“We’ve Got This”: Unburdening the Pressure of Identity Through Co-teaching

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In this chapter we share about our experience of co-teaching a socio-cultural diversity course from different personal identity perspectives of race, gender, and sexuality. We discuss the ways in which having various representations of identities in the classroom allowed us to approach charged topics, like systems of power and oppression, from a relational perspective, which can be difficult to do when teaching alone. The opportunity we had in this co-teaching relationship was made possible by the cultivation of a deep friendship outside our roles as professors. We offer a bit about how our friendship evolved while navigating mixed-identities and discuss how this invited us into relational intentionality in ways we had not necessarily experienced so explicitly in friendships before. Part of what made this friendship possible and so valuable to our co-teaching of this course was a clear commitment we both held to examining and understanding the real effects of how operations of power and oppression related to our differing identities, and then how this worked to organize and shape the way we engaged relationally. This awareness, in part, produced our decision to teach together, knowing full well that university systems often try to use diversity and representation as a rationale to slate faculty of color into teaching diversity-related courses without acknowledging or considering the larger structural risks for these faculty.

For us, the value of this experience is rooted in the opportunity we had to transform course content into a lived experience, an experience where students were able to witness the ways in which learning about and understanding issues of race, power, and privilege actually shape and inform the ways relationships are

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coordinated. In this case, how we – their professors – from different racial experiences, gender experiences, cultural experiences, etc., showed up in relationship together, taking responsibility for their places of privilege, and how we step into accountability with one another for the places where structural and systemic oppression show up differently.

1 Background Considerations

Historically, diversity courses were primarily taught from a multicultural framework that often neglected attending to systemic practices of power and oppression (Ortiz & Jani, 2010). The multicultural framework encouraged professors, both faculty of color and white faculty, to teach from a model that reduced diversity to racial and ethnic group differences based on varying cultural values, norms, and practices (Polk et al., 2021). Some of the consequences of this framework are that it can end up solidifying stereotypes and cultural caricatures, overemphasizing between-group differences and minimizing variability and within-group differences. Overall, it can have the unintended effect of rendering racial and ethnic communities as monolithic groups with essentialized qualities (Abrams & Moio, 2009). In this context, systemic oppression, structural inequity and the complex power relations that construct society in specific and intentional ways get overlooked (Ortiz & Jani, 2010). This allows these courses to be seen as apolitical, positioning course content as anthropological fact and instructors simply as objective distributors of cultural information. The problem with this is that it often obscures the ways in which these courses, particularly when taught by white faculty members, work to reify colorblind ideologies that perpetuate and maintain white supremacy in the field and the academy (Abrams & Moio, 2009; Ortiz & Jani, 2010; Polk et al., 2021).

In the recent decade, there has been a growing emphasis on diversifying the academy and increasing representation among program faculty, while also shifting the focus and emphasis away from multiculturalism in these courses to a more power attentive perspective of social justice. The convergence of these trends has meant that minoritized professors often become the ones responsible for teaching these courses that are now seen as more "politically liberal" with an agenda to disrupt deeply held American Values (Ruby, 2022). As faculty of color are tasked with the work of deconstructing white supremacy and teaching about the historical foundations of colonialism, they become saddled with a heavy burden as white students can be explicitly resistant to these themes (Vianden, 2018). This often contributes to an unfavorable teaching environment for minoritized faculty, and at times can be actively hostile for them. This is also part of what influenced us in choosing to co-teach this course together, which we expand on in the following text.

2 Overview of Our Approach

When we were doctoral students, we had the opportunity to teach a course on gender, race, and class. Instead of teaching our own sections, we decided to combine our students so that we could co-teach. I am not sure we had the research, theory, and language to explain why this was our preference, but we had a sense that a course like this would be less difficult to teach in partnership with two instructors with different intersectional identities. What we describe here as our "approach" is not a model, but the experience we had and our reflections around it. We are not suggesting that it is the best or right way; rather, it is what we tried and it ended up being powerfully meaningful to us and our students.

Foundational to how we approached co-teaching was centering our relationship and the power that relationships have to catalyze change and growth. Gender, race, and class (social context) are not merely topics; they are connected to individuals' and communities' identities and all of it informs and shapes how we engage with one another in relationship. To us, there is little meaning without understanding how social context organizes relationships. Thus, we sought to "go public with our relationship," that is, making our relational process known to the students, a process that was going to be explicit about our social contextual selves. Along the way, we invited students to be witness to how the concepts of gender, race, and class informed our decisions about teaching and our process of collaborative negotiation.

