"I Didn't See It as a Cultural Thing"
Supervisors of Student Teachers Define and Describe Culturally Responsive Supervision

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Abstract

Student teaching supervisors can play an integral role in teacher candidates' ability to understand and enact culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP). However, supervisors may lack the awareness, knowledge, skill, or willingness to serve as culturally responsive supervisors. This paper reports the findings from a qualitative study to find out how supervisors described and supported CRP. We found that supervisors hold unsophisticated views of CRP and face the following challenges enacting culturally responsive supervision: feelings of inadequacy, difficulty talking about race, color-blind orientations, and a tendency to purposefully avoid race talk. We provide recommendations for professional development to address these challenges and narrow the theory-to-practice divide in order to promote the democratic education ideals of equality and justice in our schools.

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S<small>CHOOLS PLAY A</small> significant role in preparing young people for full and active participation in a free and democratic society (Banks et al., 2001; Soder, 1996). For a democracy to flourish, compassion, community, interdependence, interconnectedness, fairness, and opportunity must be supported in schools through the use of educational strategies that empower students (Gould, 2012). However, the U.S. educational system does not serve all students equitably. We see little progress addressing persistent disparities in academic performance between White and Asian students, and other students of color at a time of increasing cultural diversity in the student population (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013; Orfield, Kucsera, & Siegel-Hawley, 2012; Trumbull & Pacheco, 2005; Villegas, 2007).

The stubbornly consistent demographic makeup of the teacher workforce compounds the problem. Although diversity in the U.S. student population is on the rise, the teaching population remains predominantly White and culturally isolated (Howard, 2006; Liggett, 2011; Milner, 2007; Swartz, 2003; Villegas & Lucas, 2002a). As recently as 2011, 84% of the U.S. teaching force was White (Feistritzer & Linnajarvi, 2011), and at least 40% of public

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schools currently have no teachers of color at all (Barnes, 2014). Further, a recent state-by-state analysis of teacher diversity revealed there are gaps between the percentage of students of color and the percentage of teachers of color in every state, and in the most populous states, these gaps were alarmingly wide (Boser, 2011). Because the student population is becoming more diverse while the teaching population remains largely homogenous, it is imperative that preservice teacher preparation programs provide beginning teachers with a democratic, multicultural, and social justice lens through which to view curriculum, communication, and instruction (Marx, 2006).

For decades, culturally responsive approaches to teaching have been touted as an exceptionally promising approach to rectify the problem of educational inequity (Barnes, 2006; Gay, 1998, 2002; Grant & Sleeter, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Premier & Miller, 2010; Swartz, 2003; Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, & Greenfield, 2000). Since culture strongly influences the experience of students in the instructional process, addressing teachers' ability to attend to the ways culture mediates learning and teaching is an essential factor in solving the continuing problems of inequity and underachievement (Barnes, 2006; Gay, 2002, 2010; Howard, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Premier & Miller, 2010; Trumbull & Pacheco, 2005; Watson, 2012). Many terms are used in the literature to identify the beliefs and practices associated with this approach, including *culturally responsive teaching* and *culturally relevant pedagogy*. In this paper we have chosen to use the term *culturally responsive pedagogy* (CRP).

CRP is well aligned with democratic education ideals. Both are concerned with promoting classroom learning environments in which equitable participation, engagement, and critical thinking allow students to work toward social justice. Yet effective implementation of teaching that supports all learners is rare and its results seen in achievement gains are rarer still. With its increased attention, it is fair to wonder why widespread implementation of CRP is illusive. Fasching-Varner and Dodo Seriki (2012) posited that it is the growing ubiquitousness of CRP in educational circles that could be contributing to a lack of implementation. They said that the problem is not a lack of attention to CRP, but "rather that CRP is spoken all the time but in ways that misuse CRP ideas" (p. 5). Because there is a disconnect between the theoretical underpinnings of CRP and teachers' articulation of it in the classroom, much work needs to be done in teacher preparation programs to create this link (Fasching-Varner & Dodo Seriki, 2012; Hayes & Juarez, 2012; Villegas & Lucas, 2002a).

In this article, we seek to initiate a conversation about promoting democratic education by understanding and attending to the unique needs of a particular group of professionals who can serve as important agents in this work: the field supervisors of student teachers. The role of a field supervisor entails working one-on-one with teacher candidates (also called student teachers) during their teaching practica. Supervisors, who are typically hired as adjunct faculty, provide feedback and advice related to specific lessons and classrooms thereby serving in a supportive role. However, because they are also called upon to assess and eventually to sign off on the candidates' teaching proficiency, they also play important evaluative roles that are key in the teacher preparation process. Though they hold a great deal of influence over the classroom performances of teacher candidates, this cadre of professionals is often overlooked in efforts to improve CRP implementation among new teachers.

We believe supervisors' ability to understand, recognize, and support CRP in the classroom can bridge the typical theory-to-practice divide for beginning teachers and help them establish dispositions and practices of CRP from their first teaching experiences. The supervisor's role in this process is an understudied topic, and we seek to bring it to the attention of social justice educators interested in promoting democratic teaching practices that increase equitable opportunity.

Purpose
This study examined the knowledge and practices of student teaching supervisors at the onset of a professional development (PD) program focused on CRP. We sought to find out, prior to the PD experience, how supervisors identified and supported culturally responsive teaching with teacher candidates. We wondered what their understanding of the practice was and how they viewed their role in supporting it. To this end, we asked: (a) How do supervisors define culturally responsive teaching? (b) How do they conceptualize supervisory practices that support teacher candidates to develop culturally responsive practices? By addressing these areas of inquiry, we hoped to better understand the ways in which supervisors recognize, support, and provide corrective feedback to teacher candidates around culturally responsive practices. In so doing, we identified barriers and challenges that must be addressed in order for field supervisors to become important agents in the development of a new generation of culturally responsive teachers.

