



Committing to Anti-Bias Anti-Racist Teaching: From Activity to Habits of Mind

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Abstract

With the need to prepare teacher candidates to work with an increasingly diverse student body in U.S. schools, a multi-institutional collaborative self-study group was formed to examine ways in which teacher educators could expand beyond practice-based literacy preparation to support candidates' understanding and implementation of critical pedagogies. The self-study served as a catalyst for interrogating the identities the teacher educators brought to their practice and began a journey that transformed a focus on critical literacies into a commitment to action for change through anti-bias anti-racist work. This paper draws from group dialogue and reflective journals to examine specific practices implemented with teacher candidates to transform their practice by considering critical literacies, asset- and deficit-based language, and the identity work of teachers and students. Insights of the self-study suggest that attention to critical pedagogies must go beyond instructional activity to consider the habits of mind essential for cultivation to support a commitment to action for anti-bias anti-racist education. The paper concludes by examining these core habits of mind and their impact on the trajectory of the group's work toward leveraging language and literacy for activism and justice in teacher education contexts.

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A student turned in a draft to me for feedback on her trip to Uganda. The piece was filled with deficit language toward the Ugandan people she encountered. She described their homes as run down and scary, perpetuated stereotypes about people she encountered on the road, and then disparaged her own students back home in Detroit because “they really didn’t know hardship compared to the Ugandans” (Sophie, June 2020 Journal).

As teacher educators, we often find ourselves making instructional decisions about when and how to challenge the assumptions, biases, and experiences that form the foundation of the belief systems our pre-service teachers (PSTs) draw on to imagine teaching and learning in their future classrooms. Like the PST Sophie described in her journal in the introductory excerpt, our overwhelmingly white and female PSTs carry into our classrooms conceptions about what it means to teach that they are not often consciously aware are informed by experiences framed by their identities and positionalities in the world, including those based on their race (Matias, 2016). Furthermore, our PSTs have also largely participated in institutions of education in the United States, including those in higher education, built upon ideologies rooted in racism (Souto-Manning, 2019). These ideologies—particularly ones associated with power, voice, and access—remain overtly and implicitly embedded within institutional structures, like admission policies, the design of curriculum and instruction, hiring procedures, and funding decisions (Milner, 2008), that our PSTs generally experience as taken-for-granted.

Thus, we began our work together as teacher educators seeking ways to implement anti-bias and anti-racist (ABAR) instruction with our PSTs in literacy courses to develop their capacity to design and teach lessons for and about these issues. We draw on the work of Derman-Sparks and Olson Edwards (2020) and Donovan (2021) to define ABAR education as teaching and learning that (a) nurtures knowledge about individual and social identities; (b) cultivates capacities to recognize and name bias and racism and the harm they cause; (c) examines the historical roots of these inequities and oppression in systems; and (d) resists and works to transform these systems of oppression through activism. However, while investigating and implementing instructional activities that particularly challenged our PSTs’ biases, assumptions, and experiences in the world, we also found it imperative that we examine and address our own positionalities in doing this work as white, middle-class, and female teacher educators. So, while engaging our PSTs in ABAR work, we simultaneously began a study of our own teaching practices to systematically examine and improve our practice in implementing ABAR instruction. We draw on this collaborative self-study of our teacher education practices (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2004; Loughran & Russell, 2002; Russell & Korthagen, 1995) to identify key activities that were essential to our PSTs’ developing understanding of ABAR instruction and to describe some of the tensions we, as teacher educators, negotiated while implementing ABAR instruction with attention to our own positionalities.

The Language of Critically Oriented Pedagogies

As literacy educators, we recognize that not only should print texts be read critically but that the world must also be read critically. Analyzing all texts (e.g., visual, aural, gestural, spatial) to examine the

relationship between language and power should be a way of being in the world (Vasquez et al., 2019), a way of living our lives with an increased awareness of equity, power, and justice generated through our own inquiries into texts. Thus, as a lens for teaching, we aim to ensure that our PSTs learn how to read the world. At the beginning of our journey to implement ABAR instruction, we believed that if we could guide PSTs in cultivating the dispositions to analyze and interrogate their curriculum and texts in critical ways, they could uncover bias and teach their own students to be critical. If we taught them to be critically literate, we would have a pathway to social justice and reform (Comber, 2015). However, we quickly learned that recognizing bias in texts, including in curriculum and people, required a much more refined and layered approach that intentionally worked to provide PSTs with both an understanding of deficit ideologies and language, as well as an understanding of the identities and positionalities they bring to a text.

