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"I Don't See Color": The Impact of Field Placements on Preservice Teachers' White Racial Identity Development

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Abstract

The purpose of this mixed-method study was to examine the influence of diverse field placements on the White racial identity development of White preservice teachers (n = 92) placed in schools where the student body was either predominantly White or students of color. Using Helms's theory (1995) of White racial identity development, we selected instruments that measured participants' awareness of racism, as well as their consciousness about being White (e.g., Color-Blind Racial Attitude Scale and Psychosocial Costs of Racism to Whites Scale). Preservice teachers in nondiverse settings became less aware of racial issues at the end of the field experience. Using pretest scores as covariates, an analysis of covariance indicated that those in more diverse settings had higher levels of White guilt at the end of their field experience. The qualitative results also showed differences in perceptions based on field placements, thus supporting the quantitative findings. Participants were asked how the diversity in their fieldwork placement affected their thoughts about their own ethnic background and social status. For those placed in diverse settings, the most common theme that emerged was the contrast between the characteristics of the students and one's own family and personal characteristics (e.g., wealth, ethnicity). The results suggest that more than exposure to diverse students is needed to evoke changes in White racial identity in order to prepare preservice teachers to effectively teach students of color.

Keywords: white racial identity, preservice teachers, diverse classrooms, field placements

1. Introduction

As the population served by the educational system has become increasingly diverse over the last few decades, scholars have begun to examine the role that race plays in teaching and learning. Recent statistics indicate that almost half of the student population is non-White, yet 83 percent of the teaching force is White and middle class (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011). Howard (2010) questions whether White educators are being adequately prepared to teach diverse students in an equitable manner to effectively promote academic achievement. Substantial data (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011) indicate an achievement gap still exists between White and Asian students in comparison to African American, Native American, and Latino students. Howard (2006) argues that the achievement gap can be attributed to "…White social, political, and economic dominance" (p. 118). White educators possess an "assumption of rightness" (Howard, 2006, p. 119), a belief that poor performance by students of color is a result of deficiencies in the student or family, not in the educational structure. In addition, specific ethnic groups have been victims of historical oppression, educational segregation, and inadequate resources, factors that continue to perpetuate the racial and ethnic achievement gaps.

In order to work with students of color, teachers must first be able to recognize the aforementioned factors that contribute to the performance of students of color (Howard, 2010). White teachers tend to perceive their diverse students as less capable and often lower their expectations as they are sympathetic regarding their social and economic situations (Howard). Hyland (2005) argues:

…we do know that teachers participate in the reproduction of racial inequality and that teachers can mitigate or exacerbate the racist effects of schooling for their students of color depending on their pedagogical orientation. As such, there have been myriad calls for effective teachers of students of color, and there has been increasing scholarship as to what an effective teacher of students of color is (p. 429-430).

Much research has been devoted to multi-cultural education and how to best serve diverse students in classrooms.

However, surprisingly little empirical research has examined the ways in which teachers' White racial identity influences the academic outcomes of students of color. Moreover, we conducted a search of the literature, which revealed that the majority of empirical research has utilized small samples and qualitative designs.

The idea of racial identity development stems from the idea that our society values belonging to groups (Helms, 1995; Tatum, 1994). Whites in the United States, as the dominant cultural group, are the beneficiaries of inequitable resource distribution (Helms, 1995; Tatum, 1994). As suggested by Howard (2006), Whites as the dominant group possess a "legacy of privilege" that fosters an ethnocentric perspective, a belief that one's ethnic group is superior to others. "Thus, the general developmental issue for Whites is abandonment of entitlement, whereas the general developmental issue for people of color is surmounting internalized racism in its various manifestations" (Helms, 1995, p. 184).

Helms (1990) proposed a theory of White racial identity in which she identified six statuses, with higher levels representing more advanced understanding of one's Whiteness in the context of cross-cultural interactions. At lower statuses, individuals are unaware of White privilege and power or deny the existence of institutional racism, whereas at more advanced levels, they recognize injustices and are willing to take action to work for social justice (Helms, 1990). Identity statuses develop sequentially; however, individuals have a dominant status and a corresponding information processing strategy that governs their race-related interactions (Helms, 1995).

The first three statuses represent the process of renouncing racism (Tatum, 1994). In the contact status (the least complex status), individuals are unaware of racism and how they participate in institutionalized racism; therefore, their information processing strategy is "obliviousness" (Helms, 1995). The next status, disintegration, is marked by a state of confusion where Whites recognize racism, but are "ambivalent" about their actions due to fear of alienation by family and friends (Helms, 1995; Tatum, 1994). In the reintegration status, "Whites may turn to explanations for racism that put the burden of change on those who are the targets of racism" (Tatum, 1994, p. 467). For example, someone might state that Native Americans are responsible for their own conditions on reservations, and that if they desired, they could leave the reservation and have more opportunities.

