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'It doesn't speak to me': understanding student of color resistance to critical race pedagogy

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ABSTRACT

Scholars maintain that when race and racism are addressed as factors that continue to shape inequality in the classroom, white students often deny the validity of these claims, while Students of Color tend to feel empowered by them. However, drawing on open-ended interviews, focus group discussions, and survey data, we argue that some Students of Color resist critical race pedagogy and curriculum. Specifically, we identify and analyze how this push back is articulated through three triggers: (1) an entrenchment in majoritarian ideologies; (2) a disavowal of racialized oppression; and (3) a disinclination to scrutinize personal experiences marred by race. These dynamics illustrate what we call 'resisting decolonization' – a reluctance to grapple with pedagogies that destabilize dominant ideologies about race and racism in schools and disrupt mainstream ideas regarding ethnic or racial identity. We introduce this concept in an attempt to hone critical race pedagogy to better address the needs of Students of Color who sometimes unknowingly participate in the marginalization of Populations of Color through deficit thinking or through the denial of the continuing significance of race.

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Introduction

Critical race pedagogy is an instructional approach designed to challenge and transform the prevailing Eurocentric power structure that organizes higher education curricula in order to cultivate spaces that validate the experiences of Students of Color (Lynn, 1999, 2004, 2005; Lynn & Jennings, 2009). However, teaching stances like critical race pedagogy that acknowledge racial disparity, unpack whiteness, and center the diverse experiences of People of Color are not always valued. Research illustrates that when race and racism are addressed as factors that continue to shape inequality in the classroom, white students express denial, anger, guilt, and shame (López, 2003; Rakow, 1991; Tatum, 1992). In contrast, given the same scenario, Students of Color are described as becoming empowered as they realize that they are 'part of a legacy of resistance to racism and the layers of racialized oppression' (Yosso, 2005, p. 75). Thus, white students are typically portrayed as resisting these approaches, while Students of Color are often depicted as thriving with them. In this article, we attempt to shed light on a lesser discussed phenomenon: Student of Color resistance to critical race pedagogy.

Drawing on the experiences of students, professors, and support staff involved in an education-themed ethnic studies class expressly designed for first-generation college Students of Color, we – instructors in this first-year Diversity Scholars program – identify how a small but noticeable number of

Students of Color recurrently struggle with the concepts, literature, assignments, discussions, and service learning requirements that comprise a curriculum grounded in critical race pedagogy. The co-taught ethnic studies course at the center of our analysis is predicated on the tenets of critical race pedagogy and its call to counter the ways that traditional public educational school environments neglect, deny, or malign the histories, needs, and racialized experiences of Students of Color. This project sets out to understand the source of this resistance.

One of the instructors, a Chicana communication professor, has taught the course six times. The other, a Latina sociology professor, has taught the course three times. During each of these semesters, we have dealt with a number of Students of Color who challenge the course material. We found that this conflict was articulated as a result of three major triggers: (1) an entrenchment in majoritarian or dominant ideologies; (2) a disavowal of experiences with racialized oppression; and (3) a disinclination to scrutinize personal experiences marred by race or other marginalized identities. These dynamics are not mutually exclusive, but are instead intimately linked through what we call ‘resisting decolonization’ – a reluctance to grapple with a critical race pedagogy that destabilizes mainstream ideologies about race, racism, and racial identity in schools. We argue that resisting decolonization elicits a cognitive dissonance within some Students of Color when they recognize that they are implicated in an educational system that often reinforces their subordination. This discord further actuates when students’ conception of their ethnic or racial identity is disrupted, especially if that identity is cast within a colonial perspective. In other words, resisting decolonization arises when Students of Color dispute the idea that legacies of domination inform their identities and shape their perceptions of the ‘American opportunity structure’ (Carter, 2008, p. 468). Distinct from research that reveals how white students tend to reject curriculum that addresses systems of racial oppression because they ultimately benefit from these systems (Applebaum, 2004), we introduce the concept of resisting decolonization to highlight the damaging way Students of Color who resist critical race pedagogy are complicit in their own disenfranchisement. Unlike their white peers who continue to reap advantages by refusing to interrogate racial hierarchies, Students of Color remain disadvantaged by systems of oppression when they resist the process of decolonization.

The article continues as follows. First, we summarize the tenets of critical race theory research to underscore how these principles buoy critical race pedagogy. Next, we review critical race pedagogy scholarship and discuss the absence of research that addresses Student of Color resistance to curriculum customized to their racialized identities. Then, we describe the Diversity Scholars program – which employs critical race pedagogy – and outline our methodological approach. Finally, we conceptualize resisting decolonization by detailing the triggers that cause some Students of Color to contest critical race pedagogical approaches and curriculum, despite the intent of these approaches to validate the cultural knowledge, traditions, and perspectives that students – like themselves – offer.

Critical race theory and critical race pedagogy

Critical race theory emerged in the field of legal studies in order to forefront and transform the function and impact of race and racism in the legal system (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995; Taylor, 1998; Valdes, Culp, & Harris, 2002). Since its introduction by legal scholars several decades ago, education scholars have applied critical race theory to interrogate the racial injustices and systemic racism embedded in the K-16 educational pipeline, and in non-formal educational settings through the perspective of People of Color (Dixon & Rousseau, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano & Yosso, 2000a). A seminal tenet of critical race theory is the conviction that racism is entrenched throughout US society (Bell, 1992; Delgado & Stefancic, 2000). Another principle validates experiences of marginality and intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989, 1995) in order to interrogate how racism operates through majoritarian, or dominant, ideologies – such as white supremacy, colonialism, and nativism, as well as color-blind discourses of objectivity, meritocracy, and equal opportunity (Crenshaw et al., 1995; DeCuir & Dixon, 2004). Both legal and education critical race scholars purposefully highlight the experiential knowledge of People of Color to document how systems of oppression

and privilege affect Communities of Color (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Valdes et al., 2002). Lastly, critical race theorists connect their research to activism, aspiring to eradicate all forms of subordination (Matsuda, Lawrence, Richard, & Crenshaw, 1993).