With relationship at the core, our co-teaching then had two main areas of focus: how we navigated our co-teaching dynamics, and what we hoped students would learn through witnessing and engaging in the relational process with us. In considering our co-teaching dynamics, we wanted to make sure that we regularly attended to our working relationship, attuned to the other person's minoritized identities, and used our voice of privilege whenever possible. Both of us have minoritized and privileged parts of our identity, some more visible (like racial identity) and others less visible (social class, sexual orientation, etc.). Because of our friendship, we knew about each other's lived experiences around our minoritized identities so we could have intentional conversations about how we would navigate these in class. For example, I (Jessica) knew and trusted that Justine had witnessed and cared about the racist experiences I have had as an Asian American. So during class time, if we were addressing the experiences of people/women of color and encountered students' micro-aggressive or dismissive comments, I knew that Justine was attuning to me and the content such that they could step into that space and use their voice as a white person. This is a different experience from most typical diversity course structures taught by a person of color. When white students are activated or upset about conversations regarding race, it is stressful and sometimes traumatic for a professor of color to address, let alone challenge, the student. In co-teaching, we wanted to model to students that our working relationship was valuable to us and to use our privilege with accountability and humility.

I (Justine) was able to lean on the relational foundation that Jessica and I had cultivated in moments where students' hetero privilege showed up in subtle yet

impactful ways, and even times when more direct expressions of homophobia were enacted by students. These moments, while uncomfortable, were less distressing for me in the context of co-teaching than when teaching alone. Jessica was aware of, concerned for, and attentive to the emotional impact of these moments for me and was willing to use her voice as a cis-hetero professor to invite students into reflection about the impact of their words and beliefs. This dynamic produced an opportunity to teach from a more vulnerable place, knowing that we always held care and protection of one another at the center.

What we hoped students would learn through witnessing and engaging with us is what it could look like to consider our privileged identities and how they can support and uphold people and relationships. This is counter to what is often felt in regard to the idea of having privilege: shame, discomfort, paralysis about what to do with privilege. We understand some of this shame to be related to the lack of relational depth that we share with those who have minoritized identities. In our relationship, we have wrestled and sought to be present with one another in all parts of our identities, particularly with minoritization. In sitting with one another, we learned how to support each other and when, or if, to speak up for the other.

We also hoped for students to witness the unease and tension of difficult conversations about social context and to develop the stamina required to sit in and navigate through such tension. It is one thing to sit and be present with clients' emotional distress; it is another type of emotional capacity, which requires developing, to sit with our own internal discomfort around self-identity and relational tension. Our experience is that unless we have had the gift of engaging at these depths in personal relationships, it is nearly impossible to teach and model to students, particularly developing therapists, how to do the same.

3 Our Experience: Activism Through Relationship

In this section, we share our co-teaching experience in more depth. We attempt to address the question around how we came to engage in activism through relationship. How is it that we developed a relationship of trust for anti-racist practice, privilege, and accountability work?

3.1 Early Connection: Who We Are, Our Intersections of Identity, and How We Found Friendship with One Another

It is hard to say exactly who we are, both because we are not now who we were then, and in the years to come, we will not be who we are today. However, we think there is a common thread between the two of us as well as between the multiple iterations of ourselves over the years, and that thread is the importance of tending to

relationships. This quickly became a place of common ground between the two of us when we met in our doctoral program at Loma Linda University. Although we had this place of shared values, I would also say that at first, for me (Justine), there was some self-protection and hesitancy I felt toward entering into relationship with Jessica, not because of anything Jessica had said or done to make the relationship feel unsafe but purely because one of our first connections was around our shared faith. At the time, I identified as a lesbian woman, but was not out publicly to family or within school and work contexts. When Jessica shared with me that she had gone to Fuller Theological Seminary and was a practicing Christian, this part of her identity made me wary, and even though I had a shared Christian background, my painful experiences in the church had led me to move away from those communities and relationships. I was not interested at the time in having to justify or explain the validity of my sexuality, nor was I interested in another relationship with someone who professed to care for me but could not condone my "lifestyle." It is important to note, there is nothing Jessica ever said that was directly diminishing of my sexuality, but it was the very fact that she carried the identity of being a Christian that made me assume all of these things might be at play for her.

The other reality was that I enjoyed her very much. I found her to be one of my cohort mates that I connected very well with and over time, we grew closer and started to dialogue about some of these tensions in our identities. I think part of this evolution for me was the way Jessica remained curious about and engaged with me. Jessica was incredibly respectful and honoring of my initial hesitance. She also was not deterred by my hesitance, and gently persisted in her interest in being my friend. The effect this had was that my hesitance and reservations began to recede, and my friendship with her grew in ways that profoundly impacted me and became restorative in places where there had been harm done as a result of homophobia in the church and broader culture. I often tell people that Jessica, at that time, created a bridge for me to reconnect with my treasured spirituality, although in a new way than before.

