

# Preparing Teachers With Sociocultural Knowledge in Literacy: A Literature Review

Journal of Literacy Research

1–20

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DOI: 10.1177/1086296X19833575

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## Abstract

Although the call for teachers to address the demographic imperative has existed for decades, recently, there has been an uptake of frameworks of multicultural education, culturally responsive pedagogies, critical literacy, and others into literacy teacher preparation. In this study, we examine connections that pre-service teachers make as a result of experiences focused on sociocultural knowledge and literacy and barriers they face in building these connections. Areas of connection include examining one's past; recognizing students' lives and resources in literacy teaching; considering race, racism, and students' racial identity; drawing on multilingualism as a strength of students for literacy learning; and engaging actively and inquiring into literacy.

## Keywords

diversity, pre-service teachers, culturally and linguistically diverse, culturally relevant, social justice

The paradox of education is precisely this—that as one begins to become conscious one begins to examine the society in which he is being educated. The purpose of education, finally, is to create in a person the ability to look at the world for himself, to make his own decisions, to say to himself this is black or this is white, to decide for himself whether there is a God in heaven or not. To ask questions of the universe, and then learn to live with those questions, is the way he achieves his own identity. But no society is really anxious to have that kind of person around. What societies really, ideally, want is a citizenry which will simply obey the rules of society. (Baldwin, 2008)

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In 1963, Baldwin wrote this passage in “A Talk to Teachers” to illuminate the effects of systemic racism on Black students in America. Baldwin asserts that teachers must attend to hegemony, or rule by consent, in which the cultural and ideological views of the most powerful in our society are upheld by the everyday practices of people in places such as schools. Activists and scholars have worked tirelessly for decades before and after the civil rights movement to foreground the consequences of hegemony for people and communities from backgrounds that were perceived and positioned as different and deficient. Baldwin asks teachers what they are willing to do to further the work of civil rights activism. Although many years have passed and much work has been done, Baldwin’s caution regarding harm being done to Black and Brown bodies in the United States continues to resonate, as does his call to teachers.

Scholars often cite this reality: An increasing number of students in K–12 U.S. public school classrooms are students of color. In the early 2000s, the White student population was approximately 58% in public elementary and secondary schools (National Center of Educational Statistics, 2017). However, the National Center of Educational Statistics projected at the time that the percentage of White students was decreasing, the percentages of Hispanic and Asian/Pacific Islander students were increasing, and Black and American Indian student percentages were holding steady. According to U.S. Census Bureau predictions, by 2060 the United States will be a “plurality” nation, with no one race in the majority. Currently, approximately 80% of K–12 teachers identify as White women (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Larson and Irvine (1999) called this disparity between students’ and teachers’ demographics a “cultural mismatch,” and two decades later, Harper (2018) maintained the “racial mismatch” between teachers and students was the number one issue in K–12 and higher education. This mismatch, as well as the ways that teachers have engaged in hegemonic practices with students of color, has been the impetus for the work of many literacy teacher educators.

In a themed issue of the *Journal of Literacy Research* on literacy teacher preparation, Xu (2000) proposed “multicultural issues” in educational research had not yet influenced the literacy field, stating that “little attention has been paid to an integration of diversity into literacy methods courses” (p. 506). Sixteen years later, in a Literacy Research Association (LRA; 2016) statement, “The Role of Literacy Research in Racism and Racial Violence,” our colleagues called for direct engagement with race and racism in literacy:

Issues of racism are not peripheral to literacy research, and literacy research need not remain peripheral to issues of racism. The [LRA] resolves that we will not ignore issues of racism and become complicit in the perpetuation of racial inequities, neither in the field nor in the organization itself. (p. 1)

. . . LRA acknowledges that racialization (and not only race), and linguisticism (and not only language), are pervasive in the 21st century. (p. 2)

We now pause, as literacy scholars, to ask what we have done to “not remain peripheral to issues of racism” in teacher education. The purpose of this review is to provide a

synthesis of literature and a set of recommendations for teacher educators in literacy to build upon efforts to “disrupt the perpetuation of racial inequalities” in education. Our research question is this: What do we know about how to prepare teachers to teach literacy in ways that disrupt inequalities and lead to more just and equitable educational practices? In this literature review, we synthesize findings of 109 research studies, published since 2000, that respond to the call to prepare literacy teachers to teach students from diverse backgrounds through close attention to sociocultural knowledge.

