



Teacher Education. A Black Student-Teacher's Narrative About Black Identity¹

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ABSTRACT

Student-teachers' Black identities have barely been documented in initial teacher education. Although some studies have focused on their cultural experiences, their identities are still unexplored to understand teacher education. This is why this study adopts a narrative perspective to address, through life story interviews, the identity formation and experience of a Black woman and student-teacher at a public university in Bogotá, Colombia. By dwelling on her experience, this study reflects upon how, although Black students deny their identities when learning a foreign language and becoming teachers, their personal and historical backgrounds work to position themselves politically and ideologically. Race and body become intersectional categories to comprehend their processes of resistance. This exploration also discusses how discursive representations have a stake in the constitution of Black identities in teacher education.

KEYWORDS

Black identity, initial teacher education, student-teacher identity, race, zone of non-being.

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Formación de docentes. Narrativa de una estudiante en formación sobre la identidad negra

RESUMEN

Las identidades negras de los estudiantes-docentes apenas han sido documentadas en la formación inicial del profesorado. Aunque algunos estudios se han centrado en sus experiencias culturales, sus identidades aún están inexploradas para entender la formación docente. Es por ello que este estudio adopta una perspectiva narrativa para abordar, a través de entrevistas de relatos de vida, la formación identitaria y la experiencia de una mujer negra y una estudiante en formación de una universidad pública de Bogotá (Colombia). Al detenerse en su experiencia, este estudio reflexiona sobre cómo, aunque los estudiantes negros niegan sus identidades cuando aprenden un idioma extranjero y se convierten en maestros, sus antecedentes personales e históricos funcionan para posicionarse política e ideológicamente. Raza y cuerpo se convierten en categorías interseccionales para comprender sus procesos de resistencia. Esta exploración también discute cómo las representaciones discursivas tienen un interés en la constitución de las identidades negras en la formación docente.

PALABRAS CLAVE

identidad negra, formación inicial docente, identidad alumno-docente, raza, zona de no-ser.

Formação de Docentes. Narrativa de Uma Estudante em Formação da Identidade Negra

RESUMO

As identidades de alunos-professores negros mal foram documentadas na formação inicial de professores. Embora alguns estudos tenham se concentrado em suas experiências culturais, suas identidades ainda são pouco exploradas para compreender a formação docente. É por isso que este estudo adota uma perspectiva narrativa para abordar, por meio de entrevistas de histórias de vida, a formação da identidade e a experiência de uma mulher negra e uma estudante em formação em uma universidade pública de Bogotá, Colômbia. Ao se debruçar sobre sua experiência, este estudo reflete sobre como, embora os alunos negros neguem suas identidades ao aprender uma língua estrangeira e tornarem-se professores, suas origens pessoais e históricas funcionam para se posicionar política e ideologicamente. Raça e corpo tornam-se categorias interseccionais para compreender seus processos de resistência. Essa exploração também discute como as representações discursivas têm interesse na constituição de identidades negras na formação de professores.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Identidade negra, formação inicial de professores, identidade aluno-professor, raça, zona de não-ser

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, a not-new but emerging interest in decolonizing English language learning (Kumaravadivelu, 2016) has appeared to advance a more political and epistemological agenda on English language teaching and teacher education. Theoretical perspectives like coloniality of power (Quijano, 2000) have been adopted to frame the moral superiority of the European imperial project and its evident inferiorization of colonized countries and their peoples in all areas of knowledge and being. English language teaching (ELT) and teacher education (TE) have not escaped this hegemony, causing an unquestionable dominance of the inner-circle countries (Kachru, 1990) regarding initial teacher education. In Colombia, for example, scholars are interested in decolonizing materials (Núñez-Pardo, 2020, 2022), English language pedagogy (Ubaque-Casallas, 2021), higher education from the perspective of indigenous students (Usma et al., 2018), and doctoral TE (Castañeda-Peña & Méndez-Rivera, 2022); some even have concentrated on exploring the racialization of the ELT field (Bonilla Medina & Finardi, 2022). However, studies that question, challenge, or attempt to document racist practices in ELT and TE are scarce. Thus, discussing the policies and practices that marginalize Black student-service teachers and English learners (Bryan et al., 2022) still needs exploration.