What I (Jessica) remember about our early connections is that I thought Justine was down-to-earth, authentic, and not afraid of difficult conversations. At that point in my life, I had not yet developed meaningful cross-racial friendships that could talk about race; this meant that I had never really felt known by a non-Asian friend. I did not know how to articulate my own racialized experiences, nor had I ever encountered a non-Asian person being interested in me or my people's racial realities. It was a different experience with Justine. They were genuinely curious about my experiences as a Taiwanese American woman. When they noticed me being treated differently (going out to eat as a group and I was the only non-white peer), they expressed anger, validated my experience, and were able to speak to racism directly. I did not feel the need to protect any white fragility or sugarcoat my reality so as to shield them from feeling discomfort; this was something I was used to doing in most other parts of my life. I will address this more later, but seeing Justine stay engaged in understanding their whiteness and caring about my racialized experiences gave me the impression that this was not just going to be a friendship to maintain. It could maybe be a friendship where I could be my authentic self and we could share life with one another.

3.2 Trust Building

Mutual trust is critical for each of us to feel known, be willing to be known, and genuinely want to know the other. It meant the world to me (Jessica) that a white friend was starting to really get my experiences as an Asian American woman in the world. It was disorienting for me because I rarely had the chance to reflect out loud about Asian American racism, invisibility, and my own experiences with model minority and honorary white stereotypes. Oftentimes, Justine would pick up on some part of my own internalized racism and validate an experience for me before I could even articulate it for myself. This was powerfully healing for me – that a white friend would care so much, do their own ongoing work, such that I felt truly seen. This went beyond our friendship in that I saw and knew that Justine was regularly involved in learning more about and advocating on behalf of issues of equity and justice. I experienced them as someone with deep integrity – accountable to themselves, to others, and to their values.

I grew up in a conservative Asian American Christian context where there were strong beliefs and sentiments about sexual orientation. These were largely unexamined for much of my life because there was little in my context to challenge these beliefs and offer other perspectives. While it had been a few years of me deconstructing these beliefs, it was not until I met Justine that I came to see the depth and harm of my homophobia and binary mindsets. Because I was so acutely aware of my experience in the world as an Asian American woman (my minoritized identities), it was a challenge to start navigating my privilege as a Christian heterosexual cisgender person. As we connected and I heard more about Justine's painful experiences with the Christian church, I knew that I could not keep going on with my unexamined beliefs. I was compelled to do some real excavation because Justine mattered to me, I believed that God loved them, and it was important to me that I lived with congruence in faith and life. Over the coming months and years, I read books, articles, and went to workshops and conferences that challenged and facilitated this journey. I believe that God was expanding my mind and heart and I will forever be grateful that my friendship with Justine led me to encounter such healing, transformation, and depth of spiritual growth.

When I (Justine) met Jessica, I had very little practice with sharing about my sexuality openly at all, let alone with someone who I knew who identified as cis, hetero, and Christian, identities I came to know as threatening. However, the friendship we began cultivating quickly became one of the safest relational spaces in my life at that time, aside from my partner. Jessica's interest and curiosity about my experiences seemed to emanate from a genuinely caring relational posture of humility and concern rather than nosiness or exploitation, both of which I was very familiar with from earlier life experiences. Her honest care and interest put me at ease in a way that was rare for me to experience, particularly with someone who identified as a Christian. My experience of Jessica at this time was that she was interested in my experience not to correct or change me by being a loving "witness" but as a way to examine and possibly change her own heart. I had not had a relational encounter with a hetero cisgender Christian before where there seemed to be such willingness

to learn from me and my experiences in a way that would produce shifts, changes, and alterations in their own beliefs. This was compelling for me, and as a result deeply affected me in ways that were restorative and healing. I also admired and respected that Jessica was a friend that took on such accountability for doing her own work. She sought out conversations with others, read articles and books, and would choose to step into humble conversation with me about how her heart and beliefs were being challenged and expanded, even as unanswered questions lingered. Jessica was always attentive and accountable to places where she may have been operating from her heteronormative privilege and would come to me when she thought she may have said something that could have the potential to leave me feeling tender. I remember a time when she had made a comment about marriage, and at the time I remember mentioning how I did not have that same choice that she had, and I could tell it created a moment of pause for her. Rather than feeling bad, Jessica acknowledged that with me in the moment, and later came back to the conversation to share with me about the ways she was seeing how her heteronormative lens was taken for granted in so many subtle ways and how she was beginning to unpack that. This created even more trust between us, and provided safety for me knowing I did not have to raise things or bring them to her attention, because I knew that she was doing the work to see them on her own and then reflect with me.

