

HOW I JUDGE A LEARNER: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF MY BIASED INTERPRETATIONS OF MY STUDENTS

A white female whose test scores placed her at the higher end of the class range.
 Vocal in class from day one and conducted most of her thinking externally.
 Her interruptions were constant.
 These interruptions posed a challenge for me.
 They often derailed my whole group work.
 In making connections out loud she robbed many students of the opportunity to make questions themselves.
 I interpreted these behaviors and interactions as please for attention and in my head gave student 1 the label annoying.

WORDS THAT DESCRIBE STUDENTS ACTIONS AND BEHAVIORS



PICTURES THAT SHOW MY INTERPRETATIONS OF STUDENTS ACTIONS AND BEHAVIORS



As I analyze these interpretations, I consider both Critical Race Theory and the understanding of “schooling as a means by which society maintains existing power relations and institutional structures” (McDougal 62). The interpretations have real implications for both students, faculty, and families. These interpretations are not neutral, they are results of active bias, either conscious or unconscious, and they maintain the inequality upon which systems such as the US public education system are built.



For this project I wanted to use the space to develop a critique of my own behaviors and actions. The most difficult part of this process was letting myself be vulnerable. Having to not only admit but analyze places where I had caused harm was difficult. At the back of my mind there was the thought that I did not have to do this. I could choose another route, or I could hold back on what felt like incriminating details. However, my goal to earn the title of culturally responsive teacher requires me to do this type of cultural work. My education has taught me that resistance to this process is not only common but expected. Engaging with this discomfort is how I make change; thus I devoted my time and energy into this space.

All the events that I analyzed through this project took place in my placement classroom. I worked with second graders and the work we did together in the classroom inspired the format of my project. I chose a simple format to pay homage to my students. I wanted the project to be something that they could see themselves doing. While the level of critique is beyond their current capacity, I want them to feel they could do this. I want to model owning one's bias and analyzing the effects they have on oneself and others.

For this project I wanted to make clear the interpretations I had made about my student. To articulate this in a visual format I chose to use stock images. While searching for stock images I noticed a difference in the representation of students based on race. I decided that this would be the perfect way to represent the bias I analyze throughout the project. I also chose to include language about students that I would normally never want to admit. The purpose of this project was for me to critically analyze my own behaviors and actions. To be true to this I chose to include this harsh language. It also represents the language that teachers and administrators use when talking to one another about students.

I wanted to represent how my interpretations hindered my ability to see my students as anything other than the title I gave them. The way I chose to depict this visual was by covering their eyes with the title I gave them. The ability to still see their race and gender markers was important. By only covering their eyes I could articulate how the initial visuals inform the label I gave to them. Once I saw this, I realized just how powerful these labels were. I knew they were informed by thinking but I never thought about the extent to which they harmed my students until I saw the titles plastered over their eyes.

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