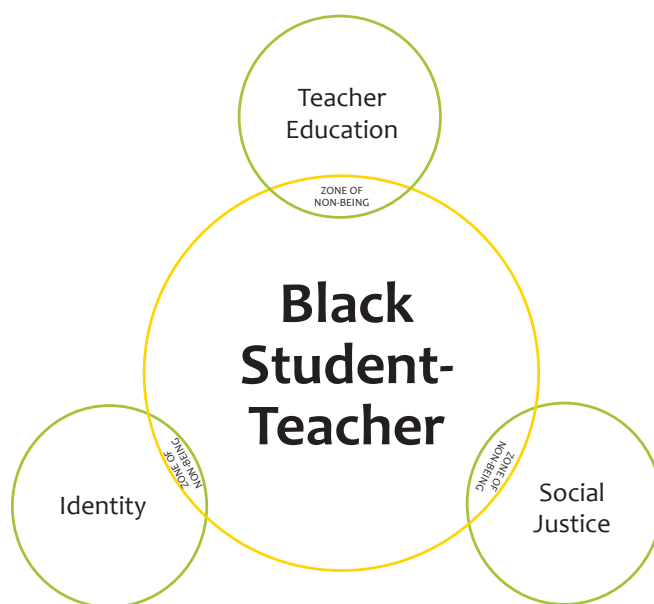
Arguably, there is a turn based on the premise that English language teaching and TE must investigate teaching dimensions beyond the mere positivist view (Granados-Beltrán, 2016). In this sense, and capitalizing on the opportunity above, this study wants to join the collective effort to dismantle the “relations of power and conceptions of knowledge that foment the reproduction of racial, gender, and geo-political hierarchies” (Maldonado-Torres, 2011, p. 1). To achieve this, we posed—more than a question—an orientation for reflexivity. We wondered how the life story of a Black student-teacher at an English teacher education program could inform us about the cracks opened by racial-colonial discourses and practices when it comes to teacher identity formation. By following in this orientation, we focused on race (i.e., the ontological category) as we believe this is our call as educators who have not only transmitted colonial knowledge but have also been whitened by it, epistemologically speaking. We are convinced that we have an ethical and political responsibility to fragment such hegemony now that we know its harmful implications. This study then seeks to generate an-other thinking conversation by breaking with the “cultural standardization that constructs Western universal knowledge” (Walsh, 2007, p. 51).

Therefore, it is in the rationale above that we sought in this study to a) listen to the voices that have been invisible in ELT and TE by dwelling on their stories and experiences; b) envision collective possibilities to resist and reinsure within the academic context; and c) tension disciplinary academic discourses that have ignored, silenced, and even erased Black bodies, identities, and subjectivities in TE. However, we want to make clear that this is not a move to innocence through which we attempt to reconcile our guilt and complicity in the administration of educational coloniality (i.e., silencing, ignoring, erasing, etc.) (Tuck & Yang, 2012). On the contrary, it is a collective positioning against dehumanizing and racializing strategies in TE.

THEORETICAL ORIENTATIONS

The theoretical orientations of this study are teacher education, identity, and social justice. We think of these conceptual categories from an intersectional perspective (Perouse-Harvey, 2022) since they converge in a space where otherness is constructed: the zone of non-being (Fanon, 2010). As illustrated in Figure 1, these categories are to be conceived up to the positionality and embodied experience of those who have lived the colonial wound (Kilomba, 2010).