## Theoretical Frameworks

Sociocultural theory suggests that learning occurs through social interaction and that social interactions are influenced by cultural and historical ways of knowing and doing (Vygotsky, 1980). Brown (2013) points out that “dominant sociocultural knowledge” (p. 319) of Black students—and, we would posit, of culturally and racially diverse students in the United States—is deficit oriented, and that knowledge has been solidified in the minds of teachers before they enter teacher education. What Brown coined “humanizing critical sociocultural knowledge” (p. 331) is a deeper form of sociocultural knowledge that can be drawn upon in flexible ways to act in educational spaces. This knowledge relates to the cultural and linguistic knowledge students bring to the classroom as well as their resources to interrogate and disrupt inequalities. This knowledge is also situated and depends on the “context (historic and local)” (p. 333). Finally, the knowledge is “all-encompassing” (p. 333); it moves beyond curriculum and becomes the context within which the child is educated. Humanizing critical sociocultural knowledge includes tools of inquiry to interrogate and disrupt dominant and deficit discourses as well as construct new, more affirming, and humanizing ways of teaching and learning.

Related frameworks speak specifically to orientations, teaching practices, and, curriculum choices of teachers, including multicultural education (Banks, 1994), culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995), culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2002), funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992), critical literacy (Janks, 2010; Luke, 2012), racial literacy (Guinier, 2004), culturally sustaining pedagogies (Paris & Alim, 2014), and language ideologies (Ruíz, 1984) in relation to bi/multilingualism (Hurie & Degollado, 2017) and race (Flores & Rosa, 2015). Each framework commonly aims to produce a critical consciousness toward texts and social practices.

## Method

We identified articles using a web-based interactive search tool for research in literacy teacher education, CITE-ITEL (see <https://cite.edb.utexas.edu/>). See Maloch and Dávila (this issue) for a detailed description of CITE-ITEL and the process of article selection and initial analysis. For this review (which constituted one of the areas reviewed in CITE-ITEL), we followed Torracó’s (2005) recommendations for conducting an integrative literature review, beginning by defining the scope of the review using our research question. Although several articles published in the 1990s have

relevance to this review (e.g., Chevalier & Houser, 1997; Florio-Ruane, 1994), 2000 is our starting point, based on Xu's (2000) assertion and our observation that this year marked an increase in attention to multicultural perspectives in literacy teacher preparation. We only included articles reporting on studies in which preservice teachers (PTs) were the participants and the students referenced in the research (actual or future students) were culturally or linguistically diverse.

We followed a systematic methodology for reviewing articles that fit our criteria (Torraco, 2005). We read abstracts and findings to determine whether articles used frameworks we included in our centering question. To analyze the 109 articles we located, we recorded several features, including the number of participants, theoretical frameworks, duration of the study, context of the study (i.e., a methods course or methods course with practicum), methodology, year published, and publishing journal. We recorded the positionality of PT participants as described by the authors (i.e., race, class, religion, language). We also recorded researcher positionality with these same descriptors as well as their experiences in diverse schools and commitments. We did not record details regarding the course context, such as grade levels or course topics.

Our work was to construct conceptual understandings of what it means to prepare literacy teachers with sociocultural knowledge in teacher education and the barriers to such work. We chose the term *barriers* to describe what came between the researcher/teacher educator's work in the course or experience and their goal of building sociocultural knowledge and literacy. We sought to synthesize the findings of the articles as well as illuminate silences in the research (Torraco, 2005). We asked a series of analytic questions related to our main research question to open-code each article: How was diversity addressed from the researcher's perspective (i.e., culture, linguistic background, race)? What were the course experiences that researchers studied when they were interested in PTs connecting sociocultural knowledge to literacy teaching? We then looked more specifically at the findings of each study and asked, What were the connections that PTs made between sociocultural knowledge and literacy teaching as a result of these experiences? What barriers arose when PTs were asked to take up sociocultural knowledge in their course experiences?

Using the code "connections" as an organizer, we collapsed the codes into seven categories that were stated as findings, such as "Knowing your students' interests, funds of knowledge, and/or seeing them as individuals changes/shapes literacy teaching practices." We then sorted articles by these codes and reread the article groups together. After a reanalysis of each group, we were able to collapse categories and confirmed five that comprehensively represented the findings in terms of connections: "Examining one's self and experiences" (31/109); "Recognizing students' lives and resources in literacy teaching" (62/109); "Considering race, racism, and students' racial identity" (16/109); "Understanding multilingualism as a strength for literacy" (20/109); and "Engaging actively and inquiring into literacy" (22/109). We then reexamined our coding. As we thought about how the PTs made connections and the barriers they faced, subcategories emerged (e.g., "the PTs came to use universality as a lens to examine their own sociocultural knowledge and their students'" and "the PTs

learned they could leverage language for teaching”). We used these subcategories as organizers for our synthesis. Finally, we returned to our theoretical framework to interpret and discuss the findings.

