

Exploring Cross-Race Dyad Partnerships in Learning to Teach

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This three-year study examined ways in which race mediates the process of learning to teach. The innovation of pairing racial minority and dominant group teacher candidates in field-based practica was based on the rationale that such collaboration would enrich the pedagogical process with different perspectives, traditions, resources, and experiences from which teacher candidates, associate teachers, and students would benefit. The findings revealed that such partnerships broke down some racial barriers, tackled sensitive racial and cultural issues, helped in the acquisition of awareness and competence to function in cross-race domains, and laid the foundation for long-term social and professional relationships. On the other hand, the study uncovered an institutional culture that interpreted racial difference as deficit and generated paralytic anxiety for candidates of color, marginalizing them in the communication process. Such institutional and personal responses limited the potential of such partnerships as a collegial enterprise. While dominant group partners gained valuable insights into how racism operates in institutional structures, candidates of color often ended up as disempowered apprentices with their expectations seriously compromised and their long-term objectives to transform the teaching profession immeasurably jeopardized.

INTRODUCTION

The rhetoric of collaboration, cooperation, and partnership has become increasingly popular in contemporary teacher education scholarship. Educational observers document the principle, practice, nature, and political context of partnerships as educators engage in a variety of peer-centered professional development variously labeled “peer coaching,” “colleague consultation,” “peer clinical supervision,” and “peer-assisted learning” (McFaul & Cooper, 1984; Glatthorn, 1987; Booth, Furlong, & Wilkins, 1990; Watters & Ginns, 1997). But as schooling becomes more racially and culturally diverse, how may such a movement toward cooperative learning be realized across racial and ethnocultural boundaries in societies that tend toward own-group cleavage and racial homophily? How may teacher educators reverse this tendency and create space for teacher candidates¹ of different racial and ethnocultural backgrounds to engage collaboratively and colle-

gially in a genuine, long-lasting appreciation of each other's norms, values, traditions, and perspectives?

This study was based on the rationale that teacher candidates' cross-race collaboration during the process of learning to teach would break down racial barriers, tackle sensitive racial and cultural issues, and provide models of intergroup collaboration. Too often in the traditional practicum classroom, potentially contentious issues of social difference (race, ethnicity, social class, gender, and sexuality) remain marginal to the curriculum, especially if such discourse challenges the conservative culture of schools. What is maintained is what Menter (1989) terms "teaching practice stasis": a strong tendency for those involved in the practicum enterprise to avoid conflict and confrontation.

This study explored a new model for field-based teacher education that transcends "stasis" and provides the structural arrangements for teacher candidate partnerships to function productively in practicum classrooms. To heighten the impact of diversity and difference, this model tested an approach in which candidates of dominant and minority racial backgrounds have extended opportunities to develop their teaching abilities and professional relationships in a collaborative and positive interdependent manner. The potential benefits of this format were seen to be that racially and ethnoculturally diverse students would experience a curriculum and pedagogy infused with knowledge and perspectives beyond those of their associate teacher.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework for this study evolves from two strands in the research literature. First, the concept and practice of cooperative learning makes the essential linkages of this pedagogical approach to different levels of the schooling process and teacher education. Second, the concept of interethnic/interracial contact and collaboration introduces the issue of schooling in heterogeneous societies and provides a model for the development of a synergetic cross-group learning environment for preservice teachers.

COOPERATIVE LEARNING

As social beings who learn our language from each other, enhance our abilities to think through interactions with each other, and develop our voices by learning what is different about our perspectives from others, those other beings in our social communities become our greatest treasures. (Thayer-Bacon, 1998, p. 209)

Thayer-Bacon's insights point to the potential of social beings as a resource for each other's social development. Yet theoretical and empirical works have documented the limited extent to which educational enterprises have embraced cooperation, positive interdependence, and the use of coworkers or colearners as resources. The empirical literature has reported the social and academic benefits of supportive peer culture for middle and high school students (Slavin, 1983; Aljose & Joyner, 1990; Beane, 1990). But at the professional education level, and particularly in preservice teacher education, the emerging research documents the need for a more collaborative approach to learning to teach (Su, 1990a, 1992; Hawkey, 1994, 1995; Watson, 1995; Norquay, 1996).

In her large-scale study of the professional socialization of preservice teachers in the United States, Su (1992) found that in their practicum experience, candidates had limited opportunities for collegial interactions. "[They] confront a 'sink-or-swim' situation in physical isolation. The way most beginners are inducted into teaching therefore leaves them doubly alone" (p. 249). She identifies a number of factors that may have inhibited the development of a collaborative peer culture: large group programs that impede cooperative, interactive relationships; the short duration of some teacher education programs that leave little time for relationships to develop; and the absence of after-class socialization activities resulting from family and job obligations (Su, 1990b, p. 381). Su challenges the individualism and the mechanistic technification of learning to teach, and advocates instead a reformulated peer culture that expands candidates' moral and intellectual horizons.

The benefits of cooperative learning outweigh those of traditional methods. Watson (1995) claims candidates show greater material retention over time, learn at higher cognitive levels, feel more positive about themselves and the subject matter, and become more skilled in interpersonal interactions (p. 210). In the context of race and ethnocultural diversity, Watson emphasizes building collaborative environments for cultural understanding. She suggests that "cooperative learning is effective in prejudice reduction . . . and in meeting the academic and social needs of at risk students" (p. 213).

Hawkey's (1994, 1995) and Norquay's (1996) research on school-based teacher education is most informative in developing alternative paradigms based on peer support in the classroom. Starting from the premise of peers as underused resource, Hawkey examines ways in which structured peer support operates within the reflective practitioner model of learning to teach. More specifically, her research focuses on the nature of peer post-lesson interaction and the extent to which novices contribute to the professional development of their peers. Beyond the giving of basic support, probing questions emerge from more interactive conversations, as the reflective practitioner model would dictate. These interactions, Hawkey (1994)

suggests, “demonstrate a readiness to air concerns with a peer. It may be that within the familiar nonthreatening environment of working with another peer, novices are more willing to express anxieties than with a tutor or mentor” (p. 142). While Hawkey concludes that there are benefits in collaborative planning, teaching, and post-lesson conferences, she suggests the need for further research to determine the extent to which peers can offer support as well as appropriate challenge, which is essential to the development of critical reflection. Other key questions emerging from Hawkey’s (1995, p. 182) research that are addressed by this study are:

- What and how do peers learn from each other?
- What is the effect of the prevailing school culture on collaborative learning to teach?
- What is the effect of different factors (such as previous experience and outlook, gender, style, and stage in development) on the dynamics of peers working together?

