

Honors Thesis Proposal

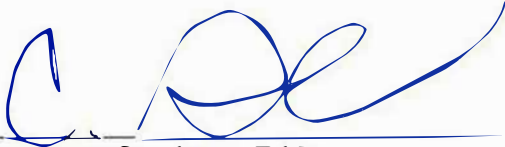
For

Exploring Preservice Teacher Attitudes toward Black Students

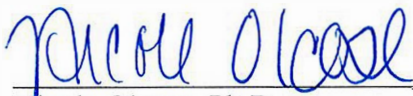
Audra Greuel



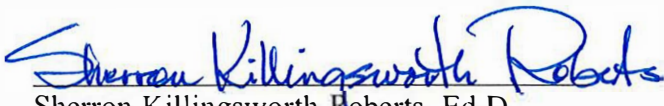
Enrique A. Puig, Ed.D.
Thesis Committee Chair
School of Teaching, Learning, and Leadership
Morgridge International Reading Center



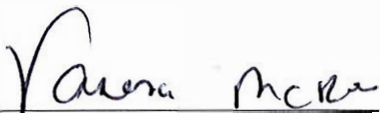
Constance Goodman, Ed.D.
Committee Member
School of Teaching, Learning, and Leadership



Nicole Olcese, Ph.D.
Committee Member
School of Teaching, Learning, and Leadership



Sherron Killingsworth Roberts, Ed.D.
Honors in the Major (HIM) Coordinator
College of Education and Human Performance



Vanessa McRae
Director of The Office of Research
and Community Engagement
The Burnett Honors College

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INTRODUCTION

The history of race, racism, and racial inequality in the United States has profoundly impacted society, and has had a negative effect on urban school systems, as well as the surrounding neighborhoods regarding socioeconomic factors. Preservice teachers, defined as any student teachers before they have been certified and/or employed as a professional teacher, face difficulty in teaching diverse students due to the fact personal racial perspectives and biases impact the classroom environment, however unintentionally. It is important for preservice teachers to explore their racial ideas, experiences, and attitudes toward Black students which are one of the most underserved diverse student populations. This will prompt further exploration into preservice teachers' cultural sensitivity towards Black students. In doing so, preservice teachers will be better prepared in serving diverse learners, which will benefit society as a whole.

For the purpose of this study, Black will refer to any individual who has dark-colored skin, with no correlation with any other factor such as ethnicity, nationality, heritage, or culture. Black will not be limited to those who are of African descent, as traditionally thought, because there are many individuals who identify as Black originating from many different nations. Conversely, White will refer to any individual who has light-colored skin, with no correlation with any other factor such as ethnicity, nationality, heritage, or culture. This study seeks to discover the attitudes of preservice teachers solely on the basis of racial skin color. Due to the idea of race as a social construct, described in the Literature Review section, the identification of both Black and White lie on a continuum. Each term will remain capitalized throughout this writing to give proper respect to each, respectively.

Entering an urban school system is a challenge that comes with many obstacles. The “geographic area, rate of poverty, proportion of students of color, proportion of students who are

Limited English Proficient, and 'High Need' status" of a school determine the strengths and weaknesses which teachers face within the profession (Russo, 2004). The degree to which each of these factors are met determines if school is classified as urban. For example, if a school has a high rate of each of the factors listed above, it is more likely to be classified as an urban school.

According to the RtI Action Network,

Urban school systems tend to have specific structural challenges that impede their ability to effectively educate the most vulnerable students. While these structural challenges may be evidenced across all types of educational contexts, they are perhaps most potent in urban settings. They include 1) persistently low student achievement, 2) a lack of instructional coherence, 3) inexperienced teaching staff, 4) poorly functioning business operations, and 5) low expectations of students (Ahram, Stenbridge, Fergus, & Noguera, 2016).

Urban education has a long and hard history of racial inequality, segregation, and poor student achievement, which has ultimately led to the current state in which low achievement and expectations are often the norm, among many other things. This issue has many complex causes, but it also has many valuable solutions. It is up to the teaching force as a whole to unite for successful, sustainable reform within urban school systems. This begins with preservice teachers, who are the building blocks of the future of education. Due to a certain malleability, preservice teachers can benefit tremendously from urban education experience and diversity awareness training programs to meet the needs of one of the most vulnerable students, the Black urban student population. Through unity and understanding, preservice teachers can create the conditions for hope and possibility in communities and schools, which includes increasing educational attainment and achievement.

However, in order to do so, preservice teachers must be willing to address certain weaknesses within themselves regarding perpetuating some of the issues within the urban school system. Thus, preservice teachers must identify certain internal issues, regarding the racial ideas, experiences, and attitudes toward future Black students within the urban education system, which might negatively impact their ability to create positive social change for communities of color. More specifically, preservice teachers must discuss and identify their cultural sensitivity towards Black students.

The U.S. society, including the preservice teacher population, faces difficulty in discussing these issues due to an element of discomfort in discussing race, racism, and racial inequality, which have festered throughout U.S. history. According to “Urban Immersion: Changing Preservice Teachers’ Perceptions of Urban Schools,”

If preservice teachers form attitudes and expectations based on uninformed perceptions of urban school environments and carry these into their future classrooms, it may negatively influence their ability to effectively teach and connect with their students (Schaffer, Gleich-Bope, & Copich, 2014).

Thus, research examines the attitudes of preservice teachers towards Black students, which derive from a complex combination of social issues, racial experiences, and racial perspectives within the urban education system and society as a whole. In doing so, the preservice teacher population will have a greater understanding of how their attitudes impact Black students’ education and learning. Furthermore, society as a whole will benefit from a more open and honest conversation about how race impacts education and learning. Therefore, Black students in the urban education system will have a much more positive learning experience than that of the past, when preservice teachers are better equipped and more comfortable in examining

their own racial ideas, experiences, and attitudes toward future Black students within the urban education system, which might impede their effectiveness in teaching.