Literature Review
Preparing the next generation of teachers to meet the intellectual, social, and personal needs of a changing student population is one of the most critical factors in U.S. education today (Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), 2013; Gay, 2002, 2010; Swartz, 2003; Villegas & Lucas, 2002a, 2002b). Teacher preparation programs in the United States are called upon by their accrediting agencies, state boards, and public opinion to ensure their graduates are prepared to meet the needs of today's public school students who are increasingly racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse (Barnes, 2006; Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), 2013; Trumbull & Pacheco, 2005; Villegas & Lucas, 2002a). However, there is little evidence that CRP practices are finding purchase among newly minted teachers.

Who Preservice Teachers Are and What They Need
The teaching population, and by extension the population of preservice teachers (i.e., individuals enrolled in teacher preparation programs), is overwhelmingly White (81%) (Feistritzer & Linnajarvi, 2011). It is not surprising, then, that many preservice teachers enter teacher education courses with no conception of,

interest in, or concern about cultural and racial diversity (Liggett & Finley, 2009; Milner, 2007). In fact, it is not uncommon for teacher candidates to begin their professional lives with little to no knowledge of themselves as racial beings and without context or experience recognizing White power and privilege in all its forms (Glimps & Ford, 2010). Their lack of experience with social groups outside of their own leaves them unprepared to identify, implement, or assess culturally responsive teaching and learning strategies (Glimps & Ford, 2010; Hayes & Juarez, 2012; Liggett, 2014). Without intervention, they will adopt color-blind (Johnson, 2002; Lewis, 2001; Milner, 2005) and culture-blind ideologies (Ford, Moore, & Milner, 2004) that obscure the central and profound influences race and culture have on an individual's academic success.

Furthermore, ideological aspects of Whiteness pervade the K–12 educational system, manifested through actions such as ignoring race and racism, embracing and rationalizing meritocracy, denying institutional oppression, and protecting and investing in privilege (Castagno, 2008). In schools, the universal culture of Whiteness serves to obscure race, racism, and racialization. Just like any other hegemonic ideology, Whiteness is perpetuated in schools because the majority of its adherents are unaware of it and its influence (Castagno, 2008; Hayes & Juarez, 2012; Marx, 2006). Because White preservice teacher candidates are products of this system, they typically lack a sense of racial identity or the ability to interrogate their own White privilege.

To change the professional trajectory for a new generation of teachers, the period of teacher preparation is critical (Milner, Flowers, Moore, Moore, & Flowers, 2003; Swartz, 2003; Villegas & Lucas, 2002a). According to Swartz (2003):

The teacher preparation period represents a window of opportunity for all students to expand their knowledge [of cultural diversity]; it is an especially important opportunity for White students whose apartheid social locations have limited their access to the accounts and perspectives of all others. (p. 263)

During their clinical experiences, teacher candidates develop and fortify the attitudes, beliefs, and practices they will carry into their teaching careers. When such experiences are not well structured and supported, preservice teachers' negative achievement stereotypes for students of color are perpetuated and confirm rather than interrupt a model of deficit thinking about non-White students (Anderson & Stillman, 2013; Glimps & Ford, 2010). The literature in this area calls for more bridging between teacher education coursework and student teaching experiences, particularly in terms of the supervision and support they receive in relation to the implementation of culturally responsive practices (Villegas & Lucas, 2002a; Zozakiewicz, 2010).

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Making classroom instruction more consistent with and respectful of the cultural knowledge and experiences of ethnically diverse students requires teaching that is contextual, interactional, dialogic, and cooperative (Cohen & Lotan, 1995; Gay, 2010;

Reznitskaya, 2012; Torres-Velasquez & Lobo, 2004; Trumbull & Pacheco, 2005; Villegas & Lucas, 2002a). When new learning is connected to familiar contexts and reflective of students' interests and background knowledge, involvement in learning activities increases (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Trumbull & Pacheco, 2005). Educators who adopt a strengths-based orientation that views students' culture as an asset are better equipped to meet the needs of all students (Díaz-Rico & Weed, 2009; Gay, 2010; González, Andrade, Civil, & Moll, 2001; Moll & Greenberg, 1992; Peregoy, Boyle, & Cadiero-Kaplan, 2013).

In this paper, we use the term *culturally responsive pedagogy* (CRP) to describe this orientation. The particular components of CRP vary in the literature, but together the definitions of Ladson-Billings (1995), McGee Banks and Banks (1995), Villegas and Lucas (2002b), Grant and Sleeter (2007), and Gay (2010) to refer to teaching that incorporates students' cultures and backgrounds to help them achieve academically and work toward social justice.

Developing CRP in teacher candidates.
Teacher preparation programs (TPPs) at colleges and universities have responded to the challenge of better equipping beginning teachers to learn and adopt culturally responsive teaching through two common approaches: (a) course offerings that explicitly address culture and learning and (b) fieldwork experiences in diverse school settings. While little is known about the efficacy of these approaches individually or in combination, many argue that a single-faceted approach is insufficient to effect change at the level and intensity needed (Ambe, 2006; Barnes, 2006; Glimps & Ford, 2010; Howard, 2006; Larkin, 2012; Villegas & Lucas, 2002a). Instead, the preservice teacher's experience should integrate coursework and the intellectual study and influence of culture with the enactment of this learning in their classrooms during their student teaching experience.

One of the ways TPPs ensure the quality of the student teaching experience and its connection to coursework is through the work of the field supervisor. These supervisors are often retired educators—either teachers or administrators—and usually mirror the teacher population demographically. Thus, they are largely White, middle-class, female, and monolingual. Since many are retired, they are often in their sixties or older. The supervisor visits the school site throughout the practicum experience to observe the teacher candidate while teaching and give feedback for improvement. TPPs rely heavily on the supervisor's observations to confirm the candidate's teaching proficiency. For this reason, attention to supervisors' understandings of and ability to recognize and promote CRP is a promising path to increasing its implementation.