Some educators distill the aforementioned principles into a pedagogical approach referred to as critical race pedagogy. Critical race pedagogy encapsulates the teaching practices and content that Educators of Color employ for Students of Color (Jennings & Lynn, 2005; Leonardo, 2009; Lynn, 1999, 2004, 2005; Lynn & Jennings, 2009; Solórzano & Yosso, 2000b) in order to center race and racism, validate the experiential knowledge of Students of Color, and deconstruct dominant ideologies in their classrooms. In other words, critical race pedagogy is characterized by the 'emancipatory teaching practices of People of Color' who utilize multiple 'liberatory strategies as a vehicle for counteracting the devaluation of racially oppressed students' (Lynn, 2004, p. 155). These approaches include – but are not limited to – critical pedagogy (Freire, 2003), anti-racist pedagogy (Sleeter & Delgado Bernal, 2004), decolonial pedagogy (Asher, 2009), feminist pedagogy (Trinh, 1989), border pedagogy (Giroux, 1988), Afro-centric pedagogy (Lynn, 2004), culturally responsive pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995), and engaged pedagogy (hooks, 1994). Critical race scholars describe these varied teaching stances and curricular choices as not only a form of 'dissent' towards the inequities that subordinate marginalized students (e.g. policies, curriculum, funding structures, and testing standards), but also a source of 'affirmation' that helps develop positive cultural/racial/ethnic identities (Jennings & Lynn, 2005, p. 192). Such approaches and class material challenge color-blindness, whiteness, meritocracy, assimilation, and conformity in K-12 schools; they also critique deficit thinking about the educability of Students of Color. Moreover, critical race pedagogy aims to revolutionize classrooms into sites where marginalized students flourish (Leonardo, 2004, 2009; Lynn, 1999; Robinson, 1997; Stovall, 2006a). Thus, critical race pedagogy utilizes various instructional approaches and race-based content that, at minimum, both challenge mainstream discourses and legitimize the experiential knowledge of Students of Color.

Regardless of the specific instructional approach, critical race pedagogues emphasize the racialized identities and experiences of both Educators and Students of Color (Jennings & Lynn, 2005; Lynn & Jennings, 2009; Parker & Stovall, 2004; Solórzano & Yosso, 2000a) as vital, yet often untapped sources of knowledge (Bernal, 2002; Romero, Arce, & Cammarota, 2009; Yosso, 2005, 2006). For instance, Bernal (2002) found that critical race pedagogy allows Chicana/o college students to feel empowered as 'holders and creators of knowledge' (p. 107), while Stovall (2006b) argued that this approach treats young people as 'experts on their lives' (p. 235). Knaus (2009) stated that when students' experiences are valorized, they 'can make sense of the reality they live in, assess the effectiveness of their survival strategies, and make changes in their daily actions to achieve the goals they set out for themselves' (p. 138). By valuing their lived experiences of marginalization, critical race pedagogy is attributed with initiating moments of transformation as Students of Color connect the materials to their own lives (Bernal, Alemán, & Garavito, 2009; Yosso, 2002). Therefore, when exposed to a critical race pedagogy that utilizes their experiential knowledge to analyze the complex layers of subordination, Students of Color are repeatedly described as readily responding to the valuation of their intimate and embodied expertise with racism (Knaus, 2009; Romero et al., 2009; Stovall, 2006b; Yosso, 2002). However, when professors critically engage issues of race and racism among white students, the literature indicates that they often feel uncomfortable or deny its relevance.

Challenges to pedagogies that problematize race

Most of the literature documenting challenges to pedagogies – like critical race pedagogy – that unmask and dismantle systems of oppression concern the reactions and sentiments of white students. In particular, much emphasis is placed on how both white and non-white educators face multiple challenges in their efforts to name and interrogate race and whiteness among the nation's predominantly white college students (Johnson, Rich, & Cargile, 2008). Simpson, Causey, and Williams (2007) argue that classroom spaces mirror contemporary society's dysfunctional color-blind or post-racial discourses (Johnson & Bhatt, 2003; Roberts, Bell, & Murphy, 2008), resulting in 'heightened tension, resistance to

or denial of raced readings of reality, rigorous avoidance of race issues' (Simpson et al., 2007, p. 34). Notably, the current millennial generation of college students present a particular challenge to these types of pedagogical approaches, because although they may have more tolerant racial attitudes, they are invested in a post-racial world which they believe is better integrated and more egalitarian than years past, resulting in a skewed understanding of racism (Mueller, 2013).

A pioneer in assessing students' engagement with issues of race and racism, Tatum (1992, 1994) has similarly documented how the white college students in her classes expressed resistance to curriculum that critiqued whiteness and highlighted the experiences of diverse racial groups in three ways. The first, 'race as taboo topic,' signals a paradox: students want to study race, but do not want to talk about it. Tatum argued that this self-censoring is learned during childhood when parents quiet children who raise questions about phenotypic difference. As a result, children intuit that talking about race is anxiety-inducing for adults and learn to avoid the subject. Additionally, students characterize classroom engagement with issues of race as involving internal conflict (Simpson et al., 2007), or at the very least, discomfort (Johnson & Bhatt, 2003). Indeed, discussions about race often evoke intense emotions – anger, surprise, frustration, passion, doubt – which can seem incongruous in logic-based learning processes (Simpson et al., 2007). White students in particular silently disagree with or, in some cases, harbor resentment when faculty discuss the continuing significance of race (Johnson & Bhatt, 2003). Yet, sensing that it is inappropriate (i.e. 'taboo') to express these opinions in the classroom, they often remain silent.

Second, when white students do express resistance, they often couch their opposition in the discourse of meritocracy and individualism. Specifically, most students ascribe to the notion that US society is equitable, and that through individual effort alone, anyone can succeed. Within these parameters, racism is understood as an individual phenomenon, whereby only a handful of deviant individuals are racist. White students reject bigotry and disassociate from the label 'racist.' Communication scholars have likewise found that when they address the topic of whiteness in their classrooms, white students adopt cultural logics that equate racism and prejudice; refute institutional or systemic racism; deny a historical legacy of inequality propagated by racial categories; and invalidate the racialized experiences of Students of Color (Cooks, 2003; Kennedy, Middleton, & Ratcliffe, 2005; Martin & Davis, 2001; Miller & Harris, 2005; Warren, 2001). When racism is problematized beyond the framework of individual actions, both white students and Students of Color often withdraw from class, albeit for different reasons: white students are frustrated with a racism that they feel they have no connection to, while some Students of Color are pained because they recognize the impact that institutional racism has in their lives (Tatum, 1992).

A third mode of resistance identified by Tatum stems from white students denying their role in perpetuating racism. As they 'inevitably start to recognize its legacy within themselves' (Tatum, 1992, p. 8), they tend to resist this self-awareness. In this 'collision of developmental processes,' white students self-censor and withdraw from class discussion in order to prove that they do not harbor prejudice, while Students of Color withdraw because of the defensive reactions of their white classmates (Tatum, 1992). Work by Applebaum (2004) reminds social justice educators that students with a dominant identity are unlikely to challenge a system that affords privileges. Specifically, white students often focus on individual intention and neglect to make connections to social structures that highlight how they are 'unintentionally and indirectly complicit in the marginalization of others' (p. 70) (see also Thompson, 2003).