Statement of Problem

The majority of the preservice teacher population is young, white, and female; however, the urban school system student population continues to become increasingly diverse, including an increasing population of underserved Black students in urban schools. The racial differences between the preservice teacher population and the urban student population complicates the challenges faced in educating Black students effectively, largely due to the societal ignorance of the histories and realities of urban communities (Delpit, 1992, p. 182). Teachers and students often encounter misunderstandings, and thus, utilize incompatible styles of classroom management and instruction, often resulting in Black students experiencing difficulties with learning.

Many of these complications derive from the profound presence of race, racial difference, and racial inequality throughout U.S. history. As societal policies have shaped racial perspectives throughout history, a clear division and notable difference between the racial composition of preservice teachers and Black students exists due to certain racial ideas, experiences, and attitudes. As a teacher in a 21st century society, more research needs to address how ideas, experiences, and attitudes shape the racial perspectives of preservice teachers toward their future Black students in order to promote learning and academic gains within the urban education system.

Purpose of Study

This study seeks to explore the racial ideas, experiences, and attitudes of preservice teachers, who self-identify as White, toward future Black students at a large, southeastern,

Research I university through a qualitative interview process. More specifically, this study will examine preservice teachers' cultural sensitivity towards Black students. This study will also observe preservice teachers' ability to discuss these issues.

Significance of Study

The findings of this study will contribute to the benefit of society considering that racial ideas, experiences, and attitudes of preservice teachers toward future Black students will increase personal and professional understandings of how race impacts the urban education system as a whole, as well as individual classrooms and students. The increase in racial diversity within the student population highlights the need for more effective urban education experience and diversity awareness training within preservice teacher education programs. Thus, teacher education programs that recognize the attitudes of preservice teachers towards Black students will be better able to train preservice teachers for entrance into the diverse classroom, in terms of both classroom management and teaching. In terms of research, the study will help to uncover critical areas in the educational process that remain unexplained. Thus, a new perspective on urban education experience and diversity awareness may be attained.

Theoretical Perspectives

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory derives from a critical analysis of race, racism, and power from a legal perspective (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). However, it has recently been applied to the field of education regarding social inequality and school inequality, based on the following ideas:

1. Race continues to be a significant factor in determining inequity in the United States.
2. U.S. society is based on property rights.

3. The intersection of race and property creates an analytic tool through which we can understand social (and, consequently, school) inequity (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

For the purpose of this study, Critical Race Theory will be applied to research regarding social inequality between Whites and Blacks, as well as inequality of urban school systems. Historically, there have been fixed inequalities between Whites and Blacks due to the social construct of race, which has profoundly impacted society and social policy. This has led to a complex combination of social issues, racial experiences, and racial perspectives within the urban education system and the U.S. society as a whole. For example, “race has become metaphorical—a way of referring to and disguising forces, events, classes, and expressions of social decay and economic division far more threatening to the body politic than biological ‘race’ ever was” (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Specifically, the idea that race continues to be an important factor in inequality in the 21st century is supported throughout research due to the fact that, generally, a large proportion of Blacks in urban communities suffer from disadvantages, unlike that of the majority, White population, due to certain historical and social factors. In addition, the idea that the U.S. society has a foundation in property rights is supported through research due for multiple reasons. For example, “property tax relief indicate[s] that more affluent communities (which have higher property values, hence higher tax assessments) resent paying for a public school system whose clientele is largely nonwhite and poor. In the simplest of equations, those with ‘better’ property are entitled to ‘better’ schools” (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). This is significant for urban school systems due to the fact that they have a higher proportion of poverty, which contributes to difficulties within the school and community.

Each of these factors creates a situation which can be analyzed through a historical perspective, as to why there continues to be issues within the urban education system, specifically affecting Black students. Through careful analysis of preservice teachers' racial ideas, experiences, and attitudes toward future Black students, the Critical Race Theory will be beneficial in connecting the reasoning of such with certain historical events regarding race and racism within society, and how it impacts the urban education system as a whole.

Critical Whiteness Theory

Critical Whiteness Theory derives from a critical analysis of the functions of the theory of whiteness within society, specifically,

Critical Whiteness Theory illuminates 'behaviors that signify what it means to be white in our society' [...] Critical Whiteness Theory stresses that whiteness 'has a set of linked dimensions' that include racial advantage, egocentrism, and oblivion to whiteness as race, and thus, whiteness is theorized as "a location of structural advantage," whether realized or unrealized by White people (Cullen, 2014).

For the purpose of this study, Critical Whiteness Theory will be applied to research regarding preservice attitudes towards future Black students due to the fact that the U.S. society, historically, has been created and shaped by the majority, White population. Due to the predominant demographic of White preservice teachers, a correlation between whiteness and the attitudes that White preservice teachers have regarding individuals of differing races, specifically Black students exists within urban education systems. This study will be analyzed through a perspective that states that whiteness is a theme that pervades society, which essentially represses minority populations and advantages the majority, White population (Cullen, 2014). Through careful analysis of interviews of preservice teachers' racial ideas, experiences, and attitudes

toward future Black students, the Critical Whiteness Theory will be beneficial in connecting the reasoning of such with events regarding race and racism within society, and how it impacts the urban education system as a whole.

Rationale for the Study

Research in urban education primarily examines its historical context (Tyack, 1974); philosophical or theoretical foundations (Freire, 2005); impetus, growth, and development (Black & Henderson, 1999; Connell & Klem, 2000); structural and cultural challenges; and policies and practices (Stone, Henig, Jones, & Pierannunzi, 2001). Research studies closely related to this project examine the overall effects of urban education experience and diversity awareness training programs on preservice teachers' effectiveness in teaching diverse student populations (Milner, 2006; Brown, 2002; Sleeter, 2001; Wiggins, 2007). However, there is little evidence of research which examines the racial ideas, experiences, and attitudes of preservice teachers toward future Black students, and the manner in which preservice teachers discuss these topics. More specifically, little research has been conducted regarding preservice teachers' cultural sensitivity towards Black, or urban, culture.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section will define race, examine various historical events relating to race, as well as consider how race specifically influences the Florida education system. In addition, this section will examine the legislative history of various Federal and state of Florida education programs and policies as they relate to racial equality and academic accountability, as well as achievement gaps between Black students and their White counterparts. This section will also discuss various factors that affect academic performance, and how that relates to racial differences and inequalities in the education system.