Student teaching supervisors and CRP.
Given their integral role in teacher preparation programs, student teaching supervisors have the potential to improve teacher candidates' abilities to develop culturally responsive practices and to skillfully enact them in the classroom (Swartz, 2003; Zozakiewicz, 2010).

Too many educators are unaware, unknowing, and unappreciative of how culture, ethnicity, and gender affect instructional learning behaviors, or unskilled in how to apply cultural diversity in teaching. Correcting these limitations is the major goal of gender sensitive and culturally responsive supervision. (Gay, 1998, p. 1217)

Supervisors are uniquely positioned to address the typical theory-to-practice divide; however, they are often several years removed from the classroom, and as a result they are typically not well-versed or sometimes even aware of the latest developments in pedagogy, in particular, culturally responsive pedagogy. In fact, many supervisors retired from their teaching careers without having had any coursework or professional development in this area and without having experiences examining Whiteness and its influence on schooling. Furthermore, like the teacher candidates themselves, many supervisors come to the diverse classrooms in which their teacher candidates are placed with little or no prior knowledge and understanding of diversity or of individuals who are culturally, racially, and/or linguistically different from themselves.

While there is a substantive and growing body of literature describing the characteristics of culturally responsive and antiracist teaching, including approaches for promoting the associated beliefs and practices among preservice teachers (Barnes, 2006; Gay, 2002, 2010; Howard, 2006; Larkin, 2012; Milner et al., 2003; Premier & Miller, 2010; Swartz, 2003; Villegas & Lucas, 2002a), limited research exists documenting the role of the student teaching supervisor in promoting culturally responsive teaching among teacher candidates. According to Bates and Burbank (2008), further research is needed on how to support supervisors' abilities to recognize classroom learning environments that support diversity. This work addresses that gap by illuminating supervisors' conceptions of their roles in this area and the barriers that must be overcome to actively promote CRP with student teachers.

Methodology

This study was conducted at a small, private college in a western state that has a graduate school of education, referred to here as Bridges University.[1] The graduate school has a strong emphasis on social justice and is widely known by educators in the community and among prospective students for its dedication to issues of equity. The teacher education program consists of a one-year full-time master's degree (MAT), which includes a year-long student teaching placement in a single classroom. Concurrent with Bridges' launch of a new required course for teacher candidates at all licensure levels titled "Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning," the college sought to strengthen the classroom connections of this work by investigating and strengthening supervisors' understanding of and ability to support CRP. The researchers were faculty members in this MAT program whose responsibilities included overseeing and supporting the clinical supervision of teacher candidates.

1   All names are pseudonyms.

To promote supervisors' ability to reinforce the CRP in the classroom, each supervisor received a copy of *Culturally Responsive Teaching* (Gay, 2010), the same text teacher candidates were using in the new CRP course. The interviews were conducted prior to the first professional development session. At the time of the interviews, supervisors had read some or all of the first three chapters in this text in preparation for the first professional development session.

Participants

The cadre of K–12 supervisors at Bridges included 28 supervisors. Of these, 12 signed informed consent to participate in one-on-one interviews and self-reported demographic information through the use of an anonymous electronic survey. These supervisors, as a group, mirror the demographics of the teacher work force (almost exclusively White, predominantly female, little experience teaching students culturally and racially different from themselves), and differ from the general teaching workforce only in the age and experience category (average age is 62.4; average teaching experience is 25.2 years). The complete results of the demographic survey are provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Participant Demographics

Racial identity	92% identify as White/European American 8% (1 supervisor) identified biracially as White/European American and American Indian/ Alaskan Native
Sex	75% female 25% male
Type of school for the majority of classroom teaching experience	67% in schools serving less than 25% students of color 33% in schools serving 25–49% students of color 0% in schools serving more than 50% students of color
Age	Span: 45 to 71 years of age Average: 62.4 years of age
Years of classroom teaching experience	Span: 11 to 35 years Average: 25.2 years
Years since leaving the classroom	Span: 1 to 20 years Average: 4.2 years
Years of supervisory experience	Span: 1 to 20 years Average: 6.1 years

Data Collection

The primary data source was one-hour interviews with each of the 12 participants, using a semistructured protocol prior to the professional development at the start of their supervision contract year in early fall. The interview protocol consisted of open-ended questions that asked the supervisors about their knowledge, beliefs, and experiences on themes of culturally responsive supervision and

pedagogy. The interview protocol was designed to reveal: (a) their vision of culturally responsive teaching (i.e., the end); (b) how they saw their actions as supervisors contributing CRP (i.e., the means to that end); and (c) what barriers exist for them implementing culturally responsive supervision. We addressed the third area by examining what they reported as well as their speech patterns when they discussed (or did not discuss) issues of culture, race, and diversity with teacher candidates. A secondary source was a survey of professional beliefs about diversity administered online prior to the interviews. This survey was a modified version of the Likert-item instrument developed by Pohan and Aguilar (2001) with space for respondent comments following each item.

Data Analysis

The research team recorded and then transcribed the interviews and coded them according to themes that emerged from the data as well as codes from the literature on culturally responsive pedagogy, supervision, and critical race theory. The data were analyzed using a grounded theory method of coding in order to apply analytical techniques for handling data, considering alternative meanings for phenomena, and systematically relating concepts (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Through the analysis of the data, categories began to emerge for open coding, which were interconnected based on comparing and contrasting phenomena to identify discrepancies, inconsistencies, similarities, and divergences. From the open coding process, categories were refined into themes. Each member of the research team read through the interview transcripts and memoed on the themes that emerged. We began analyzing data six weeks after it was collected.

The team met regularly to discuss emerging themes, anomalies, and commonalities. From these memos and discussions, we determined that supervisors often avoided explicit talk about race in describing their work as field supervisors. Based on these preliminary findings, we crafted three analytic questions to further parse this finding. The findings reported here relate to the analytic question "How do supervisors define culturally responsive teaching and culturally responsive supervision?" Additionally, we were able to document differences and similarities across participants and make connections to the literature. We chose not to use member checking because it would have been problematic given our continued relationship with supervisors and the sensitive nature of their personal responses (Midgley, Danaher, & Baguley, 2013).

