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Invoking Community Cultural Capital to Survive Teacher Education: Yolanda's Story

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Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to communicate the experiences of a bilingual/biracial Peruvian-Anglo European student teacher, Yolanda, enrolled in a "teacher education for diversity" program. Although the majority of the thirteen (mostly Anglo European) students in Yolanda's cohort expressed satisfaction with the social justice focus of the program, Yolanda was frustrated by the mixed messages she received about social justice as *teaching for change* and teacher professionalism as *deference to power*. Yolanda was often vocal in her critique and, as a result, endured and negotiated cumulative microaggressions throughout her teacher education program. Despite these challenges, she drew on her community cultural capital to become a credentialed science teacher in an underserved urban middle school. Yolanda's experiences compel us to think about how teacher educators might better support preservice teachers of color—particularly as we strive to more actively recruit teachers of color to our teacher education programs.

Theoretical Framework

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory was adopted from critical legal studies for use in education research as a means of re-centering the experiences of people of color, whose experiences, struggles, and histories are not well-served or represented via more positivist theoretical frameworks and methodologies (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Historically, traditional theories, methodologies, and practices in legal studies as well as social science research have been tools in the reproduction of inequitable social, economic, and political structures and institutions (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). Furthermore, these frameworks and methodologies often rely on generalization, universality of experience, and the identification of trends and patterns across groups of individuals, and, therefore, do not provide a space in which individuals whose experiences run counter to those trends and patterns can be voiced (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Central to critical race theory are 5 organizing principles, including a focus on issues of race/racism, challenging dominant ideologies, embodiment of struggles for social justice, foregrounding personal experiences via counter-storytelling, and promoting interdisciplinary perspectives (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Kohli & Solórzano, 2012; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). While we often think of racist acts as

more obvious transgressions and/or cases of blatant discrimination, racism can also play out in much more subtle ways in everyday life, i.e., as racial microaggressions (Kohli, 2009; Kohli & Solórzano, 2012; Solórzano, 1998). It is important to keep in mind that racism is not always directly tied to racial categories, per se, but is also played out as discrimination tied to factors associated with racial categories, such as language or immigration status (Kohli, 2009; Kohli & Solórzano, 2012).

Racial microaggressions. Racial microaggressions can take on various forms, such as the consistent (and even deliberate) mispronunciation of students' names, or disregard—whether conscious or dysconscious—of racialized practices, interactions, and assumptions (Kohli & Solórzano, 2012). Kohli & Solórzano (2012) delineate three different types of racial microaggressions as:

- *Subtle verbal and non-verbal insults/assaults* directed toward People of Color, often carried out automatically or unconsciously;
- *Layered insults/assaults*, based on one's race, gender, class, sexuality, language, immigration status, phenotype, accent, or name;
- *Cumulative insults/assaults* that take their toll on People of Color. In isolation, racial microaggressions may not have much meaning or impact; however, as repeated slights, the effect can be profound (p. 447).

Kohli & Solórzano (2012) also point out that, in order to better understand racial microaggressions, we must explore different types of microaggressions in a variety of contexts as well as their cumulative impact on People of Color who are “on the receiving end”—but also “how People of Color *respond* to racial microaggressions” (p. 447).

Community cultural capital. Yosso's (2005) community cultural capital framework also provides a valuable lens for understanding the experiences of social-justice minded teacher candidates of color. Community cultural capital allows one to “‘see’ that Communities of Color nurture cultural wealth through at least 6 forms of capital such as aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant capital” (Yosso, 2005). These are listed and described below:

1. *Aspirational capital* refers to the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real barriers.
2. *Linguistic capital* includes the intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style.
3. *Familial capital* refers to those cultural knowledges nurtured among *familia* (kin) that carry a sense of community history, memory, and cultural intuition.

4. *Social capital* can be understood as networks of people and community resources.
5. *Navigational capital* refers to skills of maneuvering through social institutions.
6. *Resistant capital* refers to those knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality. (Yosso, 2005, p 78-80)

This framework may be useful in helping to explain how teachers of color respond to racial microaggressions that are inevitably part of their teacher education experience in a predominantly white institution (PWI). Community cultural capital can help us understand how pre-service teachers are able to successfully emerge from challenging, uncomfortable, and even oppressive conditions that they often reveal of their experiences in teacher education (Delpit, 1995; Mensah, 2013a, 2013b; Moore, 2008; Su, 1996).