Furthermore, this section will outline the contemporary preservice teacher demographic profile, as well as discuss topics such as the development of racial perspectives and attitudes toward Black students. This research will relate to the field of preservice teacher urban education experience and diversity awareness training programs. Extensive research has provided a strong foundation for a critical study of race relations, and possible racial tensions, between contemporary preservice teachers and Black students due to certain factors such as sensitivity towards Black students.

Defining Race

According to Eric Thompson, Ph.D. at the National University of Singapore, “race is 1) a social construct that is 2) poorly descriptive of the phenomenon it seeks to describe and 3) has a long history of devastating consequences for individuals”(Thompson, 2006). With this, Thompson asserts that biological differences do play some role in the determination of race; however, the term is better described as a socially constructed concept based on observable, similar and distinct physical characteristics used to identify individuals and populations in a societal context (Thompson, 2006). Biological genes determine race along a continuum, meaning

that there is no specific genetic characteristic which differentiates one racial group from another. Instead,

Conceptually, race is about division and difference. The motivating logic of racial classification is to place individual bodies into differentiated groups. [...] The question is—why use a concept which has an underlying logic at odds with genetic evidence? (Thompson, 2006).

Biological genes for skin color do not influence other biological characteristics. Essentially, “most human variation falls within, not between populations. [...] In fact, there are no characteristics, no traits, not even one gene that turns up in all members of one so-called race yet is absent from others” (Adelman, 2003). Biological makeup indicates ancestry of individuals and populations; however, it is not useful in determining characteristics such as race because there is no correlation between an entire racial population and one or more biological characteristics (Adelman, 2003).

Therefore, race is a social construct, meaning that it appears to be natural and obvious to people who accept it, but it does not represent realistic biological differences between individuals and populations. Yes, superficial differences are present, specifically skin color. However, race alone does not signify differences between other biological characteristics among various individuals and populations. Identification of race within society generally leads to an association of an abundance of other unrelated characteristics, which often leads to division and difference, rather than a truly constructive and meaningful understanding and analysis of race and how it functions within society.

Essentially, race holds no merit in the association of any other physical variations in the human species besides skin color. Instead, it is concerned with social perspectives, which

perpetuate certain worldviews of privilege, power, status, and wealth, or lack thereof, depending on the particular population. The concept of race was created by society in order to perpetuate racial differences and inequalities, which resulted in many trials and tribulations, as well as triumphs, throughout history (Thompson, 2006).

The History of Race in the U.S.

Throughout history, the conception of the idea of race and racial difference had most closely been linked to the institution of slavery. However, in ancient times, societies valued language, religion, and class more than physical characteristics, such as skin color. Ancient societies “enslaved others due to conquest, war or debt, but not based on physical difference” (Adelman, 2003).

According to historians, the term slavery actually originated from the historic movement of primarily White Germans capturing primarily White Slavonic peoples in the 15th century (Adelman, 2003). During that time period, slavery was not signified by physical difference, rather it was for the sole purpose of exerting power over other individuals and populations. At the time, slavery did not denote inferiority of a group of people based on physical difference, rather it simply existed for many groups due to varying circumstances, such as conquest, war or debt, as mentioned above.

However, the U.S. had a much different historical experience with slavery than other societies, which ultimately led to the creation of the concepts of race, racial difference, and racial inferiority. According to *The African Slave Trade*, “the lords of Africa began to sell their own folk to the mariners who came from Europe” to then bring to the U.S. to begin the slave system during the 17th century (Davidson, 1961). The first slaves were brought to Jamestown, Virginia (Davidson, 1961). As slavery became industrialized and institutionalized in colonial U.S. in the

17th century, it became synonymous with racial difference due to the fact that the large majority of the slave population in the U.S. originated from West Africa, which was of much different physical characteristics than that of the majority, White U.S. population.

Slavery began to symbolize the enslavement of an entire group of people based on origin, and more superficially, skin color. Although the majority of slave owners in the U.S. were members of the White population, history confirms that there were also a number of Black slave owners who engaged in the slave system; however, they had varying intentions, which included increasing financial prosperity, rather than to perpetuate racial inequality. According to *Black Slaveowners: Free Black Slave Masters in South Carolina*, “Black slave owners were motivated by financial gain and just as invested in the slave system as Whites and were not primarily motivated by beneficence (though, as he points out, many undoubtedly were)” (Koger, 2011).

During the time of the American Revolution from 1775-1783, the Founding Fathers faced various moral dilemmas in proclaiming “the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” through the Declaration of Independence (Franklin, Adams, Livingston, Sherman, & Jefferson, 1776). Because the Founding Fathers simultaneously protected the institution of slavery, this created a “moral contradiction” and “the idea of race helped resolve the contradiction by setting [Blacks] apart” (Adelman, 2003). The creation of the idea of Black inferiority allowed the Founding Fathers to “justify denying slaves the rights and entitlements that others took for granted” (Adelman, 2003). Essentially, Blacks were not considered citizens, and they had no legal rights. Instead, they were treated as property.

With certain racial differences explicitly described in founding documents, such as the Constitution, which was signed in 1787, it set the tone for racial inequality between Whites and

Blacks in the U.S. as a whole. With this, the idea of race was constructed and would prove to have a profound impact on society throughout history.

As the institution of slavery was protected by the Founding Fathers, it was apparent that there was an innate social inequality between Whites and Blacks. Based on newfound documents and policies, various social ideas began to influence research and discoveries related to race (Adelman, 2003). Many influential Americans began to call on researchers to rationalize racial inequalities and justify harsh discriminatory laws through the use of scientific reason.

For example, Thomas Jefferson, a Founding Father and slave owner who was principal author of the Declaration of Independence, suggested that Blacks were innately inferior in his text, *Notes on the State of Virginia*:

I advance it, therefore, as a suspicion only, that the [B]lacks, whether originally a distinct race, or made distinct by time and circumstances, are inferior to the [W]hites in the endowments both of body and mind (Jefferson, 1853).