Based on these analyses, we found that supervisors spoke differently about race and culture when defining culturally responsive teaching as a general concept (an end) than when they discussed race and culture related to their supervisory practice (the means). In so doing, they displayed both a limited understanding of CRP along with expressions of color-blind ideology and race avoidance patterns.

Limitations of Study

The time-limited nature of this study did not allow us to conduct a second interview, which would have enabled the research team to follow up with interview questions to address gaps in our

understandings of participants' narratives and perspectives. In addition, an increased number of participants may have provided a more layered analyses of responses to our research questions. Perhaps these two factors, along with incorporating focus group discussions, would have teased out more complex stories and understandings of culture and its connection to race and racial identity. While we believe the present study makes an important contribution to better understanding these supervisors' role in enacting CRP with teacher candidates, caution must be used in interpreting and generalizing our findings.

Results

Fasching-Varner and Dodo Seriki (2012) characterized flawed implementation of CRP among teachers as falling into two categories: "Teachers either overemphasize a rhetorical vision of CRP without action (an end without means) or enact actions they called CRP without a vision of what the CRP framework suggests is culturally relevant (means without an end)" (Fasching-Varner & Dodo Seriki, 2012, p. 3). We found similar categories in our supervisor data as well as challenges unique to supervisors. Participants readily defined CRP in ways that matched common research understandings. Yet their self-reported enactments of culturally responsive supervision—or supporting CRP in the classroom—made these definitions seem a bit empty and more visionary. They were largely able to state pieces of the definition, but often they struggled to express what CRP looked like in actual classrooms, and/or actions they reported taking lacked cultural responsiveness.

Supervisors' Vision of the "End": Limited Definitions of CRP

Participating supervisors largely defined culturally responsive teaching as pedagogy that strives to produce academic achievement for students through knowledge and use of students' cultural backgrounds. These collective definitions resonate with the research (Gay, 2000, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2001). Eleven of the twelve supervisors mentioned both cultural background and student achievement goals in their definitions. They collectively acknowledged that students come to school with a host of culturally influenced ways of being, and the best teaching capitalizes on this to ensure that every student reaches his/her highest potential. Table 2 provides examples of words and phrases coded for "being aware of cultural background" and "achievement."

Table 2: Examples of Coding for Two Categories of Supervisors' Definition of CRP

Name	Phrases and words coded as using or being aware of cultural background	Phrases and words coded as achievement
Amelia	Respect and honor [cultural] elements	Learn to their highest potential
Andrew	Diverse variety of students	The optimum of learning

Name	Phrases and words coded as using or being aware of cultural background	Phrases and words coded as achievement
Carla	Cultural differences	Student learning
Debbi	Cultural awareness	Learning environment
Fiona	Know about different cultures	What type of teaching method works best
Hannah	Bringing out the culture	Getting student where they need to go
Jason	Find ways to link their background	Able to achieve
Rachel	Incorporate the different cultures represented in the classroom	Facilitate learning
Robyn	Caring about what they bring into the classroom	Caring about how they do academically
Sandy	Help them identify who they are	Ensure that [students] are learning
Tasha	Incorporate [background] into a lesson	How they are going to learn
Tony	Who is this person, and what do they need?	

We were pleased to see supervisors linking these two foundational ideas in this definition of CRP, but also noticed that this definition matched closely with the definition found in the first chapters in the book they had been issued: "Using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them" (Gay, 2010, p. 31). We realized their responses might have been influenced by the reading. For example, when Rachel said CRP "incorporate[s] the different cultures represented in the classroom," she echoes Gay's definition above.

We also noted glaring omissions in their definitions. No one mentioned other important conditions for CRP, such as the importance of inclusive learning environments, equitable opportunities for participation in learning, learning about and through diverse cultural perspectives, nor was there any mention of the ultimate goal: social justice. While disappointing, this is not surprising, given this is largely left out of mainstream conversations of CRP as well (Fasching-Varner & Dodo Seriki, 2012; Nieto, 2010; Sleeter, 1996). Educators often view culturally responsive teaching as pedagogy for students of color. Thus, it is reasonable that these supervisors may have seen it that way as well.

One surprise, however, was the inclusion of another component that was mentioned by a majority of supervisors. Seven of them used words or phrases associated with educating the whole

child or attending to the individual. The following quotes from Robyn and Jason are representative of many linking CRP with the individual/whole child:

I would define [CRP] that as being more aware of the whole child, the whole student, and the whole classroom population . . . But I think of it as sort of a holistic term to cover content and person and all the things that make a person what they are. (Robyn)

[CRP is] just that connection with the students that we are concerned about and we are interested in our students as individuals. (Jason)

Because *whole child* and *individual* were not included in the definition they had read in the text, we believe it represented their interpretation of CRP. While it is not possible to make definitive conclusions based on the limited data here, the fact that such associations were made so frequently raised questions in our minds. We wondered if the emphasis on whole child/individual revealed a reduction of CRP to another approach to teaching with which they were already comfortable: student-centeredness. Interpreting CRP in this way would allow them to avoid shifting their thinking and their supervisory practice: If CRP is the same as student-centeredness, then no change is required of me. As Fiona asked, "So for me, it's how is being culturally sensitive that different from just being individually sensitive?" Linking CRP to another familiar construct seemed natural. Learning new concepts often requires attaching them to prior experiences and ideas (Suarez-Orozco & Sattin, 2007). However, we wondered if downplaying culture or the uniqueness of CRP and aligning it to individuality would cause supervisors to practice color blindness.

The Challenges of Enacting Culturally Responsive Supervision—The "Means"

To understand supervisors' conceptions of their role in supporting CRP, and to help address our second research question, we asked a very open-ended interview question—"What does it mean to be a culturally responsive supervisor?"—followed by a series of related questions about the feedback they provide to teacher candidates when debriefing a lesson: "When you conduct your lesson debriefing, how do you decide which topics to address with the candidate? Have you ever (or could you imagine) deciding not to address issues related to students' culture you noticed in the lesson? What factors play into this decision?"