The literature reviewed above reveals a polarity between how white students and Students of Color react to pedagogies that problematize institutional racism and white supremacy in various classroom settings. Very little research explores how or why Students of Color push back against course content that complicates racism as an endemic and enduring phenomenon. Maybee (2011) found that the ethnically diverse students in her class did not necessarily interpret instances of discrimination as 'signs of an embedded and intractable system of racial domination' (p. 855). Contrary to the findings of other scholars (Knaus, 2009; Leonardo, 2004; Stovall, 2006b), Maybee argued that the Students of Color in her class were sometimes unconvinced that racism persisted in the United States. She speculated that this

skepticism resulted from growing up in racially and ethnically homogenous neighborhoods. In other words, her students had little contact with whites, and were therefore unaware of ‘White domination’ (p. 857). Maybee attributed the reluctance to embrace critical race pedagogy as a function of the segregated minority–majority spaces they inhabit.

Anti-racist pedagogues Carillo Rowe and Malhotra (2006) point to other reasons that might explain why Students of Color resist pedagogies that deconstruct racially oppressive systems. These include: (1) an indoctrination in color-blind and assimilative ideologies via the socializing messages communicated by families, schools, and the media; (2) a self-hatred propagated via multiple systems of domination – like imperialism, colonialism, and racism that causes them to imitate whiteness while hating their ‘otherness’; (3) class- and/or skin-color privilege that enables them to rationalize disparities as a result of cultural or individual deficits; and (4) assimilation as a coping strategy in order to minimize difference and evade racially spurred confrontations. Carillo Rowe and Malhotra (2006) problematize how Students of Color are framed as ‘already there’ when utilizing critical race, critical whiteness, anti-racist, or social justice pedagogies, ‘preclud[ing] a thorough investigation into the ways in which they are interpellated by whiteness, complicit with its supremacist structures, and/or have internalized its compulsions’ (p. 189).

In summary, research about students’ interface with race-based pedagogies that center issues of race, racism, and whiteness often sets white students and Students of Color at opposite ends of an engagement continuum: white students are described as resisting discussions about race and racism, while Students of Color are depicted as accepting and being empowered by them. One of the few exceptions to this dialectic is research by Maybee (2011) who calls attention to Student of Color reluctance to problematize race and racism, theorizing that unfamiliarity with ideologies of whiteness instigates this resistance. Like Maybee (2011), Carillo Rowe and Malhotra (2006) suggest the co-optation or internalization of whiteness might also explain student resistance. Outside of these two perspectives, very little scholarship explores *how* or *why* Students of Color articulate specific difficulties with pedagogies that problematize white supremacist ideologies, disenfranchisement, and racialization. In this research, we seek to document and analyze how Students of Color negotiate – and sometimes reject – a critical race pedagogy that is designed to de-center whiteness and interrogate various aspects of marginalization (e.g. language, ethnicity, sexuality, class, immigration status) – in an education-themed ethnic studies class. The context for this course is described below.

Diversity Scholars program

The Diversity Scholars is a first-year retention program that provides academic support for Students of Color at a Western state’s flagship university. Even though Students of Color make up nearly a quarter of all the students in the state’s public schools (Moulton, 2013), they only make up 12% of the student body. Moreover, their graduation rates range from 28% for African-American students, to 37% for Latina/o students, and 53% for Asian-American students (Office of Equity & Diversity [OED], 2012). The Diversity Scholars program was launched during the 2007–2008 academic year in order to increase the number of Students of Color attending and graduating from the university where both authors teach. The intentional creation of an ethnic studies classroom space comprised primarily of Students of Color is based on critical race pedagogy that emphasizes students’ lived experiences of systemic racialization in educational settings, as well as research demonstrating that Students of Color thrive and persist through college when they purposefully build networks with other Students of Color (Villalpando, 2003).

The Diversity Scholars program consists of five strategic components, each grounded in critical race pedagogy:

- a yearlong ethnic studies course that offers a race- and ethnicity-based analysis of the educational conditions and experiences of Students of Color in K-12 and in higher education;
- a critical service-learning experience (Donahue & Mitchell, 2010) where Diversity Scholars mentor elementary-aged Students of Color at educational sites;
- Faculty of Color instructors;

- academic advising by Center for Ethnic Student Affairs (CESA) staff of color; and
- mentoring and tutoring support by cohort graduates and graduate Students of Color.

The ethnic studies course enables the Diversity Scholars to develop an understanding of the educational experiences of historically under-represented students by reflecting on their own education and on the schooling conditions of Students of Color by reading both academic studies and autobiographical narratives. Students are introduced to and subsequently tested on their understanding and application of concepts like the social construction of race, institutional racism, whiteness, systems of privilege, the myth of meritocracy, nativism, marginality, resistance, decolonization, and deficit thinking. Throughout the semester, students acquire a vocabulary to help them identify and reflect on and how they have been socialized with dominant ideologies, racialized as a result of their racial or ethnic identities, or aggrieved because of negative expectations or assumptions about their educability. They are also asked to recall the strategies that resulted in their perseverance and success in their educational journeys. The course culminates with an educational narrative about their personal schooling experiences and an accompanying analysis utilizing their newly acquired vocabulary. Critical race pedagogy informs this purposeful focus on the intersections of education, race, and racism in order to challenge inequities resulting from institutional racism, transform educational spaces, and empower Students of Color through the experiential knowledge of racialized individuals (Lynn, 1999; Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2000b).

The critical race pedagogical approach is coupled with critical service learning's 'attention to social change, its questioning of the distribution of power in society, and its focus on developing authentic relationships between higher education institutions and the community served' (Mitchell, 2007, p. 101). Putting theory into action, the Diversity Scholars are placed in public school sites where they serve as mentors, primarily to Students of Color. Written and digital reflection assignments about the critical service-learning experience sharpen the Diversity Scholars' understandings of the legacies of inequities built into the institutional policies, Eurocentric curriculum, and disciplinary strategies of the American educational system.

Research indicates that Students of Color benefit from exposure to and relationships with racially and ethnically identified professors; as such, the class is primarily taught by Faculty of Color (Alger, 1998; Eimers, 2001; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Moreover, critical race pedagogy models feature instructors of Color (Lynn, 2002; Stovall, 2006a; Yosso, 2002). The course has been taught by 12 faculty or instructors from a range of disciplines, including education, English literature, political science, sociology, history, communication, and gender studies.

Each student in the program is assigned to a CESA academic advisor – all of whom are People of Color – and meet with them regularly. These staff members coordinate tutoring and study sessions, monitor academic performance, and guide course schedules. The program also provides graduate teaching assistants and peer mentors (undergraduate students who have successfully completed the course). Both maintain office and/or study hours and attend class to help facilitate discussion and share their experiences of racialization in their educational experiences with the scholars.