Jefferson's text rationalized slavery, and called on science to find biological proof of inequalities among the races to support his claims. This began the scientific movement in the late 18th century of determining racial biology in order to affirm that Blacks were, indeed, biologically inferior to Whites, which would aid in the continuation of racial discrimination and unequal rights.

As Abraham Lincoln was elected president in 1860, he strongly opposed the institution of slavery, which further prompted the South to secede from the Union (World History Group, 2016). The American Civil War began between the North and South in 1861. At the time, Northern states had adopted an anti-slavery policy of freedom for all Blacks; still, the South continued a harsh system of slavery. During the war, the North fought for the rights of Blacks

and slaves to be treated equally, by essentially abolishing slavery across the nation. Conversely, the South fought for the preservation of slavery in order to promote the racial inequality of Blacks, and to further enable Whites to continue with the financial prosperity that slavery awarded (World History Group, 2016).

After one of the bloodiest wars in U.S. history, the South finally surrendered to the North in 1865 (World History Group, 2016). With this, the North and South unified as one, once again, and slavery was abolished with the passing of the 13th amendment to the Constitution. Although slavery was abolished, the U.S. did not see an end to racial inequality and legal injustice for many years to come. Still, according to the *World History Group*,

Other legislation followed, including the Civil Rights Act of 1866 and the Fourteenth Amendment; both repealed the Dred Scott decision and made [B]lacks full U.S. citizens. The Fifteenth Amendment granted [B]lack men the right to vote and gave Congress the power to enact laws protecting that right (World History Group, 2016).

Although Blacks gained some legal rights, perhaps one of the most detrimental policies to achieving legal equality was the 1896 “equal, but separate” law, which mandated “equal but separate accommodations for the [W]hite and colors race” from the United States Supreme Court decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (Lofgren, 1987). This doctrine applied to many different areas within society, and led to the 1899 Supreme Court decision in *Cumming v. Richmond County Board of Education*, “which had validated the segregation of public schools” (American Anthropological Association, 2015). These policies deeply affected the education system in the U.S. society as a whole due to the fact that the public sector had a legal obligation to continue racism, racial difference, and racial inequality by separating Whites from Blacks within the public school system.

Blacks in the U.S. continued to gain equal legal rights through significant legislation; however, it was not until the Civil Rights Movement, beginning in the 1950s, that Blacks would progress in achieving equality, specifically in the education system. According to the American Anthropological Association,

[In] 1954, the Supreme Court handed down a 9-0 decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, which stated, "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal." The decision reversed the precedent set by the Supreme Court's previous decision in *Cumming v. Richmond County Board of Education* [...] *Brown* did not, however, result in the immediate desegregation of America's public schools, nor did it mandate desegregation of public accommodations, such as restaurants or bathrooms that were private property (American Anthropological Association, 2015).

Regardless of changing political policies at the Federal level, Florida, specifically, maintained strict segregation policies. In an effort to stop desegregation efforts prior to 1954, the Florida State Legislature voted to increase funding to Black schools to equalize funding between White and Black schools to satisfy the doctrine and avoid integrating each race. However, the courts proceeded with their decision to dismantle the "separate but equal" doctrine. While desegregation was implemented in some Florida school districts, other counties, namely Duval, Miami-Dade, and Orange County seemed untouched by school desegregation efforts (Borman, et al., 2004, p. 611). *Accountability in a Postdesegregation Era: The Continuing Significance of Racial Segregation in Florida's Schools*, by Kathryn Borman, described Florida's reaction to desegregation,

[...] on the same day the U.S. Supreme Court demanded that southern districts assume responsibility for desegregating schools, Florida Governor LeRoy Collins signed the

Florida Pupil Assignment Law. This law, which was strengthened in 1956, empowered county school boards to assign pupils to schools on the basis of “sociological, psychological and like intangible socio-scientific factors” [...]. The law essentially provided a loophole for schools wishing to avoid desegregation (Borman, et al., 2004, p. 610)

Although many states continued to resist desegregation efforts, the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964 primarily prohibited racial discrimination and finally provided for the desegregation of public schools (The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration , n.d.) Furthermore, in reaction to anti-desegregation efforts by states, including Florida, in 1968 “*Green v. County School Board of New Kent County* (Virginia), rule[d] that ‘actual desegregation’ of schools in the South is required, effectively ruling out so-called school ‘freedom of choice’ plans and requiring affirmative action to achieve integrated schools” (The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights & The Leadership Conference Education Fund, 2016). For segregated communities and school systems across the nation, this meant that states were required to desegregate by all means necessary, which included bussing both White and Black students from differing, inherently segregated communities to promote racial equality within the public education system.

Blacks in the post-Civil Rights Era continued to face persistent inequality as they sought equality due to the resistance that society showed in accepting newfound legal and social policies. According to Ferris State University, Blacks “did not emerge from the civil rights movement fully integrated into U.S. society; this is evident by the disproportionately large numbers of blacks who are in poverty, under-educated, and incarcerated” (Ferris State University, 2014).

Still, remarkable advances have been made by Black Americans in the last sixty years or more. Black men and women have had the opportunity to become CEOs, mayors, senators, and even most recently, the President of the United States. Still, the Black population as a whole continues to experience disadvantages unlike that of the majority, White population, due to a troubled history which has profoundly impacted the way that Americans view race and racism in modern society.

The Relevance of Race in the 21st Century

Race has been incredibly significant throughout U.S. history, and it continues to be deeply imbedded into U.S. culture. Tim Wise, anti-racist social activist and author of *White Like Me* (2007), asserts

We are all experiencing race, because from the beginning of our lives we have been living in a racialized society, where the color of our skin means something, even while it remains a matter of biological and genetic irrelevance. Race may be a scientific fiction, but it is a social fact, one that none of us can escape no matter how much or how little we talk about it (Wise, 2007).