Responses to these questions revealed that supporting CRP was fraught with challenges for them—some articulated by the supervisors, and others we discovered as a result of our analysis. Namely, we found that supervisors had a difficult time explaining what culturally responsive supervision looked like (as opposed to defining it) and harbored feelings of inadequacy with regard to its implementation. Moreover, when asked if there were any issues related to culture they would have a hard time addressing, supervisors displayed a remarkable aversion to talking about race and culture with their candidates. Between the challenges and avoidance of culture, we identified several barriers to be addressed in order for them to become effective supporters of CRP.

I Don't Know How to Enact Culturally Relevant Teaching Myself; How Can I Help Them?

Even though all supervisors saw it as their role to encourage and support culturally responsive teaching as they understood it, doing so proved challenging. For one-third of the participants (four), culturally responsive supervision proved difficult to support due to their own feelings of inadequacy. As Debbi noted in explaining culturally responsive supervision, "That's what I've been struggling with. Because I can recognize when it's a healthy environment and I can recognize an unhealthy environment. But I feel I lack the skill to help the student make it a healthy environment." Interestingly, Debbi did not feel inadequate as a supervisor—only when it came to supporting CRP, or being a culturally responsive supervisor, did she feel she "lack[ed] the skill" to do her job.

We wondered why there was a dichotomy between being a good supervisor and a good culturally responsive supervisor. We believe that one of the reasons lies in their lack of a robust definition and vision of culturally responsive supervision. In Debbi's case, when asked to define CRP, she said, "It's really such a vague term. I used to think that it was being responsive to the kids in your classroom, but now I'm beginning to feel that it's really how to teach kids to be culturally responsive in the world." Her vision of CRP is imprecise and somewhat tentative as she acknowledges the beginning of a change in her perspective. She's trying to reconcile her previous understanding with new learning about CRP but realizes it's still something she doesn't fully understand.

While Debbi questioned her ability to fix what she saw going wrong, Robyn admitted to difficulty even with the first step—gaining information about students that could be used to inform lesson planning. She admitted to "struggling," asking, "How do you find out enough information about somebody without overwhelming them?" Fiona also acknowledged a lack of awareness of cultural issues in classrooms. She said, "I don't feel as skilled at knowing what is a cultural problem or not and maybe how to address it." Likewise, Jason reflected on his own experience as a teacher and said of CRP, "To me that was my greatest challenge [as a teacher] as I became more aware of how important that was . . . I never felt I did a very good job." These supervisors acknowledged they did not feel confident in their ability to recognize or enact the very things they defined as CRP, which for Robyn was "caring about what they [students] bring into the classroom," for Fiona was "knowing about different cultures," and for Jason was "finding ways to link their background." Because they lacked confidence in implementing CRP, they questioned their ability to support candidates to do so.

Race and Culture Are Difficult for Me to Talk About

More than any other part of the interview, when relating stories or examples from past supervision visits to illustrate CRS, supervisor responses were filled with a high number of false starts, long pauses, and noticeable lack of clarity. Amelia gave a typical response:

I guess a good example would be today, the teacher candidate, the teacher candidate today had a class that was um, fairly homogenous, not [pause] any, there was no real visible um cultural [pause] there weren't any extreme cultural—er not extreme, unique cultural differences that were visible in the class. It was pretty typical Valley View, not very culturally diverse at all. And, and so, there was a good match between what she was doing because they're kids kind of like her [pause], and so, ya know, there was [pause] she didn't have to work very hard to think about is there a good match between how I'm providing my instruction and what the content of my instruction is. It sort of came naturally.

While there are certainly some misconceptions about CRP in this response that raised concerns, what struck us was the struggle Amelia—and others like her—had in speaking about the races of the students and teacher candidates. Note she completely avoided the words *race* or *White* and packed a lot of assumptions about how the teaching dynamic varies when the teacher and students are a cultural "match." As Marshall and Theoharis (2007) reported in "Moving Beyond Nice," a study of White Midwestern educators, conversations about race and racial identity were perceived by those who had limited experience with communities of color as impolite and awkward. Talking about race left them vulnerable to being perceived as racist. We believe a similar effect is at work here. Further, since most Whites see themselves as raceless (Kendall, 2012; McIntyre, 1997; Rothenberg, 2002; Solomona, Portelli, Daniel, & Campbell, 2005), Amelia, and others, contended that there was an automatic match between the raceless children and the raceless teacher. Race, in her eyes, was not a factor, given the students were not very "culturally diverse."

Even when supervisors were explicit about race or culture, they talked only about safe elements that are easily seen and for which the emotional load is low.

Because one of the components that wasn't identified in there [in the G. Gay book they had been issued] but I think is culturally responsive teaching is to display the children's work; you are respecting the child, no matter who the child is . . . Have a map up, if people are from different parts of the world. Where are they from? What are their families? . . . A couple of different lessons that I passed on relate to the family . . . [and] how they might do a celebration. (Hannah)

Here Hannah thought about culture on an important but simplistic level, paying attention only to the visible markers of culture. This dated multicultural view is often associated with celebrating "similarities" and foods—neither of which promote deep understanding of how difference plays out in teaching and learning (Nieto, 2002; Sleeter & Delgado, 2004). Similarly, Carla said, "You know, culture encompasses so many things. Traditions, family . . ." These elements of culture are important and help make children of all races, religion, and economic classes feel important and that they matter. But these only scratch the surface of cultural influences (May, 2010). Hannah and Carla failed to mention the deeper elements of culture that impact communication, interactions, and learning such as thoughts and beliefs, personal values, and approaches to relationships. By focusing only on the comfortable aspects of culture, supervisors were able to avoid potentially difficult or emotion-laden conversations.

