



## Examining Curriculum through a Critical Antiracist Lens

Informed by a critical antiracist perspective for teacher education, we describe a year-long research collaboration we engaged to interrogate how White allyship can be reimagined to support the design of critical antiracist initiatives in language teacher education. We were inspired to write this article because we see the realities, possibilities, and problems inherent in addressing the historic and entrenched ways that race and racism still operate in America, within teacher education, and within our institution, to sustain white privilege and power. This research is grounded methodologically in the notion of inquiry as stance, which recognizes the capacity of teacher educators to work collaboratively to reform education in democratizing ways. We conclude that within our institution and throughout teacher education barriers and resistance remain to taking antiracist actions to change the way we prepare teachers for guiding students who increasingly are not White and whose first language is not English.

**Keywords:** critical antiracism, white allyship, antiracist teacher education, intersectionality

*“Race is the child of racism, not the father” (Coates, 2015, p. 7).*

In this article, we analyze ongoing antiracist curriculum redesign. The goal of the redesign is to prepare TESOL teachers to become critical antiracists by engaging in pedagogies that “de-essentialize, de-simplify, de-silence, and decolonize antiracism” (Kubota, 2021, p. 1). As Dei (2011) stated, “Antiracism as a discursive and political practice places the myriad forms of racism and their intersections with other forms of oppression [e.g., linguisticism] in societal institutions on the table for discussion” (p. 17). Here, we describe a year-long research collaboration we engaged to interrogate how White allyship can be reimagined to support the design of critical antiracist programs in teacher education. We first give an overview of the framework which undergirds our thinking and praxis. Next, we discuss our methodology and efforts to redesign curriculum in a TESOL program, developed and led by author and professor Rachel Grant, and where both authors teach. We then share assignments that exemplify how we constructed tasks to apply critical antiracist pedagogies within the program. We conclude with a discussion of applications of critical antiracism in TESOL teacher preparation programs.

### Deconstructing Race

Roberts (2011) explained, “Race is not only interpreted according to invented rules, but, more importantly, race itself [emphasis in the original] is an invented political grouping. Race is not a biological category that is politically charged, it is a political category that has been disguised as a biological one” (p. 4). According to historian Frank Snowden Jr. (1983) the ancient Greek and Roman view of Africans of their time was one rooted in convenience, that is, color was adscript of their unique, most obvious physical

characteristic. Noting color provided the fullest description for distinguishing the inhabitants they encountered from the Nile Valley south of Egypt, who were also referred to as Nubian and Ethiopian. As such, the construct of “color” and “other” was not yet racialized as a socio-cultural and bio-political mark for inferiority.

Although the origins of race as the social construct we know today are widely debated, it seems clear that the incursion of Europeans into the Americas and the advent of 300 years of the trans-Atlantic transport of Africans for the purpose of unwaged labor, framed a new understanding of color and race. As if permanent removal from their land and family was not enough, white fear of rebellion meant that Africans who spoke the same languages or who appeared able to communicate with one another in any manner, were separated. From the captor’s perspective, African’s use of language was only needed to the extent that it was used to follow orders or serve the needs of the enslavers.

Over time as Africans acquired English, colonizing language practices and linguistic racialization elevated certain languages over others and African American speech remains among the most denigrated language forms no matter where in the world it is spoken (Samy Alim et al., 2016). Enslavement defined racialization in the New World, in the Americas, and later, in the United States. This put in place systems of behavior and policy that socially, politically, economically, educationally, and otherwise established and sustained White supremacy, ensuring that those of African descent were permanently situated lowest among racial hierarchies.

Simply speaking racism is the belief that a perceived racial group is superior to another; however, it entails much more. In the United States today, the issue of racism is driven by a desire, indeed a need, to assign difference between individuals based on superficial physical characteristics and language practices, merely to exercise power and privilege. To bolster the mythology of racial inequality, to justify the theft of Indigenous land and the enslavement of African and Indigenous people, economic, political, social, and legal enforcement systems were set in place to legitimize hierarchies of power around the races. “The antiquated belief that some groups of people are better than others distort our politics, drains our economy, and erodes everything Americans have in common” (McGhee, 2021, p. xxiii). The toxicity of racism increases the probability for Black and Brown people to be victims of police violence and die at the hands of those sworn to protect and serve. Racism increases chances for a Black or Brown child to live in an under-served community and attend an under-resourced school. As nations deal with the impact of a global pandemic, we are witnessing the rising up of White nationalism, and at the same time, BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and other people of Color) and White people are reacting to entrenched structural racial inequities including the disproportionate loss of Indigenous, Black, and Brown lives to the Covid-19 pandemic. Amid the rising tide of violence against BIPOC, immigrants, Muslims, and anyone who is not White, and CIS gendered, we have once again stopped to take a hard look at our racialized past, to question a present that makes it difficult for us to envision a different, better future for all.

Historically, schooling serves as a crucial system to normalize racial differentiation and far too often race remains an important metric for determining academic outcome. Enablers who take up and advance the myth of race inferiority unfortunately have been educational institutions that prepare the teaching force and our K-12 schools. Unwittingly, and far too often with conscious intent, teacher education fails to engage antiracism as intrinsic and valuable within teacher preparation. As a result, teacher education programs perpetuate the myth of race difference by failing to address “broader questions of structural racism, social oppression, domination, and marginalization of peoples in society” (Dei, 2011, p. 15). Starck, et al. (2020) revealed that despite the belief by many non-educators that teachers are somehow “uniquely equipped to instill positive racial attitudes in children or about racial

justice” (p. 282-283), teachers’ bias levels are in fact like those held by the larger population. They concluded that teachers and the broader population need training and support to acknowledge and overcome their implicit bias.

Motha (2014) asked, “What responsibility do we as TESOL professionals have for noticing and addressing the workings of race, empire, and language ideology in our practice? (p.148). Similarly, Kubota (2021) pointed out that “while the year 2020 seems to mark the beginning of attention paid to antiracism in ELT, discussions on race, racialization, and racism in ELT are actually not new...yet racism is not as widely recognized [or addressed] or understood as more familiar topics in ELT” (p. 1). In TESOL, embedded practices such as privileging the perspectives of White native English speakers in designing and implementing TESOL programs (Kubota & Lin, 2006) have led to pedagogies and assessments that conflate the teaching of the English language with English as normative and assimilation into White middle-class cultural practices. Resultantly, teachers continue to exhibit behaviors and engage in practices that convince Black and Brown children, especially those who live in poverty and English language learners, that they are less capable than their White monolingual English speaking counterparts. The same educational processes which inspire White children to believe that they are everything, can at the same time depress and crush the spirit and aspirations of the Black child (Woodson, 1983) as well those learning English.