The next three statuses represent more positive White racial identity growth (Tatum, 1994). Pseudo-independence signifies an attempt to confront some earlier confusion about racism by seeking relationships with individuals of color or those who espouse a non-racist ideology. However, at this status, individuals are uncomfortable when confronted with racially-charged experiences. Next, the immersion/emersion status represents further growth as a person seeks to understand the personal benefits associated with whiteness and is aware of his/her own personal biases, leading the individual to take action against racism. Individuals who have reached the final status of autonomy are no longer uncomfortable dealing with racism; they have "…use of internal standards for self-definition, capacity to relinquish the privileges of racism" (Helms, 1995, p. 185). Thus, individuals within the autonomy status recognize how their own whiteness has contributed to institutional racism and will purposefully avoid situations that contribute to the perpetuation of racism.

Past research has investigated how White preservice teachers and practicing teachers understand racial issues as well as how White racial identity impacts teaching students of color. Findings indicated that there were challenges in attempting to evoke changes in preservice teachers' White racial identity statuses (Buehler, Ruggles-Gere, Dallavis, & Shaw-Haviland, 2009; Pennington, 2007; Rueggles-Gere, Buehler, Dallavis, & Shaw-Haviland, 2009). Furthermore, in several studies (Buehler et al., 2009; Cross, 2003; Pennington, 2007; Ruggles-Gere et al., 2009), preservice teachers who were in diverse field placements struggled to make sense of the role that their race played in their interactions with students of color. For example, Cross (2003) found that practicing teachers in classrooms with diverse students had "negative perceptions" (p. 207) of their students' families and failed to understand how "significant connections" (p. 207) with their students would benefit their teaching.

As we considered Helms' (1995) White racial identity statuses and research indicating that preservice teachers face challenges when working with students of color, we wondered if those who have more experience in diverse settings would show changes in their White racial identity development. Given that our research focuses on preservice teachers in early field experiences with little prior cross-cultural experiences within our program, we believed that they would fall in the lower level statuses of White racial identity. We thus selected instruments that measured participants' awareness of racism, as well as their consciousness about being White (e.g., guilt, empathy toward persons of color, White privilege, comfort/fear of persons of color). We hoped that our preservice teachers who had more experience in diverse settings would demonstrate more positive changes than those with less experience.

The field of counseling offers insight on how to evoke changes in White racial identity. Research by Rothman,

Malott and Paone (2012) found that counseling students progressed from basic awareness of racial issues to a desire to confront racism as a result of a one-semester course on Whiteness. Some counseling students stated that participation in the course made them more aware of their White privilege and they experienced more White guilt. Although individuals showed changes in White racial identity, Rothman et al suggest that individuals must be developmentally ready to move to a higher level status (e.g., take social action).

The aforementioned studies are qualitative in nature, and none of them compared preservice teachers in diverse settings to those in non-diverse settings. Our current study, therefore, addresses the gap in the research by using mixed methods and comparing preservice teachers placed in schools with varying levels of diversity. The purpose of our study was to examine the influence of the diversity of early field experiences on White teacher candidates' perceptions about their racial identity and issues surrounding racial attitudes and awareness of social injustices. More specifically, our main objective was to examine changes in pre-service teachers' White racial identity after their field placement and whether field placements with varying levels of diversity influenced their racial identity development.

1.1 Research Questions

The following research questions guided our study:

1) Do pre-service teacher candidates demonstrate change in white racial identity following a semester of field placements?

2) Does the type of field placement impact changes in pre-service teacher candidates' white racial identity?

3) Does the type of field placement influence pre-service candidates' perceptions about the school neighborhood, their own ethnic background and social status, as well as working with diverse students?

2. Method

2.1 Participants

We used a convenience sample consisting of preservice teacher education candidates in their third year of a teacher preparation program at our private university in the northeastern United States. Of 110 individuals who were enrolled in four methods courses, all agreed to participate in the study. Since we only used data completed by White pre-service teachers, the final sample for our study consisted of 92 undergraduate pre-service teachers who identified themselves as White (85 females, 7 males), with an average age of 20.6 (range = 19 - 37).

The majority of participants (n = 78) in our final sample were enrolled in a program that would lead to dual certification in Elementary Education and either English as a Second Language or Special Education. Other candidates (n = 14) were enrolled in either an Elementary Education program or dual certification program in Secondary Education combined with either English as a Second Language or Special Education.

2.2 Instruments

2.2.1 Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (COBRAS)

The COBRAS (Neville et al., 2000) is a self-report instrument consisting of 20 items, utilizing a 6 point likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 6 = strongly agree). The scale assesses three dimensions of racial attitudes, with higher scores representing greater color-blind views (e.g., global belief in a just world). The three subscales include Unawareness of Racial Privilege; Unawareness of Institutional Discrimination; and Unawareness to Blatant Racial Issues. Higher COBRAS scores represent greater unawareness of the influence of these factors in social justice; individuals believe that a person's status is due to merit and hard work, not due to discrimination and bias (Neville et al., 2000).

