedagogical strategies were secondary to the sensory preceptors that castigate African American female presence as insufficient and subordinate.

A captious and pervasive theme in the evaluations of our teaching is the aesthetical value students assigned to our African American femaleness. We use the concept of aesthetics to elucidate and apprehend the subjugated narration of White supremacy embedded in White student resistance to African American female faculty who dare to move their courses into 'dangerous terrains' (Henry 1993). It is not our intent to put forth a philosophical or theoretical critique of the study of aesthetics. Rather, we use aesthetics as a conceptual guide to understand the complexity of students' experiences with our African American femaleness within the confines of hegemony in the teaching and learning process. Aesthetics encompasses the way in which one perceives and interprets experiences.

More concretely, aesthetics refers to the ability to make perceptual judgments at the sensory level (Eagleton 1990; Kant 1952; Zangwill 2008). The philosophical critique of aesthetics by Immanuel Kant (1952) has been

perhaps the most prolific in understanding the ways in which humans make judgments from sensory experiences. The analysis of Kant's work by Zangwill (2008) is very helpful in elucidating how aesthetic judgments are subjected to universal validity. According to Zangwill (2008) aesthetic judgments are based on two foundational principles: (1) subjectivity; and (2) normativity. Aesthetic judgments are based on individual subjective reasoning, formulated from feelings of pleasure or displeasure, and derived from the experience of a sensory representation. From this perspective, for feelings to have meaning, feelings must have universality. Neo-Kant philosophers, according to Zangwill (2008) regard universality as the culmination and acceptance of normative claims which determine what is appropriate and what is not. Determinations of taste, appropriateness, and right or wrong are not isolated from hegemonic control, rather it is a powerful socio-cultural and psychological tool used to regulate and maintain unequal power relations.

Critical to this discussion of White pre-service teachers' evaluative statements is Bourdieu's (1984) emphasis on the ways in which taste judgments serve as claims to social and cultural power, which demarks positionality in the reproduction of hegemony. The aesthetical value assigned to our African American femaleness, and subsequently, articulated in the course evaluations is not isolated from its hegemonic source. Indicative of the symbiotic relationship between aesthetic taste and judgment within hegemonic contexts are stereotypical referents fore-grounded by the students to contextualize course content and instructional delivery. As critical race feminist scholars, we actively live with and against racism, sexism, and classism within educational and other social spaces; therefore, we clearly detect denigrative referents to images of African American women as mammies and jezebels. These images and racialized narratives, as well as other contemporary representations, serve as both aesthetic triggers of displeasure, in addition to the normative or universal consensus that validates these feelings. Aesthetics conveys the theoretical value placed on representations experienced through the senses.

Conclusion

The overall message underlying White student resistance is that they do not have to engage in conversations of race, class, and gender difference and equity. Furthermore, the students' invoked silence serves the purpose of reminding faculty of color that White students' continue to have power and authority in the classroom, despite the Black female's presence. The students' source of power and privilege rests with their knowledge that the Black female professor, in the end, still has to speak to a 'higher authority' – the predominately White administrations. Absent of a critical race perspective, not only are female faculty of color bamboozled by the students' responses, but the reviewers of the evaluations may be hoodwinked as well. Thus, teacher preparation programs become complacent in White student resistance.

Through the anonymity offered in the evaluative process, students are able to assert White power and privilege through the authority of the shared White racial narratives. We also claim that in the so-called post-racial era, electronic forms of discourse only further threaten student-faculty relations. With the above being stated, the shared is our evidence and testimony. From a critical race perspective we set out to expose and expound upon the aesthetics of White student resistance in pre-service teacher education. In closing, we view the aesthetics behind White student resistance to be detrimental to students' academic and personal growth, a threat to the democratic ideals of many teacher education programs, and a danger to the professional and personal well-being of faculty of color. In the wake of White student resistance Black women faculty are caricaturized, disgraced, slandered and castigated – initially through group silence, and then, publicly (due to anonymity and institutional apathy).

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