Between 2009 and 2014, 800 Students of Color have participated in the program. Since it is designed to address the retention of Students of Color at the University of Utah, white students are not recruited into the program, but if white students indicate a desire to participate, they may enroll in the class. Almost half of the Diversity Scholars to date identify as Latina/o, with Asian-American students comprising the next biggest portion of the cohort at 18%, followed by Pacific Islander students at 11%, and African-American students at 9%. Non-native English speakers comprise 60% of the students, with at least 80% of them first-generation college students. Records approximate about 6 to 10% of Diversity Scholars are undocumented.

Retention data on the first four cohorts indicate that the program is making a positive impact, whereby the Diversity Scholars are persisting at rates higher than freshmen of Color not enrolled in the program (OED, 2012). Moreover, the majority of students respond to the class in ways that correspond

with the research on critical race pedagogy. For example, a Diversity Scholar from the 2011 cohort indicated that the course

is one of the best courses I've taken at the University. It gave that sense of belonging that I needed in order to succeed my first year at the university. Having a support system, the one I found through the course, enabled me to make the transition from high school into college.

A Diversity Scholar from the 2010 cohort stated that, 'In your whole college career, you will never have an amazing class like this one. It will tap into your life and make you think and at the same time cry, but also feel proud of who you are.' Finally, a third student encouraged incoming Diversity Scholars to

be excited to be in the program because they will learn new things about themselves and build their identities. The [Diversity Scholars] class will give them a chance to embrace their origins, heritage and culture – that is something to be thrilled about!

Yet despite this success, instructors note that there are a handful of students who struggle with the critical race pedagogical content every year. For example, they refuse to do the readings, remain silent in class discussions, deny the existence of racism, habitually miss class, and/or fail to complete service learning hours or written assignments. As course instructors, we are invested in the goals, values, and outcomes of the Diversity Scholars Program and have faith in its theoretical foundations. We began this project after reflecting on conversations with other participating faculty who over the course of several years have regularly encountered these pockets of resistance in their classrooms from students belonging to a range of racial and ethnic groups. Several faculty members noted that even the presence of one to two students who consistently challenge the material in class can result in an adverse environment antithetical to the goals of critical race pedagogy. In short, this research grew out of our personal interest in the class and its students, but also out of our desire to be better and more effective educators for all the Diversity Scholars. Indeed, we often wondered why so little was written about Student of Color resistance to critical race pedagogy, and consequently, no guidance for educators who encountered its effects. After regularly discussing this gap in the research at our bi-weekly meetings, we began outlining a project to address this phenomenon and engage with others who have had similar challenges. In the following section, we discuss the steps we took to pinpoint the sources of resistance.

Methodology

Our analysis draws primarily on data collected between 2011 and 2012 at a predominantly white, middle-class, and suburban Research-I institution located in the Rocky Mountain west. We began by meeting and assessing the information about students' experiences with the course content that was already available to us and determined we still need to collect additional data that corresponded to our core question. In some cases, this meant reviewing the data in our collective files (e.g. student assignments, responses to in-class writing prompts, and post-class surveys) that we had gathered over the years. In other cases, it meant thinking about how we could collect more information to build on the existing data (e.g. conducting interviews with faculty who had also experienced patterns of resistance).

Having taught the class several times, we each had our own archive of student work that comprised both in-class and take-home assignments. We individually identified patterns of resistance, and then we combined and compared our examples of students' disengagement with the course materials. We then decided that conducting open-ended interviews with current and past course instructors would better help us locate triggers that we did not initially identify. Several of our interviewees (discussed below) suggested that it might be a good idea to interview the CESA support staff (individuals who help facilitate service learning, and provide general guidance to enrolled students) and peer mentors (those student assistants who were previous students, but worked closely with currently enrolled students). In particular, they noted that the CESA staff and peer advisors are privy to different types of student feedback, and that their perspectives could also be useful in identifying the sources of the pushback.

Finally, we administered an online, closed-ended, quantitative survey to students who were enrolled in the course in 2011–2012. We believed the survey findings would enable us to determine student

perceptions about the salience of race in their lives and their educational trajectories and by administering the survey anonymously, students enrolled in the course could be assured that their candid responses would not impact their final grade in the course. Taken together, the three sets of complementary data were effective in identifying key triggers regarding student resistance to critical race pedagogy. Below, we discuss our study participants and methodology in greater detail.

Study participants

The study participants consisted of four different sets of stakeholders connected to the Diversity Scholars Program. We conducted two semi-structured focus group discussions: one with five CESA staff members (two Latino males – Luis and Richard¹; one Asian-American female – Mina; and two Pacific Islander males – Sikoti and Randi) with one of the authors; and another with three peer mentors (one Latino male – Javier; a Pacific Islander female – Jessica; and one Native American female – Elise), with both authors, lasting approximately 90 min each. All CESA staff and peer mentors affiliated with the program were invited to these discussions, with eight individuals volunteering to participate. Likewise, all eight faculty members who taught for the Diversity Scholars course between 2008 and 2011 were invited to be a part of the study. Four agreed to be interviewed: a Latina female – Graciela; a Latino male – Malaquías; a white female – Kate; and an Asian-American male – Ty). Both authors conducted an hour-long, open-ended interview with each instructor.

The one-on-one interviews were conducted with former faculty who have only taught the course once, to those who have taught it three or more times. Questions addressed how each became involved with the program, the types of student push back they experienced, the patterns in this behavior they might have recognized, and how they made sense of these occurrences. Faculty members also talked about the tactics they used to mitigate resistance and identified continual challenges they believed course instructors would face (Table 1).

The first of two focus group sessions took place with CESA coordinators and was led by Alemán. In addition to helping all Students of Color navigate the social, economic, and institutional barriers they might face as undergraduates, CESA coordinators (approximately every year) are each assigned a caseload of 20–30 Diversity Scholars. During the focus group interviews, CESA advisors reflected on individual meetings and informal exchanges with Diversity Scholars in which students expressed grievances about the class. The second focus group session took place with three peer mentors (there were three to six peer mentors annually, depending on the cohort size). Conducted by both authors, questions addressed their personal experience with the class, as well as their interactions with students' who relayed specific difficulties or disagreements with the class materials. Lastly, we invited the 2011 Diversity Scholar cohort to complete an electronic survey that prompted them to not only reflect on the course emphasis of race, racism, and racial identity, but also its relevance to their past and future educational experiences. In addition, several questions focused on how students prioritized class readings and assignments.