A key factor for exploration in this study is race. How are issues of race, race relations, and antiracism taken up in teacher education scholarship? How are preservice teachers prepared to work in multiracial schools, and how do participants in teacher education respond to an antiracism pedagogy? The introduction of the “race factor” in cooperative learning environments may well generate a kind of synergy that is more complex to unravel.

CROSS-RACE COLLABORATION IN LEARNING TO TEACH

The persistence of “ethnic encapsulation” and racial homophily throughout elementary and secondary schooling (Hallinan & Teixeria, 1987; Solomon, 1992; Tatum, 1997) has led sociologists to believe that such patterns of social relations will likely persist in postsecondary institutions and professional schools. A disturbing trend in these studies is that although there were opportunities for positive intergroup relationships, the gradual development of racial identities and same-group peer relations tend to polarize rather than build bridges between racial and ethnic groups. Such a trend carries the potential to generate and perpetuate prejudice and stereotypes because of own-group cleavages and mutual ignorance. Schenke’s (1993) study of intergroup relations in a teacher education program provides empirical evidence of own-group cleavages in professional schools. Her analysis of the social dynamics between dominant and minority racial groups learning to teach in an environment without deliberate provisions for productive cross-group interaction raises many questions around the per-

ception of racial differences as deficit, the fear of tokenism, reverse discrimination, and the setting up of defensive barricades by each group.

Further research points to other factors that inhibit productive intergroup relations in teacher education for race- and ethnoculturally diverse societies such as Britain, Canada, and the United States. Candidates bring to the process of learning to teach entrenched and often contradictory conceptions of diversity and difference, especially when dealing with issues of race, culture, and ethnicity (Ahlquist, 1992; Short, 1992; Solomon, 1995; Young & Buchanan, 1996). Their attitudes and perspectives make it difficult for them to learn from the norms, values, traditions, knowledge, competencies, and experiences of the "other." The traditional teacher education curriculum and pedagogy do not interrogate candidates' worldviews, nor urge them to engage in critical self-reflection on their identities or their impact on learning to teach. Those teacher educators who attempt this process are met with covert and overt resistance (Ahlquist, 1992; Sleeter, 1992a; Solomon, 1995). Indeed, the creation of a learning environment where candidates of diverse backgrounds can enrich each other's personal and professional lives and increase their teaching repertoires is never realized.

In Canada, Sears' (1991) project of pairing dominant group prospective teachers with international students, recent immigrants, Native Peoples, and other Canadians of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds proved rewarding to some degree. Beyond the exposure to other cultural perspectives, prospective teachers were challenged to discover the limits of their perspectives. But such contacts were transitory, with little potential for the development of long-term personal and professional relationships.

The design of the cross-race dyad system in this study transcends Sears' conception, and uses as its framework Lynch's (1987) interethnic/interracial contact model to reduce intergroup polarization and entrenchment, and build, instead, productive collaboration among student groups. Lynch proposes a change model that modifies not only individual (or group) characteristics, but also the structural and organizational characteristics of the learning environment. The main features of such an interethnic, and interracial, contact model adapted and summarized from Lynch (p. 121) are:

- the contact must be equal status, and must be manifestly supported by the authority of the institution;
- the contact within the group should be on a collaborative basis, and there should be a similarity of competence level among the group members;
- the contacts should be continuous rather than transitory, and there should be opportunities to interact with outgroup members as individuals; and

- there should be explicit superordinate goals for the group as a whole, and the work of the group must stand a good chance of success.

The research literature has debated the merits and demerits of “social engineering” or “contrived collegiality” in teacher professional development. On the demerit side of the ledger, Hargreaves (1991) found contrived collegiality (from school administrators) to be an imposition: inflexible, inefficient, over-managed, and a stance that overrides teacher professionalism. He concludes, “[It] is constitutive of socio-political and administrative systems that are less than fully serious about their rhetorical commitment to teacher empowerment” (p. 69).

But on the contrary, the contrived collegiality model utilized in this study of teacher candidates emerges from what Hargreaves and others describe as the collaborative culture domain. Here, relationships are not prefigured but are shaped by such factors as classroom context (i.e., associate teachers’ support, the personality of dyad partners, and partnerships’ work rhythms and teaching experience). There is also an explicit understanding that partners who are incompatible will be given the opportunity to work individually, while productive and supportive relationships may continue beyond the predetermined termination time. Essentially, this model provides the structural arrangements for candidates to grow across racial boundaries.

DESIGNING CROSS-RACE DYAD PARTNERSHIPS

Participants in the cross-race dyad system were teacher candidates who were already admitted to a Canadian university’s one-year B.Ed. program and who volunteered for the Diversity Initiative in Teacher Education. This project was a result of a special provincial government initiative to meet the needs of the emerging racial and ethno-cultural diversity in the province’s schools and communities. From its inception in 1994 to 1997 three cohorts each of forty-four teacher candidates were selected representing the race and ethnocultural diversity of the school communities served by the university. The design of the program dictated the selection of two evenly matched racial groups: candidates of European-Canadian heritage often referred to as the dominant group (for example, British, Italian, Jewish, French), and racial minority candidates primarily of African and Asian-Canadian heritages (for example, West Indian, Indian, Pakistani, Chinese, and Japanese).

In this study, the concept of race is taken up as a social construction marked by such visible traits as skin color, facial features, and other somatic characteristics; race is not perceived as a biological fact. The application of rigidly constructed categories in this study is, to some extent, problematic.