U.S. society has made substantial progress in advancing the civil rights of the Black population, through various social and political movements. Since the 1960s Civil Rights Movement, which advocated for full legal equality of Blacks, racial differences and tensions have improved, to say the least. Blacks have attained full legal equality, as well as Constitutional voting rights. Furthermore, state-sponsored segregation was outlawed and it was found that separate was not equal regarding public education facilities.

Remarkable advances have been made by Blacks in the last sixty years or more. Still, the Black population as a whole continues to experience disadvantages unlike that of the majority,

White population. For example, Black students in Florida have a high school graduation rate of 69.7 percent, while their White counterparts have a high school graduation rate of 82.7 percent (Florida Department of Education, 2015). This gap of 13 percentage points in educational attainment is a real problem for the Black community, as well as the U.S. society as a whole. Without something as essential as attaining a basic high school diploma, approximately 30 percent of the Black student population in Florida is entering the workforce at an extreme disadvantage, which is a social and economic issue for the U.S. society.

In addition, racial segregation from the pre-Civil Rights era has somewhat resettled, and some schools across Florida are reported to lack diversity. That does not necessarily mean that Florida's schools do not have a high minority enrollment. In fact, Florida has a more diverse student population than many other states. However, a high minority enrollment does not necessarily lead to more school diversity. Instead, students who attend schools with either extreme, very high or low minority enrollment, are not exposed to diverse populations of a different racial groups.

According to *Decomposing School Resegregation: Social Closure, Racial Imbalance, and Racial Isolation*, minority groups attend school with fewer Whites in recent years due to a declining presence of Whites in minorities' schools, which was driven by changes in student population's racial composition (Fiel, 2013, p. 25). The two main areas of concern regarding resegregation are lack of exposure to other races and cultures, as well as an imbalance between race relations.

Florida's education system has made tremendous improvements in education; however, history indicates that some student populations are at a greater disadvantage than others, namely Black student populations. Many school districts continue to struggle with the pressures of high

academic achievement without the necessary resources and funding. Therefore, the Black student population continues to have lower academic performance scores than that of majority, White population. This leads to lower graduation rates, as mentioned before.

As a 21st century society, it is imperative that success factors, such as educational attainment and achievement, are improved in the U.S. However, the U.S. is falling behind at a disparaging 20th place in educational attainment relative to other nations (Pearson, 2016). Large differences among racial achievement is not a misconception, nor is it a coincidence. The U.S. should work towards actively closing achievement gaps between races. However, this issue in particular will continue to plague the U.S. as long as racial prejudice and discrimination remain.

Until members of society, specifically preservice teachers, explore their own racial ideas, experiences, and attitudes, the U.S. will continue to face education inequalities which will lead to a perpetuation of disengaged and disenfranchised groups of students and citizens in primarily Black and urban neighborhoods. The long history of race, racial difference, and racial inequality has extended into the 21st century due to unsettled issues within society, directly impacting urban education, including Black students, which are one of the most underserved diverse student populations.

Disproportionate Preservice Teacher Demographics and Student Demographics

Research confirms that a trend of racial division between the demographics of the preservice teacher population and that of the student population. While the majority of the contemporary preservice teacher population is increasingly White, middle-class, and female, the student population is increasingly diverse (Lowenstein, 2009). According to statistical evidence, “White teachers represent 86% of the teaching force and the vast majority (80%-93%) of students enrolled in teacher education programs are White” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Lack

of diversity within the teaching profession is critical when the student population as a whole, especially the urban student population, continues to increase in diversity. In fact, “40% of the school population is now from racially [...] diverse groups” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

Although the majority of preservice teachers are also classified as middle-class and female, which is unrepresentative of the diverse student population, these factors will be treated as a separate issues which will not be examined within the context of this study due to the fact that the primary focus of this study is race. The question remains: Why does the preservice teacher population continue to be homogeneously White? Research points to the fact that White privilege within society significantly contributes to the attractiveness of the teaching profession between various racial groups (Cullen, 2014). For the White population, whiteness is consistently represented positively in daily experiences; and, furthermore, whiteness has constantly reflected back from sources of power (Guess, 2006, p. 656). The White population as a whole, including the majority of White preservice teachers, are at an innate advantage regarding reporting a positive schooling experience, due to the fact that, historically, the education system was created for and by the White population. Therefore, many preservice teachers report having a positive schooling experience, and return to the public school system as their chosen profession.

However, the Black population does not report as having the same or similar experiences. Instead, Blacks the nation report as having a schooling experience in which whiteness is consistently reflected back from sources of power. With this, the Black population does not necessarily report having an especially positive schooling experience; therefore, there is a lack of Black representation within the preservice teacher population because historically, the

education system has failed in adequately representing, educating, and appropriately mentoring the Black student population.

The consequences of the demographic differences between the preservice teacher population and the student population are vast and varied. However, the most significant challenge is the fact that “White preservice teachers, who have mono-cultural realities, insulated lives, and immature experiences” face difficulty in connecting with diverse student populations, specifically in urban schools, which include the highest proportion of Black students (Hill-Jackson, 2007, pp. 29-35). This contributes to that idea that the majority of the preservice teacher population, which has been consistently advantaged due to whiteness throughout history, struggles to connect to a student population which has not been exposed to such advantages, namely the Black student population within urban schools. This creates disconnection “between the lived reality of White preservice teachers and the lived realities of [Black students]” which can cause resistance in the classroom (Hill-Jackson, 2007, pp. 29-35).

The lack of representation of the Black population within the preservice teacher population impacts the education system, and specifically urban schools, negatively due to the fact that the student population continues to be underserved due to the consequences whiteness. For example, research, “found that preservice student teachers are fairly naïve and have stereotypic beliefs about urban children, such as believing that urban children bring attitudes that interfere with education” (Sleeter, 2001, p. 95). Although U.S. society might not be able to immediately impact the numbers of Black teachers that enter the profession, society can encourage White teachers to become more culturally sensitive in their current positions.