Dodo Seriki et al. (2015), described the permanence of racism in teacher education under the guise of “it has always been done this way so why change” (p. 93). To combat our frustration and isolation as teacher educators who have heard this refrain throughout our careers, we came together to collaborate as a Black faculty member (Rachel) and a White faculty member (Stephanie) who each teach graduate teacher education candidates in a TESOL program. In what follows, we discuss our effort to address issues of racism and describe how we are working collaboratively to imbue critical antiracism within our courses and programs.

## **Theoretical Framings**

### **Origins of Racism**

Although it is beyond the scope of this work to take up the origins of race, it appears that sometime in the seventh century, race fueled the turning of Africans into a free source of labor. Africans were forcibly trafficked, first by Arabs across the Sahara Desert, later by Europeans across the Atlantic to labor in lands stolen from the Indigenous peoples of the Americas. Clearly, the incursion of Europeans into the New World and the rise of slavery capitalism is noteworthy as forever altering notions of racialization. To meet the demands of discovery, settlement, and development, Europeans looked first for a cheap source of labor, White indentured servitude. Next, attempts to enslave the Indigenous whose lands were discovered, ceased, and plundered proved too challenging. Finally, supported by religious doctrine, Africans, seen by the Church as infidels, became the odious resource for European expansionism (Williams, 1944).

For a global racial hierarchy to succeed, formal systems were needed to sustain it, “the West took ideas and built them into the fabric of the political and economic system in order to exploit the globe and build the modern world” (Andrews, 2021, p. 79) and race was the metric used to justify the capture, transport, enslavement, and forced labor, for life, for millions of Africans. Consequently, racism still frames much of life in our times, it “is not only the glue that holds the system together but the material of which it is comprised” (p. xv).

## **Intersectionality**

“Intersectionality is a way of understanding and analyzing the complexity in the world, in people, and in human experiences” (Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016, p. 2). Critical scholarship, most notably Black feminist and critical race scholars present race, class, gender, and language as closely intertwined and argue that these forms of stratification need to be studied in relation to each other; the goal being to take a stand and challenge the status quo and aim to transform power relations (Davis, 2016). Within the field of language education, critical researchers have long acknowledged the number of significant determinants that operate simultaneously to influence how and to what extent learners develop proficiency in another language, including English. As our understanding of the ways multiple factors operate, intersectionality is now utilized to examine how variables of multiple oppressions, including language, intersect in ways that are historically co-determining and complex.

As critical inquiry and critical praxis, intersectionality has a long-standing history within the fields of second/foreign language in seeking to identify and analyze the inordinate ways that politics, histories, and economies work to influence how identity markers such as culture, race/ethnicity, class, gender/sexuality, immigration/citizenship status, and dis/ability intersect with English language learning. Intersectionality provides additional layers of complexity to understanding, in the case of teacher education, ways that social inequality inserts and operates to uphold white privilege and power within schooling.

We take up Davis’ (2016) call to use intersectionality as a frame to challenge the status quo in relation to White allyship. Specifically, we see the need to move past a focus on White educators interrogating their own pedagogies and practices in relation to their own racial identities (e.g., DiAngelo, 2021) and instead work to recognize how we can collaborate to recognize racism and racist practices through critical conversation and interrogation across our identities (Sachs et al., 2017). In this way, we embrace the intersectionality that is created when educators of diverse social and cultural backgrounds collaborate to design critical antiracist educational programs.

## **Critical Antiracism**

We begin by declaring that we see the connectivity between antiracism and other perspectives, such as multiculturalism, that address diversity and difference. However, it is important to point out differences within multiculturalism, liberal versus critical. As Kubota (2010) noted, the liberal form of multiculturalism “promotes a superficial form of pluralism, reinforces color or difference-blindness” (p. 99). As we see it, infusing critical multiculturalism within the framework of teacher preparation is crucial for educators and their students. Moreover, understanding the varied epistemologies of people of color embedded within critical race theory (AsiaCrit, LatCrit, Indigenous feministCrit), critical antiracism, as well as endarkened feminist epistemologies, intersectionality and raciolinguistics, reflect the best hope for preparing educators capable of stemming the real and symbolic violence of racism in schooling. This grounding in the critical serves as rationale and the framework for radical resistance to help educators implement pedagogies of assets i.e., contextually relevant, culturally relevant/responsive/sustaining/revitalizing within classrooms because these are explicitly antiracist.

According to Kendi (2019), antiracism is a transformative concept that reorients and re-energizes the conversation about racism, and we would add, conversation about language and power. Throughout U.S. history we have witnessed the systemic implementation of racism and its crippling effect, not just in schooling, but in wider society. McGhee (2021) asserted, “racism is a poison first consumed by its concocters” (p. xii). As teacher educators in a TESOL program, we are engaged in efforts to dismantle racist traditions and policies that have denied and limited opportunities for teacher candidates to realize the

power of an antiracist stance. To do so, we draw upon the perspectives expressed by Kendi (2019) in his book for “how to be an antiracist.” We find Kendi’s work informative, a stimulating beginning for personal reflection; however, we are convinced that more is needed. What we seek through the TESOL program is to prepare language educators who reject racism in every form, who can give voice to the myriad minoritized, racialized, classed, lingualized and otherwise oppressed students. In our view, racism is an action that has been employed within every institution in the U.S., and elsewhere, to create artificial chasms between those who are White and those who Whites race differently (McGhee, 2021).

Dei (2011) noted, “Anti-racism is a discursive and political practice” (p.17). Therefore, we believe that educators must be willing to advocate for proximal (their classrooms) and distal (school and district wide) change, to reimagine schooling for English language learners and other minoritized learners. As we see it, critical antiracism is needed to interrogate, to push, processes of teaching, learning, and educational administration that challenge the institutionalization of race, gender, class, sexuality, other identities, and as well, the power and difference in schooling and broader society. Dei further stressed that “Race and anti-racism education is a major task and responsibility for the contemporary educator and learner.” (p.239). The task of antiracist education is “to help subvert colonial and racist relations and power hierarchies of conventional schooling” (p. 241). Drawing from Fanon, Dei helps us understand the connectivity of racism to colonialism and capitalism and the necessity for considering the global context in which race and racism operate within schooling and other systems.