I Haven't Thought about It in Terms of Culture

As described previously, many supervisors' definitions of CRP centered on the notion of knowing the individual in order to best meet students' educational needs. Knowing an individual or understanding the whole child would seem to imply gaining knowledge about all aspects of that child: family composition, interests, talents, aspirations, and cultural traditions. However, responses to questions later in the interviews revealed this not to be so. Supervisors gave no indication that race and culture were part of their definition of *individual* or *whole child*. In fact, when asked how culture and race impacted the feedback they gave to candidates, the majority of supervisors asserted that it didn't. The supervisory feedback they gave and the issues they raised typically involved interactions with individual students but did not include questions about race or culture. This made the researchers wonder if the definitions supervisors held for *individual* and *whole child* were in fact grounded in a color-blind ideology "characterized by people claiming that they do not see color or talking as if race does not matter" (Watson, 2007, p. 25). The following quotes revealed indications of color-blindness:

> There've been so few cultural issues . . . but I haven't paid attention to it, so maybe it will be different . . . So, I guess I'm not sold in that there is that much that is only cultural. There's going to be a whole lot of other things going on with that child or children so . . . I have to be convinced . . . But then again, the book points out there is so much variation between the people within the same culture, so we have to be careful not to be too . . . thinking this is a cultural thing when maybe it's just an individual thing. (Fiona)
>
> I don't do it [give feedback] in the context of [cultural] responsiveness, which is probably wrong. If I'm noticing there's a problem, I will ask about a particular student. How do you know you've reached that student? What's happening with that student? So we can talk about that. Now, how does the curriculum then match that student? . . . I haven't thought about it in terms of their culture as much as I've thought of as individual histories that they've had . . . And others it's because of their social background that we had the communications issues, but I don't think I've ever addressed it culturally, now that I think about it. (Debbi)

Both Fiona and Debbi, like other supervisors, described conversations with candidates that focused on the candidate knowing and understanding the student, but race and culture didn't occur to them as relevant dimensions in this conversation. When supervisors say, "individual student," we contend they mean the individual devoid of culture/race. For these predominantly White, middle-class supervisors, there is a tension they cannot resolve between knowing the individual and considering the culture that has shaped that individual.

We wondered if there was a crucial link missing between the notion of *whole child* and thorough understanding of the racial and cultural underpinnings of CRP. On the one hand, supervisors see culturally relevant pedagogy as understanding students as individuals with unique backgrounds and experiences and designing meaningful curriculum around this knowledge. On the other hand, they don't see race or culture as relevant topics for supervision conversations and, therefore, avoid talking about race or how race impacts teaching and learning. Thus, it could be that when supervisors talk about teaching the individual or whole child, they are defining *individuality* as everything that makes up a student minus race and racial identity (Lewis, 2001; McIntyre, 1997).

While supervisors' responses reveal a color-blind orientation, these same supervisors recognize that color-blind and culture-blind approaches to teaching are not productive. On the initial survey of beliefs about diversity, the following prompt was offered along with a Likert-response scale (1 = strongly agree; 5 = strongly disagree): "Teaching is most fair to diverse groups of students when educators adopt a 'cultural- or color-blind' approach." Responses from the 12 study participants indicated moderate to strong disagreement with the statement, indicating they have an understanding that a color- or culture-blind approach is ineffective. Comments submitted by study participants accompanying this survey item included:

- "Being blind to culture or color, or handicapping conditions, or anything else is to neglect important aspects affecting student learning. It also seems disrespectful as it devalues the individual to ignore factors that may affect learning."
- "I think you have to be honest about what is in the classroom. Ignoring differences will not help."
- "It is impossible for most to be color-blind."
- "We have to be in touch with our own biases, recognize that students come from different backgrounds (always)."

There is reason to be concerned if supervisors believe they are promoting CRP yet unknowingly project a "color-blind" or "culture-blind" value. Exposure to a color-blind perspective has been shown to create greater automatic racial bias among research subjects (Richeson & Nussbaum, 2004). Hayes and Juarez (2012) warned that color-blindness perpetuates racial injustice. Given the supervisor's influence over the beginning teacher with whom he/she works, this color-blind perspective could become entrenched in their teacher candidates. By shifting the level of conversation to a narrow focus on the individual, supervisors obscure race in their discussions of teaching and schooling and potentially do the same with their teacher candidates.

I Didn't Approach It as a Cultural Thing

Beyond color-blindness, we discovered that some supervisors purposefully avoided discussions of culture or race with teacher candidates. This result was especially compelling because all but one supervisor said she/he had not and would not avoid any topic related to race or culture when discussing a lesson with a teacher candidate. Yet when asked to describe examples of such conversations, half of the supervisors could not provide one, including Amelia:

> Um, not at this point, because I've never had that kind of thing come up. I've never had the discussion. It's always been about, "what do

your students need?"; and "this child is having a difficulty with focus"; "how might you approach the child?"; "what do you know about the child that helps you make a decision of a good way to approach him?"; "what are his strengths?" So it's really talking like that, which I suppose it touches upon culture a little bit, not in a direct way of labeling it as culture but looking at the whole child.

In the italicized portion of Amelia's response, we saw another indication that the focus on the individual student had the effect of removing race and culture from supervisors' conversations with candidates. Moreover, *whole child* is explicitly defined as "that person who *does not* include culture." Again, what would it mean to educate the entire child or attend to her individuality without considering culture or race?

Among those who did have an example to share, analysis of their responses showed they actually negated or minimized the cultural aspect of that particular instance when talking with the teacher candidate. For example, Carla described her conscious choice not to bring culture into the debriefing with a candidate centered on a particular Latino student. The candidate was making assumptions about the Latino student based upon his race. Even though it was clear that race was central to the conversation, Carla said, "I didn't approach it as a cultural thing. I just said, 'What more information do you have to support what you can do for this child and why they're not learning, why they are failing.'" Carla went on to explain her reluctance to bring up culture-laden incidents with teacher candidates, saying she hesitates to "accuse" anyone of not being "open-minded" and she would rather "err on the side of being more sensitive" rather than "push it." Her purposeful avoidance of race in conversations with teacher candidates pointed to her discomfort raising this topic in her role as supervisor. Carla's response was similar to the findings of Borko and Mayfield (1995), who concluded, "Supervisors did not have the conversations they wanted because they didn't want to be confrontational" (Borko & Mayfield, 1995, p. 515). The desire not to be confrontational was further complicated by the desire to avoid talking about a topic that was generally difficult for these White supervisors—the topic of race.