As literacy teacher educators we framed deficit language as language that separates groups of students based upon what they are lacking or cannot do. This language leads to an examination of systemic forms of oppression, our location in these systems, and the power and privileges they grant (Love, 2004). Literacy education has a long history of deficit-based instructional frameworks that disadvantage minority cultures, languages, and identities through discourse, including socially constructed labels like *at-risk* and *struggling reader*, that constrain expansive thinking about teaching diverse learners (Paugh & Dudley-Marling, 2011). Like scholars before us, we recognize that our discourse communicates our perspectives and impacts how we enact our identities in various contexts (Gee, 2014).

In examining our language, we began a deeper investigation of our own identities and critically considered, as eight white women, our complicity in the oppression of minoritized peoples through the system of schooling. Here, we refer to identities as ways of being that are multiple, in flux, and shaped by context (Gee, 2014). Matias (2013) reminds us that self-examination of one's own identities and whiteness is essential for disrupting structures of race, racism, and white supremacy in schools, particularly for white teachers whose claims of culturally responsive practices often continue to invisibly perpetuate inequities. Through our group's shared reading of texts such as *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism* (DiAngelo, 2018), *The Price of Nice: How Good Intentions Maintain Educational Inequity* (Castagno, 2020), and *Race, Justice, and Activism in Literacy Instruction* (Kinloch et al., 2020), we interrogated our identities as manifested in discourse, or language-in-use (Gee, 2014). Studies like those conducted by Matias (2013) and Wong (2019) demonstrate how continued violence is perpetrated against Students of Color when claims of culturally responsive education avoid discussions about racism. Critical dialogue that creates space for all students is traded for a false veneer of amenability that maintains teachers' racialized white identities of niceness (Bustamante & Solyom, 2020). We believe, as expressed in theories of identity, that all educators have the power to "maintain, resist, or transform teaching practices because context, history, culture, discourse, power, and ideologies influence their work" (Fairbanks et al., 2010, p. 166).

With this growing knowledge of the inextricable link between identity, agency, and lived experience, we systematically targeted our teaching practices to increase ABAR consciousness in our work with PSTs. Collectively, we continue to unpack why it can be so difficult to understand identities and what our identities mean for our teaching. Britzman (2000) reminds us that genuine learning must be destructive; new knowledge must sit alongside previous knowledge and break it down before it can be part of our own understanding. Knowing that identities can form and change through discourse, particularly for white people who are socialized to avoid talk about race (DiAngelo, 2018), we continue to have conversations about race with each other and with our students.

These conversations emphasize the importance of developing the habits of mind that make ABAR teaching possible. Habits of mind include an array of dispositions directed toward navigating problem-solving situations (Costa & Kallick, 2008). They are especially critical in educational contexts where teachers face dilemmas with no clear solutions (Chen et al., 2016) and must draw upon patterns of intellectual behaviors to inform decision-making (Costa & Kallick, 2008). Designing ABAR-conscious curriculum and instruction with students within the constraints of current schooling structures is a significant dilemma. Together, we continue to navigate this dilemma through dialogue and implementation of common assignments, which we share in the following sections to illustrate how we worked toward unpacking identities and negotiating the process of ABAR work with our PSTs. These common assignments are not meant to be viewed as a lockstep approach to ABAR instruction. On the contrary, we have experienced our journey toward a more ABAR-conscious approach to teaching as non-linear and endless (Tondreau et al., 2021). Instead, we present these common assignments and excerpts from dialogue as examples of how we began our journey, with attention to some of our missteps and blind spots, to help other educators, particularly white teachers and teacher educators, envision how they might begin a journey of their own.

Methods

Collaborative self-studies of teacher education practices empower teacher educators to work together to systematically study problems of practice (Dinkleman, 2003; Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2015; LaBoskey, 2004; Samaras, 2011). Specifically, as a method of inquiry into one's own instructional practices and teacher educator identities, self-study allows teacher educators to explore tensions between instructional aspirations and enacted practice (Dinkleman, 2003; Fletcher, 2020; Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2013; Loughran, 2005; Samaras, 2011). Such self-studies possess potential for supporting teacher educators in identifying and negotiating perceived biases and challenges to ABAR teaching, including in examinations of hidden curriculum that positions families of color as "at-risk" commodities; external pressures to cover content, including for accreditation purposes; concerns about impacting promotion and tenure; and institutional and departmental leaders who disregard equity work (Eisenkraft, 2010; Iverson, 2007; Phillips, 2019). Self-study requires a community of practice (Kitchen & Ciuffetelli Parker, 2009) wherein collaboration and critical friendship build the group's capacity for self-reflection and intentional instructional change that could potentially extend beyond the classroom to lead to educational reform (Fletcher, 2020; Kitchen, in press; Loughran, 2005; Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2015). Critical friendship, which involves engaging "with another person in a way [that] encourages talking with, questioning, and even confronting, the trusted other" (Hatton & Smith, 1995), is particularly important when engaging in self-study to enable ABAR work. High quality critical friendships support learning and reflection through relationship-building that simultaneously encourages others within emotionally charged contexts while also challenging their biases and centering accountability for change through action.