As whiteness continues to impact the development of racial perspectives and attitudes, it perpetuates the idea of racial inequality within society. Preservice teachers must be willing to

address certain weaknesses within themselves regarding perpetuating some of the issues within the urban school system. Thus, preservice teachers must identify certain internal issues, regarding the racial ideas, experiences, and attitudes toward future Black students within the urban education system, which might negatively impact their ability to create positive social change for Black, or urban, communities. More specifically, preservice teachers must discuss and identify their cultural sensitivity towards Black students.

Possible Influences on Preservice Teacher Racial Attitudes toward Future Black Students within the Urban Education System

The U.S. Department of Education reports that “about 84% of the nation’s teachers are White” (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). When addressing preservice teachers’ attitudes towards future Black students, it is important to note that the especially high proportion of White individuals within the teaching force allows for a critical analysis of the possible influences on racial attitudes of White preservice teachers.

According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary, an attitude is defined as “[1] the way you think and feel about someone or something” or “[2] a feeling or way of thinking that affects a person's behavior” (attitude, 2015). In the specific context of race, a racial attitude is a feeling or way of thinking, relating to the social construct of race, which effects behavior. Racial attitudes may be negative or positive, depending on the particular individual or population which forms the attitude. Racial attitudes shape behavior. Depending on certain feelings and thoughts, the attitudes and behaviors may have positive or negative consequences. For example, when an individual has a positive racial attitude regarding another individual or population, it will positively impact their behavior, which increases the likelihood of a positive experience, and vice versa. This is true regarding the racial attitudes of preservice teachers towards future Black

students. The development of racial attitudes, with many possible influences, impacts the way in which preservice teachers behave and treat future Black students in an urban school setting.

There are many possible influences of the development of racial attitudes, which derive from certain ideas and experiences. The profound impact that race, racial difference, and racial inequality has had on U.S. history has shaped political and societal feelings and thoughts regarding racial attitudes. These factors have indirectly shaped individual feelings and thoughts, which have further shaped the development of racial attitudes. As a whole, the U.S. society has incorporated the theme of Whiteness, which continues to impact the development of racial attitudes. Thus, it perpetuates the idea of racial inequality within society. Preservice teachers must identify certain internal issues, regarding the racial ideas, experiences, and attitudes toward future Black students within the urban education system, which impact their behavior towards this particular population. More specifically, preservice teachers must discuss and identify their cultural sensitivity towards Black students.

METHODOLOGY

This section describes the methodology utilized for this research study. Following a review of the purpose statement, the section is organized in the following sections: research questions, research design, researcher's role, research setting, research participants, limitation of the study, data collection process, interview protocol, and data analysis.

This study seeks to explore the racial ideas, experiences, and attitudes of preservice teachers toward future Black students at a large, southeastern, Research I university through a qualitative interview process. More specifically, this study will examine preservice teachers' cultural sensitivity towards Black, or urban, culture. This study will also observe preservice teachers' ability to discuss these issues.

Research Questions

The researcher sets out to explore the racial ideas, experiences, and attitudes of preservice teachers toward future Black students, examine preservice teachers' cultural sensitivity towards Black, or urban, culture, and observe preservice teachers' ability to discuss these issues. Research will be conducted by content analysis utilizing the results of a qualitative interview process of preservice teachers at a large, southeastern, Research I university. This study seeks to answer the following questions:

Research question one (RQ1): How do preservice teachers define race and racism?

Research question two (RQ2): What factors contribute to preservice teachers' racial perspectives?

Research question three (RQ3): What are preservice teachers' attitudes towards students who are racially different from themselves, specifically Black students?

Researcher's Role

The role of the researcher will be quite important due to the fact that the researcher is considered an instrument in data collection, meaning that the researcher will play a significant role in the manner in which data is collected and analyzed. The researcher will be considered an insider into the phenomenon which the study seeks to describe regarding race. This may have an effect on the responses of research participants.

Furthermore, it is important to disclose the race and gender of the researcher due to the fact that, because of the nature of the topic of race, it may inadvertently effect the responses of the research participants. For the purpose of this study, the researcher is a White female. As the target population includes only White females, it is important to note that the similarity between the researcher and participant may impact the nature of the conversation, regarding willingness and comfortability in participating in the study. Individuals who do not identify as a White female will not be included in this study in order to go along with research on the current population of teachers. When discussing the topic of race, is it not uncommon that members of the discussion alter their responses depending on the demographic of the researcher.

Research Setting

Potential research participants will be found using a sample of convenience method at a large, southeastern, Research I university. Potential research participants, outlined in the subsection labeled "Research Participants," will be contacted and recruited by the researcher via email to complete a ten question interview that should take approximately 25 minutes. Interviews will be conducted in-person and recorded in a quiet, neutral location where the research participants are not in danger and there is no intimidation or coercion.

Recruitment materials are found in Appendix B.

Research Participants

The researcher will seek a voluntary sample of convenience of peers over 18 years of age, who are known to the researcher as current preservice teachers enrolled in the English Language Arts Education program at a large, southeastern, Research I university. Research participants will be contacted by the researcher via email to complete a ten question interview that should take approximately 25 minutes.

Race and gender will be a variable in the study, as the researcher will seek research participants who identify their race as White, and their gender as female. This is due to the fact that the researcher would like to have a sample population which is representative of the contemporary preservice teacher population in order to effectively compare and comment of preservice teacher attitudes towards Black students. There will be no interview questions that make the research participant unwilling or uncomfortable to participate, and this should create an atmosphere that allows them to speak freely. If the research participant is unwilling or uncomfortable, they may choose to decline answering questions.

The researcher will seek to interview four research participants. Small participant research, also known as small-N research design, is the expected norm in qualitative research (Creswell, 2009). Small studies with a limited number of research participants will enable the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of participant experience.