The question is “what does this mean for teacher education in the U.S., particularly within TESOL?” It is noteworthy that much antiracist scholarship has been contributed by scholars outside of the U.S., notably Canada where the inordinate workings of racism and colonialism are tools for understanding the history and impact of race and racism on Indigenous people and society. However, racism and intersections with imperialism, capitalism, and militarism, particularly as imposed by the U.S., requires more attention and examination because the U.S. has not often been examined in terms of its settler colonial past, as have been the countries of Europe (Andrews, 2021; Horne, 2020). Currently, in the U.S. many White politicians and citizens refuse to acknowledge or address the sins of Indigenous genocide, colonialism, enslavement, and racism, and many are now engaged in efforts to remove from our schools’ pedagogies that promote Critical Race Theory, multiculturalism and even diversity. As we see it, racialization of language means that students enter schools speaking over a hundred different languages, and instead of nurturing their first languages (L1) and using translanguaging pedagogies to build literacies, far too often ELT educators squander this opportunity by phasing out L1 and transitioning MLL into English only content and language. This is our greatest tragedy (Wong & Grant, 2016).

As Motha (2016) pointed out, “English is a fundamentally racialized language, irreversibly shaped by its history as an important vehicle during the 500 years of European colonialism across the globe” (p. 110). In addition to considering socio-historical and socio-political works that directly impact ELT, we also draw from antiracist perspectives expressed by those in teacher education (Hackman, 2005; Haddix, 2017; Mason, 2016; Sleeter, 2016; Wilson & Johnson, 2015), as well as Dei’s (2011) writings on critical antiracism in education, and in second/foreign language (Kubota, 2010, 2021). What follows is our exploration and analysis of the content in several courses which this research guided us to intentionally design in ways to prepare teachers to challenge imperialist discourses that perpetuate the superiority of Whiteness and the White native English speaker. In the next section we describe our methodology including the analytic tools we employed that supported our efforts in redesigning our curriculums in service of critical antiracism.

## Methodology

The data described in this article are drawn from a year-long collaboration aimed at interrogating how White allyship can be reimagined to support the design of critical antiracist programs in teacher education. Accordingly, this research is grounded methodologically in Cochran Smith and Lytle's (2009) notion of inquiry as a stance, which recognizes the capacity of teacher educators to work collaboratively to reform education in democratizing ways. As researchers we take up the position of practitioner generators of knowledge, who use data gathered in our own courses and programs to inform pedagogical practices that create improved educational opportunities for our teacher candidates. Specifically, we engage a critical antiracist framework to address two research questions:

1. How are antiracist practices exemplified in our teacher preparation courses? and
2. How are antiracist practices exemplified through institutional policy?

## Project Context

The TESOL program at our institution is a relatively new program, developed just eight years ago. The program offers a Master of Science in education with a concentration in TESOL/ESL. In addition, there are academic tracks leading to post masters and advanced certificates of teaching in TESOL and Bilingual education. Similar to other TESOL programs, admission is not contingent upon previous teaching or coursework in education. As a result, our teacher candidates reflect a range of backgrounds and professional experiences. The population consists of international, but primarily U.S. born monolingual students and those who speak several first languages including Mandarin, Arabic, Spanish, Russian, and Albanian. The program's mission is guided by several principles but foremost is our commitment to support full literacy in English and first languages, to utilize students' first culture (C1) to support learning, and to advocate to improve schooling outcomes for multilingual students.

## Data Sources

Data were collected over one academic year and include critical conversations, course curriculum and assignments, and peer observations. Eight monthly critical conversations were conducted over Zoom, which were recorded and transcribed in fieldnotes. Each conversation included discussion of how we were making sense of racism we had recognized and/or experienced in our personal lives, in current events, in our university, and in our classrooms. We then worked to codify antiracist practices based within our critical antiracist theoretical framework and discussed how we were planning for our courses and assignments accordingly. Four courses in the program were identified for analysis, three core to the TESOL program taught by Rachel (Foundations, Methods, Assessment) and one course that enrolls candidates from across the school of education taught by Stephanie (Reading in the Content Areas). Over the course of the academic year, we documented the redesign of assignments based within our critical conversations and informed by critical antiracism. We further observed each other teaching classes over Zoom (all classes were fully remote due to the COVID-19 pandemic) which we captured in reflective field notes and shared in post observation conferences.

## Data Analysis

To address our research questions, data analysis began with thematic analysis of critical conversation fieldnotes. Specifically, we reviewed transcripts and identified themes that emerged and re-emerged as we worked to uncover racist discourses in our institution and courses and define our understanding of critical antiracist practices. Next, we leaned on Dei's (2014) critical antiracist framework as we sought to identify opportunities to better enact critical antiracism in our courses. As such we examined our course curriculums and assignments by asking the following three questions:

1. What opportunities are available to support students in developing interrogative voices to speak about social oppressions and relations of domination?
2. Where is space available to nurture students' self-efficacy as critical thinkers as well as their capacity for resistance against hegemonic systems and institutions?
3. How can we enact action-oriented pedagogies to challenge privilege and power and to subvert the status quo?

In what follows we share findings from the analysis above that highlights how we used a framework of critical antiracism to identify and attempt to dismantle racist traditions and policies in our program and institution as well as provide opportunities for our teacher candidates to realize the power of an antiracist stance.

## Findings

### Critical Antiracism in Our TESOL Program

Despite great challenges we identified to enacting antiracism in our institution, we found Dei's (2014) framework for critical antiracism as a useful tool to support the initial development of the TESOL curriculum. Further, this framework informs redesigning other course curriculum and assignments in service of empowering our teacher candidates to take up an antiracist stance. In this section, we share examples from our courses that illustrate how specific assignments have been designed in relation to our three key antiracist tenets that framed our data analysis.