### **Reflexivity**

Our research team is a racially, religiously, linguistically, and ethnically diverse group of scholars in literacy research who work together at a university to prepare PTs using pedagogical frameworks we discussed above. Our families emigrated from Pakistan, Nigeria, Puerto Rico, Europe, the Middle East, and Mexico. We practice Christianity, Judaism, and Islam and are linguistically diverse as a group. Our experiences as literacy teachers in urban, diverse schools also shape our perspectives and commitments to equity. Before, during, and after each round of coding, we met as a team to reflect together. We exchanged articles during each cycle of analysis to allow for multiple lenses and checks on inclusion and analysis conducted. The multiple perspectives of our research team enabled us to disagree and often investigate the claims of researchers. Together, we grappled with what constitutes learning, and more so transformation, within and across these articles, thereby strengthening our analysis.

### **Findings**

Across 109 articles, teacher educators reported on the learning of PT. *Journal of Literacy Research's* (JLR) supplementary materials contain a full reference list of articles represented by category and article details (see Appendix 1 in the online, supplementary archive [URL supplied by SAGE]). In terms of the duration of the study, 70% of the 109 articles occurred over one or two semesters. Authors defined diversity most often in terms of culture and/or linguistic diversity and/or race. There was little variation in terms of the typical number of participants for each study—most focused on a few PTs or a cohort ( $n = 15-25$ ). The positionality of PTs is difficult to summarize because of the diversity of many participant groups. PTs of color were included and recognized in study methodologies, although they were often a minority in relation to the number of White PTs. We decided not to count raw numbers of PTs of color across the articles as the descriptions of participant populations were not consistently reported. Twenty-three of 109 articles (21%) did not specify PT positionality beyond gender, and 28 (26%) included only White PT participants. Eleven (10%) articles included only PTs of color. The teacher educator was always part of the authorship team in 109 articles, and in 32 (29%) of the articles, researchers identified their positionality, although that percentage ranged greatly across categories (29%-63%). Similarly, 18 articles (17%) included scholars of color ( $n = 17$ ) or queer scholars ( $n = 1$ ). Across categories, 16% to 31% of the articles included scholars with these positionalities. In each section below, we begin with descriptions of what makes each category of articles typical or unique, report the subcategories of each category, and then discuss the findings and barriers within subcategories.

## Examining One's Self and Experiences

Thirty-one (28%) of the 109 articles found that examining one's self and experiences supported PTs' preparation to teach students from diverse backgrounds. This group of articles was typical of the 109 in terms of how diversity was addressed (primarily as culture, linguistic diversity, and race). Thirty-five percent (35%) of the researchers identified their positionalities and 16% identified as scholars of color, similar to the larger group of articles. PTs approached their uptake of sociocultural knowledge in three ways: drawing on "universality," examining their own cultural identities, and recognizing differences.

*Drawing on "universality."* Teacher educators found that PTs consider themselves and people from other cultures as fundamentally similar. Glenn (2012) observed that the term *universality* does not indicate "the same lived realities among people everywhere but intimates instead the shared elements of existence that draw us together as a human species" (p. 335). She found that reading and discussing multicultural literature supported PTs in grappling with diversity through drawing parallels between themselves and the characters of color. Escamilla and Nathenson-Mejia (2003) found the PT participants responded with universalist responses to Latino literature 62% of the time. Finally, Vaughn, Allen, Kologi, and McGowan (2015) explored universality via "text to self" connections in which PTs compared their own childhood experiences with those in the text or in the field, so as "to explore empathy toward one another" (p. 30).

Glenn (2012) argued that a search for universality often led to the "intimation that race doesn't really matter" (p. 336). In these instances when PTs sought universality, they were often unable to recognize the impact of race and racism in the characters' lives, although they were on a path to disrupting neutral ways of seeing universality.

*Reflecting on one's own cultural identity.* PTs also used literature to reflect on their own identities in terms of histories of literacy, culture, ideology, race, language, and gender (e.g., Xu, 2000). For example, Voelker's (2013) participants explored their racial, religious, and "protected" histories when reading "unprotected [controversial] texts" (p. 28). In studies reported by Hammett and Bainbridge (2009) and Strong-Wilson et al. (2014), Canadian PTs examined their national identity while considering their stance on the need for multicultural education. Strong-Wilson et al. (2014) analyzed PTs' cultural understandings in relation to touchstone texts from their childhoods, using nostalgia as a framework to examine the power of the text on the reader. Finally, McNair (2003) described the PTs' resistance to critically reading childhood texts as "hostile" because of the affection they felt toward the literature.