Limitations of the Study

This study will be limited in scope. While the researcher acknowledges that the development of racial ideas, experiences, and attitudes of White preservice teachers toward future Black students encompass numerous areas, this study will focus specifically on race. Although the majority of preservice teachers are also classified as middle-class and female, which is unrepresentative of the diverse student population, these factors will be treated as a

separate issues which will not be examined within the context of this study due to the fact that the primary focus of this study is race. Furthermore, the researcher recognizes that the “issue of race does not exist within a vacuum, but often intersects with a number of other constructs, such as gender, culture, sexual orientation, physical, mental, and emotional abilities, age, as well as economic and social class” (Kwegyir Aggrey, 2007). However, in an effort to give this study a clear focus, race will be the sole focus examined here.

In addition, this study is based on a limited number of research participants as detailed more fully in the Methodology section. The sample will consist of a limited number, approximately four, individuals participating in the teacher education program at a four-year college located in Central Florida. Due to the nature of discussions regarding race, racism, and racial difference, research participants feel an array of emotions, including disinterest, which may lead to non-participation. Due to a limited number of research participants, the generalizations of this study’s findings will also be limited.

Ethical Considerations

This study will be submitted to the IRB Committee for approval. The researcher has completed IRB certification, and understands the responsibilities of research ethics, and will communicate appropriately with the research participants. This research study is aligned with IRB policies. Furthermore, there is no planned use of deception involved in this study.

Research Participant Privacy

Participation in this study and responses will be kept confidential. Any reference to the research participant will be by pseudonym, including any direct quotes from responses. The Informed Consent Form and any notes or recordings that might personally identify the research participant as a participant in this study will be kept in a locked place that only the researcher

will have access to. Only the researcher and the research supervisor might know who has participated in this study. Three years after the completion of this research study all personally identifying information will be destroyed.

Risks to the Research Participant

There are five acknowledged risks generally associated with participation in research studies such as this one: Physical, psychological, social, economic, and legal. The researcher foresees minimal risk for those who choose to participate in this study. There are no foreseen physical risks associated with this study; other risks might include the following: a potential experience of anxiety, discomfort, or negative emotions as a result of responding to the questions asked of them in this research study. If the research participant experiences a negative reaction, they may choose to skip the question, to withdraw from the study, or may contact the faculty advisor or the BGS Institutional Review Board, especially if discomfort continues after the study.

The research participant might experience social, economic, or legal implications if they share their responses or their participation in this study with others. If the research participant chooses to volunteer for this study, they are encouraged to keep the participation in this study and responses confidential. The researcher will maintain confidentiality throughout the study, and will destroy the records of participation three years after the study is complete.

Benefits to the Research Participant

There are no foreseen direct benefits to the research participant regarding participation in this study beyond the general knowledge that they are assisting in furthering the knowledge related to this research topic, and assisting the researcher in completing the Honors in the Major (HIM) thesis requirements. There is no compensation associated with participation in this study.

Data Collection

Data collection will include an open-ended, one-on-one interview format of ten questions that should take approximately 25 minutes. Interviews will be conducted in-person and one-on-one. The nature of an interview requires interpretation and analysis throughout the interview, as well as after.

Interview Questions

Interview questions are created based on prior research, an intensive literature review, and the purpose of the study. Each interview questions correlates to the study's research questions, listed under the section "Research Questions". Each interview question is different, and aids in the analysis of each of the research questions, labeled as (RQ#).

Interview questions one through four are meant to gather information about the research participant's background information, including name, academic year, academic major, racial identity, hometown, and career plans. This information is significant to the study in order to make special correlations between the research participant's background information and the remaining interview responses.

Interview question number five gathers information regarding the research participant's personal racial experiences with individuals who are racially different from themselves, as well as their feelings towards those particular experiences. Interview question number five correlates to (RQ2).

Interview question number six gathers information regarding the research participant's beliefs and attitudes on race and racism, as well as the factors that contribute to the research participant's racial perspectives. Furthermore, interview question number six indirectly gathers

information regarding how research participant's engage in regarding race and racism. Interview question number six will correlate to (RQ1) and (RQ2).

Interview question number seven gathers information regarding the research participant's attitudes and concerns about teaching future students who may be racially different. Interview question number seven correlates to (RQ3).

Interview question number eight gathers information regarding the research participant's thoughts about differences in relationships with students who are racially different from themselves. Interview question number eight gathers correlates to (RQ3).

Interview question number nine gathers information regarding the research participant's perception of their own racial identity. Interview question correlates to (RQ2).

Interview question number ten gathers information regarding the research participant's diversity awareness, and preparedness in teaching racially diverse students. Interview question number ten correlates to (RQ3).

Interview questions are found in Appendix D.

Interview Protocol

The interview protocol will be utilized for data collection and data analysis. The interview protocol utilized for this study will consist of ten open-ended questions. Interviews will be conducted in-person and one-on-one to address any identified issues or concerns that arose from research or the survey instrument. The results from the interview protocol will be evaluated and summarized in Section 4.

The research participants will remain anonymous with no reference to name and institution, but demographic data such as academic year, academic major, racial identity,

description of hometown community, and career plans will be recorded by the researcher to identify emerging themes among the research participants.

Data Analysis

Due to the nature of open-ended interview questions, there is the likelihood of research participants' offering varying responses. Sometimes, this may cause data to become skewed, or difficult to analyze due to the complexities offered with each response. However, for the purpose of this study, the researcher prefers open-ended interview questions, with the possibility of varying responses, rather than other methods, due to the fact that the topic of race is quite complex itself. Race is a lived experience; therefore, there is a large possibility that each research participant has a unique response to any given interview question.

Still, the researcher will collect and analyze emerging data in this study with primary intent of developing themes from the data. Each interview session will be recorded in a quiet, neutral location. Audio tapes will be transcribed.

After initial reading and rereading of the transcribed transcripts, the researcher will undergo a process of manual coding to categorize information into themes for interpretation and analysis. This will include identifying and placing emerging data, themes, and ideas into groups for use in this study. Significant data, themes, and ideas will correlate directly to research questions. Furthermore, the research participant's direct words will be used to illustrate significant data, themes, and ideas. Specific groups of data, themes, and ideas will be developed into a descriptive narrative. The researcher will interpret and analyze this to determine meanings and implications for preservice teachers' attitudes toward Black students, as well as the urban education system as a whole.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter

Appendix B: Research Participant Recruitment Materials

Date

Dear Students:

My name is Audra Greuel and I am an undergraduate student at the University of Central Florida. I am studying secondary English Language Arts Education with a focus on Business and Leadership Studies.