Each course is informed by critical socio-cultural perspectives including critical race theory, critical ethnic studies, critical multiculturalism, womanist/feminist theory, intersectionality theory, and critical antiracism. Emphasizing the use of familial, cultural, and linguistic resources, teacher candidates apply learning and assessment practices to meet academic and socio-emotional needs of all multilingual learners (MLL). Courses address not just methods, but the politics of teaching and testing in an atmosphere where teacher candidates confront, through readings, discussion, and application, the disparities of racism, linguicism, classism, xenophobia, homophobia, ableism, genderism, and other identities that impact language teaching and learning. Within each course, we apply a decidedly developmental approach to build knowledge, shape dispositions and shift positionalities to reflect antiracist perspectives. Course readings and assignments are intentional in helping candidates come to terms with the racial power of Whiteness, confront their own bias, racist attitudes, and behavior, and understand that colorblindness is not an appropriate ideal for social justice.

The first tenet we took up in our critical antiracist design was to create opportunities that support students in developing interrogative voices to speak about social oppressions and relations of domination. One opportunity we created was in the course Reading in the Content Areas. This course enrolls students across multiple programs in our school of education including childhood and adolescent education candidates. Grounded in an understanding that reading is essential to student learning, the course prepares candidates across all content areas as teachers of literacy, with special attention to students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Throughout the course, students learn about literacy from the perspective of their own content (e.g., English, Social Studies, Science, Math) as well as engage in conversations that support their understanding of how literacy is framed in other content areas.

The capstone project for this course is the Fieldwork Research Project. For this project, which spans the semester, each student selects an issue in literacy to research in-depth for the purpose of investigating its relationship and implications in the teaching and learning in their content area. The critical

antiracist redesign of the assignment includes the addition of a tool we created using Kendi's (2019) framework (see Appendix A) which students use as an analytic tool for the literature review of their selected topic. Students further use this tool to conduct field-based observations which they analyze in relation to what they read in the literature. Some of the students are employed as teachers and analyze their own classroom setting in relation to the literature.

The next tenet that we enacted was making space available to nurture students' self-efficacy as critical thinkers as well as their capacity for resistance against hegemonic systems and institutions. We identified the course Foundations of Multiethnic Approaches to Learning to foreground this tenet. This foundation class is an initial course in the program that examines culture, race, ethnicity, and language through historical, political, sociological, and philosophical foundations. This is a required TESOL course and is a popular elective for students across all programs.

The initial assignment, an Identity Self-Study Essay', requires that students examine the identities, people, and experiences that help to shape their attitudes and behaviors around race, class, gender, spirituality/religion, etc. They discuss who they are and how they came to be and then identify who to them is the Other and tell why. Self-exploration is the crucial first step to racial self-awareness and acknowledging the socially devalued identities so often associated with multilingual families, communities, and learners. This assignment nurtures self-efficacy by immersing teacher candidates in self-reflection and criticality as they read, engage, and discuss a wide range of diverse topics to question the role of schooling as related to linguisticism, racism, and classism. We want to lay bare the attitudes teachers' hold that have historically played a role in crushing the spirits and opportunities for students and color and MLL.

The final assignment, the Cross-Cultural Family and Community Case Study (CCFCS) further supports students in their capacity to recognize and speak against hegemonic systems in the communities in which they teach. This culminating assignment examines the in-school and out-of-school- life, family, and community life of an MLL. Teacher candidates identify an MLL of any age but whose identities are racially, culturally, and linguistically different from their own. They conduct a "cultural tour" to learn about the community and conditions where the subject lives. Next, students develop a series of questions to guide conversation, schedule a series of meetings and conversations to learn about the background, family life, schooling, as well as current and past experiences within and outside the schooling context. Particular attention is given to finding out how subjects and families navigate schooling and other systems that impact their quality of life and aspirations for a better life. Time in class is devoted to how to establish rapport, develop culturally sensitive and linguistically appropriate questions, and how to apply the broad range of readings to gather, analyze, and learn from the CCFCS.

The final of Dei's (2011) antiracist tenets that we took up was to enact action-oriented pedagogies to challenge privilege and power and to subvert the status quo. We identified two courses in which to do so. The first, Content Literacy: Methods for MLL addresses academic content area literacy for MLL and other culturally-minoritized students. Foci include the theory, research, and praxis to address the developing academic literacies of MLLs across all content areas and grade levels K-12, and at the same time supporting full literacy in the first language and English. Congruent with all courses in the TESOL program, teacher candidates are immersed in readings (see Appendix E) and discussions to further knowledge development and application of critical theories to the content classroom.

The Developmental Inventory Project assignment in this course sensitizes teachers to literacy demands across the curriculum and in other school contexts, therefore strengthening their ability to plan instruction and apply strategies to support MLLs in academic literacies in class and other contexts. For this



assignment teacher candidates engage in observational assessment of formal and informal literacy contexts for MLLs. Observations are performed in two content areas and one other school context (physical education, art, during play, navigating social contexts during lunch or on the playground, etc.) to determine the demands of listening, language (production, reception), reading, writing, and technology in the school environment. Fieldnotes are maintained for each context to document challenges, task demands, and teaching strategies used to support or hinder MLL literacy development. Also of interest are the ways L1 (first language) and C1 (first culture) are utilized in various contexts to support literacy.

The second course where we enact action-oriented pedagogies to challenge privilege and power and to subvert the status quo is Language Assessment. This is an advanced course in the program designed to examine innovative approaches to assessment and assessment design. This course, like the others in the TESOL program described above, is informed by critical theories and perspectives that support teacher candidates' questioning of the politics of testing and their examination of bias in the design and implementation of testing policy, and how these negatively impact students who are raced, classed, and otherwise minoritized. At the onset, students examine standardized tests and the other assessment materials to determine ways that language, culture, race, gender, etc. bias influence test design and how the results are interpreted to disadvantage students of color and English language learners. Throughout the course students discuss the racial and language politics that drive high stakes testing and the negative impact this has on teaching and learning.

To do so, students complete the classroom-based Assessment Project (CBA), an in-depth semester-long project that requires students to apply principles of validity and reliability to design culturally and linguistically appropriate assessments in three content/literacy areas. They also design instruments to measure MLL self-assessment and social emotional learning. Next, they use data from the assessments to offer intervention and adjust instruction. Teacher candidates disaggregate data to examine differences within and across first (L1) and second language (L2) proficiency, and L1 and L2 reading proficiency levels. To conclude the CBA, post assessments are developed and administered to evaluate and critically reflect on the impact of instruction on student learning.