In this article, we use collaborative self-study to examine our experiences as eight white teacher educators (See Table 1) implementing and negotiating ABAR instruction with PSTs in our literacy courses. To identify key activities that were essential to developing ABAR capacities, in ourselves and our PSTs, we examined data spanning the initial years (2018-2020) of our ongoing longitudinal self-study. This data included (a) transcripts from monthly Zoom meetings and (b) individual journal reflections to group-constructed prompts that were written monthly in response to focal readings and

group discussions. Directed content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) was used to examine data in four stages: (a) defining the unit of analysis; (b) developing categories and a coding scheme; (c) coding the text; and (d) drawing conclusions from the coded text. For the purpose of this self-study, themes were defined as the unit of analysis and categories were developed deductively based on themes apparent in the focal texts our collaborative self-study group had read. These categories included *critical literacies*, *asset- and deficit-based language*, and *identity work*. *Habits of mind* emerged inductively as a category during the coding process. Conclusions were drawn from the data based on patterns in application of the categories in our instructional practices and tensions and dilemmas that arose in relation to each category, particularly in terms of our experiences and perceptions as white, female teacher educators building our capacities to do ABAR work.

Table 1
Teacher Educator Demographics

Teacher Educator	Years in Teacher Education	Rank	Region	University Type
Amy	4	Assistant Professor	Southeast	Mid-size Public
Elizabeth	8	Associate Professor	Northeast	Small, Private, Liberal Arts
Kristen	4	Assistant Professor	Midwest	Mid-size Public
Nance	18	Professor	Northeast	Mid-size Public
Sophie	16	Associate Professor	Midwest	Private
Tess	6	Assistant Professor	Northeast	Small, Private, Liberal Arts
Tierney	2	Assistant Professor	Southeast	Large, Public
Wendy	14	Associate Professor	Pacific Northwest	Small, Private, Liberal Arts

In the following sections, we describe key activities we explored while building capacity for doing ABAR work through critical literacies, asset-based language, and identity work. We then consider how we move beyond activities to also cultivate the habits of mind we need for ABAR work. We particularly emphasize how a habits of mind lens was needed to support our awareness of and ability to enter and sit with the tensions and discomfort that arose as we confronted (and continue to confront) our whiteness in our teaching practices.

Expanding from Critical Literacies to ABAR Teaching

Critical Literacies

At the beginning of our journey, we saw critical literacies as the key through which we could guide our PSTs to see how texts, curriculum, and systems were not always designed in favor of *all* students. Our goal was to encourage our PSTs to question and push back against texts, including those that were assigned to them in our classes, through the examination of the relationship between language and power. To accomplish this task, Nance introduced a shared assignment that engaged PSTs in website evaluation to support skill building around identifying the author's purpose and uncovering implicit biases and messages brought to the text by both author and reader.

The assignment (See Figure 1) began by reviewing a fake news article before moving on to analyzing fake websites. After these tasks, PSTs were asked to use the state standards and what they learned from the analysis to help articulate why it is important for students to engage in critical literacies. Before and after this assignment, PSTs were asked to define critical literacies and why it is important to their teaching. It was clear that the assignment helped PSTs better understand critical literacies and see how it could improve their students' understanding of digital text, but PSTs did not generally move from valuing critical literacies of "fake" news and websites to critical literacies of all sources.

Figure 1
Critical Literacy Focus

1. Read the FULL article at [https://www.eschoolnews.com/2017/01/27/robots-teaching- children/](https://www.eschoolnews.com/2017/01/27/robots-teaching-children/)
2. Visit <https://www.allaboutexplorers.com/> and review the website
3. Visit <http://www.dhmo.org/> and review the website
4. Using what you learned in the article and 2 websites make connections to why it is important for students to read critically

We knew that we needed to do more. Looking at websites was just one pathway towards critical literacy. PSTs needed to look critically at the language of teaching, at the texts used in classrooms, and at their role as teachers in perpetuating an inequitable system. The focus on critical literacies in news and websites was a starting point that led to changes in our instruction, such as those described by Nance:

Last Spring, I only focused on critical literacy with some application assignments. In the summer, the focus was on students and building from their strengths (but I paid little attention to race). In the fall I added more information and conversation about critical literacy and had students evaluate a curriculum that was being implemented in their field placement schools (February 2020 Journal).