Figure 1. Theoretical Orientations



TEACHER EDUCATION

Teacher education (TE) is the disciplinary yet socio-cognitive institutional space where student-teachers make sense of and shape their professional selves. It has been the center of attention in understanding student-teacher education (Garcia-Chamorro & Rosado-Mendinueta, 2021; Moody et al., 2022). For example, some of the literature available accounts for Teaching practicum (TP) and how student-teachers and mentors co-create knowledge (Castañeda-Trujillo & Aguirre-Hernández, 2018), student-teachers' beliefs in TE (Durán Narváez et al., 2017), the role of lesson planning in comprehending how student-teachers' epistemologies change (Ubaque-Casallas & Aguirre-Garzón, 2020), and also the role of emotions to make sense of the teaching practice (Méndez López, 2020). Moreover, since “behind every national system of initial teacher education [...] lies a conception of teacher professionalism and behind that, fundamental assumptions about what education is and how it is best realized nationally” (Furlong et al., 2021, p. 61), there are also studies that inspect TE as a vital element in education for society (see Al-Jaro & Asmawi, 2019; Coskun & Daloglu, 2010; Le Gal, 2018). These different interests compose a reasonable attempt at mapping TE.

Based on the above interests, we want to address TE not only as an institutional program that builds towards “the sum of experiences and activities through which individuals learn to be language teachers” (Freeman, 2001, p. 72) but more as a space in which student-teachers have multiple and varied possibilities of being and becoming. With this, we refer to ontological possibility; specifically, Black student-teachers have to question and dismantle structural racist impositions that the Western-North system (i.e., education) and the White self-representation of knowledge spread in TE. In this sense, since TE is still a part of a colonial architecture that manufactures Whiteness (i.e., knowledge and being), it is relevant to spot and move within the ruptures Black student-teachers create. Therefore, as we are interested in situating initial TE beyond colonial paradigms, we consider it essential to analyze how Black student-teachers’ identities navigate TE. In this sense, we see that there is still a “possibility of imagining relationships beyond coercion, subjugation, and [onto]epistemic violences” (Andreotti, 2011, p. 17) by exposing coloniality in TE.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Social justice is a perspective that allows engagement with social inequities within education. As such, it serves as a path toward creating more humanizing experiences (see Doherty, 2022; Hawkins, 2011). For example, Schiera et al. (2022) suggest that a way to build social justice is by including critical self-reflection and helping others position themselves as agents. The former is something forgotten in TE due to the massive amount of disciplinary content to handle, and the latter, at times, is blurred by dispossessing discourses that make one’s identity something fixed and immutable (Norton, 2000). According to McPhail (2021), “A common mindset is to view social justice as the need for society to treat individuals fairly and equitably [...] [However,] social justice also means dismantling policies, practices, and mindsets that have far too long supported and fostered inequities.” (p. 33). In this line of thought, social justice is not just about supporting equity but dismantling racial, gender, and other discourses and practices that create a lack of equity.

Social justice is not an unknown notion for TE. Various social justice approaches (e.g., critical pedagogy, antiracist and anti-colonialist approaches to education) have attempted to resist the Western canon (see Apple, 2019; Banks, 2019). Aligned with this attempt, thinking about social justice in this study is to consider power practices and discourses to “reduce prejudice and oppression [...] [by] incorporating multiple knowledge construction processes” (Adams, 2022, p. 63). That is, TE must value and acknowledge the humanity of those whose identities, subjectivities, and bodies have been made disposable.

Student-Teacher Black Identities

Identity is a popular term in TE (e.g., Balbontín Alvarado & Muñoz, 2022; Alzhrani, 2023; Kimsesiz, 2023). However, most of what has been done around this term concerns disciplinary or professional identity (e.g., Salinas & Ayala, 2018), which has meant prioritizing ways of being and thinking from the West and North (e.g., native speakers vs. non-native speakers). However, little

has been said or explored about Black student-teachers and their experiences in TE. Yet there are a few that explore this dimension (e.g., Choe & Seo, 2021). This study focuses on identities inasmuch as these are not only produced within relations of power (see Foucault, 1970; Lave & Wenger, 1991) but also forged through our identifications with people. However, since identities are also constituted through language (Davies & Harré, 1990), discourses exercise power over someone's identity (e.g., Black student-teachers).

According to Hall (1997), "because identities are constructed within, not outside, discourse [...] they emerge within the play of specific modalities of power, and thus are more the product of the marking of difference and exclusion" (p. 4). In this sense, TE has molded Black identities by manufacturing ways of being and existing as fictional representations (e.g., Black students belong to statistics to show how minoritized communities are included). Therefore, this study conceptualizes Black identities as an active position that cannot be limited by societal structures and practices (Mahtani, 2002). That said, Black identities must become analytical paths to unveil the racist design maintained over Black existences and the evident below-Otherness in TE (Fanon, 2010).