While we found our collaborative work productive in redesigning our courses in the TESOL program as described above, we faced challenges when trying to enact broader changes within our institution. In the next section we theorize these challenges and discuss how we are working collaboratively to address them.

### **Impact on Teacher Candidates**

Developing and nurturing critical pedagogical awareness must be undertaken with acknowledgement and acceptance that teacher candidates *arrive* in our courses having a wide range of understandings, experiences, dispositions, and positionalities about equality, equity, and social justice. Freire identifies four states of critical consciousness: semi-intransitivity, transitive consciousness, naive transitivity, and critically transitive consciousness (2005). Our teacher candidates are at different points in their development, as such, we must meet them where they are, as together, we embark on the journey of developing, reinforcing, and advancing their critical awareness. From a critical pedagogical view, education is an act of knowing, a political act, and an art at the same time (Freire, 1985). Although this has changed, at the onset of the program, the majority of our students lived on Staten Island, rarely venturing beyond their own neighborhoods. Moreover, Staten Island is the most politically and socially conservative borough in New York City. The island itself is a geographical and social representation that supports Heather McGhee's assertion that, "White people are the most segregated people in America" (2021, p. 168). This is the borough where, in 2014, Eric Garner died at the hands of police as a result of

being placed in an illegal chokehold. During our initial orientation session, we let students know that many, at first, may be *uncomfortable* as they develop or enhance critical consciousness. Our stance is that, no matter where students are in their critical awareness, the program will equip them with heightened intellectual curiosity and sustainable development that will lead to a more equitable language education for the children they teach.

### **Enacting Antiracist Teaching Practices in Our Institution**

We embarked on this work in an effort to identify new ways of enacting antiracism in our courses. We recognized we could not enact an antiracist agenda in our classes without simultaneously recognizing and interrogating power structures within our institutions that might serve as barriers to our efforts. As described above, we used critical conversations as a tool to document our experiences with racist practices in our institution as well as the efforts we were making to combat both the overt biases and archaic microaggressions we witnessed throughout the year. Our analysis uncovered two main barriers to the implementation of antiracist practices at our institution and in our school of education. The first is the lack of diversity, both in our teaching faculty (Rachel is the sole black faculty member) and in our student enrollment (identifying across all programs in our school of education as 68% White and 4% Black), which we see as intimately linked. The second is the lack of diverse pedagogical texts and approaches used across the school of education.

We recognize that the first barrier we identified is unsurprisingly not unique to our institution. To be fair, there is some diversity among the faculty. However, representation of African descent full-time faculty reflects that over the past 15 years there has been but one. There are no Latino/a faculty members, although Latino/a students represent one of the largest minoritized populations in the university and school of education. Though there is widespread acknowledgment amongst education policymakers of a need to diversify the teaching force, there is a failure to interrogate factors that lead to the absence of Black teacher candidates in U.S. schools of education and within TESOL (see Nabukeera; Bryan, Cooper, & Romney, this issue). At our institution over the past eight years, fewer than five Black teacher candidates completed the TESOL program. While efforts to increase diversity of the TESOL student pool for other students of color have succeeded, a primary factor leading to the underrepresentation of Black candidates in TESOL and teacher education in general is the lack of Black faculty in teacher preparation programs at our institution and across the United States. Rockquemore & Laszloffy (2008) identified the differences between the experiences of Black and White faculty which lead to this significant disparity. The racialized structure of academia, they argued, contributes to an expectation of Black faculty members to take on more labor than their White counterparts such as serving on a higher number of committees or mentoring more students. Further, Black faculty are likely to experience disrespect and hostility from students as well as microaggressions from faculty, staff, and students that reflect the stereotypes of their race while simultaneously being expected to serve as the representative for diversity or race issues (Baker-Bell, 2017; Del Pino, this issue).

Women of color in the academy face challenges experienced on an individual level, but which are tightly connected to global patterns of systematic power inequities (Satienchayakorn & Grant, 2022). They continue to experience marginalization, exploitation, and oppression (West-Olatunji, 2005). Behar-Horenstein et al. (2012) argued that “[a]n increasing body of educational literature focuses on the experiences of culturally diverse female faculty and presents a wealth of evidence of the severe systemic disadvantages they face as a result of racism and sexism in gaining tenure and advancement...” (p. 69). We note that the lack of diverse faculty in schools of education has a significant impact on TESOL education in particular, as the students who are learning in TESOL programs most often come from racialized cultural

and linguistic groups. One significant consequence of this is that TESOL students will not see themselves in the profession.

However, despite efforts in recent years by predominately White institutions to increase their numbers of women faculty of color, those efforts have been “relatively unsuccessful” for a variety of reasons, including a disproportionate focus on recruitment over retention, consequently failing to garner lasting results. While there has been progress since the 1970s and there are increased numbers of women faculty of color, Black, Hispanic, and Native American women combined still make up only 2% of tenured full professors at public and private research universities in the United States in 2007 (Evans, 2007).

In their summary of research addressing long standing barriers women faculty of Color encounter, The Sister Scholars (2021) point out that these disparities are becoming more entrenched as we teach while navigating a global pandemic. Women of color increasingly experience a higher rate of denial of tenure (Myers, 2002) and contract renewals (Billard, 1994; Winkler, 2000); they occupy insecure, temporary, and non-tenure-line positions in disproportionate number (Lester, 2008); and they receive lower salaries (Patitu & Hinton, 2003; Perna, 2001) and higher service loads (Hirshfield & Joseph, 2012). They are more likely to be assigned to introductory rather than advanced-level classes (Buckley et al., 2000), courses that have higher enrollment (Turner, 2002), require more caretaking responsibilities (Lin, Grant, Motha, Kubota, Tinker Sach, Vandrick, Wong, 2004), and require more labor that does not directly nurture the faculty member’s scholarship. Women of color are more likely to be discriminated against in student teaching evaluations (Pittman, 2010), and women in leadership positions experience more intense scrutiny (Henry, 2015; White, 2005). They are overlooked for positions of power (Mayuzumi, 2015), and are more likely to experience sexual harassment (Calafell, 2014) and academic bullying (Behar-Horenstein et al., 2012).