It was in navigating these much broader conversations around power and language across all texts that our PSTs would encounter as educators that we confronted limitations in our own language abilities. These limitations, for both us and our PSTs, included our comfort and willingness to take up discourses around race, as well as our understanding of how to recognize and address our own socialization into deficit discourses that framed the racialized portrayal of people in texts. Thus, our next endeavor was to engage in explicit conversations with each other and our students around deficit language and its impact on instruction.

Deficit Language

Engaging our PSTs in critical reflection of curriculum and other instructional texts required analyzing discourse (e.g., gestural, pictorial, spoken, written) and planning intentional interactions that worked to disrupt deficit language. Wendy noted in her reflection, "I keep working to chip away at deficit language

and support replacement language and the ideology necessary to make language reframing based on beliefs, not just swapping words” (February 2020 Journal). We implemented several assignments to challenge our PSTs to critically examine their language and ideologies, particularly about Students of Color.

Elizabeth began by asking students to define and contrast deficit- and asset-based perspectives. She invited students to think about language individuals might use when they talk about students from these perspectives. Students often shared anecdotes from contexts like the faculty lounge: “He probably doesn’t have access to books in his home. Her parents don’t have time to read to her, they have too many kids.” Elizabeth reminded students that deficit discourses are ways of using language to suggest that certain individuals or groups are perceived as deficient and that these are the discourses that are important to work against in order to provide more equitable opportunities for all students in schools (Comber & Kamler, 2004).

Many of us particularly grappled with our PSTs’ use of the term *struggling reader*, a label that, despite its popularity in educational contexts and materials, has been shown to restrict and exclude students and to be associated with Black, Brown, and other marginalized children (Enriquez et al., 2010). Kristen, Tierney, Amy, and Elizabeth examined their own choices for instructional materials in their classrooms and shared titles of readings that each used to guide students to reframe their language and beliefs (See Figure 2). About “Who are Struggling Readers?” (Hall et al., 2011) Tierney said:

This chapter does a nice job of introducing students to inquiring into the typical labels used for readers in schools and I pair it with a carousel activity in class that dives deeper into the issues of the who, what, why, and by whom that frames decision-making about literacy instruction in schools (February 2020 Journal).

We also realized many of us included case study assignments in our literacy methods courses and PSTs’ case studies were often laden with deficit language. To disrupt this use of language, Elizabeth implemented an assignment titled “Disrupting the Status Quo: Thinking about the Kids in My Classroom” drawn from Minor (2018). Elizabeth used it in conjunction with the traditional case study assignment for the purpose of having PSTs bring an additional lens beyond that of administering running records and *kidwatching* (Goodman, 1985). The goal was to get PSTs thinking about the way their language and beliefs shaped the opportunities they did or did not provide students in the classroom. As outlined by Minor (2018), the assignment required PSTs to name the students they worry about, group students based on their worries, name what it takes to be successful in the classroom, identify what may be getting in the way of the students’ success, and brainstorm barriers teachers could remove to support each group’s successes. Elizabeth required PSTs to highlight the case study participant throughout the assignment, pushing them to move past deficit language and ideology to actionable teaching practices.

However, through reflective journaling and conversations as critical friends with one another, some of us recognized that, although we were asking students to use asset-based language rather than deficit-based language, we were not always explicit about the reasons why and sometimes our own socialization into deficit discourses made it challenging for us to support PSTs in unpacking problematic statements. Following a group meeting, Tierney wrote:

In the past, I know now that I have asked students to refrain from deficit language in student case studies, but I never really gave them the opportunity to explore what deficit language is and why I am asking them to refrain from using it. Our work has helped me develop the language to begin to recognize and talk about systemic racism and the historical, spatial, and temporal practices

that sustain it (February 2020 Journal).

Figure 2

Texts on Struggling Readers

- Dudley-Marling, C., & Lucas, K. (2009). Pathologizing the language and culture of poor children. *Language Arts, 86*(5), 362-370.
- Dyson, A. H. (2015). The search for inclusion: Deficit discourse and the erasure of childhoods. *Language Arts, 92*(3), 199-207.
- Hall, L. A., Burns, L. D., & Edwards, E. C. (2011). Who are struggling readers? *Empowering struggling readers: Practices for the middle grades* (pp. 1-11). Guilford.
- Enriquez, G. (2011). Embodying exclusion: The daily melancholia and performative politics of struggling early adolescent readers. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique, 10*(3), 90-112.
- Enriquez, G. (2014). Embodiments of “struggle”: The melancholy, loss, and interactions with print of two “struggling readers”. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly, 45*(1), 105- 122.
- Enriquez, G., Jones, S., & Clarke, L. W. (2010). Turning around our perceptions and practices, then our readers. *The Reading Teacher, 64*(1), 73-76.
- Triplett, C. F. (2007). The social construction of “struggle”: Influences of school literacy contexts, curriculum, and relationships. *Journal of Literacy Research, 39*(1), 95-126.
- Triplett, C. F., & Barksdale, M. A. (2016). Pre-service teachers’ perceptions of struggling readers. *Literacy Practice & Research, 41*(2), 37-43.