Omni and Winant (1993) and Yon (2000) warn that racial categories such as “dominant” and “minority,” “white” and “people of color” are complex and unstable. They are socially produced and will, therefore, shift over time and with sociopolitical circumstances. Here, the homogenization of diverse ethnicities, cultures, and nationalities into two social categories, whites and people of color, was to provide a less complex conceptual and analytical framework with which to work. Indeed, such categories are common, taken-for-granted social markers in racialized societies and served very well the purposes of this study.

At the outset, group-building activities at the university site provided the opportunity for candidates to develop a strong cohort culture, while theory-based assignments emphasized collaboration and team planning and execution. Field placements in practicum schools were arranged in smaller cohorts of four, six, or eight evenly numbered candidates of dominant and racial minority backgrounds. Cross-race partnerships of two candidates per classroom evolved on the basis of candidates’ grade level choices, their essential directive being that candidates from the same racial group could not share the same classroom. These partnerships extended into the ethno-cultural communities served by the school, where teacher candidates were expected to engage in some form of social or educational project. Program expectations were that dyad partners would develop a working relationship, utilize each other’s cultural knowledge, experiences, and resources, jointly observe and discuss the teaching-learning process in their practicum classroom, jointly prepare and team-teach lessons, and participate as a team in post-lesson debriefings with their associate teacher. The associate teachers were veteran professionals selected by the school principal to host and mentor candidates placed in their classrooms. Orientation to the rationale and functioning of the dyad system was provided for all field-based personnel related to the program. The dyad structure remained in effect for most of the candidates’ practicum experience: two days per week throughout the year in addition to two teaching blocks of two weeks for the first and second terms. At the beginning of the second term, when candidates switched from the primary to junior division (or vice versa), they teamed with another partner who was again racially different. For the final teaching block of three weeks in term three candidates had the option of working independent of partners.

For the research component of the project, data gathering strategies included individual and focus group interviews conducted by research assistants from white and people-of-color groups, the observation of dyad partners in their practicum settings, analysis of journal entries, and end-of-year written evaluations of the dyad system by all three cohorts (C1, C2, C3). Teacher candidates’ selection for interviews was based on practicum personnel’s (associate teachers’, adjunct professors’, and practicum supervisors’)

perception of partnerships as achieving or not achieving the dyad system's objectives. Over the three-year research period, approximately half of the 132 candidates participated in either individual or focus group interviews. Interviews were semi-structured and explored such issues as previous exposure to extended cross-race interaction, impact of the "race factor" on learning to teach, specific learning opportunities from dyad partner about racially diverse classrooms, dyadic relationships as collaborative or competitive, equitable or inequitable treatment of partners by supervisory personnel, and the modeling of cross-race collaboration in the classroom. These were also key issues in the observation guide used in practicum classrooms and highlighted in candidates' journal entries and end-of-year reflections.

For the analysis of these data the principles of "constant comparative" methods were employed (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987). Patterns and themes from the coded data of year one generated questions for interrogation in subsequent years of the study. Triangulation of data from the different sources continued to strengthen emerging patterns and helped formulate generalizations about dyad partnerships.

This qualitative approach was instrumental in capturing the feelings and experiences of teacher candidates learning to teach collegially in a competitive school environment. The findings that follow in the first part of this article are reported primarily through candidates' (pseudonyms used throughout) narratives as they shared their positive experiences; in the second section of this article, the challenges posed by social difference and racial preference in teacher education and teaching are explored.

PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF CROSS-RACE DYAD PARTNERSHIPS

The findings in this study indicate that peer partnerships inject quality interaction into the process of learning to teach. Candidates' narratives revealed rich benefits in the development of pedagogical competencies and the provision of emotional support for partners. In the area of lesson preparation, dyad partners created opportunities to plan lessons at their practicum schools, at the teacher education site, on the telephone, and by visiting each other's homes. The following excerpt captured the extent of team planning:

We did all the planning together. . . . We brainstormed together, we researched together, wrote down the "Web" together. We talked a lot about how the lessons were going to go, and thought about different ways of presenting them.

At the lesson presentation stage dyad partners were equally enthusiastic about team teaching and were anxious to learn from each other's teaching style, perspectives, and experiences. One candidate emphasized the

importance of observing her partner teach: “You learn to teach not only by standing at the front of the class; you can learn to teach by observing your partner from the back of the classroom.” Another claimed, “My dyad partner offered a much different perspective on learning.” The other dimension of learning to teach that was valued by dyad partners was post-lesson conferences. Often, these discussions between partners continued and encompassed much more than the associate teacher’s contribution. The following interview excerpt captured the intensity of the debriefing exercise:

Any lesson that my partner or I ever did we’d always go back over it and say, “What could you have done differently?” On the way home we always talked about the day’s lesson, or things that transpired; and to be honest, we were always each other’s best, and worst critics too.

These narratives provided powerful insights into the many advantages of a dyad system in developing teaching competencies.

Researcher observation of partnerships in practicum classrooms and follow-up interviews with them revealed that candidates brought different strengths and weaknesses to their pedagogical tasks and gained from each other’s experiences and teaching styles. At the emotional level, candidates revealed the benefits of a peer support system to cope with the pressures of program intensity, the frustrations of a “lesson gone wrong,” and the anxieties of learning to teach in competitive school cultures.

More important for this study, however, are the benefits that are derived from candidate collaboration across races. As will be detailed later, cross-race dyad partnerships provided the structure for candidates of different racial, ethnic, and cultural heritages to develop productive work relationships and to deal with diversity and difference in a positive way. Such partnerships helped to break down racial barriers, tackle sensitive racial and cultural issues, and explore divergent political perspectives and ideologies. Most importantly, cross-race partnerships prepared candidates to work competently with students and parents of racially diverse backgrounds. Beyond personal and professional growth, some participants revealed that lasting friendships resulted from these partnerships; relationships that extended beyond the classroom into their social lives.

It is important to note that benefits of dyad partnerships are not always clearly articulated in candidates’ narratives. They are often interwoven with the challenges encountered in exploring the sensitive issues of racial difference and diversity within the restricted time frame of an intensive nine-month teacher education program. The themes that follow capture the many ways candidates experienced the dyad system and its impact on their personal and professional growth.