Characteristic of the larger review, many PTs were identified as White across the articles, and often the teacher educators engaged them in deconstructing the racial construct of Whiteness. For example, when Miller (2014) asked PTs to complete equity audits, they recognized (often for the first time) the inherent privileges in their life due to their Whiteness. Several researchers utilized autobiography to elicit this examination (e.g., Murillo, 2010); in some cases in relation to a student of color the PT

was tutoring. In some instances, the PTs resisted taking a “firm position” on racial matters, choosing “instead to muddle in complexity,” possibly to avoid admitting their own racism, or “as a response to rigid dichotomies that leave little room for creating new identities” (Mosley & Rogers, 2011, p. 318). PTs worried they would not be able to implement these practices with children and continued to question the necessity of addressing race in school.

Eight articles explored the experiences of PTs of color examining their own cultural identities. Angela, a bilingual PT, felt that she did not possess the linguistic resources to teach children because she believed she did not “speak correctly” (Haddix, 2010, p. 114). Ultimately, she came to teach students drawing on her hybrid identity and “linguistic reflexivity” (p. 118). Similarly, Escamilla and Nathenson-Mejía (2003) provided evidence to support that “ethnic minority TCs [teacher candidates] . . . made more specific cultural connections to literature than did the white teacher candidates,” whose connections reflected universality (p. 246). In Strong-Wilson et al. (2014) and Murillo (2010), PTs of color told narratives that related to their sociocultural identities and being “othered” in social and school spaces. The two PTs of color in Clark and Medina (2000), on the other hand, wrote narratives to reflect on their journey of coming into literacy and identified the emotional support that was offered to them by family and teachers. Mendelowitz (2017) explored the relationships of language, culture, gender, and identity with PTs of color in a South African context, finding that reading and writing scenarios in which these aspects of identities and relationships were at play extended PTs’ imaginations and critical consciousness in ways that might transfer into their teaching.

Although PTs of color recognized the role of sociocultural knowledge in their own lives and in their future students’ lives, it was not always the case that PTs’ practices centered such knowledge in the classroom. For example, Coulter, Michael, and Poynor’s (2007) study followed two Mexican American PTs through their coursework, student teaching, and first year in the classroom. Coulter et al. (2007) reported that one PT embraced culturally relevant practices during her university experiences. However, in the first year of teaching, she was unable to enact these practices due to the demands and expectations of the institution.

*Recognizing differences.* For many PTs, it was challenging to overcome differences between themselves and their future students. PTs in Monroe and Ruan (2018) and Xu’s (2000) work expressed deficit perspectives about students due to the differences between their cultures and students’ cultures, and in Hermann-Wilmarth’s (2010) study, some PTs questioned whether lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, transgender, queer/questioning (LGBTQ) literature should be part of classroom discussions. Hammett and Bainbridge (2009) found that PTs who read literature about cultures different from their own engaged in “othering” those cultures. Unlike researchers who studied PTs’ engagement with texts centering on race, sexuality, or culture, Pytash (2013) chose texts on bullying and suicide. Ten of 22 PTs in her study had known someone who committed suicide, and the PTs felt they gained insight into those people’s choices, leading to empathy.

## Recognizing Students' Lives and Resources in Literacy Teaching

Sixty-two (57%) of the 109 reviewed articles centered PTs' learning about P–12 students' literate lives and resources. This group of articles was typical in terms of how diversity was addressed. Twenty-nine percent (29%) of articles in this category included researcher positionality, and 16% of articles included researchers who identify as scholars of color. In this set of articles, PTs engaged in direct experiences working with students and what we call “textual experiences” to build sociocultural knowledge for literacy teaching.

*Direct experiences working with students.* Seventeen articles explicitly focused on PTs' learning about and valuing of P–12 students, adult English as a second language (ESL) students, and incarcerated youth, and drew on frameworks associated with race and culture to build PTs' connections between these students' experiences, identities, and literacy teaching.

Researchers found PTs were able to draw on students' resources in their teaching. One approach was for PTs to learn about students' interests (e.g., Lazar, 2001). In one case, PTs used an assessment tool designed to focus attention on three domains of literacy: Cognitive knowledge and skills, cultural and social capital, and personal–social identity (Ellis & Smith, 2017). In other cases, PTs were guided to use a variety of practices that illuminated students' linguistic resources (Souto-Manning & Price-Dennis, 2012), cultural histories (Simon, 2015), and lived experiences (e.g., Escamilla & Nathenson-Mejía, 2003; Xu, 2000). For example, when looking for examples of students' critical media literacy, PTs discovered ways that students brought features of African American language (AAL) into the classroom through their play (Souto-Manning & Price-Dennis, 2012). Learning about students was not limited to experiences in classroom settings, but rather extended to work with nontraditional students (e.g., adults, families; incarcerated youth) and in community sites (e.g., Hallman & Burdick, 2011; Mosley Wetzel, Martinez, Zoch, Chamberlain, & Laudenheimer, 2012; Styslinger, Walker, & Eberlin, 2014). Working side by side with students across different settings supported PTs to know and value the resources that students bring to the classroom, even when these sociocultural understandings were challenged in field settings (e.g., Ticknor, 2015).