Critical race theory is, albeit slowly, starting to make its way into research on teacher education (Kohli, 2009; Mensah, 2013a, 2013b). I draw on critical race theory and community cultural capital (Kohli & Solórzano, 2012; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Yosso, 2005) to communicate the experiences of one preservice science teacher participating in a teacher education program designed to prepare teachers as change agents in underserved schools. Critical race theory is a useful framework for understanding Yolanda's experiences, which were not typical of the other mostly Anglo European, middle class teacher education candidates in her cohort (see Tolbert, 2012b). Her experiences, therefore, represent an important counter-narrative that will be articulated in this paper.

Yolanda is a biracial/bilingual woman and science teacher education candidate (at the time of this study), who challenged the dominant narrative of professionalism within a social justice-based teacher education program. Yolanda's experiences are similar to the experiences of other preservice and inservice teachers of color. For example, Yolanda articulated a clear awareness of the inequitable educational opportunities for students of color, strongly identified as a change agent, and experienced a sense of discouragement and exclusion during her teacher education program (e.g., Delpit, 1995; Foster, 1990; 1997; Knight, 2002; Montecinos, 1994; Su, 1996). As a result of questioning and challenging the policies and practices of some of her instructors and the teacher education leadership, Yolanda was silenced through institutionally granted power and privilege and the construction of unequal social hierarchies. Yolanda's story illustrates how she drew from multiple resources to successfully navigate the microaggressions and other emotionally taxing situations that challenged her sense of professionalism and commitment to social justice, and overcame her strong desire to drop out of the program (Yosso, 2005). Yolanda's experiences have clear implications for how

teacher education programs in predominantly white institutions (PWIs) can reproduce the inequitable social and institutional structures that many of these programs intend to challenge.

Method

In a critical race theory and methodology, counter-narratives are tools for individuals, whose experiences have been marginalized or overlooked, to (re)present those experiences (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Yolanda was a participant in a larger study on secondary science teachers learning to teach in underserved classrooms. The context for the study was a 1-year (5 quarters) Masters/credentialing program in California. I specifically looked at changes in preservice science teachers' knowledge and dispositions and the extent to which teachers implemented culturally and linguistically responsive inquiry approaches to science instruction in their placement classrooms (Tolbert, under review, 2012, 2013). In this current study, Yolanda and I worked closely together to interpret and understand her experiences as a preservice teacher in the program. Yolanda was one of three students of color in the science cohort (all three were mixed race).

Data sources included pre-post program interviews, student teaching observations, post-observation debrief interviews, and field notes and participant observations from course sessions. Using member-checking, which consisted of verbal conversations and email communications, I was able to ensure that through the analysis I was capturing and communicating Yolanda's story. This was particularly important because her experiences were not representative of the larger cohort.

As the teacher-researcher, I am a bilingual (English-Spanish) Anglo European woman and a former secondary science/ESOL teacher. Yolanda was both a student in a course for which I was a co-instructor, as well as a participant in the larger study that was conducted during her credentialing year. I sympathized with Yolanda's critique of some of the practices she observed in the teacher education program, as I had developed a similar critique of my own experiences as a graduate student in a Masters/credentialing program at another university several years prior to meeting Yolanda. Though my critique had emerged from a nearly complete absence of coherent and programmatic attention to issues of diversity and equity in my teacher education program—other than those addressed during the "required" multicultural education course (which many students were able to exempt out of using a variety of creative enrollment strategies), Yolanda's critique emerged *because* she was aware of her teacher education program's stated commitment to preparing teachers for instruction in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms. In an attempt to hold the program accountable to that stated commitment, Yolanda

experienced serious repercussions as a result. There were several themes that emerged from the analysis of the data.