Tasha demonstrated this race avoidance as well when she explained that she had opportunities to raise issues of culture with her teacher candidates but chose not to. Instead, she talked about strategies for increasing student participation without referencing culture or equity:

There are a number of times when there have been opportunities to talk about [it], and actually I didn't frame it so much as because of students' culture but giving students opportunity to talk with each other first before answering so that both students have some comfort level to be able to then answer in front of the class. Those kind of strategies that . . . some students are not the ones who want to raise their hand really fast, they don't feel comfortable in that kind of competitive situation. (Tasha)

Rachel went further and explained why she hasn't talked directly about race/culture with her teacher candidates, citing her

discomfort. Like Tasha, she chose to address these issues indirectly with comments about teaching methods and other classroom skills.

Well, I'll just lay it out there. She [had], I think, the perspective that a lot of White people have coming into the classroom where there are students of color, that they are going to be able to save the class because, you know, they know so [much] better, and all these kids, you know, they are struggling and they really need my help. And I saw some of that with one of my candidates last year, and I . . . because some of the other issues she was having, I wasn't comfortable addressing that directly with her, so I tried to find ways to address it indirectly. (Rachel)

These quotes revealed there is much work to be done in working with White supervisors to overcome their purposeful avoidance of race and culture and, perhaps more harmful, their tendency to deny or diminish culturally significant topics that arise in the context of the classroom. When supervisors redirect conversations with candidates away from racial and cultural topics rather than address them, they further exacerbate the theory-to-practice divide they are charged with closing.

Discussion

Supervisors face many challenges to supporting culturally responsive teaching. In particular, five barriers surfaced in our research with supervisors: a superficial understanding of CRP, discomfort talking about race and culture, feelings of inadequacy with regard to CRP practices, entrenched and invisible color-blind orientations, and purposeful avoidance of classroom-related cultural and racial incidents. These combined to impede supervisors' ability to enact CRS. Given the many challenges, there is a great deal TPPs need to do to support supervisors to become culturally responsive educators.

The Need for Targeted Professional Development for Supervisors

Supervisors' perceptions of race, culture, and ethnicity and their intersection in the classroom matter (Bates & Burbank, 2008; Zozakiewicz, 2010). A supervisor who understands and is prepared to discuss racial and cultural issues with teacher candidates can positively influence the development of culturally responsive practices. Without support, however, supervisors may not have the awareness, knowledge, skill, or willingness to address these issues in conversations with their teacher candidates. Strengthening the connection between field experiences and the diversity coursework provided in teacher preparation programs relies in large measure on supervisors. Our findings suggest the need for targeted professional development in CRS that goes beyond reading and discussing race, culture, and CRP at the theoretical level. Providing supervisors with professional development experiences that mirror the teacher candidates' coursework with regard to culturally responsive teaching is one way to support the implementation of culturally responsive practices (Trumbull & Pacheco, 2005). To address the challenges we identified, four key goals should guide the professional development experiences provided for supervisors: (a) reduce supervisors'

discomfort with race talk; (b) expand supervisors' understanding of culture; (c) broaden supervisors' conception of CRP and its purpose; (d) target supervisors' attention on personal action.

Reduce supervisors' discomfort with race talk.

Like most members of the dominant culture, White supervisors need to begin with self-reflection that increases their understanding of themselves as racial beings (Glimps & Ford, 2010; Howard, 2006; McIntyre, 1997). Professional development to this end needs to bring race to the surface and allow supervisors to examine Whiteness as well as White racial identity and privilege. The goal of such PD should be to reduce their reluctance to talk about themselves in racial terms and to remove their fears of acknowledging the race of students and teacher candidates. Supervisors should also recognize that many of their teacher candidates are much more comfortable talking about race and culture than they are by virtue of the content of their teacher preparation coursework, as well as their generational standing. However, even if teacher candidates are not open about these issues, it is the supervisors' responsibilities to ask the questions that raise equity issues. The professional development experience should help supervisors to recognize that not talking in racial terms only serves to perpetuate and reproduce inequity (Watson, 2012).

How can this be achieved? We believe supervisors need opportunities, in a supportive learning community, to role-play supervisor-candidate conversations they might initiate in which race is central to the exchange. This kind of professional development experience should be approached as one approaches the learning of a new language. Everyone needs practice when learning a new language because the first attempts will be clumsy and awkward. The more opportunities for conversation, the greater the fluency in the language. With practice engaging in and listening to conversations about race, supervisors can overcome fears such as the fear of being perceived as racist (Marshall & Theoharis, 2007) when they bring race into an exchange with a teacher candidate and the fear of using the wrong words or terms.

Expand supervisors' understanding of culture.

Our data and the work of previous scholars (Abt-Perkins, Hauschildt, & Dale, 2000) showed that supervisors typically brought relatively naïve, superficial, and celebratory notions of cultural diversity, race, and equity to their work, and such mindsets limited their abilities to support CRP. As is typical in the general population, many supervisors misunderstood culture to be solely composed of visible and surface markers like food, dress, music, and language (May, 2010; Nieto, 2002; Sleeter & Delgado, 2004). They were unaware of the more significant elements of culture that shape the learning experience, such as norms for nonverbal communication, how elders and members of the opposite sex are viewed, and attitudes toward motivation, merit, and achievement. Supervisors who have not had training or experiences with diversity will make assumptions about students or their families based on their limited White, Eurocentric perspectives. They need to deeply understand all facets of culture if they are to initiate conversations with teacher candidates about incidents that might

be perceived as conflicts or problems, when in fact they are simply differences of cultural perspectives. Furthermore, supervisors need to expand their understanding of culture beyond race and nationality. Other social locators such as religion, sexual orientation, class, gender, and language present additional diversity within the classroom. Supervisors need more knowledge about culture and how to reinforce cultural knowledge in the classroom.