I am sending this letter to explain why I would like you to participate in my research study. The research study will only include peers over 18 years of age, who are currently enrolled in the English Language Arts Education program at the University of Central Florida. With your permission, I will ask you to complete a ten question face-to-face interview. The survey will take about 30 minutes. The interview will be provided in English.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and is not associated with The University of Central Florida or the College of Education and Human Performance and will not affect you or your rights in any way. You may quit this study at any time, by simply saying "I want to stop" or "I do not wish to participate." The study will be conducted *** through ***.

There are minimal risks involved; this study will be used for education purposed only, as I seek to gain a better understanding of preservice teachers' ideas, experiences, and attitudes regarding diversity and urban education.

To protect your confidentiality, your name will not appear on the survey, I will only use data and results from the survey, without including your name. This survey will not be shared with anyone other than myself, Audra Greuel, and my professor, Dr. Enrique A. Puig, at the University of Central Florida. If you have any questions or if you would like to receive a final copy of this research study after completion, please feel free to contact me at ().

This letter will serve as a consent form for your participation and will be kept in my personal locked file for a minimal of three years after completion of the study. If you have any questions about this research, please contact Dr. Enrique A. Puig, my research supervisor for this study.

Thank you,
Audra Greuel

Appendix C: Research Participant Informed Consent Form**Informed Consent Form, page 1**Exploring Preservice Teacher Attitudes toward Black Students

I would like to invite you to participate in a research study examining racial ideas, experiences, and attitudes of preservice teachers toward future Black students, which will add to the knowledge related to urban education. My name is Audra Greuel and the data collected in this interview will help fulfill the requirements for a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Honors in the Major (HIM) Program in English Language Arts Education in the College of Education and Human Performance and in The Burnett Honors College at the University of Central Florida. I am under the supervision of my faculty advisor, Dr. Enrique A. Puig.

Participation Requires of You: To be interviewed in person by a researcher, which will consist of ten questions, for an estimated time of 30 minutes. There is no planned use of deception involved in this study.

Your Privacy: Your participation in this study and your responses will be kept confidential. Any reference to you will be by pseudonym, including any direct quotes from your responses. This document and any notes or recordings that might personally identify you as a participant in this study will be kept in a locked place that only the researcher will have access to. Only the researcher and the research supervisor might know who has participated in this study. Three years after the completion of this research study all personally identifying information will be destroyed.

Risks to you: There are five acknowledged risks generally associated with participation in research studies such as this one: Physical, psychological, social, economic, and legal. The researcher foresees minimal risk for those who choose to participate in this study. There are no foreseen physical risks associated with this study; other risks might include the following: You might experience anxiety, discomfort, or negative emotions as a result of responding to the questions asked of them in this research study. If you experience a negative reaction, you may choose to skip the question, to withdraw from the study, or you may contact my faculty advisor or the BGS Institutional Review Board, especially if your discomfort continues after the study. See the contact information on the page below.

You might experience social, economic, or legal implications if you share your responses or your participation in this study with others. If you choose to participate in this study, you are encouraged to keep your participation in this study and your responses confidential. The researcher will maintain your confidentiality throughout the study, and will destroy the records of your participation three years after the study is complete.

Benefits to You: There are not foreseen direct benefits to you regarding participation in this study beyond the general knowledge that you are assisting in furthering the knowledge related to this research topic, and assisting the researcher in completing the Honors in the Major (HIM) thesis requirements. There is no compensation associated with participation in this study.

Informed Consent Form, page 2Exploring Preservice Teacher Attitudes toward Black Students

This document acknowledges you understand of your rights as a participant in this study, which the researcher has explained to you prior to signing this document.

I acknowledge that the researcher has explained my rights, the requirements of this study, and the potential risks involved in participating in this study. I understand there is no compensation for, or direct benefit of participating in this study. By signing below and providing my contact information I am indicating that I consent to participate in this study, that I am at least 18 years of age, and I am eligible to participate in this study.

You may withdraw from this study at any time by notifying me by email. If you have any concerns regarding your participation in this research study you may contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Enrique A. Puig, or the UCF Institutional Review Board (IRB). You may ask for a copy of this document for your own records.

Signed Name: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name: _____

Phone Number, Email Address, or Postal Address: _____

Thank you for your participation,
Audra Greuel
Honors in the Major (HIM) Program
The Burnett Honors College

Email Address:

Dr. Enrique A. Puig, Ed.D.
Thesis Committee Chair
School of Teaching, Learning, and Leadership
Morgridge International Reading Center

Email Address:

University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board
Email Address: irb@ucf.edu

The UCF Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversees the ethical practice of research involving human research participants conducted by students of the University of Central Florida.

Appendix D: Survey Instrument

1. What is your name, academic year, and academic major?
2. What race do you identify with?
3. How would you describe your hometown community?
4. Please describe your career plans upon graduation.
 - a. What geographic area do you plan to teach in (rural, suburban, or urban)? Please explain.
5. Have you had any personal experiences with those who are racially different from you?
 - a. How do you feel about these experiences?
 - b. What do you think you learned from these experiences?
6. What are your beliefs and attitudes on race and racism?
 - a. What factors helped to shape these beliefs?
 - i. For example, culture, politics, media, family, or socioeconomic status (education, income, wealth, employment, and occupational status)?
 - b. How does talking about race and racism make you feel?
 - c. Are you concerned about being “politically correct” when conversing with those who are racially different from you?
7. What are your attitudes and concerns about teaching future students who may be racially different from yourself, specifically Black students?
8. Do you think there might be any differences in your relationships with students who are racially different from yourself?
9. Do you think that Black students could perceive you in certain ways because of your racial identity? If so, how?

10. Do you feel prepared in effectively teaching a racially diverse student populations, considering the amount of diversity awareness you have received in your undergraduate career?