BRIDGING RACIAL BARRIERS THROUGH SUSTAINED DIALOGUE

For both dominant and minority groups the program structure and process broke down, to some extent, the “racial divide” that appeared insurmountable in their prior experiences in other institutional settings. The dyad system provided the organizational structure for inter-group collaboration in teacher education praxis. In keeping with Lynch’s (1987) interethnic contact model, this structure moved well beyond the transitory, fleeting contacts often utilized by traditional programs to build understanding and working relationships across racial lines.² Such sustained contact provided candidates the opportunity to explore, in a structured and supportive learning environment, race-based political ideologies, cultural norms, traditions, and peculiarities. The following are examples of such experiences:

It was a good experience. We spent many hours talking about different things. He was wearing a Malcolm X t-shirt and I wondered to what extent he was sympathetic to Black Muslims because if I had a public enemy number one it would be [that group]. So we talked about that. He was kind of curious about Judaism and we had a really good talk about that when we were doing our narrative assignment. It was supposed to take half an hour, but we just sat and chewed the fat. We talked about meaty issues like Black Power. We did have good conversations, but given the intensity of the program, its relatively short duration, the fact that there was little real time to get really acquainted without the pressure scenario, we didn’t get to know each other as much as we might have. (C1:4, white candidate)³

It was hard not so much on a teaching level, but on a personal level, to relate to things she [dyad partner of color] was saying. . . . But I really had to look at things in perspective and say that that’s the way she grew up, and in her culture that’s the way they do things, and they accept that, but it took a lot of patience for me to be able to accept her. . . . And that’s when I could more and more see the differences between us. I really realized how different we were even tho’ initially I didn’t think we were that different. (C2:10, white candidate)

Yon (2000) argues for the creation of discursive space within institutional structures for students to deal with their racial identities. The above excerpts from teacher candidates’ narratives provide insights into their limited previous exposure to and interaction with the “other,” although they live in a society that embraces diversity in principle. Historically, racial groups in Canada as well as other Western societies such as the United States have lived parallel but not integrated social lives.

For candidates in this study the potential benefits of discursive space were enormous. It increased their capacity for multiple perspectives and

allowed them to reconstitute themselves as more open-minded and less ethnocentric individuals. In the classroom, discursive experiences prepare teachers to create an environment for dialogue. Sustained dialogue across the “racial divide” hopefully will help develop children’s capacity to embrace diversity and difference in the classroom and beyond.

THE ACQUISITION OF AWARENESS AND COMPETENCE TO FUNCTION IN CROSS-RACE DOMAINS

Candidates emerging from racially homogeneous communities and schools came to teacher education with limited knowledge and often a stereotypic preconception of “the other.” Through cross-race partnerships candidates were introduced to an insider’s perspectives on other cultural terrains. Candidates provided entry points to each other’s ethno-cultural communities. The teacher education program’s extended practicum required candidates to know more intimately the communities served by the school and to engage for five hours per week in social and educational projects there. Dyads served with agencies performing such tasks as tutoring in English as a second language (ESL), heritage language, literacy, and citizenship; serving breakfast to needy children; and helping to develop and implement programs for at-risk youths. Such an in-depth involvement of dyad partners moved well beyond the superficial “tourist” study of community. These initiatives are often referred to as “service learning” or community field experiences (see Zeichner & Melnick, 1996). Here, the dyad partnerships provided candidates with a guided immersion into the complex life and functioning of ethno-racial communities and the school’s role within them. Such guided intervention also provided awareness of the cultural knowledge, traditions, and artifacts that are potentially school curriculum materials.

In the excerpts that follow, candidates explain how such exposure helped them develop the self-confidence and competence to interact professionally across racial boundaries in school settings.

Being in a dyad [partnership] gave some direction, it gave some focus, and the focus was two people from diverse backgrounds, and in this case specifically, two different races. Prior to working with my partner I don’t think I was prepared as I am right now. What I’ve learned this year in the lecture room, in my own course work, and my practicum classroom was that I wasn’t prepared before to work closely with someone from a different background. This experience was certainly one of the strong points about this program. (C2:11, candidate of color)

I now have enough self-confidence to go into the classroom. What my partner and I have modelled, what we have discussed, I believe I will be able to transcend racial barriers in the classroom. I can go into a

staff room and interact with different people on a professional level, not based on seeing race, I'll be able to evaluate them as individuals based on what they bring to the relationship. (C2:12, candidate of color)

Because white candidates' lived experiences were almost exclusively in dominant group institutions, their prior level of functioning was not contingent upon familiarity with or knowledge about the "racial other." And as Robertson-Baghel's (1998) research showed, the later in life intergroup contact occurs the more difficult it becomes to shed negative stereotypes and assumptions about the "racial other." Dyad partnerships provided racial identity growth opportunities from an early stage, where candidates were driven by initial preconceptions, to more sophisticated stages of development, and specifically, where white candidates recognized and confronted individual and institutional racism. Some candidates' journal entries indicated that their theoretical explorations of racial identity development models taken up in course work (Tatum, 1992; Helms, 1995), provided useful measures of their stage of development and helped them build plans to achieve more desirable levels of growth.

POSITIVE SOCIAL OUTCOMES OF CROSS-RACE PARTNERSHIPS

Candidates' journal entries, the observation of dyad partners at the teacher education site and in the practicum settings, and interviews with the candidates themselves indicated that cross-race social relationships developed to various degrees from these structures. Post-program follow-up studies showed that the strong emotional bonds that developed moved well beyond the classroom and into the social lives of candidates during and after their initial teacher education experience. Two years after graduation, cohorts were still meeting regularly as an organized group to socialize and dialogue about their work and other ventures. Such reunions were also a source of support for those challenged by the conservatism and inequities of the school cultures in which they teach, and a clearinghouse of information for those who were still seeking employment or exploring further professional and academic studies.