All focus groups sessions and interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Each author analyzed the transcriptions and survey results for patterns separately. To begin, each author listed the types of behaviors instructors, peer mentors, and CESA advisors identified as an expression of resistance, as well as noting the nature of conversations that frequently provoked resistance. We then analyzed survey results to identify students who indicated the class content was irrelevant to their educational experience to determine if there was a relationship between how often these students missed class, came

Table 1. List of stakeholders interviewed about Student of Color resistance.

Source of information	Method
Instructors (4)	Interview
CESA academic advisors (5)	Focus group
Peer mentors (3)	Focus group
Students	Electronic survey

to class without reading material, or did not complete assignments. Next, we inductively grouped the resulting forms of resistance into categories that pointed to the ideologies fueling their behaviors. We then collaborated to refine the number of majoritarian discourses, reading them against critical race pedagogy's focus on students' experiences with marginalization.

After several rounds of discussion, we identified at least three dynamics that elicit student behaviors and attitudes that instructors interpreted as resistant to critical race pedagogy. These include: (1) an entrenchment in majoritarian or mainstream ideologies; (2) a disavowal of experiences with racialized oppression; and (3) a disinclination to scrutinize personal experiences marred by race or other marginalized identities. These various frictions arise despite the empowering objectives of the critical race focus of this course. Although organized here as discrete categories, it is important to note these triggers overlap and manifest in varying degrees each semester. Therefore, they are not treated uniformly, but instead, are used to help identify the recurring nature of student push back. The following sections explain our findings by fleshing out the three triggers that initiate resisting decolonization.

Triggers to resisting decolonization

In this section, we unpack each of the three triggers listed above, beginning with the ways students resisted the decolonization process initiated by clinging to majoritarian ideologies. Critical race scholarship identifies majoritarian ideologies as the 'bundle of presuppositions, preconceived wisdoms and shared cultural understandings' (Delgado & Stefancic, 1993, p. 462) that constitute the dominant narratives used to undergird white supremacist racial hierarchies and systems of white privilege (Yosso, 2006). Multiple dominant discourses surfaced as sources of friction with the critical race pedagogy employed in the class, namely the American Dream, meritocracy, whiteness, deficit thinking, and color-blindness. We discuss these below. Then, in the proceeding section, we investigate the triggers that spur students to distance themselves from the realities of racialized oppression. The last section analyzes the reluctance to address the trauma and pain incurred by racial or other marginalized identities.

Entrenchment in majoritarian ideologies

American Dream and meritocracy

Faculty identified discussions of the 'American Dream' and the 'myth of meritocracy' as prompting opposition from some of their students. Kate, who taught the course twice, explained that her immigrant students were particularly invested in the American Dream and found it difficult to challenge its foundations or exclusionary nature:

Most of them have bought into that calling and ... think that they have evidence that you should buy into it. And their families are invested in it, and that's why they're in college, and that's why you're in this country.

For Kate, a difficult aspect of teaching the American Dream using critical race pedagogy is helping students 'understand that wanting to do well isn't a bad thing, and working hard isn't a bad thing ... but that when working hard [is seen as] guaranteeing ... financial success, that's where it breaks down.'

Malaquías similarly named the myth of meritocracy as challenging to teach:

I asked them to consider if it was just them [and their hard work] or do their parents have anything to do with [them being in college], their teacher, their counselor ... is anybody getting financial aid? All of these things play into the reason they're in school ... nobody has done it on their own, but [that's what] they latch onto.

From Malaquías' perspective, students have a very limited understanding of non-merit factors (McNamee & Miller, 2004) in the context of the American educational system. Additionally, Ty explained that his students 'push back' when he questions notions of meritocracy because they are uncertain 'where they fall in that critique.' In his words,

It sort of makes them kind of second guess their own accomplishments ... it creates this sort of bubble for them where they don't quite know where to go. If we are critiquing meritocracy, how does that speak to them and their own sort of situation being here in the university?

Students often expressed exasperation to advisors when meritocracy was problematized, remarking, 'I worked hard and I've gotten where I've gotten because I worked hard, no one stopped me!' Advisors interpreted this common defensive reaction as indicating that students believed the course communicated that they 'didn't work hard, and that meritocracy is bad.' For many who have been rewarded within the schooling system for their academic achievements and performances, this challenge appears to devalue their individual accomplishments, which leads them to rebuff the critique.

What these various expressions of resistance indicate is that despite a course curriculum that offers alternatives to the dominant racial ideology, Students of Color are not immune to following a narrative of familial, educational, and professional success 'laid out by the "Great Events" of American history and its attendant meritocratic 'dream' (Pérez, 1999, p. 8). Bonilla-Silva (2003) contends that the potency of the current (and dominant) achievement ideology does not ensure 'ideological uniformity' (p. 171), but rather regulates understandings of capitalism, the American Dream, and equal opportunity while delimiting critiques of these systems. In other words, Student of Color are equally – if not more – susceptible to mainstream narratives about 'pulling themselves up by their bootstraps' in order to acquire economic and academic success (Ainsworth-Darnell & Downey, 1998; Harris & Marsh, 2010; Portes & Wilson, 1976; Solorzano, 1992). Indeed, the ideology that fuels its currency relies on less advantaged people celebrating the notion of true equality through hard work. Consequently, for many, understanding that they are negatively (and not neutrally) affected by the dominant institutional arrangement can be distressing. Importantly, then, resisting decolonization should be understood as an 'interstitial space where differential politics and social dilemmas are negotiated' (Pérez, 1999, p. 6) – and often, remains unresolved.

Whiteness

Advisors identified the construct of whiteness – a system that privileges and normalizes white identity – as also triggering opposition from students. Advisors noted that Diversity Scholars frequently shared that they felt that were being taught to believe that all white people were racist, and that the white people they knew, including friends and family, were bad, and that they shouldn't have those friends. Advisors expressed concern that white biracial students were particularly affected by these classroom discussions. From their perspective, these students felt that their white identity 'clashes with everything that's being talked in this class, and so that really has an [negative] impact.' Richard recounted an outburst in class by a female biracial student who chastised panel presenters for using the word 'White' instead of the term 'Caucasian' because she interpreted the term 'White' as rude. When the panelists and her fellow classmates expressed surprise at her response, she walked out of the room. Richard and other advisors met with her afterwards to help her pinpoint the source of her distress. As a light-skinned white and Latina student, she felt attacked for having to acknowledge her ability to pass as white as a privilege that had protected her from being racialized as a Latina.

Faculty also offered multiple instances of how Diversity Scholars denied the systemic effects of whiteness on People of Color. A mid-semester informal review by one of the authors asked students to identify concepts or ideas that they did not find useful. In response, one student wrote, 'whiteness, because I don't give a fuck.' One of the longstanding instructors – Graciela – said that she often dealt with students who feel that if they accept an ideology of whiteness exists, they are disparaging their white family members or friends. Many students have difficulties separating 'White people from an ideology of whiteness, or from white privilege,' she noted.