Past research by Neville et al. (2000) shows high reliability and validity. Reliability analyses revealed Cronbach alphas ranging from .70 to .86 (Neville et al., 2000). Neville et al. (2000) also found concurrent validity, with scores on the COBRAS related to scores on two separate instruments that measure racial prejudice. We also conducted an inter-item reliability analysis of the COBRAS subscales, and the results showed moderate to high inter-item reliability: (a) alpha = .69 for Unawareness of Institutional Discrimination; (b) alpha = .76 for Unawareness of Racial Privilege; and (c) alpha = .52 for Unawareness to Blatant Racial Issues.

2.2.2 Psychosocial Costs of Racism to Whites Scale (PCRWS)

The Psychosocial Costs of Racism to Whites Scale (Spanierman & Heppner, 2004) is a self-report instrument that consists of 16 items, utilizing a 5 point likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). The PCRWS contains three subscales: White Empathic Reactions Toward Racism; White Guilt; and White Fear of Others. Higher scores on the PCRWS subscales indicate more negative consequences to racism.

Past studies show high reliability and validity of the PCRWS (Sifford, Ng, &Wang, 2009). Sifford et al. (2009) reported significant relationships between scores on the PCRWS and other instruments (e.g., White Racial Identity Attitudes Scale) that measure White racial identity statuses, thus providing evidence of construct validity. Spanierman, Poteat, Beer, and Armstrong (2006) conducted inter-item reliability analyses and reported coefficient alphas ranging from .63 - .77 for the three subscales. We also conducted an inter-item reliability analysis of all subscales of the PCRWS and found moderate to high reliability for each subscale: (a) alpha = .64 for White Guilt; (b) alpha = .68 for White Fear of Others; and (c) alpha = .79 for White Empathic Reactions Toward Racism.

2.2.3 Open-ended Questions

To substantiate the quantitative findings, we also gathered participants' perceptions about their field placements. At the end of their field experience, they were asked to provide a written response to the following three questions: (1) What were your initial impressions about the neighborhood of your fieldwork school; (2) How did your field placement make you think about your own ethnic background and social status; and (3) How have you changed your thinking about working with diverse students?

2.3 Research Design

This is a mixed-method study. We quantitatively compared the scores of preservice teachers who were placed in schools where the student population was predominantly White to those who were placed in schools where the student population consisted primarily of non-White students. To support the quantitative findings, at the end of the semester preservice teachers wrote narrative responses to three open-ended questions about working in diverse settings.

2.4 Procedures

Prior to commencing this study, it was approved by the university's Institutional Review Board and followed all requirements for ethical treatment of human subjects. At the beginning of the semester, students in four different methods courses (taught by four different instructors) were placed in field experiences in four different schools with varying levels of ethnic diversity; two of the settings predominantly consisted of White students, whereas the majority of the students at the other two schools were non-White. These field experiences and their respective locations were already requirements as listed on the course syllabi. Prior to the start of the fieldwork, students were asked to participate in the study. Those who wished to voluntarily participate completed the informed consent form, with the opportunity to ask questions before signing the form. We collected the signed consent forms and then administered two likert surveys (Color-Blind Racial Attitudes scale and the Psychosocial Costs of Racism to Whites scale) and a demographic questionnaire. Participants who self-identified as non-White were directed to skip the Psychosocial Costs of Racism to Whites scale. Upon completion of the fieldwork experience at the end of the semester, the participants again completed the two likert surveys as well as three open-ended questions. Data collected from participants who self-identified as non-White were excluded from the data analysis.

2.5 Data Analysis

2.5.1 Quantitative Analysis

To examine changes in White racial identity for the entire sample, we conducted paired sample t-tests. Paired sample t-tests were also utilized to investigate changes in White racial identity for individuals at specific sites (those that were in schools with the majority of students who were White and those placed in schools that predominantly served students of color). To compare pre-service teachers who were placed in schools that served predominantly White students to those that served students of color, an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted for each of the sub-scales, using pretest scores on each sub-scale as the covariate. We utilized ANCOVA because random assignment was not possible, therefore we controlled for initial differences on the subscale scores.