Context and Participants

This study was conducted at a public university in Bogota, Colombia. Marla, a Black woman and student-teacher, was invited to share her experience at the TE program, where she studied to become an English language teacher. She voluntarily participated since she had previously engaged in academic conversations about Black identities. Her voice was present at a seminar on gender, sex, and race as invisible tenets in TE. In this educational space, Marla expressed the importance of letting her voice be heard. Thanks to this academic space, Marla had the opportunity to reflect upon her Black identity, till then hidden from her own eyes. Such a reflective path was possible due to an autoethnography she wrote in which she spotted racist instances in her life as a Black woman and student-teacher. Arguably, her interest in conversing about her experience and our curiosity as self-appointed researchers in making sense of her Black experience is what, in this manuscript, we recognize as an epistemological possibility to add diversity and potential redistribution of power. That is to say, the inclusion of voices that have been historically and presently oppressed (de Sousa Santos, 2015). We must clarify here that Marla was the name chosen by the student-teacher who participated in this study. We did not re-colonize her identity by exercising any power and imposing an identification (Hurst, 2008). On the contrary, it was part of the collective agreement and investigative strategy to allow research agencies.

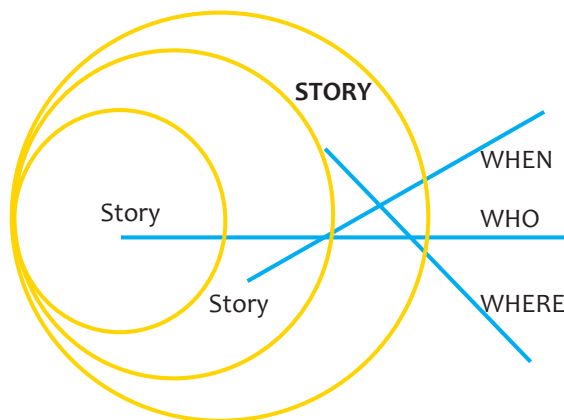
Method

This study assumes a narrative research approach (Barkhuizen, 2013). For us, it means the promotion of a horizontal and democratic dialogue towards a more complex and diverse knowledge (Márquez García et al., 2019) to research and "the necessary abandonment of the universalist and objectivist pretensions [own translation]" (Yedaide et al., 2015, p. 29).

Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that this study was framed within colonial regulatory strategies due to its context and peer approval to be conducted. As such, we faced the challenge of keeping the privacy of conversations by resorting to a consent form. Although the former is nested in linear and positivist rationality (Khan, 2005), we chose to use this more as an ethical resource to reclaim research agency (Castañeda-Peña et al., 2022). Therefore, more than a way of controlling who owns the experiences, we saw the consent form as a mutual agreement in which all participants were able to act and make decisions together.

As we have resorted to Barkhuizen's (2013) model of life stories, Figure 2 illustrates the entry and location of analysis of the experiences. In this sense, we inspected the a) story (lowercase) to situate thoughts and perceptions around and about her Blackness and female constructions; b) Story (S capitalized) to explore how institutional policies (i.e., school, university) have built certain otherness and marginalization due to her Black-female body; and c) STORY (all in capital letters) to identify all the macro level dynamics that have had any impact on her being/becoming. Thus, by adopting a narrative lens, we also assume an oppositional, transformative but counter-hegemonic approach to think of the experiences of Black student-teachers not as mere extraction of events but as a mechanism to embrace various ways of knowing and building knowledge (Vasilachis de Gialdino, 2012). This means, in a nutshell, that a narrative approach is a possibility to collaborate with those we converse and feel with (Zhu et al., 2020) and fragment rationalities maintained within the colonial architecture of TE.