In nine articles, PTs struggled to implement the understandings they built through coursework regarding sociocultural knowledge related to students, facing barriers of time, resources, and knowledge (e.g., Brock, Moore, & Parks, 2007). PTs also resisted implementing sociopolitical curriculum because it was not relevant to literacy (e.g., Dávila, 2013; Papola-Ellis, 2016). Sometimes resistance was explicit, for example, when a PT argued against legitimizing AAL in the early childhood classroom (Souto-Manning & Price-Dennis, 2012). PTs expressed concerns about incorporating multicultural literature or critical issues because of the teaching context, for example, due to uncertainties about classroom management or parent support (e.g., Skerrett, Pruitt, & Warrington, 2015; Turner, 2007). Deficit perspectives of students also served as a barrier to PTs' incorporation of pedagogy that drew on their culture and interests (e.g., Assaf & López, 2015; Lazar, 2007; Scherff, 2012).

*Textual experiences.* A second approach to building PTs' sociocultural knowledge was through experiences with literature and other texts. Through explorations of multicultural children's literature, PTs built cultural knowledge of imagined future students and became knowledgeable about texts that connected to students' lives (e.g., Lohfink, 2014). PTs expressed resistance to certain kinds of texts, including urban literature (Haddix & Price-Dennis, 2013), religious-themed texts (Escamilla & Nathenson-Mejía, 2003), and texts addressing sociopolitical issues (e.g., same-sex parenting; Papola-Ellis, 2016). PTs additionally voiced concern about how students might respond to "sensitive topics" in texts (Williams, May, & Williams, 2012).

PTs built understandings of knowing and valuing students' literacies, histories, and cultures through class discussion of shared texts such as professional literature (e.g., Hall, 2009). These discussions allowed PTs to shift beliefs regarding the role of culture and language in teaching (e.g., Clark & Medina, 2000) and construct more nuanced understandings of literacy (Dooley, 2008). In addition, online discussions around professional texts were found to be effective in building understanding of sociocultural influences on learning (Skerrett et al., 2015). Additional examples of textual experiences included a panel discussion about LGBTQ youth and allies (Staley & Leonardi, 2016) and a museum exhibit field trip (Mendoza, 2018).

Some PTs did not see connections between sociocultural knowledge and literacy teaching through these experiences (e.g., Dávila, 2013). At times, White PTs' explorations of multicultural literature sustained stereotypes rather than disrupting them (e.g., Vaughn et al., 2015). Furthermore, PTs also denied the role of race in literacy instruction. Other PTs described fear in bringing literature that contained diversity to the forefront of their teaching, noting the complexity of issues (e.g., Dávila, 2013; Papola-Ellis, 2016). Researchers also indicated that comfort with alternative ways of knowing and confronting one's own Whiteness were barriers to learning about students in ways that would support literacy teaching (e.g., Glenn, 2012; Staley & Leonardi, 2016).

### *Considering Race, Racism, and Students' Racial Identity*

Sixteen (15%) of the 109 articles focused on the work necessary for PTs to explore issues of race, racism, and racial identity in relation to literacy. This group of articles was atypical of the 109 in terms of how diversity was addressed: Race was identified and examined in 100% of the articles (as opposed to 32%–48% in other categories). Also, 63% of researchers identified their positionality and 31% of articles included researchers who identify as scholars as color, much higher than other categories. PTs explored race, racism, and racial inequities through literature, the study of language, and an exploration of social inequalities using a framework of race.

*Exploring race through literature.* One subcategory of articles focused on how PTs can build understandings of race, racism, and racial inequalities when reading and discussing texts. In four articles, researchers focused on how multicultural literature with critical themes might expand PTs' sociocultural knowledge (e.g., McNair, 2003; Schieble, 2011). In addition, two articles documented how PTs gained racial understandings that applied to literacy teaching by reading professional literature focused on

race, White privilege, Ebonics, and inequalities (Lazar, 2001; Skerrett et al., 2015). PTs explored interconnected forms of social inequality and oppression through examinations of their lived experiences, and in two articles, a PT of color additionally extended her classmates' views on race in relation to English education in response to their professional readings (e.g., Skerrett et al., 2015). White participants in Skerrett's study denied the role of race in literacy instruction and the legitimacy and adequacy of frameworks of race and racism to teach English education in diverse settings (see also Schieble, 2011).