The ability to recognize, unpack, and eliminate deficit language hinges on an understanding of the identities one possesses and how those identities shape one’s experiences in the world. Understanding the impact of identities on experience can make the difference between a PST who, for example, tries to disrupt deficit language by attributing limited reading at home to parents’ busy work schedules (instead of a lack of interest) versus a PST who recognizes and leverages the families’ oral storytelling as a legitimate early literacy experience. Adopting asset- based language thus requires identification of one’s identities, recognition of the privileges that accompany or do not accompany each of those identities, and knowledge of the identities and privileges and oppression of others. To increase our capacities to disrupt deficit discourses, we, as well as our PSTs, had to engage in these introspections on identities.

Identity

Interrogating our identities to support ABAR teaching meant bringing difficult conversations about our identities into classroom spaces. Wendy shared one of these moments and reflected on its impact on her PSTs:

I took a step back and talked about intersecting identities and how some identities are privileged and how some of our identities (e.g. SES) are fluid throughout our lifetime. I brought out that I grew up low SES where Appalachia and Ohio meet and that SES/geography meant I had a certain dialect that they don’t hear in my voice because I learned to code switch and I don’t know them yet and am not so comfortable that my home dialect filters in, such as my “y’alls, all

y'all, reckons" . . . I included those words and there was some laughter (which I anticipated). One student said, "That's not funny" and I stepped up and said, "That's right. It's not funny." I talked about how our identities, which include our language, are a central part of who we are and in this class all identities are honored. There was silence, but it felt like the silence of "Okay, this is how this space works" (February 2020 Journal).

For ourselves and many of our white PSTs, talking about our identities and exploring the ways in which our identities shape our experiences and worldviews were unfamiliar tasks and we had few models in our own lives for how to navigate the difficult conversations that arose.

Specifically, we struggled to negotiate ABAR conversations and activities in classrooms in which the majority of white PSTs had little experience interrogating their identities but in which a few PSTs, particularly PSTs of Color, had deeply personal experiences involving bias and racism and who were often frustrated with the disengagement of their white peers in these conversations (Amy, April 2020 Journal). In response, we worked to create multiple opportunities for PSTs to engage in interrogating their identities, from naming their identities and their privileges and oppressions and listening to others with diverse identities and worldviews to examining the ways in which their identities and worldviews shaped their personal practical theories (Levin & He, 2008) about teaching and learning. Amy shared her implementation of identity work that, over time, we each began integrating in our own ways:

I think starting with the identity work, grounding the class in Ahmed's (2018) intro and story of our name was a successful starting point, though I think I need to give them more class time to get engaged with sharing their name stories this semester . . . The Danger of a Single Story TED Talk (Adichie, 2009) and the windows and mirrors (Bishop, 1990) PowerPoint were helpful, as they were last semester. I think building from windows and mirrors to considering bias and stereotypes to disrupting single stories works as a progression . . . We can't talk about disrupting the single story of time periods or historical events without digging into systemic racism (January 2020 Journal).

Through these assignments, we had PSTs acknowledge and talk about their identities and the impact of those identities on their beliefs about teaching and learning while simultaneously asking them to attend to their students' identities and how their identities shaped how students engaged in learning in the classroom (See Figure 3).

Going Beyond the Activity to Habits of Mind

The expansion of our thinking from critical literacies to discourse and identity work was a shift toward ABAR teaching. However, in collaborative reflection, we realized that the activities we discussed above often remained peripheral rather than centrally and integrally connected to the underlying purposes, objectives, and experiences provided by our courses. For our PSTs, critical literacy, discourse, and identity work were often concepts that were developed in one class but subsequently dropped and not further developed or connected to other concepts in the course. We realized that we needed an overarching purpose focused on ABAR teaching that would drive course content and activities, including our daily interactions and conversations.

Considering our own journey, we reflected upon the underlying habits of mind we had been challenged to develop while taking on ABAR activities and how they became embedded (or not) in the

structure of our courses. We thought about how we did, or could do, the parallel work of introducing and supporting these habits of mind in PSTs. Across dialogue, reflection, and action, we identified three interlocking habits of mind that we found essential to the shift we made toward ABAR teaching—being vulnerable and transparent, collaborating and networking with others in and beyond this group, and constructing inclusive spaces.