Figure 2. Model for life stories analysis (Adapted from Barkhuizen's 2014)



Marla's experience as a Black woman and student-teacher was transcribed and analyzed using a qualitative data analysis software called InVivo. This software permitted us to categorize, by using themes, accounts of her experience that refer to her Black female student-teacher being (i.e., story), her life and experience at the TE program where she is academically situated (i.e., Story), and any reference to a broader discourse of marginalization (i.e., STORY). In the process of analysis, and having in mind that there is no ideal way to proceed in thematic analysis (Braun et al., 2016), we entered into Marla's experience to "identify or examine the underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualizations—and ideologies—that are theorized as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data" (p.84). This meant, in other words, dwelling on Marla's story, seeking to determine resisting and reinsuring strategies through which colonial strategies (i.e., ignoring, silencing, and erasing) were revealed and contested.

Table 1 lists the themes reported in this manuscript.

Marla	Level of Analysis	Themes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • story • Story 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I never knew I was a black woman
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • story • Story 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let's include her
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • story • Story • STORY 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My peers expect me to be inferior

FINDINGS

Since this study was interested in exploring how the life story of a Black student-teacher at an English teacher education program could inform about the cracks opened by racial-colonial discourses and practices when it comes to teacher identity formation, findings are presented by exploring, commenting, and theorizing in and from the emerging themes (see Table 1). Therefore, we present below the analytical steps of the collective reflectivity we engaged in.

I Never Knew I Was a Black Woman

The theme *I Never Knew I Was a Black Woman* emerged when conversing about life at university. This theme refers to how being a Black woman in a TE program is like being invisible. In this academic context, identity seems to be assembled from colonial disciplinary referents of linguistic competence and knowledge. The following three extracts open the path of analysis in which Marla narrates her own experiences and makes sense of her own colonial wound as a Black woman and student-teacher.

Desde pequeña, yo nunca supe que era negra hasta que en el colegio me hicieron bullying por ser negra. Eso fue como en tercero de primaria que un niño me decía como “betún”. Pero ¿por qué? yo no entendía, y me decía “¿es que usted no se ve?” y yo “¿Qué tengo?”

Y me tocó cambiarme de salón y todo eso porque era muy asfixiante. Yo no lo sentía como algo malo solo decía “niño raro”. Después, entré a séptimo y también tuve el mismo problema de que la gente me veía como raro y yo como, pero ¿qué tengo, no sé qué tengo? Es como ese sentimiento que yo era la típica niña negra en el salón, porque no había nadie más. [Sic]

In this extract, Marla narrates her experience in primary school. Other kids positioned her as different. Her body (i.e., black skin) was the referent for a kid to nickname her. She was labeled as “betún,²” which caused her discomfort in understanding what seemed wrong with her.

2 It means shoe polish. It is a waxy paste, cream, or liquid used to polish shoes. It is of many colors, among them black.

En la universidad es algo súper raro porque se siente cuando se habla de los temas [p.ej., ser negro, indígena]. Todo el mundo voltea y miran a la negra del salón. Es muy rara la población negra en la universidad, es muy poca, es escasa y cuando hablan del tema, todos tienen cuidado al hablarlo y yo soy como ¿qué pasa?, no entiendo ¿qué es lo que pasa? Es raro de explicar, pero es como si tuvieran miedo de decir la palabra, o de hablar, de expresarse; es como... como que en medio de no herir terminan hiriendo. Es algo como *no quiero excluirte, pero te excluyo*. [Sic]

Marla narrates part of her experience at university. She mentions that when topics such as her being Black are brought into the conversation, there seems to be a politically correct discourse that marginalizes her existence instead of respecting her Blackness. Whether spoken or not, these discourses deepen the colonial wound inflicted by her race.