2.5.2 Qualitative Analysis

Each question was analyzed separately. We utilized constant comparative analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to develop codes for each question. First, we independently read through the responses to look for emergent ideas which were then developed into initial codes. The initial codes were subsequently collapsed into more general categories that represented ideas that were frequently mentioned by several participants.. Using these categories, two of us independently coded a sub-sample of the responses. Categories were refined to address discrepancies in the coding. Once a final set of categories was determined, we independently coded an additional sample of responses to check for reliability. Reliability was calculated using ReCal 0.1 Alpha

(http://dfreelon.org/recal/recal3.php). Using average pairwise Cohen's kappa as an index, the reliability of the final set of codes ranged from (a) .58 – 1.0 for question one; (b) .35 - .78 for question two; and (c) .44 – 1.0 for question three, indicating a good to outstanding level of reliability for each code. Frequencies were calculated based on the number of participants who mentioned each topic/theme. We calculated frequencies separately for those placed in diverse and nondiverse settings.

3. Results

In order to examine changes in teacher candidates' White racial identity following a semester of field placements, paired sample t-tests were conducted on the three subscales of the COBRAS and the three subscales of the PCRWS for the entire sample. The results indicate that at the end of the field placement, participants showed a significant change in the White Fear of Others subscale of the PCRWS (t_{88} = 2.27, p = .02), as well as the Unawareness to Blatant Racial Issues subscale of the COBRAS (t_{91} = 2.38, p = .02), as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Differences between before and after semesters scores on the COBRAS and PCRWS as evidenced by t-tests

		Time 1		Time 2				95% CI	
		M	SD	M	SD	t	p	LL	UL
COBRAS									
	URP	30.47	5.82	30.43	6.21	.07	.95	-.98	.91
	UID	23.13	5.94	23.35	5.90	.43	.67	-.78	1.21
	UBRI	14.81	3.84	15.73	3.77	2.38	.02*	.91	3.66
PCRWS									
	WERTR	27.74	4.94	27.33	4.67	1.10	.27	-1.15	.33
	WG	8.10	3.43	8.14	3.63	.11	.91	-.57	.64
	WFO	14.01	4.61	14.81	4.37	2.27	.02*	.10	1.49

Description: CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit. COBRAS = Color Blind Racial Attitude Scale; URP = Unawareness of Racial Privilege; UID = Unawareness of Institutional Discrimination; UBRI = Unawareness of Blatant Racial Issues. PCRWS = Pschosocial Costs of Racism to Whites Scale; WERTR = White Empathic Reactions toward Racism; WG = White Guilt; and WFO = White Fear of Others.

Given that the entire group exhibited changes on only two subscales, we further analyzed the data on those two subscales to determine whether the type of field placement impacted changes in pre-service teacher candidates' White racial identity. Paired sample t-tests were conducted for those who were placed in predominantly White settings, as well as for those who were placed in schools that predominantly served students of color. The data analyses revealed that only the participants placed in predominantly White settings exhibited change on only one of the six measures: the Unawareness to Blatant Racial Issues subscale of the COBRAS (t_{33}, p = .03), with scores higher at the end of the field experience (see changes in group B in Table 2).

Table 2. Differences between before and after semester scores on the COBRAS and PCRWS for each group of preservice teachers (A vs. B) as evidenced by t-tests

			Time 1		Time 2				95% CI	
			M	SD	M	SD	t	p	LL	UL
COBRAS										
	UBRI									
		A	14.66	4.38	15.45	4.05	1.44	.16	-.31	1.88
		B	15.09	2.85	16.21	3.32	2.21	.03*	.09	2.15
PCRWS										
	WFO									
		A	13.54	4.61	14.17	4.43	1.35	.18	-.31	1.57
		B	14.76	4.63	15.79	4.17	1.88	.07	-.09	2.15

Description: A = Teacher candidates placed in schools where the majority of students are of color; B = teacher candidates placed in predominantly White setting. CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit. COBRAS = Color Blind Racial Attitude Scale; URP = Unawareness of Racial Privilege; UID = Unawareness of Institutional Discrimination; UBRI = Unawareness of Blatant Racial Issues. PCRWS = Pschosocial Costs of Racism to Whites Scale; WERTR = White Empathic Reactions toward Racism; WG = White Guilt; and WFO = White Fear of Others.

Finally, an analysis of covariance was conducted for each of the six subscales to compare post-test differences between those placed in predominantly White schools to those who were placed in more diverse settings. A separate ANCOVA was utilized for each of the six subscales, using the specific pre-test as the covariate. This provided a robust comparison, controlling for initial differences on the subscale pre-test. As seen in Table 3, the results indicated a significant difference on the White Guilt subscale of the PCRWS ($F_{1, 84} = 6.91$, $p = .01$), with those in the racially diverse settings showing higher scores (mean = 8.93) than those placed in predominantly White schools (mean = 6.94). Although neither group showed significant pre-post changes in White Guilt, changes for the group placed in predominantly White settings almost reached significance ($p = .07$). They showed a decrease in white guilt after the field experience (mean = 7.7 at pre; 6.9 at post).

