Chapter 7
(Re)Positioning White–Bodied Preservice Teachers and Providing Equity in Online Communities of Learners

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ABSTRACT

Positionality is a central and integral way of understanding and practicing equity as educators. Critiques of these courses are that they recenter whiteness and reinforce stereotypes of an imagined other as well as solidify existing power structures of whiteness. Whiteness can be somewhat disrupted by turning the lens back on oneself through awareness of one's own positionality rather than fixating on or saving an imagined other. Next, highlighted are equity traps, such as deficit views and dysconscious racism, because they prevent learning. Methods and examples of equity to preservice teachers enrolled in the course are provided. To bring to life the theoretical concepts in this chapter, interspersed throughout are examples of work students do in the course, the ways they struggle, and some of the author's own experiences as a teacher.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to describe methods for providing equity to preservice teachers enrolled in an online Social Foundations of Education course. Social Foundations courses seek to prepare preservice teachers to provide equity in PK12

educational settings (Reagan & Hambacher, 2021). Preservice teachers learn to avoid further marginalizing students, whose identities have already been marginalized in society, through their actions in schools and instead learn to implement pedagogical approaches that allow all students to experience high levels of success. The length of the course varies from sixteen weeks in the fall and spring semesters to six or four weeks in the summer. The content of the course, as well as the methods used to teach it, are grounded in equity consciousness and actions. I use critical autoethnography as the approach to explore my experience of teaching social foundations to white-bodied students, "As an autoethnographer, I am both the author and focus of the story, the one who tells and experiences, the observer and the observed, the creator and the created" (Ellis, 2009, p. 13).

My impetus for writing this chapter and teaching justice in education is because, as a white-bodied educator who belongs to mostly dominating groups, I began my teaching career in a K12 educational setting with little awareness of what equity truly meant. My equity consciousness grew as I earned my master's degree in critical literacy and went on to ground my practice in theory and research. I revamped my entire teaching approach to practice equity, anti-whiteness, and humanizing pedagogies by making pedagogical decisions through the lenses of sociocultural theory, critical literacy, and culturally relevant pedagogy, and aligning these theories, frameworks, and practices with the state, district, and school standards and expectations. However, before ever stepping foot into a classroom, I should have had a much more developed equity consciousness and a deep understanding of what I brought to the classroom as a white-bodied educator from mostly dominating groups. I am now aware of the great damage we as educators do to children in schools, unknowingly and with the best of intentions. My intention is for preservice teachers to receive the learning I did not around equity consciousness and actions, as well as direct them as to how to continue to grow a practice grounded in equity long after this course ends.

Additionally, I had the unique opportunity to participate in a semester-long graduate-level professional development course at a college I taught at. It was centered around best practices for teaching online and best practices in general, such as utilizing the Universal Design Framework. We were deeply immersed in theory, frameworks, and practices for providing students with accessible and rich online learning experiences. The combination of teaching about equity in an equitable way with specific training in online platforms will be addressed in this chapter.

First, I provide a brief overview of some of the accessibility methods I use in teaching in online spaces. Next, I describe the importance of positionality (Brayboy, 2000; Misawa, 2010; Peshkin, 1998) as a central and integral way of understanding and practicing equity as educators. Critiques of these courses are that they recenter whiteness (Matias & Boucher, 2023) and reinforce stereotypes of an imagined other as well as solidify existing power structures of whiteness.

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