In the excerpts that follow candidates indicate the quality of the reciprocal relationship across racial lines that the dyad system built:

Growing up I never had the experience nor the pleasure of friendship with someone of a minority group. . . . My dyad partner is very valuable to me as a friend and a learning partner. Many of my success stories I owe to my partner. This dyad relationship is a very positive experience and I look forward to more learning experience together. (C3:14, white candidate)

We could be very comfortable about things. What I wanted to learn and what I was curious about I could ask her [dyad partner] openly and we dealt with things from there. We had lot of laughs from things that we thought about each other. She would even say that up until now she had never had a really close White friend. As for myself, I only had one close friend who is Black and one close friend who is Asian. Other than that my friends are mostly whites. But my partner is more like a best friend. (C3:15, white candidate)

In Sleeter's (1993) work on the structuring of immersion experiences of the white candidates she reinforces the importance of an approach that develops "some emotional bonding with members of the [racial minority] group, [which] can propel serious reexamination of his or her perspective" (p. 169). The dyad arrangement satisfied the needs of whites expressed by Sleeter and created the opportunity for both groups to engage in sustained social relationships.

Probably the most important experience of white candidates in cross-race partnerships is learning how racism operates in institutions such as schools. As one candidate of color discovered, "It is necessary that you pair a person of color with one of the dominant group because it's putting the whole issue of race, racism, and power relations 'in your face.'" Dominant-group individuals in Canadian society have habitually denied the existence of racism in their institutions (Solomon & Levine-Rasky, 1994; Henry, Tator, Mattis, & Rees, 1995; Alladin, 1996). Until this stage in their education, some white candidates had maintained that the educational system is meritocratic, and that teachers within the system are fair, impartial, and "colorblind" (Solomon, 1995; Robertson-Baghel, 1998). This naive or ideologically strategic stance is partly responsible for widespread resistance to antiracism pedagogy developed to eliminate racism in schools and society (James, 1995; Dei, 1996; Solomon & Levine-Rasky, 1996; Carr & Klassen, 1997). People of color who reported racist victimization were often perceived to be "crying wolf." Without a perceptive and impartial third party witness to the perpetration of racism, this subordinating and demoralizing act had become a "witnessless" crime.

Dyad partnerships provided white candidates with the opportunity to witness how school agents routinely and often unconsciously engage in differential behavior based on race. They were now privy to the process of racial marginalization, explored in the next section, as they watched their partners of color be denied privileges, be assumed to be less capable than whites, and be over-scrutinized as they learned to teach. As insightful pre-service teachers, they concluded that such differential school practices were also afforded students of color. Given such an exposure to and acknowledgement of the stark realities of racism in schools, the dyad system will be

better able to prepare white candidates to respond to individual and institutional racism.⁴

How did candidates of color benefit from cross-race dyad partnerships? Because some have had to operate almost exclusively in dominant-group institutions with white colleagues, critics argue that their learning curve in the dyad system may not be as steep as that of their white partners. But it is not difficult to see how colleagues of color who are immigrants from societies where they were the majority gain valuable insights into the “cultural capital” required to penetrate the “culture of power” in dominant-group institutions. By their close association with their white colleagues, they developed a better understanding of power relations in institutional settings, and learned the skills required to negotiate such power and concomitant resources. Delpit’s (1988) pedagogical strategy of exposing minority children to the culture of power is applicable here for these candidates of color. Their white partner’s explanation of how this operates was of benefit to candidates of color. For some, their “equity-conscious” white partners provided a “reality check” on their attitudes toward the dominant group. Here, one candidate elaborates:

Interacting with a lot of dominant group candidates in my [teacher education] class I became very discouraged. They were not naming their power and privilege, and when you call them on it, they reacted negatively. I started to get very discouraged and I kept generalizing, “Oh my, they [white people] are all like that; they’ll never understand.” But my dyad partner, she is my reality check. By her behavior and understanding, she was the person who said, “No, all the people from the dominant group are not like that.” (C3:17, candidate of color)

Dyad partnerships temporarily sheltered candidates of color from overt forms of racism. Although this study uncovered evidence of “dysconscious” racism, defined by King (1991, p. 135) as “an uncritical habit of mind that justifies inequity and exploitation by accepting the existing [racial] order of things as given,” equity conscious white dyad partners acted as a deterrent to overt practices of racism by school personnel. As we shall see later in this study, perceptive whites have often detected racism directed at their partners and some have strategized to act against it. Such a response had the potential to make the practicum environment a more wholesome and equitable place for candidates of color.

To conclude, the findings of this section indicate that the organizational characteristics of learning environments can be transformed to create opportunities for the acquisition of cross-group awareness and competence to work effectively with social difference. The awareness of how environments

may be transformed to facilitate “cross-border” learning is an essential awakening for those preparing to teach in racially diverse settings.

CHALLENGES TO DYAD PARTNERSHIPS

Despite the many benefits of cross-race collaboration in learning to teach, this study uncovered personal, institutional, and systemic factors that challenged the concepts and practices of the dyad partnerships. Extremely damning for multiracial school systems are the ways these factors interact with race to restrict, marginalize, and subordinate candidates of color in their quest to become teachers. Perhaps the biggest challenge to partnerships is differential treatment of candidates based on race. The findings strongly implicate some practicum personnel (associate teachers and adjunct professors) in perceiving and responding to candidates of color as subordinate and deficient members in the dyad partnership. Such a perception had tremendous influence on the communication process between dyad members and practicum supervisors, on candidate-driven curriculum innovations, and on the level of control and authority minority candidates were allowed to exercise in practicum classrooms. The following narratives from both dominant-group members and racial minorities make explicit the debilitating and dysfunctional impact of racism, not only on candidates of color, but also on their dominant group partners.