Table 3. Differences between teacher candidates placed in predominantly white or non-white schools on PCRWS subscores, controlling for pretest scores

PCRWS		df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
White Empathic Reactions Toward Racism					
	Intercept	1			
	Pre-test	1			
	School Type	1	18.52	1.87	.18
	Error	84	9.89		
White Guilt					
	Intercept	1			
	Pre-test	1			
	School Type	1	46.89	6.91	.01*
	Error	84	6.79		
White Fear of Others					
	Intercept	1			
	Pre-test	1			
	School Type	1	12.54	1.39	.24
	Error	84	9.00		

Description: Pre-tests on the subscales served as covariates. School type consists of 2 levels: Placements in either a school where the majority of students were White or a school where the majority were students of color.

3.1 Open-ended Responses

In addition to data collected on the COBRAS and PCRWS, we also gathered pre-service teacher candidates' perceptions about the school neighborhood, their own ethnic background and social status, as well as working with diverse students. Candidates responded to three open-ended questions as indicated below. The responses corroborate quantitative findings.

3.1.1 Initial Impressions

For the first question, participants were asked to describe their first impressions of the neighborhood of their fieldwork school. The codes that emerged are described below in Table 4, with exemplary quotes provided.

Table 4. Number of participants whose responses represented themes about initial impressions of the neighborhood in which they were placed

Themes	Definitions	Sample Quotes	*Diverse Placements	*Non-Diverse Placements
Familiarity	Congruence with past experience (ordinary, common = normal	"It is a quiet/safe suburb, in which many families live to raise their kids. It seems to be a small, close community, similar to the one, in which I live." (non-diverse placement) "The neighborhood, though not something I have never experienced, was pretty different than what I am used to." (diverse placement)	9	19
Comfort level	Feeling comfortable in the school, neighborhood/community, classroom	"It looks like a very nice neighborhood. Somewhere I would like to live. Somewhere I wouldn't mind raising a family in." (non-diverse placement) "I felt safe inside the school, but I don't think the surrounding environment is very safe. I never felt uncomfortable but it was definitely different." (diverse placement)	9	8
Safety	Feeling safe in the school, neighborhood/ community, classroom	"I feel very safe. I think it is very beautiful and clean." (non-diverse placement) "It was very run down and I was afraid to go. My parents told me it was in an unsafe neighborhood. I believed them of course and the school was nice, but not the neighborhood." (diverse placement)	15	10
Cleanliness of environment	Describes the school neighborhood as clean, neat	"The houses all looked well kept up with and neat." (non-diverse placement) "Everything other than the school seemed poor and run	10	3

		down." (diverse placement)		
Level of diversity	Comments about the number or level of students from diverse backgrounds	"The neighborhood is very nice. It seems to be predominately white, with little to no minorities. It seems to be an upper-middle class neighborhood." (non-diverse placement) "A lot of Mexican Immigrants who barely spoke English. Minorities were Blacks and Caucasians." (diverse placement)	19	6
Assumptions	Assumptions and expectations based on race and ethnicity and economic status	"It was a nice location and a very small community. I presumed students to mostly be Caucasian, and that is basically what I found." (non-diverse placement) "Since I grew up in [Town], which is very close to [Town], I was aware of the community that the [School] was in. To me and everyone I know, the west side of [Town] is known to be populated with African-Americans and mostly illegal Hispanics." (diverse placement)	8	3
Economic Status	Notices level of economic status in the school and/or community	"I thought it was a nice middle-upper class neighborhood with "normal" people." (non-diverse placement) "My first impression was that it was in a low income society." (diverse placement)	16	4

*Note. Numbers represent frequencies: Number of participants who mentioned each category.

As seen in Table 4, differences between those placed in diverse and non-diverse settings emerged. Preservice teachers placed in diverse settings more frequently made statements that appeared to be negative. For examples, issues of safety, lack of cleanliness of the environment, and statements about students' low socioeconomic status were more commonly expressed by those in diverse placements. Moreover, some preservice teachers made negative assumptions about the neighborhood based solely on demographics (e.g., making assumptions that Hispanics were "illegal"). In contrast, those placed in non-diverse settings more often expressed feelings of familiarity.

3.1.2 Reflections about Their Own Ethnic Background and Social Status

Next, participants were asked how the diversity in their fieldwork placement affected their thoughts about their own ethnic background and social status. Themes, sample quotes, and frequencies are presented below in Table 5.