Yolanda's Story

Yolanda is a mixed race middle school teacher of Peruvian and Anglo European descent. Though she recognizes that she appears "White" to many people, she strongly identifies as both Anglo European and Peruvian. Though Yolanda appears "White," she was raised in a bicultural home. The racial microaggressions that she experienced, then, might appear to some as having little to do with the construct of race. I will argue, however, that "racial microaggressions" accurately represent Yolanda's struggle, given the similarity between her experiences as an outspoken bicultural and bilingual person of color and those that have been well-documented in the literature on preservice teachers of color in predominantly white institutions (PWIs). Yolanda's story also illustrates how racist ideologies and practices have been institutionalized within higher education, even among those departments that have either publicly or via their research agenda committed themselves to social justice principles. Her experiences also give us some new insights into how People of Color negotiate racial microaggressions in predominantly white teacher education programs.

Theme 1: Teacher as Agent of Change

Yolanda was one of 3 teachers (out of 13) who entered the science teacher education program with the strong conviction that she wanted to teach in an underserved school upon receiving her credential. She came into the credentialing program with over six years of experience teaching, with over half of those years directly in underserved communities. She always knew she wanted to teach science to underserved, minority youth. However, she was concerned that by becoming a classroom teacher, she would play a role in the further marginalization of these youth via formal schooling as a tool of social reproduction. She resisted obtaining her teaching credential for many years, but finally succumbed to pursuing this path when she felt she had reached a glass ceiling in her career path as an educator in informal learning settings.

After college, Yolanda moved to a small, rural farming town near Minneapolis, where she worked a naturalist teaching adventure courses, life skills, and life sciences to K-12 school groups. Though she felt far outside of her comfort zone in this rural setting, the program for which she taught served high needs students, including urban students of color from Minneapolis/St. Paul as well as students from nearby rural, low-income farming communities. Yolanda moved back to California, where she had been raised, to join Collective Roots, an educational

non-profit which had partnered with East Palo Alto Charter School in East Palo Alto, California. Yolanda's Peruvian side of the family lives in East Palo Alto and East Menlo Park, and she spent much of her childhood there. By moving back to the area, she felt she could give back to her community and be closer to her family. Collective Roots' mission is to address food justice issues in the community through education, farmers markets, and organic, community based gardens. While working with Collective Roots and East Palo Alto Charter School, Yolanda developed a K-6 experiential garden-based science program which focused on life science, environmental science, and nutrition. Yolanda felt that she gained valuable expertise in curriculum development, instruction, and data analysis. She was particularly impacted by the mentorship she received from social justice-minded educators who successfully maintained high expectations for traditionally marginalized students.

Around this time, however, the City of East Palo Alto had decided to tear down the local high school to put up an IKEA, which meant that high school students would be bussed to other schools in neighboring communities. East Palo Alto High School students already had a 60% high school dropout rate at the time in addition to a high level of gang activity. Yolanda became frustrated with the City's decision and, after three years at Collective Roots, Yolanda moved to teach at a school in East Redwood City. She soon realized, however, that the social justice work she had been doing with Collective Roots and East Palo Alto Charter School was not supported by the administration in the regular public school where she was hired. This experience reinforced her sentiment that true science social justice programs cannot be implemented in traditionally-oriented district schools. Her decision not to pursue a regular teaching credential was, therefore, reinforced by this experience.

Yolanda then took a position as a naturalist in at Walden West Outdoor School in the more affluent town of Saratoga, California. While she loved being outside every day, she missed the connections with the families and youth and her work as a social justice educator. Though other staff members groaned when the "urban" schools came up to visit, Yolanda looked forward to these experiences. She realized that she wanted to go back into the classroom so she could work specifically with underserved youth, and came to understand that the lack of a teaching credential was the institutional gatekeeper holding her back from this work. She begrudgingly applied though she felt was selling out a part of herself that was trying to work outside of the system she had seen marginalize so many students over the years.

Theme 2: "Following the Norm" as Professionalism

Yolanda was one of the most vocal social justice advocates in the science cohort. She struggled with the mixed messages she felt she received throughout the

program. For example, she was encouraged to implement culturally and linguistically relevant instruction in her placement classrooms, but Yolanda felt that some of the teacher education faculty attempted to silence her for holding them accountable to the same standards. Yolanda felt disconnected from the beginning of the program, and this disconnect continued as she began to take courses. Yolanda felt, at times, that, despite being one of few student teachers who had extensive prior teaching experiences with underserved youth, her experiences and prior knowledge were not honored as valuable contributions in some of her courses.