*Exploring race through the study of language.* Researchers also pursued racial literacy development through language study of AAL, exploring markers of the language (e.g., Godley, Reaser, & Moore, 2015). Vetter, Schieble, and Meacham (2018) asked PTs to examine their teaching transcripts with a lens of race and language, bringing their attention to identity markers in classroom talk. Souto-Manning and Price Dennis (2012) investigated early childhood PTs' developing understandings of AAL when they explored popular culture texts to critically address issues of inequity and language. Barriers that surfaced as a result of PTs exploring race through the study of language across articles in this subcategory included limited understandings of power dynamics at play in language. In addition, researchers found PTs had very basic understandings of the relationship between language variation and social/racial communities or the relationship between language and identity (Godley et al., 2015) and were often resistant to embrace or acknowledge AAL as acceptable (e.g., Souto-Manning & Price-Dennis, 2012).

*Exploring race through inquiry around social inequalities.* Researchers also reported that PTs pursued racial literacy development through exploration of institutional factors that reproduce racial inequalities (e.g., Dávila, 2011; Miller, 2014; Simon, 2015). This exploration happened through work with inquiry groups with peers and students and through text-based discussions with students. PTs learned about equity data, tracking and other racialized practices, and movements and alliances for racial justice. Although working directly with students seemed to be generative in terms of PTs' knowledge and desire to engaged with race and inequalities, PTs lacked skills to address comments and direct the conversation when working with students. In contrast, Haddix (2012) employed ethnographic and discourse analysis methods with two Black women in a teacher education program. These participants spoke AAL, and in White-dominated settings, they engaged in "counterlanguages" (p. 177), often choosing silence to avoid continued racial positioning. In contrast to the PTs who encountered barriers of lack of skills to address race in lessons and conversations, these PTs were proficient in discussing race from a nuanced perspective of language, power, and diversity.

### *Understanding Multilingualism as a Strength for Literacy*

Twenty (18%) of the 109 articles focused on preparing PTs for linguistically diverse learners. In this set of articles, diversity was addressed primarily in terms of language.

Forty percent (40%) of researchers identified their positionality, and 25% of the articles included researchers who identified as scholars of color. In this group of articles, PTs came to understandings of multilingualism as a strength for literacy learning through two paths: building familiarity with and valuing students' linguistic backgrounds, and leveraging language for teaching.

*Building familiarity with and valuing students' linguistic backgrounds.* In 12 of these articles, researchers found that PTs gained familiarity with students' linguistic backgrounds. Emphasis was placed on how PTs' own experiences as multilingual learners or their previous study of linguistic diversity contributed to their valuing of students' linguistic backgrounds (e.g., de Courcey, 2007; Mohr, Lane, & Sarker, 2010). In Hauerwas, Skawinski, and Ryan (2017), researchers concluded that the PTs were able to empathize with the challenges language learners encounter as a result of their own experiences learning an additional language. Murillo (2010) positioned the PT participants as multilingual and asked them to reflect on their experiences of linguistic marginalization. The PTs realized their experiences were not unique and considered how to transfer these realizations into visions of teaching multilingual learners. Also, when PTs learned about multilingualism as well as students' linguistic backgrounds, their appreciation for those backgrounds grew, and often grew into more nuanced understandings of language as part of culture (e.g., Dooley, 2008; Mahalingappa, Hughes, & Polat, 2017; Murillo, 2010; Pappamihiel, Ousley-Exum, & Ritzhaupt, 2017; Sugimoto, Carter, & Stoehr, 2017). PTs who had lived experiences as multilingual students were often able to make connections that were more difficult for monolingual PTs, who faced barriers in terms of their knowledge of students' linguistic resources (e.g., Mohr et al., 2010).

*Leveraging language for teaching.* Eight articles focused on PTs using language to support students in literacy teaching and shared the context of practicum settings. For example, Wall and Hurie (2017) found that reflection through post-conferences between bilingual PTs and university facilitators enabled three bilingual PTs to draw on their linguistic resources in the conferences and internalize the voices of the facilitators. In Mosley Wetzel et al.'s (2012) study, PTs worked with Spanish-speaking parents, learning collectively, making the curriculum relevant, and making on-the-spot decisions to provide language support for adults (see also Rymes, 2002). Barriers to PTs' learning in relation to multilingualism and literacy learning included their perceived constraints in the school context (e.g., Kaste, 2001). Rymes (2002) found that PTs could have benefited from a critical pedagogy "that emphasizes learner agency but also encourages an understanding of the situated, historical and linguistic limitations and affordances" (p. 447) as a framework to interpret their experiences.

### *Engaging Actively and Inquiring Into Literacy*

Twenty-two (20%) of the 109 articles focused on how PTs engaged in or envisioned engaging in change in regard to their approaches to teaching racially, linguistically,

and/or culturally diverse learners. This group of articles was also typical of the 109 in terms of how diversity was defined. Thirty-six percent (36%) of articles included researcher positionality, 23% involved researchers who identify as scholars of color, and .05% (1 article) involved researchers who identify as queer. In these articles, PTs engaged in inquiry that extended beyond their knowledge of themselves and of their students and to their action in the classroom. Some inquiry work was part of the course design, and at other times it was spontaneous.