Table 5. Number of participants whose responses represented themes about their own ethnic background and social status

Themes Q2	Definitions	Sample Quotes	*Diverse Placements	*Non-Diverse Placements
Level of Congruence with past school experience	Mentions the contrast between placement school and experience with diversity in past environments	"As a middle class white student, I'd never been in a classroom like this. It made me realize that I attended an all white school in a middle class neighborhood. My parents would not allow me to attend a school like (name of school) Primary because of the diversity. To be honest, it is not where I would choose to teach for my first choice, but I enjoyed the experience." (diverse placement) "I felt fine about it. I did not feel scared or anything. Just as diverse as any normal school." (non-diverse placement)	5	3
Level of Congruence with economic /diverse status of family	Mentions the contrast between the characteristics of the students and one's own family and personal characteristics (e.g., wealth, ethnicity).	"I personally have never been in a classroom where people of 'minority' backgrounds and low social status were the dominant group. It made me think that I was never really exposed to other cultures and backgrounds. I was very sheltered; however I don't think this had a negative impact on me. I am not ashamed that I have different ethnic backgrounds and social status from (sic) the students. Instead, I think I learned a lot from them." (diverse placement) "It is mostly white class which is just as I grew up in. It seemed normal." (non-diverse placement)	12	3
No Change in thinking about race, diversity or economic status	Mentions that the field experience did not change one's perceptions or thought	"It didn't. I don't judge people by their ethnic background. I'm Italian, I'm proud to be it and I'm not ashamed. But that doesn't make me think about it when I see people from other races." (diverse placement) "There was not much diversity. The few that there were did not make me think about my own background at all." (non-diverse placement)	5	11
Awareness about one's own race/economic status	Mention about being more self-aware or realizing one's own racial or socioeconomic background	"It made me think about how ethnicity impacts your background knowledge, social behaviors and norms. Personally, my social status and upbringing was one where I was provided all my needs, but we didn't always have everything." (diverse placement) "My classroom is not very diverse, however, I feel very comfortable in it. I seem to be on the same social status as the students, yet our backgrounds may be different. This does not bother me." (non-diverse placement)	11	3

Appreciation of one's own socio-economic background	Feeling fortunate to have social or economic benefit (privilege)	"It made me appreciate my upbringing and it made me start thinking about how I can learn more about other ethnic backgrounds so that I can have a classroom that supports all kinds of ethnicities." (diverse placement) "In some cases it made me appreciate my background and status." (non-diverse placement)	10	1
Diversity of classroom; no mention of own experience; Awareness about students' diversity/economic status (either noticing lack of diversity or abundant diversity)	Notices the level of diversity and/or economic status of students in the classroom.	"Caucasian/white is no longer a dominate race. Many classrooms I am in have very few Caucasian." (diverse placement) "I felt as if I belonged because all of the students were white and there was not much diversity as some of my other placements." (non-diverse placement)	8	21
Learning from experience	Experience has promoted change/learning about how to work with students	"It taught me to learn how to adapt my lessons and approaches of teaching to address ethnic backgrounds and social statuses that are different from my own." (diverse placements) "It made me want to be able to relate to them." (non-diverse placement)	5	1

*Note. Numbers represent frequencies: Number of participants who mentioned each category.

As seen in Table 5 above, preservice teachers in non-diverse placements did not appear to change their perceptions. The codes for "no change in thinking about race, diversity or economic status," and "diversity of classroom" mirror the quantitative results that revealed less awareness of racism following the semester-long placement; open-ended statements show lack of awareness of racial issues. For example, preservice teachers in non-diverse field placements frequently stated that their field placement seemed "normal", "nice" and that they felt a sense of belonging solely based on the similarity of their own race and the race of their students.

Preservice teachers in diverse settings showed that at the conclusion of the semester, they were beginning to think about their own race in contrast to their students. For example, they more frequently indicated an appreciation of their own socioeconomic background and also realized they lacked experience with diverse populations. These individuals noted the contrast between their families' ethnicities and economic statuses and those of their students.

3.1.3 Thoughts about Working with Diverse Students

Finally, participants were asked to explain changes in their thinking about working with diverse students in the classroom. Themes, quotes, and frequencies are noted in Table six below.

As seen in Table 6, 21 preservice teachers stated that race is not a factor to consider when teaching diverse students, and this color-blind approach – the need to treat everyone the same – was more common for those placed in diverse settings. Less commonly, some preservice teachers (primarily those in diverse settings) stated the need to provide more support for diverse students; these comments were framed in a negative way, foreseeing that these students would create additional challenges for teachers.

Table 6. Number of participants whose responses represented themes about working with diverse students