When I began the program the theory that was described by my professors was not one I had to read about, but one I actually lived in my [prior] experiences. I didn't need to read about how the achievement gap can be closed because I worked at a school that closed the achievement gap in their neighborhood already and [I] was already a part of this movement. I did not need to be convinced that watering down the curriculum just because a child had a tough life at home was the antithesis of social justice because I spent years of heated debates [on this topic] already. I was ready to move to the next level, but unfortunately for me, the rest of my classmates were not. The majority of students in the [single-subject (secondary) and multiple-subject (elementary)] program--of course there were exceptions--were straight out of college with zero work experience and full tuition paid for by their parents. Oh yeah, and most of them were White, too. I knew I was in for a tough year when a colleague asked "What is White privilege?" and refused to believe it existed when explained. In some of my classes my teachers were able to differentiate for me and take me to a new level of understanding, but in the classes that I had all year--and also the administration--I was not encouraged to share my experience or opinions because it made other students uncomfortable.

Through different conversations in class it became clear the program wasn't so much about how to teach social justice, just the buzzwords you need to know when asked about it, and that true social justice programs were too radical for this institution. It was through multiple experiences such as these that I really because to separate personal identity from the world of Academia because I wasn't comfortable being associated with an institution who just spoke of social justice, but didn't actually implement it. I have never felt so far removed from my social justice educator identity as I did in the main classes at this social justice teacher credentialing program.

As I look back on it now, there were definitely some professors and some teachers who valued me, primarily in the [bilingual certification] program, in my science [credentialing] cohort and two of my placement

teachers. I don't want to undermine the support of these individuals because I probably would have dropped out if it wasn't for them. But a huge chunk of the program was all a social justice show. Say the right words to the right people, but don't dare implement what we actually say. I realized my idea of social justice is very far from the institutionalized definition of social justice. (Yolanda, written communication, March 2013)

An ongoing critique was that Yolanda felt the teacher education leadership and teacher supervisors espoused mixed messages about social justice. She felt she was encouraged both to "try new things, be a social agent of change, yet don't forget to maintain the status quo of education." She understood this to mean not rocking the boat, which seemed to contradict the social justice stance that the program espoused:

I feel like as a teacher it's my role to be an agent of change but I think if anything this program has separated me a little bit more from that identity [as a change agent]....I definitely didn't get that from the program and I feel like in fact I got the complete opposite – of more of follow the norm, follow the norm, that's professionalism in the field of education...(Yolanda, P13.FG2.10.).

Yolanda confidently expressed her viewpoints in class, and would often open up the discussion with critical questions to help challenge dominant viewpoints—including those of her instructors. As the year progressed, however, Yolanda began to express some frustration with how these comments or questions were received.

I would not agree with colleagues who said ELLs could never catch up or that students in underserved communities could not be as successful as their white, affluent counterparts. I wouldn't back down in class conversations and was told by the teacher that people were not comfortable with me in class and that I needed to be more respectful of their opinions. Their silencing of my point of view...is not social justice—this is supported by research! In this way, it was really hard for me to form a positive identity with this program, or academia in general (Yolanda, personal communication, March 2013).

About midway through the credentialing year, Yolanda discovered that she was being called in for a disciplinary meeting to discuss what one instructor considered unprofessional behavior and language. The "unprofessional" behavior in question was largely the way in which Yolanda "challenged authority" during seminar

sessions with the instructor and frequently “appeared disengaged” during class. She was also informed that other students had come to this particular instructor to report concerns about Yolanda's comments in class. Yolanda felt “shocked and humiliated” by this disciplinary action, since this was the first time that anyone had directly expressed concerns to her about her behavior. Yolanda was asked to think more carefully about the comments she made in class, and to reflect on “ways her instructors could better support her professional growth.” In response, Yolanda developed an action plan with suggestions for the instructors, but she decided not to share it with the faculty. She was concerned that it might further agitate the situation. Yolanda chose instead to remain silent during future course sessions with instructors who she felt might react negatively to her contributions in class.