A partir de esas experiencias, sí ha habido un proceso de análisis de construcción de mi identidad, de –yo soy negra–. Siento que he tenido la oportunidad de hablar con varias personas que me han ayudado en ese concebirme como negra porque como te digo, yo nací aquí en Bogotá y siempre he estado rodeada de personas blancas. Entonces es como: bueno, ¿quién soy? Porque no me veo reflejada en ninguno. Por ejemplo, para disfrazarme en Halloween era súper difícil porque no me quería disfrazar como una princesa. Sin embargo, yo no era mona o rubia o de pelo corto o de pelo liso y así yo no me veía así. Era horrible porque la gente decía “ay, disfrazémonos de princesas” y yo como que no quería hablar, evitaba tanto tocar los temas que tuvieran que ver con identificarse con alguien, porque siempre yo tendría que buscar a alguien de mi color y no estaba, o cosas así, tipo “uy, yo me parezco tanto a esta actriz” y las personas de color casi siempre son extras que no les prestan importancia. [Sic]

In the excerpt above, Marla refers to how her identity, as constituted by others, has been framed within the race label. However, this constitution has to do with the impossibility of recognizing herself in the semiotic representations offered by a whitened culture (i.e., princesses must be White and blond). It also results from recognizing herself in the exteriority of an already-given and established identity.

In narrating her experience, Marla brought to the surface different constituting discourses that have placed her own body and identity within the exteriority others have built as a mechanism of control (Mignolo, 2021). Such a constitution has implied the impossibility of developing a sense of belonging (i.e., by race or geographical location). Her wound has been deepened at school and at the TE program where she is becoming an English language teacher—programs where social and racial segregation are barely contested (Sleeter et al., 2016). Arguably, Marla realized she was Black when she could see herself through the eyes of those labeled as “betún,” their system of representation and racial privilege.

Let's Include Her!

Marla realized she was Black when she could see herself through the eyes of those labeled as “betún,” their system of representation and racial privilege. However, let's include her develops a reflective yet critical stance in which Marla makes sense of the racialized practices and

discourses she has had to put up with. The following three extracts open the path of analysis in which Marla narrates her own experiences and tries to work out the meaning of her own colonial wound as a Black woman and student-teacher. She also speaks about her sense of dis-belonging due to being born Black in Bogotá.

Va a sonar raro, pero en el Chocó cuando mi hermana y yo vamos nos dicen “blanquitas”. La razón es que tenemos muchas costumbres de acá propias, e ir allá es como “ay, los blanquitos” porque también, como ellos se expresan como bailan, para nosotras es nuevo, para nosotras no es lo mismo que estar aquí y tampoco encajamos con los que están acá. También tenemos cosas que nos ha enseñado mi abuela, mis papás. Allá somos las blanquitas y aquí somos las negras. [Sic]

In the excerpt above, Marla refers to discursive labels (e.g., “blanquitas,” “negritas”) used to position her as different, as someone unlike and dissimilar to those who are also Black. Yet these discursive representations constitute a sense of dis-belonging by dispossessing her identity as a Black woman.

Ha sido muy raro, porque a mí me cuesta todavía expresar mis opiniones como persona negra. Yo digo “es que mucha gente o la gente lo va a ver raro” o todavía hay esa concepción de que el negro es el raro, el diferente. Por ejemplo, los niños cuando vamos a práctica, los niños son muy queridos, pero también hay unos que dicen... Yo comparto prácticas con mi compañera y ella es blanca, y hubo una vez en la que me acerqué a un niño y le dije: ¿Te ayudo? y me dijo: No, tú no, la otra profe. Entonces hasta en eso siente uno que está es incluido-excluido. Es algo muy extraño. [Sic]

In this extract, Marla brings her experience at the teaching practicum. Instead of narrating an experience where disciplinary knowledge is mobilized—her practice building professional knowledge—she speaks about the simultaneous process of being included and excluded: included since she is doing her teaching practicum at school; excluded as she is unsure if the kids who rejected her help did so for her being Black.

Creo que es un camino largo. En la universidad me he visto retada a repensarme. Por lo que soy y por lo que hacen de mí. Creo que además cuando yo tenga la oportunidad de ejercer la profesión como tal, entraré a mostrarles a los niños que los negros no solo son los que piden limosna en la calle, sino que pueden llegar a hacer algo profesional, pueden crecer como personas. Esto es importante porque en los cargos importantes es raro ver personas negras y no es porque sean menos, sino porque les han faltado oportunidades. No es solo decir “vamos a incluirlos”, es hacer que suceda de manera más humana. [Sic]

In this last fragment, Marla reflects upon the challenge she has had at university in which she has had to re-think who she is based on her perception and what others have made of her.