It is important to note that TESOL programs mirror the experiences described above. As we discussed earlier, the design and implementation of TESOL programs are most often informed by the perspectives of White native English speakers (Kubota & Lin, 2006) and as such reflect pedagogies and assessments that conflate the teaching of the English language with English as normative and assimilation into White middle-class cultural practices. This grounding of TESOL programs impacts the recruitment and retention of faculty of color in TESOL programs.

Given that barriers to faculty diversity in academia are grounded in systemic institutional structures, we realized that our efforts to diversify faculty at our institution needed to be local. As such, we have committed to activism and organization in our department to ensure that any new hires in our department will be people of color and to support new hires by taking on any additional labor that may serve as a barrier to their success.

However simply diversifying our teaching faculty, which we acknowledge would be a significant step, is not sufficient to ensure more students of color enroll in our programs. Haddix (Haddix, 2017) argued,

Instead of being in programs that acknowledge their cultural knowledges and center on curriculum and practice, students of color are expected to excel in Whiteness centered teacher education programs and in standardized teaching metrics (i.e., teacher certification examinations) to be identified as “a teacher.” For students of color, becoming a teacher means erasing or hiding their racial, linguistic, cultural, and sexual identities to fit a set standard (p. 142).

For our institution and school of education to embrace critical antiracist teaching, we realized the need to interrogate our own systems including our student teaching evaluation system and course curriculums.

Here it is important to acknowledge that our teacher preparation program is bound by state certification policies which include a minimum GPA for admission and the completion of the edTPA standardized performance assessment for certification, an exam that has been documented as disadvantageous to Black students (Garland, 2016). We are also bound by our accrediting body the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparedness (CAEP), which upholds the types of standards that Haddix (2017) described as Whiteness-centered. These institutional structures contribute to what we identified as a second major barrier to enacting critical antiracism in our school of education which is the lack of inclusion of diverse pedagogical texts and practices in courses outside of the TESOL program that our students are required to take. We observed that it is difficult to engage in conversations about changes in pedagogy with our colleagues when our focus is consistently on passing accreditation and preparing students to pass standardized certification exams. Given this challenge, we realized the way we could be most impactful is to design and model ways we could infuse critical antiracism into our courses in the TESOL program while simultaneously meeting external expectations.

### **Conclusion**

“The great lie at the root of our nation’s founding was a belief in the hierarchy of human value. And we are still there, we have not touched the root.” (McGhee, 2021, p. 288)

We were inspired to write this article because we see the realities, possibilities, and problems inherent in addressing the historic and entrenched ways that race and racism still operate in America, within teacher education, and within our institution to sustain white privilege and power. As well, we are painfully aware of the many barriers and resistance to taking antiracist actions to change the way we prepare teachers for guiding students who increasingly are not White and whose first language is not English. We believe the school is a site that offers endless possibilities for engaging action-orientated, liberatory, productive, and transformational critical antiracism. However, “the expectation that teachers facilitate racial equity in their classrooms, absent of training to address their own biases, may be an impossible task, especially if teachers’ racial bias mirror those of the American population” (Starck et al., 2020, p. 273).

As two women faculty, one White, one Black, we are unapologetically womanist/feminist in our perspectives and positionalities with respect to how we design and redesign our curriculum and approach this project. The overwhelming presence of women in K-12 classrooms and their prominence within teacher education, as we see it, necessitates the use of theoretical perspectives that promote a political agenda and action for achieving social justice. As feminist writers who are critical scholars, we advocate radical changes in the academy to eradicate educational inequity (Hurtado, 2003) and for cross-racial solidarity (McGhee, 2021). We believe that it is essential for teacher educators to first understand, and then design their courses using frameworks, such as intersectionality and critical antiracism to prepare teachers capable of engaging actions to reduce and finally eliminate the entrenched racism within schools. Although far more is needed, it is in the TESOL profession that we see the greatest promise and possibilities for a critical antiracism orientation. TESOL has a long tradition of acknowledging the importance of first languages and cultures, this we would add, has not been the case overall within teacher education. So, we look to TESOL to enhance our repertoires of understanding language and culture at the intersection of race. In closing we stress that transformations in policies, programs, and practices are not

possible without White allies. We understand that faculty of Color cannot do this alone, nor should they have to.

## Authors

*Stephanie Schmier is an associate professor at City University of New York- College of Staten Island. Her current research focuses on the possibilities of digital storytelling collaborations between preservice teacher candidates and elementary students from culturally diverse backgrounds.*

*Rachel Grant is a full professor at City University of New York- College of Staten Island where she developed and now administers the TESOL program. Her research utilizes critical theory to investigate the intersections of race, class, and language variety in teaching and learning.*

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## Appendix A

### *Critical Antiracism Assessment Tool*

#### Biological Antiracism

- In what ways does the curriculum express ideas that the races are meaningfully the same in their biology and there are no genetic differences?

#### Ethnic Antiracism

- In what ways do the policies in the classroom lead to equity between racialized ethnic groups?
- How do the policies of the school support or challenge my ability to implement ethnic antiracist policies?

#### Linguistic Antiracism

- In what ways do the policies in the classroom lead to equity between speakers of different languages?

#### Bodily Antiracism

- In what ways does the curriculum humanize, deracialize, and individualize violent and non-violent behavior?

#### Cultural Antiracism

- In what ways does the curriculum reject cultural standards and equalize cultural differences among racial groups?

#### Behavioral Antiracism

- In what ways do the curriculum and the policies in my classroom (including norms) make racial group behavior fictional and individual behavior real?

#### Color Antiracism

- In what ways do the curriculum and the policies in the classroom lead to equity between light people and dark people?

#### Class Antiracism

- In what ways does the curriculum identify the harm of racial capitalism?

#### Space Antiracism

- In what ways do the policies in the classroom lead to racial equality between integrated and protected racialized spaces?

#### Gender Antiracism

- In what ways do the curriculum and the policies in the classroom lead to equity between race genders?

#### Sexuality Antiracism

- In what ways do the curriculum and the policies in the classroom lead to equity between race sexualities?

### **Appendix B**

#### *Identity Self-Study Narrative Assignment*

What is my Culture? What subcultures do I belong to? How do/will my identities and experiences inform my teaching/professional interactions? For this assignment you will write a scholarly paper. The paper should be approximately 6 pages or more, in APA style, including a cover page, abstract, in-text citations of relevant course readings, and references.