*Inquiries around educational inequities.* In five articles, PTs explored educational inequities to build connections between literacy and sociocultural knowledge. PTs in Miller's (2014) study engaged in equity audits, working toward narratives of "the schools' beliefs and ideologies" (p. 56) as connected to literacy instruction. The peer group engaged in sharing as a community, looking at data patterns, and imagining futures for themselves. PTs in Skerrett et al. (2015) explored educational inequities such as gentrification, school segregation, immigrant status, and deficit positioning of linguistic diversity in an online community. One PT, Jasmine, positioned herself as a member of the oppressed, as a "Black girl from an urban neighborhood," and drew from her knowledge to write extensively about racial inequity in her online posts. However, despite Jasmine's "substantive use of racial and related specialist knowledge" (p. 334), her peers struggled to engage specifically with issues of race in their work with each other and often "absorbed it into other paradigms" (p. 335).

*Inquiry and curricular choices.* In eight articles, PTs engaged in inquiry related to curricular choices, creating and at times implementing critical literacy units. Researchers discussed navigating a politicized agenda through inquiry work (e.g., Scherff, 2012). For example, PTs in Skerrett's (2010) study collaborated in groups to create projects for students "to inquire into some political, educational or social issue that held significant social justice consequences" (pp. 57-58). In a revision to the project, the PTs themselves were the learners in the inquiry project, experiencing firsthand the challenges and learning of students doing inquiry work. Each study presented a focal PT who was able to transcend curricular expectations to teach a variety of social-issue topics through critical literacy (e.g., Saunders, 2012). However, across these same articles, other PTs experienced discomfort with the topics and held narrow views of issues that could be explored with students.

*Envisioning agency for the future.* Finally, some teachers expressed a desire to act in their future practice as an outcome of inquiry. PTs recognized the importance of addressing issues of race with students (e.g., Hill, 2012), using place-based pedagogies in instructional decisions (Mendoza, 2018), attending to LGBTQ identities and discrimination (Staley & Leonardi, 2016), and employing drama-based pedagogies to build multiple perspectives in response to text (Brindley & Laframboise, 2002). PTs had opportunities not only to study and explore inequitable social issues but also to envision and develop agency as future teachers. Sugimoto et al. (2017) highlighted a counterexample in which PTs were uncertain how to move forward in their own

practice with English language learners as a result of their experience. Similarly, Dávila and Barnes (2017) found PTs willing to use current political texts, such as President Obama's "A More Perfect Union," but only in contexts where they would face less resistance to a sociopolitical stance. Despite these barriers, the researchers found that the PTs planned to integrate action-oriented literacy teaching in their future practice, bringing students' lives and experiences more centrally into the curriculum.

## Discussion and Recommendations

There is a strong sense of urgency in the field of education to prepare teachers to be responsive to diversity. Not unlike Baldwin's schools, schools today often fail to recognize color, class, sex, ethnicity, language, or gender and their intersections when considering what kinds of curriculum and instruction teachers employ. Rather, schools continue to standardize teaching and learning and in turn to ask students, their families, and communities to create not the person who holds "the ability to look at the world for himself" but instead, a student who "will simply obey the rules of society" (Baldwin, 2008). A racial mismatch between teachers and students (Harper, 2018) is related to such hegemony. To understand how teacher educators in literacy are addressing disparities in educational opportunities and outcomes for students of color, we conducted a synthesis of 109 articles. We explored what we know about how to prepare teachers to teach literacy drawing on sociocultural knowledge. The majority of PTs were White women, and many researchers worked from an unstated or stated assumption that different approaches in teacher education can mediate the potential detrimental effects of the racial mismatch between future teachers and their students.

Promising approaches in the literature included experiences that led PTs to examine their own cultural identity (e.g., Miller, 2014), which seemed important for both White PTs and PTs of color (e.g., Haddix, 2010; Murillo, 2010). Again, for all PTs, it was important that they learned about diversity as deep understandings of the rich cultural resources held within societies, including students' linguistic backgrounds (e.g., Murillo, 2010). PTs also developed tools to extend these understandings of resources to critical perspectives regarding why these resources are so important (e.g., Haddix & Price-Dennis, 2013). In general, practices that were most promising engaged future literacy teachers to question deficit discourses of students that circulate in educational spaces, to acknowledge the social practices that hold inequalities in place, and to shift educational practices in ways that disrupt whiteness and White privilege. In articles within two categories, "Considering race" and "Engaging actively," PTs engaged in inquiry that extended beyond their knowledge of themselves and their students to action in the classroom (e.g., Simon, 2015). Here, racially diverse PTs disrupted ideas of education, power, and privilege. We found in this group of articles the development of the kind of disruptive knowledge that Brown (2013) described as a humanizing critical sociocultural knowledge. Our professional organizations in literacy have actively worked to bring the community's attention to issues of equity, antiracism, pluralism, and social justice. We propose that literacy teacher educators similarly focus our attention.