Themes Q3	Definitions	Sample Quotes	*Diverse Placements	*Non-Diverse Placements
Race not a factor (color-blind)	Participants mentioned that they do not notice race or color; everyone is the same to them.	"Students need help no matter what they are. Race is not an issue for me. I will help all my students" (diverse placement) "I still think nothing of it. I try not to see color." (non-diverse placement)	15	6
Equal treatment of students	Participants mentioned the need to teach all students the same way and have similar expectation of students regardless of race.	"They are all the same students, deserve the same attention and require the same education." "I have changed by thinking just by realizing as a teacher you have to treat all your students fairly no matter what color their skin is or where they come from." (non-diverse placement)	2	4
Promoting cross-cultural awareness	Participants mentioned that having diverse students in the classroom promotes better cultural awareness and understanding between cultural groups of students.	Diversity is an advantage to students in the classroom, they won't be as closed minded as students who did not grow up in a diverse school community." (diverse placement) "I've always been accepting of diverse students and think the world would be a better lace if all our students learned about diversity." (non-diverse placement)	9	7
Different treatment of students (for various reasons like needing extra help, not understanding material, etc…):	Participants mention that diverse students have different instructional needs.	"It made me think that most kids in the diverse class do not have the support at home from their parents and the teachers have to work twice as hard." (diverse placement) "I changed my ways of thinking about diverse students in the classroom because I realize they may need more assistance and guidance than I thought." (non-diverse placement)	5	1
Comfort level	Participants mention a comfort level for interacting with diverse students.	"I have become more comfortable with being around diverse students." (diverse placement)	2	0

Assumptions and stereotypes for race, class, economic status	Participants make a global statement about an entire group pertaining to a specific characteristic or attribute.	"I feel that they believe they are not as good as whites, so they act out or do not care." (diverse placement)	5	0
No change in thinking perceptions about diversity	Participants state that they have always felt this way about diversity; experience has not altered their perceptions.	"I am more aware that classrooms can be diverse. But, I do not think my view was changed. I embrace being white, but I don't judge other cultures…I do not think I was drastically changed." (diverse placement) "My thinking has not really changed because I was not that exposed to diversity in the classroom." (non diverse field placement)	12	8
Change in thinking about teaching diverse students	Participants state that they have experienced a change in thinking about teaching diverse students; experience has altered their perceptions.	"I've changed my thinking about diverse students in the classroom in a way that now I realized if a student has the right learning tools and support-they can be successful." (diverse placement) "I never had a negative opinion towards children that are diverse. But this experience has taught me that all children have the potential to learn." (non-diverse placement)	8	5

*Note. Numbers represent frequencies: Number of participants who mentioned each category.

Interestingly, only two individuals with experiences in diverse placements mentioned a comfort level with working with students of color, and several made statements that revealed no changes in their perceptions of students of color. Moreover, only those placed in diverse settings made stereotypical statements (See Table 6). As mentioned by one preservice teacher, "I wanted to help them, but from what I observed, some of the races acted in a very stereotypical way which makes me second guess my rational thinking."

4. Discussion

The results of this study provide some evidence that placements in diverse settings might impact White preservice teachers' White racial identity development. The quantitative data indicated that preservice teachers placed in non-diverse settings became less aware of racial issues by the end of their field placement (scores on the Unawareness to Blatant Racial Issues subscale), comparable to Helms' (1995) contact status wherein individuals are oblivious to racial issues. The qualitative data also indicate that lack of experience with diverse students might maintain this lack of awareness. Preservice teachers in diverse settings, in contrast, did not experience a change in awareness of racial issues. However, despite the lack of significant change in awareness for those in diverse settings as noted in the quantitative data, the qualitative findings demonstrate that these

preservice teachers were beginning to notice their own racial and economic backgrounds in comparison to their students of color. Furthermore, some made comments about advantages they possessed in terms of language, resources, and family support. Perhaps we can attribute the lack of significant change on the COBRAS to the nature of the items; the items reflect general, broad racial statements, whereas the qualitative questions required reflection about personal experiences in diverse classrooms.

Interestingly, when these teacher candidates were placed in settings where a large percentage of students were not White, they experienced greater feelings of White guilt than those placed in predominantly White settings. We believe that teacher candidates who lacked interaction with students of color lacked the experience of negotiating cross-cultural interactions and thus remained insulated from discussions of race and racism, and the experience of confronting their own White racial identity. White guilt is a component of the PCRWS, where psychosocial costs to racism indicate the negative effects that racism has on Whites (Spanierman & Heppner, 2004; Spanierman, Poteat, Beer, & Armstrong, 2006). According to Spanierman and Heppner (2004), these costs cross three dimensions: affective, cognitive and behavioral. For example, an affective cost might be anxiety and fear of people of other races or feelings of guilt about being White (Spanierman & Heppner, 2004; Spanierman et al., 2006). Cognitive effects include a "distorted" view of one's race as well as others' races, and being color-blind (Spanierman & Heppner, 2004). Behavioral costs include a propensity to maintain relationships with other Whites rather than forming relationships with people of color (Spanierman & Heppner, 2004). Moreover, individuals who experience greater White guilt have less fear of people of color (Spanierman et al., 2006). As noted by Spanierman et al. (2006), individuals who have higher levels of White guilt may have greater empathetic reactions about instances of racism.