Figure 3
Guiding Questions for Knowing Your Student

- Who is your student?
- What do they think about school in general? Are there aspects they enjoy? Aspects they don't? Why?
- What do they think about reading and writing?
- What do you think is most important to know about this student? What surprised you?
- What would you share with other colleagues who work with this student to help them get to know the student better/in a different way? How might this shift their thinking?
- What did you learn from conducting this interview?
- How did your initial impression of this student shift as you got to know more about them?
- How could this process help you as you prepare to have your own classroom?

It is, however, important to recognize that these habits of mind are not exhaustive of the dispositions we need to cultivate to effectively engage in ABAR instruction in our teacher education contexts. The three habits of mind we discuss here are those dispositions we found most challenging and significant for us in the early stages of our work together to engage in critical literacies, the disruption of deficit discourse, and identity work. Other educators may discover other habits of mind more essential to their initial or extended journeys into ABAR implementation. In addressing habits of mind, our goal is to emphasize the importance of moving beyond just considering activities to creating a culture in which PSTs and instructors can bravely examine systemic racism and bias and take action for change, however incremental. It is also important, particularly because we are white teacher educators who have benefitted from socialization into a system in which racial privileges are erased (Gallagher, 2003), that we recognize that cultivating the habits of mind for ABAR teaching cannot occur without also recognizing and engaging in the tensions that arise in moments demanding the leveraging of particular habits of mind. For each habit of mind we discuss, we also examine the tensions we experienced and explore what these tensions mean for the work we, as white teacher educators, must still do while building our capacities to implement ABAR instruction.

Transparency and Vulnerability

We often discussed the significance of transparency and vulnerability to ABAR teaching, both because we recognized our continual learning and because we aimed to model how to engage in this process for our PSTs. For us, this habit of mind included weaving our own identities and stories into instruction and extended to the act of being honest and open about our own limitations of knowledge as we negotiated difficult conversations with our students. For example, Kristen wrote the following reflection in her journal:

I am working on helping students grapple with sensitive topics in humanizing ways such that they feel safe to feel uncomfortable, if that makes sense. Something I'm trying to improve in my own practice is sharing my vulnerability with my students to maintain humility. It's never my intention to appear as someone who has the answers or whose work with whiteness is complete; it never will be. However, it is my intention to create a space where students and I engage in the work together (February 2020 Journal).

While cultivating this habit of mind, with one another and our PSTs, we became aware of two major tensions that shaped the ways in which we were willing and able to be transparent and vulnerable. The first tension involved our developing awareness of who has been historically vulnerable in the classroom. In responding to Tess' description of how a racist incident went unaddressed when a staff member used a racial epithet at an anti-racist event on her campus, Amy reflected, "[it] makes me think about how often we talk about 'protecting' students from curriculum or topics . . . [because] so often it's 'protecting' white, middle-class students from having to think about the realities marginalized students face, like in this example" (February 2020 Journal). Although our whiteness has often given us the privilege of choosing when to be vulnerable, Leonardo and Porter (2010) remind us that not all of our students have benefitted from that same privilege and that classrooms that have been characterized as a "safe" space have often protected white students and teachers while perpetuating harm against People of Color and other traditionally marginalized communities. This particular tension is embedded in the choices we make about what vulnerabilities we share and the intentional and unintentional parallels we problematically draw between our experiences and understanding of oppression as white females and the experiences and understanding of oppression held by People of Color.

The second tension centered on our openness to engage in consistent critical reflection, both with ourselves and with the members of our group. Recognizing and taking up opportunities for vulnerability and transparency required reflecting on moments in which we were more likely to adopt this habit of mind and moments in which we were more likely to avoid it. We depended upon one another to play the role of critical friend—someone who could support and encourage us while also being willing to critically examine our actions and call out those moments of avoidance. For example, when Tierney wrote in her journal that she had not centered ABAR instruction because "it's more challenging, it takes more preparation beforehand and more agility during," Kristen pushed back by offering journaling as way to critically reflect upon and unpack key moments in each class to build capacity for that agility:

I think it does take a lot of agility before, during, and even after teaching to always foreground ABAR. But it does not absolve us White teacher educators from doing so. While I don't like the idea of journaling after each class because it feels like one more thing to do, it might hold us accountable in teaching and planning (June 2020 Journal).

However, calling out those moments was also challenging because of our socialization, particularly as females, to remain silent and compliant, thus resulting in moments that were intentionally overlooked, maintaining the status quo in terms of remaining unresponsive to systems of oppression, bias, and inequity. In continuing our work toward ABAR education, we continue to build our capacity for being vulnerable and transparent by engaging in cyclical critical reflections that involve journaling and discussing but that also necessarily include critically examining those records with the intention of identifying moments in which we are not truly functioning as critical friends.