As the above examples illustrate, the marking of 'White' as a racial category can provoke impassioned reactions, even from Students of Color presumed to be attuned to its systemic advantages. Frankenberg (1997) described how the marking of whiteness in the college classroom prompted 'an awakening – rude or otherwise' (p. 5) for her white students who insisted they are just people, and not raced individuals. Like their white peers, Students of Color find themselves jarred by the dissection of white racial identity and its attendant privileges. Such responses can be linked to a racial order predicated on a white supremacy that is meant to remain unnamed. Moreover, this finding mirrors Carillo

Rowe's and Malhotra's (2006) contention that some Students of Color internalize and are complicit in maintaining the supremacist structures of whiteness.

Deficit thinking and color-blindness

Faculty also attributed disengagement as a result of students' undervaluing the class because of its non-white racial/ethnic composition. Malaquíás explained that some Diversity Scholars 'think it's a blow off class,' and therefore less important than their other classes. He explained:

They're walking in late, not doing the readings, not showing up to service learning, not showing up for basic things ... Would you do this with chemistry class? Or English class? Or to any other faculty member? Would you show up late consistently? Do you think it's going to be easy because you already know the content?

For Malaquíás, student resistance manifests in insolent behavior, which he believes is motivated by thinking the course is not academically rigorous, because of its focus on the experiences of individuals repeatedly undervalued, shunned, dehumanized, and pathologized in public narratives.

For instance, a common first impression of the class is that high-achieving students believe they are in the wrong place. Graciela recalled that a student told her that he walked into class on the first day and assumed it was an ESL class, because most present were Students of Color, and thus signified that it was a lower track class (Carter, 2005). As she explained, they attend schools 'where all the kids of Color are the lower tracked, are in the ESL classrooms. They walk in and think, "why am I here?"' The initial perception of a classroom full of Students of Color as less desirable indicates a deficit-based correlation of racial identity and educability (Valencia, 1997). Specifically, deficit-thinking occurs when person-centered explanations of the educational inequities between Students of Color and Whites attribute an inferior intellect, inadequate linguistic skills, or lack of motivation as the cause of these disparities. Deficit thinking looks to racial group membership, rather than to structural factors that fail to fully meet the learning needs of Students of Color (Leonardo & Grubb, 2014; Valencia, 1997). Thus, for some of the students, resisting decolonization can be understood as having internalized deficit thinking about members of their communities.

Additionally, survey results revealed that some students discount the class's emphasis on race as beneficial. A quarter of the Diversity Scholars who participated in the online survey felt that engaging race, racism, and racial identity was irrelevant for earning their degree, nor did they anticipate this topic having utility later in life. One-fifth of the class prioritized homework from other classes rather than complete the readings or assignments for the Diversity Scholars class. Furthermore, over half of the surveyed Diversity Scholars surveyed indicated they had never talked to teachers about race or racism, signaling a consistent message about the diminished importance between race and schooling.

Minimizing the import of race and racial identity signals an entrenchment in color-blind ideology, a pervasive majoritarian discourse. Rooted in the perception that people should not notice racial difference, nor judge people based on their skin color because doing so actually invites divisiveness and tension (Haney Lopez, 2006; Lewis, 2004). Work by Bonilla-Silva and Dietrich (2011) suggest that this stance is related to the current terrain of the American racial regime, whereby today's discrimination is tethered to color-blind ideology (Williams, 1997) rather than the racialized social systems undergirding US society (Bonilla-Silva, 2012). Color-blindness leads to inaccurate discernments of the current nature of race relations and suppresses conversations about the impact of the legacy of unequal access and opportunities has had racialized communities (Williams, 1997). In particular, 'racism in the United States has taken on a colorblind appearance, which characterizes the current era of race relations affecting education and governance of schools' (Leonardo & Grubb, 2014, p.7).

Despite what the literature on critical race pedagogy suggests, faculty reflections and self-reported student responses indicate that some Students of Color are constrained by the logics of a color-blind paradigm, rendering them ill-equipped to converse about 'taboo' topics like race and precluding them from attaching significance to race. Carillo Rowe and Malhotra (2006) similarly found that Students of Color support color-blind ideologies, echoing Bonilla-Silva's contention that color-blindness 'will reach

even deeper into the crevices of the American polity' (2003, p. 190), underscoring that Students of Color are similarly entrenched in and impacted by the new color-blind ideological regime. As subjugated peoples in a system of white domination (Leonardo, 2004) that is camouflaged by color-blind and deficit discourse, some Diversity Scholars have likely internalized Eurocentric, white supremacist ideologies and are unable to imagine a worldview that acknowledges and elevates their racial and cultural identities from a lower status position to one that is worthy of discussion, let alone study (Andresen, 2013). These impulses problematize what critical race pedagogues describe when teaching Students of Color because it indicates students with racialized identities *can* undervalue a curriculum that centers race.

Not about me

A second dynamic activating detachment from the course became apparent from the amount of Diversity Scholars who reported to their advisors that they were unable to relate to the multiple narratives of disenfranchisement centered in the course reading material. One advisor, Luis, said his advisees claimed, 'I don't have experience with that, I've never had to explain myself based on my racial identity,' or this class 'has nothing to do with me because that's not my experience – I haven't had a racialized experience.' Sikoti recounted how several of his advisees expressed concern that 'the professor isn't going to grade me well because I've never experienced' the issues of bias or discrimination addressed in class. In addition, Richard mentioned that many of his students reiterated that the class 'doesn't relate to me,' and that the 'readings don't have anything to do with me and my community.' Sikoti suggested that this denial might stem from developmental immaturity regarding race, education, and their own identities. As Mina aptly put it, 'this class has them do a lot of reflection that maybe they're not ready to do.'

A variety of scholars offer perspectives that help to make sense of this reluctance to engage with critical race pedagogy. Drawing on her experience in law school, Montoya (2000, p. 517) explains that first-generation Students of Color often carry a different burden than traditional students – they must be 'Janus-faced, able to present one face to the larger society and another among ourselves [...].' This duality has emotional repercussions and can lead some students to mask aspects of their identities. Yoshino describes this disavowal, or toning down of 'stigmatized identities to get along in life,' as covering (Yoshino, 2007). When Diversity Scholars claim that the class has nothing to do with them, it can be understood as an assimilationist strategy that functions to conceal their non-dominant identity and avoid feelings of vulnerability in the university. Like Montoya's description of masking, deflection through withdrawal or negation, provides protection. Similarly, Tatum observes that academically successful African-American and Latina/o students often take on a persona of 'racelessness,' (Fordham in Tatum, 1997, p. 63) a coping mechanism that de-emphasizes 'characteristics that might identify them as members of the subordinate group' (p. 63) in order to navigate predominantly white colleges and universities. These students deliberately disassociate themselves from the qualities, activities, or language of their racial or ethnic groups in order to avoid the stigma of these attributes (Tatum, 1997). Tatum concludes that this assimilative attempt is damaging to the psyche, yet it is a common tactic that Students of Color adopt to distance themselves from racialized experiences.