However, she projects this to her future as an English language teacher. She has a political and ethical projection in which education implies dismantling social representations regarding Black people—representations that not only hinder their being but also make them less human.

In the above narratives, belonging was a salient reference in Marla's experience. In the literature available, the sense of belonging is tied to the idea of community (Wenger, 1998). However, what Marla describes is far from social configurations where she could engage in mutually negotiated actions. In fact, her mom's and her Black identities were out of context, either due to her habits or her place of origin ("*Allá somos las blanquitas y aquí somos las negras*"). This sense of dis-belonging hindered Marla's engagement as a mode of belonging. That is to say, since we construct ourselves by negotiating and participating with others (Goodnough, 2010), the fact that Marla is Black, not like others who identify themselves as Black, becomes a material strategy that represents her as the other, even within those also marginalized. There is also a projection regarding her profession. Being an educator is not only about transmitting instrumental and disciplinary knowledge. It is also a political and ethical bet to dismantle the colorblind ideology that denies the influence of racism in structuring life (Mayfield, 2021).

My Peers Expect Me to Be Inferior

The theme *My Peers Expect Me to Be Inferior* appeared when discussing university studies. Marla has gone through several seminars at university where she has listened to her peers speak about topics such as sex, gender, and racism, topics in which she has been positioned somehow.

Yo siento que mis compañeros esperan que yo sea inferior a ellos sin darse cuenta, porque he tenido experiencias en las que en algún trabajo hago una exposición y tengo alguna traba, algún acento, algo que se me sale y es normal, pero ellos dicen como... hace poquito tuve un comentario en el que me decían algo tipo: "Agh, a usted le regalaron la nota" y yo quedo como... ¿por qué? Si yo hice mi trabajo e hice las cosas que tenía que hacer, no entiendo porque dicen eso, me responden como: "¿Usted no se escuchó cómo habló?" Y yo: "Pues respondí, así hablo yo". Entonces no sé si tiene que ver con el tema de la piel de una mujer negra o con la misma persona, pero pues no ha sido solo una vez que esto me ha pasado. [Sic]

In this excerpt, Marla narrates her experience at university. She perceived the predisposition of her peers to assume that she was not as good as they were. On one occasion, some discourses positioned her as inferior by questioning her academic results ("*Agh, a usted le regalaron la nota*"), even though it is not clear whether these comments came from her being Black, female or just because she did not get along with the person commenting. In her experience, speaking about these positions of marginality forces her to question her own identity (racial, sexual, and linguistic). Somehow, she has been told she is out of place (Kilomba, 2010).

Algo curioso pasó con un chico que conocí en la universidad. Él me decía como “yo era racista antes de conocerte” y en el instante en que escuchas esto es shockeante, pero me pareció interesante porque él pudo, creo yo, desmontar su propio imaginario de lo que es ser racista. Creo que lo que le sirvió fue escuchar mi punto de vista porque muchas veces en lo que leemos y aprendemos no está lo negro. [Sic]

In this narrative, Marla relates that she was shocked when she knew a peer of hers was racist before knowing her. She was also surprised that her peer claimed to have stopped this. Yet it seems it has been possible due to Marla’s voice and point of view. She acknowledges that much of what is learned and read in TE lacks the Black perspective. This claim is not far from reality since there are scholars like George et al. (2020) who have highlighted that curriculum “mutes, distorts, omits, and stereotypes the perspectives of racialized” (p. 3).

Hay gente que te dice: “No estoy acostumbrado a una persona negra”. Es como ir a un museo y ver una obra rara, tratan de entenderme. Creo que en la universidad he sido vista como un bicho raro. Soy la única mujer negra del programa, bueno, estudiante, porque sé que hay una profe. Pero, aun así, creo que mi trabajo está en irrumpir estos espacios de la academia, de la formación de profes de inglés en donde solo te ven como alguien que no encaja por ser negra; es decir, soy la parte exótica para algunos. Se me permite hablar mal, según ellos, ya que soy diferente. [Sic]

In this last fragment, Marla reflects on her role in TE. Her being there implies that others appreciate who she is. Her job is to interrupt academic spaces where student-teachers keep being deracialized and labeled as exotic when represented based on their apparent difference.