Problems later resurfaced for Yolanda that spring. Because Yolanda was pursuing a bilingual credential in addition to her science credential, she was placed with two cooperating teachers in the same school. While she felt that one of her cooperating teachers, Brian, was an effective mentor who valued her prior experiences, letting her experiment with novel approaches to instruction, her other cooperating teacher, Susan, rarely let Yolanda teach. Yolanda felt that Susan exhibited behavior with students, which Yolanda found *authentically* unprofessional (e.g., inappropriate interactions and comments with and about students, low expectations for students of color, being unprepared, etc.). Though Yolanda frequently expressed her concerns to her teacher supervisor, John, she was told that, as a *professional* who represented the University, Yolanda needed to keep the peace during the remaining weeks of her placement or she would be dropped from the program:

At one point, I tried to change out of one of my student teachers because I felt that she was the complete opposite of social justice education. She taught an ocean sciences class that a class needed to graduate, but not A-G requirements. Interestingly enough, the majority of the class was Emerging Bilinguals (ELL) and as such, I felt they needed a strong science class to be a true social justice education experience for them. She epitomized exactly the opposite of everything we were taught in our classes. She never knew what she was going to teach until class actually started, she did not have a rigorous curriculum. She would often touch students inappropriately, and was more concerned with them liking her rather than her educating them. I brought up these concerns with my [teacher supervisor] and with the administrator. We had a meeting and I was told that unfortunately there are not that many good teachers out there and I couldn't switch teachers. I was then given a B in that class [student teaching seminar], ruining my 4.0 GPA and the reasons why? Because I caused too

much trouble for them and I they said I needed more [support] meetings than other people in my cohort....I also had to have a [narrative] evaluation overturned, which was [only] done [i.e., overturned] when I questioned the legality of the evaluation. The teacher [of the course] commented on my personality--in an academic evaluation--saying I was condescending. When I brought it to the attention of the administration, saying I would take it further if needed, it was overturned by the teacher.

Theme 3: Invoking Community Cultural Capital

Yolanda drew on her community cultural capital to overcome the antagonistic situations she encountered during the program (Yosso, 2005). Drawing on *aspirational capital*, Yolanda was able to see past the difficulties of her current circumstances. She looked toward the possibilities that completion of the program would offer her, particularly as an avenue to effect change in underserved communities. At several points during the program, she expressed to me and her friends that she wanted to drop out—even as late as the end of her spring semester of student teaching. She was suffering from increased anxiety and a loss of sleep that these cumulative microaggressions had inflicted on her well-being. However, despite feeling helpless and beaten down by her unsuccessful attempts to negotiate changes in her own teaching placement assignment, she continued to persist. She found ways to focus on the smaller successes that she experienced with students in her placement classrooms. I observed Yolanda teaching several times, and the strong relationship and sense of mutual respect that Yolanda had created in such a short time with her students was quite impressive. Yolanda drew on other forms of capital to create these relationships and increase her own sense of self-efficacy despite the institutional challenges she faced. Yolanda drew on *linguistic capital* to enact social justice pedagogies in her student teaching placement. For example, her cooperating teacher, Brian, did not speak Spanish and did not allow his students to speak Spanish in the classroom before Yolanda became his student teacher. Becoming the catalyst through which her students were “allowed” to speak Spanish served as one of many forms of community cultural capital that helped Yolanda carry on throughout the year.

Yolanda frequently drew on *navigational* and *social capital* to advocate for herself and her students. For example, Yolanda described how she challenged an instructor to remove negative comments about her behavior that had been written on the official narrative evaluation—which is against university policy. Yolanda sought out information about institutional grading policies by reaching out to allies in the program or those who might be sympathetic to her situation (e.g., supportive faculty members, doctoral students, etc.) who might be able to provide her access

with this information. She then reminded the instructor of the university policy stating that behavior should not be a factor in academic evaluations. As a result, the instructor removed the comment. Drawing on *resistance capital*, Yolanda found ways to assert some form of agency in Susan's classroom. For example, when Susan went out of town for a week and left Yolanda in charge, Yolanda developed and taught a project-based inquiry unit for the students, rather than teach the traditional seat-based, rote activities that Susan had left.