Mutual experiences of racial disenfranchisement among Communities of Color are not always obvious to students either, prompting further distancing. Ty realized that one of his African-American male students who seemed 'apathetic' and 'disinterested' did not relate to the class content 'because he felt sort of left out of the conversation, being African American.' The student perceived the class as focused on Latinas/os or Asian immigrants and did not see the class as relating to his experiences as a Black man. His inability to connect did not become apparent until the student wrote in his final paper: 'I don't really know why I'm in this class, it doesn't really sort of speak to me.'

Graciela described feeling similar tensions from students who interpret the content as 'Latino-centric.' She said the faculty, 'literally counted the articles. There was no disproportionate representation of Latino/Chicano themes or authors or issues. And yet it came up again.' Furthermore, Graciela is cognizant that when she shared a personal experience, it will always be 'from the perspective of my Latina brown body.' For instance:

I'll tell the story why I don't speak fluent Spanish. Again, it's back to Spanish, it's back to Latinos ... I'm always wondering if students feel like ... Latinos are privileged because there's so many of them here as opposed to the Pacific Islanders or Taiwanese or whatever it might be.

Ty speculated that while the class attempts to unveil the interconnections between various marginalized communities, it is reasonable for students to feel detached because of the varied ways 'race plays out is different for specific groups.' As he saw it, many students 'don't feel the need to think' that 'connections are important' across groups. He added that students might appreciate how a Woman of Color is 'going to have to deal with both race and gender and sexuality,' but will wonder why it would be 'important for me, say if I'm a male Student of Color?' As Kohli (2012) found, People of Color 'rarely interact cross-rationally' and often carry 'deep-rooted stereotypes and misconceptions about other races' (p. 181). As a result, they are 'unable to see commonalities of their oppression' (Kohli, 2012, p. 181). Zúñiga and Sevig (2000), also note that scarce opportunities exist for inter-group dialog between Students of Color. Instead, they have mastered the pressures of performing in predominantly white spaces (Kohli, 2012; Zúñiga & Sevig, 2000), but rarely engage in spaces that allow them to consider their similarities or interrogate the negative perceptions they have internalized about other racial and ethnic groups (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012).

The complexities of managing multiple positionalities also frustrates some students. Graciela sensed resistance when she tried to model the fluidity of identity:

When I talk and give examples of different identities – my heterosexual privilege or my class privilege as I live today ... when I'm judged by just my brown femaleness ... my privilege as a fluent English speaker ... I try to at least have them see that there are different ways to think about our identities. I think pushback happens more often, too, when identities are seen as fixed ... versus it kind of depends on what kind of identity you're seeing me right now.

Tatum's (2000) work on the complexity of identity highlights the challenges that individuals face in recognizing different aspects of their privilege. As she explained, most people hold both dominant and subordinate positions, and that the act of recognizing 'each other's pain, even as we attend to our own,' can be a difficult endeavor (p. 13). While the curriculum is structured to highlight the interconnections between these various matrices of advantages and disadvantages, instructors noted that Diversity Scholars at times contested associations with a privileged vantage.

Too much about me

In juxtaposition to the disassociation prompted by either race-neutral ideologies or the disinclination to recognize a racialized or privileged identity, some Diversity Scholars also exhibit resistance as a result of the course material resonating too painfully with their own experiences. The peer mentor interviews revealed this form of student resistance because of their insider's perspective of how fellow students engaged with the material. Javier said he believes some students dismissed the readings and classroom discussions because they 'were guarded' or 'just weren't ready to go there' when it came to talking about their experiences with race or racism:

As People of Color ... there's many wounds. Sometimes it is just a lot easier to be guarded and emotionally detach yourself from those wounds. Like, for me, it was very personal, a very, very personal journey. It's really hard for some people. In general there's a lot of detachment between the body and emotions, even in academia ... we've been taught to remove ourselves from our studies, so when we're introduced to studying that involves the self, the very close, intimate, wounded self, it's like 'wait, hold up, I don't want to talk about any of this.'

Javier pointed to a type of embodied trauma instigated by racial oppression. In order to cope with this distress, Students of Color erect defensive barriers to shield and suppress those painful memories, making it nearly impossible for them to willingly recollect and share them. For instance, Jessica talked about a male student who attended her section regularly, but did not contribute to class discussion, read the course material, or complete any assignments. When she inquired about his lack of participation, he shared that it was hard for him to engage fully in the course because he was experiencing many of the external challenges that the class addressed. In particular, he was burdened by his family's mixed

citizenship status and how it imperiled their ability to provide for themselves. As Jessica saw it, it was 'just too much' for him to rehash his struggles during class while simultaneously working to overcome them.

Graciela surmised that students who performed poorly in her class typically were dealing with the same issues discussed in class, such as 'being a primary caretaker at home, to multiple jobs to help the family.' These personal challenges prevented students from fully engaging. As Graciela explained, 'There's something that's going on that's making it almost impossible to do the work. It's just way too much for any 19-year-old to have to deal with.' Importantly, the faculty recognize that external, or structural, circumstances (e.g. family, finances) affect perceived student interest in the class. Diversity Scholars work more hours a week than their white peers, and a greater proportion of them live at home (OED, 2012). Many students report that family obligations (e.g. taking a sibling to school or driving a parent to an appointment) are the reason for arriving late or missing class. In essence, the larger social and economic factors the course reveals as affecting the educational experiences of Students of Color (as opposed to cultural deficits or individual shortcomings) are, in fact, impeding many of the students from engaging with the course.

Several peer mentors identified how these larger responsibilities can be exacerbated by the topics addressed in class. As Javier elucidated, Students of Color often enter college with 'many wounds' – wounds that are 'very personal.' Eminent Chicana scholar, Gloria Anzaldúa, famously described life on the US-Mexican borderlands as '*una herida abierta*' (an open wound), where 'the Third World grates against the first and bleeds' (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 25). Like the merging of two worlds, the 'grating' of the material and the emotional, and the clashing of the subjective against the objective, impels some students to withdraw from the course content.