In terms of barriers, researchers reported that PTs—even diverse groups of PTs—were resistant to incorporating students’ sociocultural knowledge and resources into their teaching. Some researchers illustrated how difficult it is to build what Brown (2013) called “the improvisational, situated and all-encompassing” (p. 331) aspects of humanizing critical sociocultural knowledge when students hold hegemonic views on social issues. Other times, PTs struggled to implement such approaches due to a lack of preparation, tools, or support. In experiences that were textual or discussion-based, PTs spoke about limited agency. For example, they expressed concerns or discomfort with using critically oriented texts in the future. Often, PTs *imagined* barriers related to the context of teaching, citing unknown school or district policies, classroom management, parent engagement, or censorship. Some White PTs refused to implement such approaches because they denied the existence of structural and institutional forms of discrimination, and researchers that centered the experiences of PTs of color and carefully considered PT positionalities did not report this denial. Sometimes struggle was a necessary part of learning: For example, in the inquiry-focused category, barriers included PTs’ negotiations and strategic compromises to enact literacy teaching through inquiry.

Although many articles included diverse demographic groups of PTs, 21% of articles did not specify PT positionality beyond gender and 26% of the articles included only White PT participants, so potentially almost half of the articles included only PTs who were White. Even when authors identified students racially and linguistically (e.g., African American, Hispanic, bilingual, speakers of AAL), how those identities mattered was most often unexamined. The category “Considering race” serves as a counterexample, in which teacher-educators positioned PTs as whole people with a range of histories. They have experienced discrimination and inequities and have a wealth of resources for resilience and learning (e.g., Skerrett et al., 2015). Skerrett and colleagues (e.g., 2015) and Haddix (2010, 2012) focused particularly on PTs of color, and we argue more researchers should concentrate on those experiences, building knowledge that will help literacy teacher educators create better programs (Haddix, 2017).

Our analysis of the articles in each category raised questions about *who* conducted the research and how researchers’ sociocultural identities were made relevant to the work. In 71% of the articles we reviewed, researchers did not reveal their positioning. However, across categories, when “Considering race” or “Understanding multilingualism” were frameworks of analysis, researchers were more likely to name their positioning (63% in “Considering race” and 40% in “Understanding multilingualism”). Researchers did reflexively consider their identities when reporting how PTs engage in sociocultural aspects of language and race in relation to literacy teaching. In future studies, researchers might interweave findings of how PTs of color experience literacy teacher education with their own histories (e.g., Haddix, 2015). More diverse voices in literacy teacher education research will provide examples of how and why this exploration is important.

Further recommendations relate to knowledge construction of the field. We implore researchers to build on the findings of previous studies in the designs of course experiences and program development. And, for teacher preparation programs, we see the five areas of connections between sociocultural knowledge and literacy teaching as

potential guiding principles that might influence the development of experiences within course and field experiences. Could programs ensure, for example, that PTs have experiences that ask them to consider their own histories, the resources of students, and the impact of language, race, and other sociocultural factors on learning? Could these experiences lead PTs to focus on action? What would a sequence of experiences guided by these five categories look like? Furthermore, we know that barriers exist in relation to developing critical humanizing sociocultural knowledge, but how can we build on research to anticipate such barriers and provide tools for PTs to engage agentially in navigating barriers?

## Conclusion

It is imperative that we now pause, as literacy scholars, to ask what we have done to “not remain peripheral to issues of racism” (LRA, 2016) as a field of teacher education. In 2000, Xu and others began exploring teacher-educators’ attempts to engage with “diversity and identity” in literacy teacher education through what Barr, Watts-Taffe, Yokota, Ventura, and Caputi (2000) described as “processes of self-evaluation” and “redefinition of oneself” (p. 467). The field of literacy teacher education has taken this call seriously and we are encouraged by what we have learned. In solidarity with the LRA’s (2016) statement on the role of literacy research in response to racism and racial violence, we would be remiss to not end with this urgent call to researchers: We must also engage with scholarship that is antiracist and works specifically to disrupt hegemony in education through literacy education, using studies that center literacy as a tool for critical analysis and transformation.

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## Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

## Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

## Supplementary Material

The appendix referenced in this article and abstracts in languages other than English are available at <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/suppl/10.1177/1086296X19833575>.

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**Manuscript submitted:** 25 July 2018

**Manuscript accepted:** 22 December 2018