Collaborating and Networking

In addition to embodying transparency and vulnerability in teaching, we also developed the habit of mind for intentionally creating opportunities for collaborating and networking with others as we employed ABAR teaching with PSTs. As we worked to make ourselves more vulnerable, we found our own community of practice an essential source of encouragement—one that would also push back against moments of resistance and provide new perspectives. We found one another’s “support/call to action” vital when otherwise “tempted to roll over and take an easy way out” (Wendy, March 2020 Journal). The focus on collaboration also expanded our notion of who could and should be collaborators as we pursued more ABAR-centered instruction. For example, Sophie, who had struggled with making a strong connection with a class of Latinx PSTs shared:

I committed at that moment to inviting a former doc student to speak at my class in January about issues of biliteracy/bilingualism . . . Alejandro’s dissertation research was on that topic. He also served at mostly Latinx schools in Chicago, including as a special ed teacher, regular classroom teacher, and principal. So, he came in to speak with my students in January, and I noticed something very cool happen. My students looked suddenly more engaged, more animated. Alejandro, who had prepared an excellent presentation on biliteracy and translanguaging (among other things) was talking to my students as if they were all members in the same group/club, which they were (February 2020 Journal).

The tensions that emerged in the process of cultivating this habit of mind centered on decision-making regarding collaborators—who needed to serve as collaborators, when, and in what capacity. In part, this tension arose in response to calls by scholars such as Love (2019) and Picower (2021) for white people to do the work of dismantling oppression rather than relying on People of Color to do the work, which instead perpetuates systems of oppression. As a community of practice, we committed to doing the work of critically examining ourselves and our practices, both within and beyond the classroom without unnecessarily burdening Scholars and Teachers of Color by asking them to participate in doing the work that is ours to do.

However, in doing that very work, we also became more aware of our own limitations and the ways in which our socialization into a curriculum of whiteness (i.e., tools that maintain racial hierarchies and white supremacy; Picower, 2021), both as K-12 students and teachers/teacher candidates, contributed to our lack of awareness and our unwillingness to engage in taking focused and intentional action against systemic oppression.

The above excerpt from Sophie’s journal is an exemplary depiction of this tension. We struggled to negotiate when we, as white teacher educators, needed to take responsibility for change and when and how we drew on the knowledge and experiences of Teachers and Scholars of Color. On our journey to

learn more about challenging systems of oppression that we participate in, we quickly learned, in examining our own practices, that we often drew from the work of white scholars like DiAngelo (2018) and Picower (2021), rather than from Scholars of Color. Even though we shifted to intentionally seek works by Scholars of Color, our reading and application of their work was still done through our white lenses and there were moments when guidance in and critique of our work by people outside our group were essential to expanding our understanding of ABAR education and our journey towards it. On the other hand, we needed to also ask ourselves what counts as “work we cannot do” versus “work we will not do” because it is uncomfortable, difficult, and resists the status quo. By inviting a Scholar of Color to speak to her class and observing only the class’s positive response, we wondered what opportunities Sophie missed to reflect on why she was struggling to connect with her Latinx PSTs and the harm that had been perpetrated against them, both by her and by their previous teachers. As her white critical friends, we questioned what opportunities our community of practice had missed to challenge Sophie to think about why she felt she needed to bring a Scholar of Color into her classroom and what that indicated she still needed to work on to build her capacity to provide ABAR instruction. Thus, in continuing our journey toward ABAR education, we found it essential to continually revisit our positionalities as white women doing ABAR work, engaging in discussions about if, when, and how we ask for the help of Teachers and Scholars of Color while simultaneously seeking opportunities to share our work (e.g., presenting at conferences, talking with colleagues, submitting for publication) with an expanded group of teachers and scholars who, as external to the group, can bring fresh perspectives and critical analyses to our work towards implementing ABAR instruction in our teacher preparation courses.

Constructing Inclusive Spaces

The final habit of mind that we cultivated was the construction of inclusive spaces. Our willingness to be vulnerable and transparent and our growing ability to collaborate with a more diverse, expanded selection of people while still critically examining our own practices formed the foundation for building these inclusive spaces. As our work moved forward, we examined the multitude of borders and boundaries of teaching and learning in traditionally white spaces that we could challenge to create authentically inclusive spaces. This meant taking action to surface the “hard problems” (Kay, 2018) in content learning (Tierney; February 2020 Journal) and “decentering the normal” by “taking advantage of questions [students] ask [to] see where that leads us” (Amy; January 2020 Journal). This examination extended to all parts of our instruction and supported our (re)thinking about ABAR teaching. For example, Amy shared an example where her interactions with a PST made her rethink some of her teaching strategies:

[A] student came to my office to borrow LGBTQ children’s lit this week and told me she’s not out with her family yet but was so excited to see herself represented in these texts. She showed me a picture of her coworkers sitting and reading the picture books and shared that one who is pregnant is buying the texts for her baby. I need to make sure this work is centered in the course, not just happening on the margins for the students who seek it out (February 2020 Journal).