The purpose of this paper is to increase awareness of your identity as an initial step in better understanding and preparing to teach students who come from a wide variety of backgrounds. As you look at your life and begin to articulate aspects of your identity, consider your experiences through a cultural - historical lens. In this autobiographical narrative, you will explore your own personal history, including the formation of your identity, family background, experiences, beliefs, and attitudes that help in shaping your dispositions, positionalities, and perspectives on teaching “the Other”. In doing so, you may consider identifying some key events and individuals that have influenced your identity formation and shape how you currently form relationships with “Others”. This assignment challenges each candidate to critically unravel her or his cultural assumptions by reflecting on the events and life experiences that have shaped their cultural premises. Focus your narrative on the aspects of your experience including individual, interpersonal, social, and cultural influences, which lead to your current interest in learning about and teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students.

In a nutshell, you must identify your cultural heritage and explore the cultural groups you identify with. Discuss family background and family culture in terms of values, habits, worldviews, beliefs, and goals, as well as how your culture shapes your life experiences, successes, and challenges. Describe the community where you grew-up. Consider how much alike or different it is from the communities of the



students you hope to teach. Finally, end your narrative by discussing how you can use your experiences in guiding your interaction with racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse students and their families.

### **Example Candidate Response**

“There are a tremendous number of factors that have made me who I am. My family, friends, religion, and experiences have all had a hand in helping me to form my ideas and opinions on everything in life. I know that my experiences thus far in life have been unlike that of anyone else.”

### **Components and Organization for the Narrative**

- Abstract (100-150 words)
- Introduction (basic information: age, birthplace, birth order, what are you preparing to do)
- Family/heritage background (geographical origins, parentage, grandparents, language, race, ethnicity, religion, social class, family traditions, etc.)
- Self-Identification—Define who you are (culture, language/dialect/accent, social class, gender, sexuality, religion/spirituality, personal qualities, etc.). What family/heritage elements contribute most to how you see yourself? How do others see you? How do you see the world? How do you see yourself in terms of culture, race, social class, gender, etc.? What experiences/practices have the greatest influence on who you are? Who are you becoming?
- Theoretical Influences—Define or explain the theories that most inform your evolving understanding of “the other” and diversity.
  - Explain teaching methods and/or classroom activities (2-3) you plan to use that are informed by critical theory. How can you make your classroom an inviting and comfortable space for all learners?
- Conclusion—How can you draw from elements of your identity and your experiences to inform your work with diverse learners? How can you draw from critical theory to inform your work with diverse learners? Connect your narrative to the course or other relevant readings. You must include citations of relevant readings.
- References—At least 8 different peer reviewed articles or other text sources.

\*It is important to note that students are told in advance that only the instructor will ever read the narrative. This affords them safe space to be candid and reveal identities, describe troubling experiences and toxic relationships that shape who they are and who they are becoming.

### **Appendix C**

#### *Cross-Cultural Family/Community Case Study Assignment*

#### **Goals:**

- To demonstrate knowledge, understanding, and use major concepts, principles, theories, and research related to the nature and role of culture and cultural groups;
- To take advantage of professional and personal growth opportunities that help to construct supportive learning environments for MLLs;
- To demonstrate the ability to build partnerships with colleagues and students’ families, serve as a resource, and advocate for ELs.

### **This performance assessment requires students to:**

- Identify a subject/family (ethnic, linguistic, racial and socioeconomic background different from your own), establish rapport, develop interview questions, schedule time to meet with the subject and parents/guardians.
- Take a cultural tour and document the neighborhood in which the subject and family live. How is it similar/ different from your own neighborhood? What languages do you hear? What cultural, class, racial and religious contextual clues do you observe? How would it “feel” for a family to live here? Search for “cultural artifacts” (e.g., community centers, libraries, storefronts, places of worship, signs, spaces) and what they represent to its residents.

### **As you explore, take photographs or videotape, and document your observations in field notes.**

- Identify the topics (develop a range of questions to keep your focus) you plan to discuss with parents/guardians for each visit.
- Conduct a series of home visits (or identify a location convenient to the family to meet) and interview parents or guardians of English language learners from an ethnic, linguistic, racial, and socioeconomic background different from your own, use the guidelines included in the syllabus and discussed in class.
- Visit the school to observe and learn about the school environment in which the subject operates.
- Increase cross-cultural competence by becoming familiar with students’ linguistic and sociocultural background.
- Examine the concept of bilingualism—additive and subtractive—held by MLL students and their families and reflect on the implications for the classroom.
- Critically analyze how students’ cultural identities affect language learning and school achievement.
- Utilize a wide range of materials, resources, and technologies to learn about the cultures of students and their language community.
- Discover the strengths in MLL students’ home discourses, including multiple literacies, and learn about the funds of knowledge educators can use to enhance second language teaching and learning.

### **Steps for Conducting the Project**

#### ***Step One. Walking Cultural Tour***

Conduct a ‘cultural tour’ by walking through the neighborhood. How is it similar/ different from your own neighborhood? What languages do you hear? What cultural, class, racial and religious contextual clues do you observe? How would it “feel” for a family to live here? Search for “cultural artifacts” (e.g., community centers, libraries, storefronts, places of worship, signs, spaces, etc.) and what they represent to its residents. As you explore, take photographs and record your observations in a journal.

#### ***Step Two. Meeting the Family***

Each team will develop “interview protocols.” The protocols are organized sets of questions used to guide the interview process and keep the interview flowing in a conversational manner. Good interview protocols consist primarily of open-ended questions that invite participants to engage in storytelling. Avoid questions that elicit only yes/no or very short answers such as “Did you go to school?” in favor of questions that elicit longer answers. (e.g., “Tell me about your childhood back home. What was your

school like?") Use prompts to get participants to keep talking (e.g., "Tell me more about that..."). We will spend time during class discussing appropriate questions.

Suggested types of information you will need to collect from either direct observation and/or your interview protocol:

- Physical characteristics of the home;
- Community characteristics;
- Demographic/background information;
- Parents' educational background, children's ages and grades in school;
- Immigration experience (How/why did they decide to come to the U.S.? What was it like?);
- Childrearing practices and philosophy;
- Economic, work issues;
- Funds of Knowledge (cf. Luis Moll);
- Perspectives about education (What is a well-educated child? What are the roles of families and schools in children's education?);
- Experiences with children's school(s). Types of support they have received;
- Misunderstandings, difficulties, and challenges and how they have handled them;
- What would this family like their children's teachers and administrators to know about them and their child?