Conclusion

Many scholars have explored the benefits of applying a critical race theory in higher educational research (Lynn, 1999; Parker & Stovall, 2004; Sleeter & Delgado Bernal, 2004; Solórzano & Yosso, 2000a; Stovall, 2006b). Likewise, this research indicates that when critical race pedagogy is integrated into courses comprised primarily of Students of Color, these students are more likely to gain a greater sense of intellectual empowerment (Bernal et al., 2009), and in some cases, are more likely to graduate from college at higher levels than their white peers (Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998; Villalpando, 2003, 2004). In other words, much has been written on the positive effects and outcomes of critical race pedagogy for Students of Color. In this article, we instead explored Student of Color resistance to race-related content that seeks to center and authenticate their racial, ethnicized, minoritized, immigrant, undocumented, and/or bilingual identities while demystifying dominant ideologies that impact their educational trajectories.

Drawing on individual and focus-group interviews with former students, advisors, and instructors, in combination with survey data, we shed light on how some Students of Color struggle with critical race pedagogy. We found that student push back was instigated around three triggers: (1) an entrenchment in majoritarian ideologies; (2) a disavowal of experiences with racialized oppression; and (3) a disinclination to scrutinize personal experiences marred by race or other marginalized identities. Importantly, these triggers are not exhaustive, nor discrete. These three dimensions often intersect, vary across geographic locations and institutional settings, and are situated amidst the fluid and slippery process of racial identity formation (Tatum, 1997). Unlike Maybee's (2011) findings, the impetuses we identified appear to be a response to discourses that center whiteness and devalue non-white identities, or as a coping mechanism to minimize further racially induced trauma. We call this uneven and complex process resisting decolonization and expound below what it offers critical race pedagogues.

As revealed by the trigger, *entrenchment in majoritarian ideologies*, resisting decolonization reminds Faculty of Color that both white students and Students of Color are ubiquitously socialized to champion dominant discourses and invest in ideologies of whiteness, meritocracy, deficit thinking, and color-blindness especially when it comes to higher education. In fact, although many Students of Color confront evidence of inequities in education, housing, and health care, the universality of nonracial and non-systemic explanations for these differences compels Students of Color to rely on competing

frames – such as the dominant ideology of individual responsibility, mainstream color-blind discourse, and an inchoate critique of systemic white power and privilege – to make sense of their reality (Roberts et al., 2008). Moreover, both imperialism and colonization play a role in hindering the ways Students of Color locate points of alignment and solidarity between different racial groups. Together, this results in a discordant experience articulated by the concept of resisting decolonization. Unfortunately, little research on critical race pedagogy tracks how Students of Color divest from color-blindness, meritocracy, and whiteness because they are typified as already well-versed in these critiques, leaving less experienced faculty using this pedagogical approach underprepared to anticipate or deconstruct student resistance. Dominant ideologies, especially the language of meritocracy and the notion of the American Dream, powerfully shape the lives of all students, regardless of race or ethnicity. Faculty should remain cognizant that resisting decolonization is a byproduct of the rigid hegemony that fortifies the American educational system.

A second trigger – *not about me* – illuminates how a significant portion of Students of Color do not enter these classroom spaces with a solid or positive racial identity. Our identification of resisting decolonization calls attention to the ways that critical race pedagogy hinges on empowering students from an essentialized starting point. As our findings illustrate, student perceptions of their racial and ethnic identities are diverse, contradictory, and in flux. Learning about their less privileged place in the US racial hierarchy can be unsettling. For a large number of them, being able to identify their place in the racial hierarchy can initiate a new political awareness. But for some, the course's application of critical race pedagogy validates an identity that, for the most part, they have learned to see only through dominant stereotypes (Roberts et al., 2008). Empowering students to positively self-identify means helping them rid themselves of limited and degrading notions of self. Not all students will develop a racial consciousness or recast their identity in affirmative terms within the semester. Moreover, because the borders of racial categories are being contested with the increasing number of bi- or mixed-race identities, it behooves critical race pedagogues to take into account these shifting identity politics. We likewise recognize that existing racial identity formation theories may not adequately account for the ways Students of Color simultaneously embrace and eschew their racial identities. However, we believe that faculty can do a better job at facilitating this journey, beginning with the recognition that the experiential knowledge and sense of identity celebrated by critical race pedagogy can be fraught with contradictions. We encourage scholars to continue to analyze these dynamics as they manifest in their classrooms. Providing a shared theoretical starting point for the multiple and fluid ways Students of Color understand their identities is vital for understanding how and why resisting decolonization takes shape.

Lastly, the trigger – *too much about me* – reveals how Students of Color can be deeply traumatized by their racially marginalized identity. The emotional damage incurred by those navigating educational livelihoods in racially hostile environments, often exacerbated by the indices of poverty and state-sanctioned surveillance or violence, may be too distressful to acknowledge or engage. Even in an environment meant to recognize, legitimize, and ease the pain and suffering sustained as a result of systemic oppression and neglect, some students cling to coping strategies designed to shield them from additional harm. Consequently, critical race pedagogues should consider that some resistant or disengaging behavior may, in fact, be a defensive mechanism that shields them from their lived realities. As educators, we must be prepared to cultivate the space, time, and tools needed to confront and reconcile this anguish as a necessary part of our pedagogical efforts.

Given these circumstances, it is no surprise that Students of Color responses to critical race pedagogy are diverse and sometimes contradict their own interests. The concept of *resisting decolonization* identifies and calls attention to the various manifestations of Student of Color resistance to critical race pedagogy. This term is intended to underscore the need for engaged attention by educators utilizing critical race-based approaches or engaging in race-based content. While many Students of Color thrive under a pedagogical approach that validates and draws from their understandings of racialization and oppression, not all Students of Color have developed a critical racial consciousness, a positive racial identity, nor are necessarily eager to engage in critical race curricula. Further, it acknowledges

that while critical race pedagogy initiates a process of critical consciousness and legitimizes a positive racial/ethnic identity for many, decolonization has not been fully mapped out for Students of Color who contest unlearning majoritarian ideologies and divesting from hegemonic whiteness, even to their own detriment. Unlike their white student peers whose interests are served by refuting a system of white privilege, Students of Color who comply with a racial hierarchy predicated on white supremacy, and who lack a robust sense of racial or ethnic identity, are not fully accounted for in the scholarship on critical race pedagogy. With this project, we invite educators and scholars to begin charting the processes of decolonization initiated by critical race pedagogy, especially the journey for Students of Color who are deeply entrenched in majoritarian ideology. By reflecting upon and refining the approaches critical race pedagogues advocate and implement, critical race pedagogy can begin to better facilitate this process for all Students of Color.

Note

1. The names of all faculty, staff, and students interviewed are pseudonyms.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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