Analyzing the theme *My Peers Expect Me to Be Inferior* reveals Marla’s agentic discourse and behavior. Thanks to her commitment to gaining more visibility as a Black woman and student-teacher, she has uncovered deep racialized structures that have shaped oppression. However, Marla has not reproduced the discursive internalized racism from which harmful ideologies have positioned her as inferior (Charity Hudley & Mallinson, 2014). Instead, she has been able to develop a pedagogy in which raising consciousness toward racism and White hegemony (e.g., ontologically, epistemically) has served to heal the wound she has been inflicted in and by TE.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Teacher education needs to be unwhitened. TE has functioned as the architecture to build disposable ontologies and has also contributed to displacing Black epistemologies. In this line of thought, for “decolonizing [...] the principles and practices of planning, learning, and teaching English” (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, p. 54), it is necessary to decolonize institutional colonial practices and discourses. Suppose initial teacher education wants to move beyond colonial paradigms; the voices, experiences, and embodied epistemologies of those made dispensable need to be considered. In this line of thought, we are convinced that this study advances in the

identification and contestation against discourses and strategies of educational coloniality (i.e., silencing, ignoring, erasing, etc.). As such, it contributes to undoing racism as epistemology and race as the colonial label (Mignolo, 2021) through which Black student-teachers, such as Marla, have been made invisible and disposable.

First, we agree with Bryan et al. (2022), who state the importance of “Examin[ing] and critiqu[ing] curriculum & materials for blackness” (p. 8). As narrated by Marla, TE programs use a curriculum that does not significantly consider Black histories and positionalities. As a result, course syllabi account for instrumental-procedural knowledge necessary for the disciplinary dimension of TE. However, since this dimension cannot function as an isolated perspective; otherwise, it becomes a whitening technology. Thus, TE curriculum must be reorganized to incorporate, value, and welcome postures that do not necessarily originate from hegemonic geopolitical locations (i.e., United States, Europe). We need to work to provide epistemological/cognitive justice (de Sousa Santos, 2009) in those communities that have commonly been subalternized regarding initial teacher education. Such postures should come from Black student-teacher experiences and local histories (not the only ones, as many others have also been made disposable and whose humanity has been dispossessed).

Second, we are here using our academic privilege to help make the decolonial crack deeper and broader. We assume our privilege as scholars and choose to think with Marla to achieve a more just TE. In this sense, the idea of blackening TE resonates with us. We have been educated in a whitened system. Therefore, to get out of the zone of non-being (Fanon, 2010) (which we also occupy but with different intensity), disposable and dispensable student-teachers must start being/becoming. With this, we must speak with and not for the educational systems that have segregated. In this sense, the illusion of inclusion (Bryan et al., 2022, p. 2) must vanish. TE, educators, and even student-teachers cannot continue minimizing discourses and practices of marginalization. As Marla put it, *we cannot avoid hurting by hurting people*. Therefore, in this line of thought, we agree with Patel (2016) on the need to pause to reach beyond. This means that we need to “sit still long enough to see clearly what we need to reach beyond” (p. 38); in our case, pause to think more about the implications of developing social justice frames as these may not fully suit decolonial needs. They offer, at least until now, just an illusion of inclusion and presence (Patel, 2016) and, more than decentering coloniality, end up centering even more. However, for future studies conducted by those engaged in these conversations, it becomes an area of contestation.

Lastly, this study adds its contribution to some already advanced efforts (see Aldana, 2019; Bonilla Medina & Finardi, 2022; Escobar Gómez, 2019) that have not only spoken against but contested colonial legacies in education. We believe then that this study is not isolated. On the contrary, it is a decolonial effort (Vilarinho et al., 2020) that joins other voices, experiences, and reflexivities in the pursuit of dislocating and dehumanizing education. Thus, our study becomes an invitation for fellow scholars and educators to show their solidarity and interest in dismantling not only racist practices but also other colonial strategies and expressions of coloniality.

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