Identify and interview (virtual or F2F) a family from a racial, linguistic, and socioeconomic background different from your own. You may choose to focus on a family or individual within the family unit. If possible, conduct the interview in the home. Find out about the cultural, educational, linguistic background. With permission, you might video or audio record the sessions. Seek permission from participants in advance. Also, you might have an interpreter to accompany you if participants are more comfortable communicating in their first language.

- After the initial meeting and with input from participants, develop a schedule. Consider meeting virtually, in the home, or convenient locations for the family. This will allow you to see how the family interacts with their community. The number of meetings will depend on several factors; however, 3-5 meetings should be sufficient.
- Schedule time to visit the school(s), workplace, etc. Before visiting, develop a schedule and focus for each observation. Also, schedule time for interviewing others who can help you in understanding the family, individual, and community.

### ***Step Three. Preparing the Narrative***

Analysis—schedule conference time with the instructor to review and discuss your field notes, photographs, and tape recording. Before listening to your recording for the first time, write down your initial impressions of this student/family. What surprised you? What moved you? How does this family's story change your understanding of multicultural education, diversity, social justice, and family involvement in schools? As you listen, jot down notes about interesting information, stories, quotes that strike you.

Next steps—Select the most salient quotations to transcribe. What else do you need to consider in your analysis?

Proofread and edit your work. The last section is your personal reflection on this experience.

## **Appendix D**

### *Developmental Inventory (Observational Assessment)*

#### **Purpose**

To evaluate the academic literacy demands (language, reading/listening, and writing/speaking) for MLL in content area classrooms and make recommendations for instruction

Note: Before beginning this project establish rapport with the classroom teacher and student. Confidentiality will be maintained, as any information gathered for this project will not be shared with other school personnel. As a requirement of the TESOL graduate program the goal is to assist you in developing knowledge about the demands of academic language and content knowledge MLL encounter and improve your ability to provide instruction. You MAY use a student you teach, but it may be difficult to base the project on your own instruction or classroom. For this assignment, pre-service teachers may work with ONE in-service teacher and submit a joint final report.

#### **Timeframe**

Observation: 3-4 weeks.

Caution: Conduct all fieldwork during the semester you are taking the course (not from previous semesters or years). This will ensure your understanding and application of course content.

#### **Tasks**

This project allows you the opportunity to utilize observational assessment in the content area classroom.

- Early in the semester, identify one student as a potential subject for this project. After you read pages 335-337 in Ruddell (2005), begin informal observation and maintain fieldnotes. You should conduct observations several times before completing the Developmental Inventory (DI) form.
- Read all information and review the rubric I will use to evaluate your work.
- Throughout this project, keep in mind the real purpose for engaging in observational assessment. [See Ruddell (2005) page 337.]
- Conduct an interview with the classroom teacher and case study subject (MLL student) you observe. In some situations, it may be best to conduct your interview after the observation period. Keep in mind that you must have rich background information about the student you select. After a period of informal observation (2-3 occasions), schedule at least three occasions during which you will make formal observations of the student, then complete the DI form. To improve validity and reliability of the DI, be sure to observe during periods of substantive instruction.
- After formal observation, organize your notes into the primary areas of literacy. Well-organized notes will support the analysis process and help you “read” the data.

- Be prepared to share your data during collaborative analysis conferencing. Ruddell pages 340-343 will be especially helpful during this process.
- In the appendix be sure to include the observation form and your fieldnotes.

### **Final Report Format**

- I. Introduction—Be sure to also include information on L1 and L2 levels of proficiency
- II. Analysis—discuss the nature of the instruction and academic literacy demands for MLL; summarize what you observed in terms of speaking, listening, reading, and writing; must include at least 3 different contexts, e.g., ELA, science, math, social studies, and outside the classroom. Discuss the following for the student you observed:
  - a. Strengths
  - b. Needs
  - c. Indicate student’s specific stages of development in spelling and writing (these stages were thoroughly covered in EDL 604)
  - d. Strategies
  - e. Behaviors/Interests
- III. Recommendations—must support with data from your observations and justify using citations from theory, research, and practice; at least one recommendation must be designed to maintain and nurture ongoing literacy development in L1.
- IV. Conclusions
- V. References
- VI. Appendices (DI observation form, field notes, student work samples, etc.)

### **Appendix E**

#### *Partial List of Resources*

#### **Course 1**

- Chomsky, A. (2014). *Undocumented: how immigration became illegal*. Beacon Press.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1994). *The dreamkeepers: successful teachers of African American children*. Jossey-Bass.
- Olsen, L. (2008). *Made in America: Immigrant students in our public schools*. New Press.
- Paris, D. & Alim, H.S. (Eds.) (2017). *Culturally sustaining pedagogies: teaching and learning for justice in a changing world*. Teachers College Press.

#### ***Strongly Recommended***

- American Psychological Association (2020) (7th edition). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association (APA)*. APA.
- Kendi, I.X. (2019). *How to be an antiracist*. One World.
- Motha, S. (2014). *Race, empire, and English language teaching: creating responsible and ethical anti-racist practice*. Teachers College Press.
- Wilkerson, I. (2020). *Caste: The origins of our discontents*. Random House.

#### **Course 2**

- Carrasquillo, A.L. & Rodriguez, V. (2003). *Language minority students in the mainstream classroom*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Hererra, S., Holmes, M., Kavimandan, S. Ruddell, M.R. (2011). *Crossing the vocabulary bridge: differentiated strategies for diverse secondary classrooms*. Teachers College Press.

Brock, C.H., Goatley, V.J., Raphael, T.E., Trost-Shahata, E., & Weber, CM. (2014). Engaging students in teaching tools for the classroom. Teachers College Press.

### **Children's Literature**

Asgedom, M. (2001). *Of beetles and angels: A boy's remarkable journey from a refugee camp to Harvard*. Little, Brown, & CO.

Draper, S. (2012). *Out of my mind*. Atheneum Books.

Ryan, P.M. (2000). *Esperanza rising*. Scholastic.

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