Shifting this work to center it in our courses as part of creating inclusive spaces introduced new tensions into our awareness, both emerging from our growing understanding of our white privilege. First, creating authentically inclusive spaces required inviting all PSTs to participate in engaging with an

ABAR lens but, historically, not all voices have been granted equal space in classrooms (Solorzano et al., 2000), contributing to a perpetuation of the dominant narrative by white students and teachers that continues to silence Students of Color, as well as students whose experiences and beliefs challenge otherwise established norms. Disassembling hierarchies of power in the classroom to create space for ABAR work to flourish required a recognition of our own privileges and a cultivation of this same awareness with our PSTs. At the same time, pressure to conform weighed heavily, both through the explicit expectations of accreditation and accountability measures (e.g., CAEP, edTPA) and the implicit expectations of ourselves and our PSTs to not disturb what had been comfortably status quo for those of us in possession of white privilege.

Cultivating inclusive spaces also raised tensions around our perceptions of what counted as content learning (e.g., instructional practices for teaching phonics) and what counted as ABAR instruction and how we found the time to do both in our courses. We often experienced best practices, which Kinloch et al. (2020) argues are synonymous with colonizing practices, as separate from our growing knowledge of curricula and pedagogies responsive to diverse literacy histories, knowledges, and ways of being. Cultivating inclusive spaces thus demanded that we expand our own limited knowledge of literacy practices while supporting our PSTs' developing capacities to both critically interrogate traditional school practices in literacy and envision what responsive school literacy practices could look like within the highly regulated spaces of K-12 classrooms. We have pushed forward as a group by continuously seeking to move beyond the single activity to intentionally and thoughtfully situate ABAR instruction as the foundation of our courses in ways that are informed by our work to expand our knowledge of literacy histories and practices that are not our own. We are, however, also increasingly aware of the work we still need to do to examine the impact of our practices on our PSTs, including recognizing when our actions perpetuate harm and making changes to avoid making those same mistakes again.

Conclusion

The habits of mind we developed over the course of implementing and collaboratively reflecting on instructional practices for ABAR teaching created the foundation for our shift from teaching for critical literacies (e.g., for the purpose of raising consciousness) to transformative education (e.g., for the purpose of change; Wang et al., 2019). Thus, our work with PSTs began to emphasize more than just instructional activities for *talking* about ABAR education; we also began interrogating the ways in which biased and racist teaching is used to empower some while disempowering others (Ononuju et al., 2020) and we continue to seek ways to disrupt this hierarchy of power in classroom settings. As a community of practice, we are committed to doing the ongoing work of embodying the leveraging of language and literacy in ways that lead us into activism and justice (Martinez, 2017) and to do so in ways that call in other white teachers and teacher educators to take responsibility for ABAR work. Based on an examination of data from the initial years of our longitudinal collaborative self-study, we advance several recommendations for others interested in engaging in ABAR teaching:

- While planning and implementing lessons founded on ABAR principles with students, educators must be simultaneously committed to consistent, honest, and critical reflection of one's positionality and its impact on beliefs and decision-making about teaching and learning.
- High quality critical reflection for initiating change in teaching practice requires an essential group of critical friends who can provide support while pushing back against the bias and racism present in teaching beliefs and practices.

- Critical friend groups often share many central identities and positionalities and thus should consistently seek outside feedback from diverse colleagues who can provide alternative viewpoints that challenge socialized ways of thinking, being, and doing teaching and learning.
- Keeping a record of individual and group thinking (e.g., journaling, recording conversations) is essential, providing critical friend groups opportunities to revisit their thinking and actions over time to identify ways in which the group avoids, resists, or is silent around topics and actions that can initiate change in support of ABAR teaching.
- Critical friend groups should dedicate time to not only exploring ABAR activities for classroom use but also to identifying and cultivating the habits of mind that situate ABAR work at the center of teaching and learning and, thus, position activities as meaningful and relevant to overarching learning objectives.

Our journey to making this commitment to teach through a framework of race, justice, and activism has emphasized the vital importance of being willing to engage with ourselves (and each other) in interrogating our own beliefs, biases, and experiences and examining the ways in which they shape our instructional choices and the messages we consciously and unconsciously communicate to PSTs in our courses. We believe in the importance of ABAR teaching and commit to developing the habits of mind that inform transformative praxis and the life-long identity work of ABAR educators and scholars “where uplifting humanity is at the center of all decisions” (Love, 2019, p. 89).

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