ANXIETY-GENERATING SCRUTINY OF CANDIDATES OF COLOR

Practicum supervisors’ microscopic examination of candidates of color as objects in the classroom proved to be anxiety provoking, tension ridden, destabilizing, and a retardant to learning to teach. This tension is described by a white candidate:

The AP [Adjunct Professor] was brutal. I would have been paranoid if I’d undergone the scrutiny [my dyad partner received]. I wondered if it was because he was a male or because he was from a very different culture from those who were evaluating him. We had probably about one third of the classroom who were Muslim so the students were very fond of him and identified with him very closely. It was frustrating being his partner because it was impossible to teach with the level of anxiety that there was on both of us. (C1:1, white candidate)

The anxiety-generating scrutiny experienced by candidates of color in the practicum setting also extended to their curriculum content and pedagogy. The following excerpt provides an example of the ways in which feelings of incompetence and inadequacy were created in candidates who attempted to introduce issues of race and culture into the mainstream

curriculum. It is essential to note that the following incident took place in a school district that has accepted multicultural and antiracism education in principle, and has developed policies and programs for its implementation:

It got to the point in my [teaching] block when I decided to focus on antiracism and multiculturalism, and it appeared as if my philosophy differed greatly from the adjunct professor and associate teacher. . . . What happened was, the adjunct professor totally disagreed with the idea of handling that kind of issue. The times that I was supposed to meet to decide my block they said they didn't get a clear idea of where I was going with my topic, so I met on the second occasion and had full details for everyday. Again, they said they didn't have a clear idea of the direction I was going with my topic. They [associate teacher and adjunct professor] wanted me to bring in all tapes, all books, everything that I was using for my block to the next meeting. When I got there, they wanted to know what I was going to say in exact words. After that I brought the books, I got like 45 books, I brought everything, I went and I followed these little geese [wild goose chase] that I was being put on. Then I got a phone call at home saying don't expect to start my block. At this point the Practicum Supervisor from the University was coming to observe the TCs [teacher candidates] at the school. So that made me really uncomfortable to think that she was coming to the school and seeing that I hadn't started my block. And you know, it appeared as if it was my incompetence [why I wasn't starting] which was the way that this whole situation played out. But I wanted to keep my position; I wanted to go with what would get me through. But that was an experience that I don't ever want to have again. (C2:9, candidate of color)

Two salient issues have emerged from this excerpt that are supported by other research. First, candidates of color who introduced issues of multiculturalism and antiracism pedagogy into traditional classrooms experienced discomfort, feelings of incompetence, and censorship of their teaching materials. Such seeds of self-doubt planted by supervisors have the potential to restrict and stifle creativity and innovation in practicum classrooms. Second, although equity and social justice have been introduced into progressive teacher education scholarship, discontinuities plague the passage of such issues from university lecture-rooms to practicum classrooms. Resistance to the inclusion of critical multiculturalism, antiracism, and other equity issues into the curriculum of schools whose culture is white and mainstream is well documented in the Canadian (Solomon & Levine-Rasky, 1996; Carr & Klassen, 1997), British (Troyna & Williams, 1986; Figueroa, 1991; Bagley, 1992), and American (King, 1991; Sleeter, 1992b; Delpit, 1995) research literature. Faced with such inhospitable learning environments

candidates of color not only had their self-confidence trampled upon and ideals compromised, they ended up conforming to rather conservative notions of curriculum just to get through their program of teacher education. As one candidate concludes, "I never brought in a lot of antiracism materials because I knew there wouldn't be any support for it. The planning structure doesn't allow for it . . . so you end up fitting in what you can." (C1:8, candidate of color)

INTERPRETATION OF DIFFERENCE AS DEFICIT

The findings of this study clearly show that the candidates of color, when compared with their white colleagues, were perceived as deficient or incapable. Such perceptions by the associate teachers resulted in negative evaluations and restricted opportunities for candidates of color.

First term was awful because of the perceptions that our associate teacher had of him [dyad partner of color]. I spent a great deal of time defending him and trying to get her [associate teacher] to see that his methods were just different, they weren't worse, they were just different. I was better at mimicking what was expected of us. . . . I thought that was very, very unfair. (C1:2, white candidate)

This quotation raises a number of issues in teacher education. The first has to do with methodological essentialism and the expectation that candidates learn to teach by imitating veteran teachers. This approach potentially reproduces methodological sameness in an environment where the student population is becoming more diverse and requires pedagogically responsive teaching. Another issue for candidates is that the apprenticeship model of learning to teach quickly sorts and labels those who mimic as good learners and others who don't as deficient. Such value judgments encourage prospective teachers to fit into the hidden curriculum of associate teachers and discourage them from engaging in critical pedagogy. Candidates of color in this study who maintained a critical stance were often perceived to be deficient in their adaptability to appropriate classroom practice.

Another perceived deficiency of candidates of color is their "lack of presence" in the classroom:

I was told [by my associate teacher] that I didn't have quite the presence my [White] partner had. But meanwhile I was the one asked, "How do you have blue eyes and this color skin? Are you Jamaican? Are you this? Or, how do you know how to say that?" And she [dyad partner] wasn't interrogated as I was. It made me feel like I have to do much more to be appreciated as much as my partner was. (C3:16, candidate of color)

Candidates of color see themselves as highly visible and even as curiosities in the traditionally white workforce, as well as being those who personify difference and bring new knowledge and perspective to the learning environment. Yet the meaning of “presence” that some associate teachers construct may be from two particular and related realities. First, the concept of teacher presence emerges from a set of hegemonic practices and expressions of legitimizing authority. This is what Bourdieu (1977), Delpit (1988), and others describe as cultural capital. The second related reality is one of cross-cultural confusion on the part of dominant group teachers (Delpit, 1995). They use their limited cultural framework, which they perceive as the norm, to negatively assess the pedagogical style of those who teach differently. Finally, the perception of candidates of color as deficient restricted their teaching opportunities in practicum classrooms, as the following excerpt indicates:

The associate teacher was still at the stage where she was trying to give the basic steps to my dyad partner. But when I went on my own I was to do more open activities and “risk take.” Without my dyad partner I was able to have control of the room, where prior to this, the associate teacher did not feel secure leaving the room with my dyad partner there. (C2:13, white candidate)

The cross-race dyad system reawakened the notion that people of color need whites as a crutch to survive in dominant-group institutions. Despite the clarified objectives of paired sharing across the racial divide, some teachers remained entrenched in their ideology that candidates of color will be a burden to their white counterparts and the teaching profession as a whole. This is evident from the following:

In the second week [of practicum], I wasn’t there and she [associate teacher] told my partner, “You know, it’s okay, you don’t have to carry her, you know, it’s okay, you don’t have to carry her.” I had never taught a lesson in her class, but she had already decided that I wasn’t going to be a good teacher. She already had that barrier up against me. (C1:7, candidate of color)

MARGINALIZATION IN THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS

Race also mediated the pattern of communication between associate teachers and dyad partners. Researchers’ observations within practicum classrooms revealed that the quality and frequency of associate teachers’ interaction with white candidates far outweighed those with candidates of color. Such preference was evident in the following interview excerpts:

People would speak more often to me. There was that kind of ongoing difficulty, but especially in the beginning, that kind of ongoing comfort-to-comfort feeling, White people to White people. (C1:3, white candidate)

I don't know if it's because I tend to be talkative, but there were times when I was in school that I thought it was because they [teachers] were the same [white] group as me, and they weren't necessarily connected with Joan [dyad partner of color] and maybe they felt more comfortable talking with me. (C1:5, white candidate)

I find that most of the time when Phyllis [partner of color] and I deal with authorities, people are usually paying more attention to me. . . . I think people look at me more, they make more eye contact and give me more feedback. I mean, they talk to Phyllis with the occasional reference, even if I don't say anything, so I find that discriminating. Our first associate teacher was very much like that; he gave a lot more attention to me. I pointed that out to Phyllis and she kind of brushed it off; but I think it would bother me. I didn't do anything about it. If I had done something about it I think it would have been like the White girl's saving the day. So, I let Phyllis handle it the way she wanted to. (C1:6, white candidate)

In a practicum environment where ongoing verbal communication is an essential dimension of learning to teach, the marginalized is obviously disadvantaged, especially in a competitive school culture. These cross-race communication patterns are laden with meanings and send strong messages about the hierarchies that exist in the social structure of the classroom and in the larger social system.

The meanings white candidates attached to their communication experience point to broken bridges across the racial divide in North American societies; the lack of connectedness between dominant and minority racial groups; and the apparent discomfort in some cross-race interactions. While the dyad structure provided an opportunity for growth in cross-race relationships, developing strategies to change the racial culture at the institutional level is a great challenge.⁵

Their experience of subordination and marginality in learning to teach in dominant-group settings does not surprise some candidates of color. Yet they strive for respect and acceptance as is evident here: "I think I knew all along the difficulties that are present in working with especially somebody who's White and from the dominant group. For me, the biggest problem is just trying to get the White person's respect." (C3:18, candidate of color)

Siraj-Blatchford's (1990) study of teacher candidates' experience in British schools concurs with my findings. She concludes, "School practice pro-

vided the worst experiences of racial discrimination for many black students" (p. 7). Restricted teaching opportunities, the censoring of learning materials, and the overbearing monitoring of their pedagogy place them at risk, and plant in them seeds of incompetence, self-doubt, and inadequacy. They end up with compromised goals and restricted professional growth (Crozier & Menter, 1993). To avoid conflict and confrontation they lower their aspirations by "just doing what would get them through." As Liston & Zeichner (1991) conclude, candidates become disempowered apprentices simply implementing prepackaged curricula.

DISCUSSION

The study was designed to examine the extent to which intergroup collaboration advances the process of learning to teach. The findings, however, provide deeper insights into personal and institutional construction of race and racism. The experiences of candidates in schools revealed how racial domination is constructed and executed and the ways in which such execution served to subordinate people of color and limit the development of white candidates.

How must we theorize about this racism? Sleeter (1993) and Wellman (1993) urge us to examine structural arrangements among racial groups in the larger society since schools are inextricably related to the social order. This debilitating social problem is not unique to Canada; research conducted in the United Kingdom (Troyna & Williams, 1986; Figueroa, 1991; Bagley, 1992) and the United States (King, 1991; McCarthy & Crichlow, 1993; Sleeter, 1993) provides similar findings regarding schooling in these nations. Such structural analysis of schooling points to the protection of power and privilege by those who hold them. Some white teachers in this study perceive teaching as a race privilege profession and protect it from "the other" in the most inequitable ways. They suspend their moral accountability in constructing candidates of color as deficient, incompetent, and as "a white man's burden."

Teacher educators must therefore accept the challenge of confronting racism and working proactively with candidates and their associate teachers to minimize its impact. According to Short (1992) there is no effective mechanism to screen racist prospective teachers from the profession, and no fool-proof approach to detect racist practitioners in schools. In addition, it might be futile to try to eradicate deep-seated, ideologically entrenched racism, to change those with the pathological need to subordinate others, or to engage those who are unresponsive to rational discourse (Allport, 1954; Short, 1992). Instead, teacher educators must focus on those preservice and in-service teachers who engage in "unintentional racism" (Department of Education and Science, 1985), or "dysconscious racism," an uncritical

habit of accepting and internalizing dominant group justifications for racial inequalities in schools and society (King, 1991).

Therefore, a teacher education agenda for challenging racism and dealing with racial difference must include an antiracism pedagogy that helps teacher candidates and their associates locate themselves at the genuine stage of their racial identity development.⁶ From their location in this framework they can plan to develop the awareness, knowledge, and skills that are essential to function at a higher cognitive and pedagogical level in multiracial classrooms. This agenda should also focus on the development of a consciousness among teachers that moves beyond a neutral “color-blind” framework to a more politically and morally informed orientation. As Cochran-Smith (1995) warns, “color-blindness and basket making are not the answers” when confronting racial diversity in teacher education and teaching.

Teacher education institutions, in collaboration with practicum schools, must investigate the field-based practicum component of their program. This study has revealed how easily a conceptually sound dyad principle was subverted in practice, giving way to a more racially inequitable system of practices. The first task in reconstructing practica is to recruit school personnel who are sensitive to equity issues and knowledgeable about antiracism pedagogy. Recent studies have shown teachers of color to be more supportive than their white colleagues in the use of antiracist education to change school culture (Solomon & Levine-Rasky, 1994; Carr & Klassen, 1997). Teacher educators should, therefore, move to recruit those practitioners who are ready and willing to provide an equitable learning environment for all candidates.