How can this be achieved? Introducing supervisors to the dimensions of culture can be effective (Ladson-Billings, 2009; Liggett, 2014). Personal stories and interactions are also powerful in expanding perspectives here. During the interviews, one of our recently retired supervisors talked about an experience he'd had in a PD experience when he was a teacher:

> We had students from diverse backgrounds come and talk to us about their experiences—usually they were seniors, who then were talking about what they experienced K through 12. Some of it, oh, just shots to the heart, just awful feelings coming from that. And they [the students] weren't negative at all—they were just being dead honest with us about how they had been treated. And these were all students again from different backgrounds who had found a way to succeed, in my words, despite what we had done to them. (Jason)

As an optional event, we invited supervisors to join our teacher candidates in a session presented by a local family advocacy group working with Latino parents. After the presentation, the supervisors in attendance spoke of the power in hearing firsthand accounts from parents to understand better how these Latino parents approached schooling and how this was different from their own White middle-class experiences. Alone, these intercultural experiences and panels often reified stereotypes—particularly that those who "make it" are unique and a credit to their race. We suggest they always be accompanied by deliberate and skillful debriefing with individuals knowledgeable about racial identity development and how teaching and learning are mediated by race and culture.

Broaden supervisors' conception of CRP and its purpose.

Supervisors need to develop thorough understanding of what culturally responsive teaching is and why it is important. While our study showed that supervisors quickly came to understand CRP as resting on two important pillars (academic achievement and utilizing students' backgrounds in the classroom), it also showed that they confounded the definition with other educational constructs (student-centeredness, whole child, individual). We believe they need a more robust definition of *CRP*. Supervisors who understand that CRP is complex and multifaceted, not something that one can be given (Fasching-Varner & Dodo Seriki, 2012), but rather as something that is dispositional, attitudinal, and political, will be equipped to influence both the beliefs and the instructional habits of their beginning teachers.

In our work, we respect and acknowledge previous scholars and the definitions they have provided but are concerned that CRP is often cast as beneficial and appropriate primarily (or solely) for

students of color. We seek to expand the definition of *CRP* to apply to students from the dominant White European American culture as well as to students from cultural and linguistic minority groups. We define *culturally responsive pedagogy* as having five elements. CRP includes teaching actions that (a) intentionally facilitate and support the academic achievement of all students in (b) learning environments that support and affirm students' cultural identities where (c) opportunities for engagement with and participation in learning is equitable and where (d) students learn about and through diverse cultural perspectives so that they (e) can take action beyond the classroom to live out principles of social justice.

We believe the inclusion of our third and fourth elements expand the breadth of CRP and, significantly, confirm that CRP benefits all students, including those from the dominant White European American culture. Our fifth element connects CRP beyond the classroom walls to the future lives of students to effect social change that addresses racial inequity. As mentioned earlier, one of the issues hampering widespread CRP implementation is the disconnect between the theoretical underpinnings of CRP and teachers' articulation of what this means in the classroom. Adopting and reinforcing a more robust definition of CRP such as ours is one way to address this problem.

Target supervisors' attention on personal action.

Finally, upon reflection, we noticed that all of the supervisors' attention was on the culture of the students, very little on the culture of the teacher, and virtually none on themselves. Their gaze was always outward, never inward. Significant change is only possible when educators lead by example. Supervisors need to walk the talk and become advocates for social change that brings about racial equity and elimination of the opportunity and achievement gaps. Previous researchers have argued that all teacher educators—which includes supervisors—must become proficient and competent in the cultural realities of public schools (Milner et al., 2003) and that it is imperative for White educators—which also includes supervisors—to look deeply and critically at personal changes and growth if progress is to be made toward working effectively with issues of race, equity, and social justice (Howard, 2006). We agree.

How can this be accomplished? All PD sessions need to be action oriented. For example, we concluded our series of PD sessions by having supervisors generate questions they could ask during a lesson debriefing session to raise issues of CRP with the teacher candidate. Following the session, we compiled and distributed the questions they wrote and encouraged them to use these questions in their upcoming supervision visits. Through a follow-up survey sent at the end of the school year, we found that two-thirds of supervisors who responded had used at least one of the questions. As teacher preparation programs look to further all educators' understanding of and ability to support culturally responsive teaching, they will need to pay much more attention to the cultural development of supervisors, an important link to improving teacher education and, thus, student access and achievement in K–12 schools.

Conclusion

In *Democracy and Education*, Dewey (1916/1997) wrote, "Obviously a society to which stratification into separate classes would be fatal, must see to it that intellectual opportunities are accessible to all on equable and easy terms." (p. 92). If we are to interrupt persistent patterns of inequity and underachievement, teachers must attend to the ways culture mediates learning and teaching (Barnes, 2006; Gay, 2002, 2010; Howard, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Premier & Miller, 2010; Trumbull & Pacheco, 2005; Watson, 2012). Accomplishing this goal requires that TPPs leverage all resources. Attending to the unique needs of field supervisors is critical. If supervisors routinely support and provide corrective feedback regarding CRP in the classroom, their teacher candidates will be equipped to foster equitable participation, engagement, and critical thinking for all students. Supervisors must understand that the approach embodied in the quote that formed one of our section headings, "I didn't approach it as a cultural thing," is counterproductive to the goal of promoting instruction that intentionally facilitates and supports the academic achievement of all students in learning environments that support and affirm students' cultural identities where opportunities for engagement with and participation in learning is equitable and where students learn about and through diverse cultural perspectives so that they can take action beyond the classroom to live out democratic ideals and principles of social justice, in short, culturally responsive pedagogy.

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