Spanierman et al. (2006) conducted a cluster analysis of the PCRW, and they found that individuals fell within five clusters that represented different perceptions of racial issues such as being "unempathetic and unaware" (Spanierman et al., 2006, p. 437). They then evaluated differences across the clusters on scores on the COBRAS subscales and found differences in colorblind racial attitudes. For example, individuals who were "unempathetic and unaware" had high scores on Unawareness of Racial Privilege. In our study, it appeared that the preservice teachers who were placed in non-diverse settings appeared to be similar to Spanierman et al.'s "insensitive and afraid" cluster where individuals display less awareness of blatant racial issues (e.g., scores on the UBRI).

As noted in the qualitative findings, many preservice teachers' comments signified that they do not notice race when working with students. Many also said that their field experience did not alter their perceptions about working with diverse students. In addition, preservice teachers who were placed in predominantly White settings showed greater color-blindness (scores on the UBRI subscale of the COBRAS) at the end of their field placement. According to Howard (2010), this "color-blind" approach reinforces the dominant White culture and, more importantly, "…contributes to the deficit models about students of color" (p. 124). Richeson and Nussbaum (2004) found that individuals trained in a color-blind approach for working with diverse groups demonstrated greater racial bias than those trained in a multicultural approach. "For Whites, adopting a color-blind perspective may help to protect against recognizing racial inequalities in society and thus help to alleviate any conflict or dissonance that may arise…" (Neville et al., 2000, p. 69). White individuals in Helms' (1995) contact status may also take a color-blind approach when interacting with individuals of color, failing to realize that people of color may perceive them as being White (Howard, 2006; Neville et al., 2000). Thus, in our study, it appears that preservice teachers did not move beyond the contact status, either because they only worked with White students or they took a color-blind stance when working with students of color in their field placements.

Tatum (1994) found that interventions that focus specifically on issues of White racial identity have the potential to promote positive growth, but as individuals become more aware of issues of White privilege, people may fear alienation from family and friends when they express their new perceptions and attitudes. Our study, however, compared teacher candidates in predominantly White settings to those in more diverse settings, but there was no intervention to accompany this experience. Through training and guided critical reflection, teacher candidates can explore the influence of their own race and racial identity on their capacity to teach in diverse settings. Thus, this study should be expanded to include discussion and self-reflection about Whiteness and racial attitudes toward others.

Many schools of education across the United States have embraced the need for multicultural education, but there is a paucity of research or programs devoted to the exploration of White racial identity development and its impact on culturally responsive pedagogy. Before White teachers can benefit from multicultural training, they must have opportunities to explore institutionalized racism and their own racial identities. Atwater (2007) proposes a diversity teacher training model that includes three components: (a) "becoming color-conscious:

understanding privilege and biases;" (b) "modeling and instruction on discussing race and racism;" and (c) "extending diversity training beyond a one-day workshop" (p. 11). Research in the counseling field (Rothman et al., 2012) shows that to promote White racial identity development, coursework should include critical examination of the history of racism, personal racism, Whiteness, and advocacy. To be effective, this content should be discussed critically in small groups where individuals feel free to share their ideas, and this training must highlight that White racial identity development is a lifelong process (Rothman et al., 2012). Therefore, to promote multicultural competence, preservice teacher education should weave coursework and discussion about White racial identity throughout the curriculum.

4.1 Limitations

Our study utilized a convenience sample, and the majority of participants were female, thus we question whether this influenced the results. Future research should be conducted using a random sample. Due to the sampling, there was also little control over the variety of experiences within the field placement settings. In addition, the selected instruments, although indicating adequate reliability for the sample in this study, have not been widely used to study the construct of White racial identity. Finally, we did not collect social desirability data, and it is possible that one group may have been more inclined to provide answers that would frame their perspectives more positively.

5. Conclusion

Past research has shown the necessity of cross-cultural interactions on the development of White racial identity (Wihak & Meral, 2007), which consists of awareness of White privilege and commitment to social justice (see Helms, 1990). The results of this study, in contrast, indicate that when White teacher candidates are placed in schools with a predominantly White student body, their awareness of racial issues decreases. The qualitative results show that those placed in diverse settings seemed to become more aware of their own background and economic advantages. Therefore, to promote awareness of White racial identity, which is necessary to promote effective teaching in multicultural classrooms, teachers need experience working with students of color.

Individuals are often unaware of issues of race and racism due to the communities in which they live (Solomon et al., 2005). Thus, "…cross-cultural contact is a prerequisite for White racial identity development" (Valli, 1995, p. 309), although more than exposure is necessary to promote awareness of White privilege and power. It is imperative that teacher educators engage preservice teachers in applied projects and conversations about race, racial identity, and race-related issues of privilege and power, topics that frequently are avoided in situations wherein participants are predominantly White (Pennington, 2007). Further research is needed on larger samples to examine the ways in which White preservice teachers respond to coursework dedicated specifically to critical examination of their own White racial identity and how it impacts their students of color.

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