The second task is to engage in teacher development all personnel engaged in the business of practica. An interesting approach is to encourage associate teachers, teacher candidates, and practicum supervisors to become communities of learners exploring these issues together (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993;⁷ Norquay, 1996). The content and process of these development programs are key to their success. The findings of this study would be invaluable content in raising the consciousness of those who engage in “dysconscious racism.” The importance of community building as process is that it reduces the knowledge gap that tends to exacerbate social relationships between practicum personnel and candidates in the classroom environment. A community of learners also can overcome the strained power relations that often lead to what Menter (1989) terms “teaching practice stasis,” and tackle sensitive issues in a collegial way. Most important, such a professional development structure brings together in a nonthreatening environment the theoretical perspectives learned by candidates in the teacher education lecture room and the wealth of classroom experience of veteran teachers. Such theory–practice interface is critical for the development of teachers across their professional life span.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHER EDUCATION

To conclude, this study sought to explore the impact of race on the process of learning to teach. The design and implementation of cross-race dyad partnerships provided the opportunity to explore what and how whites and candidates of color learn from each other, and determined the extent to which Lynch's (1987) interethnic/interracial contact model could be effectively implemented in a preservice teacher education program.

In summary, the findings indicate that the program structure provided a discursive space that drew candidates out of their own-group cleavages and into a broader intergroup domain. Sustained dialogue, an ongoing professional and social interaction between partners, and exposure to the racial nuances of their practicum schools enabled them to evolve from a superficial understanding of racial difference and race privilege to a more critical perspective of how race impacts people's lives in institutional settings. These critical insights prepared prospective teachers, especially whites, to move away from their liberal "color-blind" view of working with racial diversity, to take up a more critical "color-conscious" perspective. Such a heightened sensitivity to race and schooling is essential for working equitably in today's multiracial schools.

Further, cross-race dyad partnerships provided strategic entry points into others' race and ethno-cultural domains. This dyadic approach to community fieldwork provided candidates with an insider's perspective into the lived experiences of the "other." This awareness allowed candidates to make informed and worthwhile social, cultural, and educational contributions to the children and youth of the communities in which they were working. By the same token, candidates became aware of the abundant cultural resources that could potentially enrich the school curriculum.

For the teacher educator, this research reinforces the fact that environments can be restructured to achieve desired outcomes. Throughout the study, candidates acknowledged that this restructuring of relationships "generated excitement," "served as an eye-opener," and "provided for confrontation with racism and power relations." This research signals the urgent need for teacher educators to abandon the conventional approaches and explore transformative arrangements that are more in tune with a rapidly evolving multiracial society.

But there are challenges to overcome in the implementation of progressive designs such as cross-race dyad partnerships. Lynch's (1987) interethnic/interracial contact model stipulates that for contact arrangements to be productive, they must be manifestly supported by the authority structure in which they function. This study uncovered the ways in which practicum school agents subvert the dyad system and restricted its potential. Associate teachers and others did not perceive and treat whites and candidates of

color as equals; in fact, some engaged in the production of incompetence in some candidates of color. Further, within the competitive culture of practicum schools, the principle of collaboration gave way to competitive individualism.

These findings have serious implications for teacher education in multi-racial societies. Teacher educators are challenged to develop and implement an approach to inter-group collaboration that is less vulnerable to the institutional culture of racism. Field-based practica as a vital dimension of learning to teach must operate within an “equity conscious” environment. Teacher educators must work toward the development of a more controlled practicum environment that ensures continuity of equity principles from the university lecture room to practicum classrooms. Practicum personnel therefore must embrace the principles and practices of equity, social justice, and antiracism education. Lawrence and Tatum (1997) have documented some positive outcomes of antiracism professional development. Further research must continue to explore reliable ways of selecting and working constructively with field-workers in the business of practica. Only then may initiatives such as cross-race dyad partnerships realize their full potential.

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Notes

1 In this study “teacher candidates” are those who are engaged in initial teacher education. They are also referred to as “student teachers” or “preservice teachers.” “Associate teachers” refers to the teachers in whose classroom teacher candidates are placed for field-based practica. They are also referred to as “host teachers,” “cooperating teachers,” or “mentor teachers.” In some teacher education models associate teachers are seen as “master teachers” to whom candidates are apprenticed. The adjunct professor is the liaison between practicum schools and the teacher education facility and has the responsibility of evaluating candidates. The practicum supervisor is university based and is ultimately responsible for the practicum component of teacher education.

2 Some teacher education programs encourage visits to ethnic communities and interviews with racial or ethnic minorities to develop familiarity with difference and diversity. In such situations contacts are superficial and transitory, and the interviewer–interviewee relationship is unequal. This is typical of the traditional anthropological research approach to “studying the natives.”

3 Interview respondents are identified by codes. C1:4, white candidate indicates cohort year one, respondent 4, who is a white teacher candidate.

4 There is no guarantee that white candidates will intervene on their partner's behalf since some benefit from this inequitable treatment by school personnel. This is what some observers describe as "living off the avails of racism."

5 At the classroom and school levels white candidates have started engaging in a strategy of moving their partners of color from the margins to the inner circle of communication through the process of deflection. This strategy, using verbal and nonverbal cues, entails deflecting questions and comments from school personnel to candidates of color. Inclusive communicative relationships develop in a nonconfrontational way.

6 Emerging research in racial and ethnic identity development has provided a framework or model for the examination of people's level of growth (Tatum, 1992; Helms, 1995). Although these models are themselves evolving, they provide their users with strategies for growth to a higher level of functioning in a multiracial society.

7 Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) describe Project Start (University of Pennsylvania) as an opportunity for teacher candidates, associate teachers, and university supervisors (teacher educators) to engage regularly as a community of learners. Such school-site meetings provide learning opportunities on a variety of themes (e.g., language and literacy; community-school relationships; race, class, and gender in schooling) using a variety of strategies for inquiry (e.g., critical discussion, case studies, literature study, journals [individual and collaborative], and collaborative analysis of classroom data).

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