Discussion

Leveraging Community Cultural Capital

Due to a lack of clear and safe avenues for voicing critique, Yolanda experienced "institutional silencing" which prevented her "full and active participation in shaping [her] future" as a social justice educator (p. 18, Cammarota & Romero, 2006). Similar to the experiences of other preservice teachers of color, Yolanda ended up on the receiving end of cumulative microaggressions throughout her credentialing year took a significant toll on her emotional and psychological well-being. Yolanda's story provides us with insights not only into the multiple types of microaggressions she experienced, but also how she responded to them (Kohli & Solórzano, 2012). Community cultural capital is a useful framework for analyzing how students of color in predominantly white institutions respond to and negotiate their way through challenging and oppressive situations. Yolanda drew on community cultural capital in order to not only "survive her program" by adjusting to standards of professionalism that her faculty wanted of her, but also by providing meaningful learning experiences for students in her placement classrooms. Without having invoked community capital to achieve either of these goals, she would likely not have made it through the program. Had she not found a way to meaningfully connect her student teaching experiences to her identity as a change agent for underserved students (e.g., by providing her students with rigorous learning activities they would not have had otherwise), she may not have been able to conjure up the emotional energy she needed to carry on. If she had not adjusted to the standards of professionalism expected by many of the teacher education faculty, she may have been asked to leave the program—or, rather, her presence there may have been made even more challenging with additional repercussions for her "oppositional" behavior.

Rather than putting preservice teachers of color in a position of invoking community cultural capital to "survive" teacher education, Yolanda's story can help us think about how we might more consciously leverage their cultural capital to improve their teacher education experiences. Yolanda mentioned that it might have

been even more difficult for students who are unable to “pass” as White—and remembered that the single African American student who was enrolled in the elementary certification program dropped out of the program early in the year. Yolanda expressed that her biracial identity may have played a role in her ability to persist in the program: “I also realized that being half white empowers me to be more vocal of these inequities. Being [half] white has given me the privilege to have a voice.” Even to this day, however, a couple of years later, Yolanda has difficulty reflecting on her experiences as a student in teacher education. As we were working on this paper as well as co-authoring a related manuscript for publication, Yolanda shared with me how “this process is a little weird. I feel like I'm re-living suffering to some degree.”

Redefining Professionalism

As critical educators for social justice, we must strive to prepare teachers who implement theoretically informed, responsive pedagogy in underserved classrooms. However, it is equally important (and less attended to) that, in the name of social justice, we reflect deeply on the vulnerabilities of teacher education. How do we position outspoken students and students of color, particularly those who challenge and critique our practices, as troublesome? How do we position ourselves as deferent to the policies and contexts of our placement schools and teachers? Rather than encouraging teachers of color to “grin and bear it” in mediocre placement classrooms, how could we work to prepare them with the political and diplomatic skills they will need to voice critique and dissent against inequitable educational policies and practices in student teaching placements, so that they might be better prepared to effect change as beginning teachers in underserved schools (Mensah, 2013a, 2013b; Moore, 2008)?

With much recent attention to the need for recruiting more teachers of color in teacher education—particularly in secondary science and math—we must become vigilant in ongoing self-reflection and analysis of how we do/do not provide programmatic support and mentorship for pre-service teachers of color in predominantly white institutions, as well as what sorts of safe and transparent avenues are in place for voicing critique. We are amiss to pursue active recruitment strategies in communities of color when we do not first—or at least, simultaneously—analyze how we currently fall short of providing a safer and more supportive context to better ensure the success of the students of color we recruit.

Conclusion

Yolanda's story provides us with important insights into how preservice teachers of color in PWIs endure and respond to cumulative racial microaggressions. However, though Yosso's (2005) community cultural capital

framework is a useful tool for analyzing the responses of pre-service teachers of color to microaggressions in PWIs, this framework does not help us explain or better understand the experiences of preservice teachers of color who do not persist. What can we say about the African American student who dropped out of the program? That she did not have the "right" type of community cultural capital? Or that she did not find it worth her time to pursue the credential, given the challenges that Yolanda and other pre-service teachers of color have associated with persistence? Further research is needed into the various types of racial microaggressions that pre-service teachers of color in PWIs experience, as well as the multiple and contrasting ways that they negotiate and respond to those microaggressions.

Finally, Yolanda's story demonstrates that, in addition to factors such as language or immigration status, racism and discrimination are also enacted against individuals who have taken on a socially critical orientation as a result of their prior cumulative experiences as a marginalized individual in a hegemonic society. We must further investigate the experiences of students of color who are targeted specifically because of their socially critical orientation. This will be another important avenue to explore in research on both pre-service teachers of color as well as research on students of color in PWIs in general.

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