Aside from my own queerness, so many of my earlier life experiences situated me to hold a deep place of understanding of what it meant and felt like to be othered. So, as I got to know Jessica, there was a sense of understanding, in part, of her experiences of having to navigate the many damaging effects attached to the "model minority" moniker as well as more blatant racism as a result of her visible Taiwanese American identity. However, being white, I knew very well how deeply white supremacy had trained me to not see many of the places where I lived with privilege. Because of this, I knew I had to be committed to always doing my best to hold this in view and to inspect the ways this showed up in our friendship, as well as our teaching relationship. I often thought I had a good grasp on my awareness of how this happened, though there were many times when I saw how my privilege as a white person really shaped the way I felt comfortable to use my voice with students and others and assume no consequence for it, when that same privilege was not often the same kind of fail-safe for Jessica.

3.3 Acceptance of Internal Struggles

When it comes to developing an honest, mutually supportive relationship, I (Jessica) believe that it is our fear of rejection, remaining unknown, and also being truly known that prevents us from moving toward connection. I can think back to the many internal struggles I had throughout the course of our friendship. Even now, I have a sense that there are many layers of my own racialized identity that I have yet to uncover. I had never talked with anyone about the weight of racism that I carry with me all the time – not even to myself. I experience this to be largely self-protective and a form of racial resilience I have had to build in order to keep going.

It felt scary to explore these inner dynamics with Justine, for them to make reflections back to me about my identity, and to start feeling vulnerable and known in these parts of myself. I could not hide behind the complexities of my model minority identity with this white friend.

I also struggled with not wanting my own journey as a Christian deconstructing homophobia to be hurtful for Justine and wondered to what degree I share about that process with them. I knew they had been so hurt by the Christian church and I did not want to contribute to that pain. I felt some sort of responsibility, personally and communally, as someone who was part of the Christian community to acknowledge and take personal ownership of the deep hurt that Christians have inflicted on the queer community. Though it was uncomfortable, I knew I needed to move toward the discomfort of recognizing that it was the sort of homophobia and fundamentalist ideology I grew up with that forced beloved siblings like Justine out of the church. In accepting my own internal struggles, I felt more integrated with myself and the history of which I was a part.

There were struggles for me (Justine) around what it meant to navigate my whiteness and privilege in the context of relationship with Jessica without feeling like that invalidated any place of tenderness I held around my identity as a queer person, and the harm I had experienced at the hands of Christian cisgender hetero folks. I held a lot of anger that was rooted in such deep pain and I sometimes felt unsure of how to speak to this in congruent and honest ways with Jessica. I worried it would be too harsh or even antagonistic toward a part of her identity that she held so dear. I was also very new to speaking about my queerness, and at the time, there were many things I had yet to understand about what being queer meant for me. So much of what I was navigating then was about my sexuality, but I was also internally exploring so many other complexities – things I had not shared or even looked at closely for myself. I felt like the church in many ways was responsible for what felt like my late blooming, and my resentment was palpable. I took care with how to communicate about this because I wanted to protect Jessica, and did not want what felt like my messy process to create painful places for her in return. Jessica, however, often invited my raw feelings forward, and heard them, held them, and witnessed them in gracious and compassionate ways. These conversations could often feel quite vulnerable, but because we held such tremendous space for gentleness, grace, and trust in one another, we were able to sit in the tension of these often unknown and uncharted relational territories. So much of this was made possible by holding deep care and respect at the center of our friendship.

4 How Our Experience Informed Co-teaching

As we share our co-teaching experience, we want to remind readers that this is not a model or any best/right way to co-teach. Our co-teaching experience was very much an extension of our friendship's journey. In this section, we want to share how our choiceful negotiations shaped our teaching together, as well as specific

experiences that impacted the way we continue to think about mixed-identity friendship and co-teaching.

One of the things that we were very clear about in our co-teaching process is that we wanted to be transparent with students about what our teaching process was. This meant that we were intentional about exposing the ways identity shaped our choices in how to facilitate the overall course as well as each week's lessons and activities. In practice this often looked like sharing with the class the kinds of conversations we had with one another in preparation for the day's lecture, specifically sharing about how each one of us reflected on how our differing identities informed or might have informed how we were each thinking about it. In many ways we would "go public" with our planning process and would invite students to offer their thoughts and reflections about what we were sharing. This created a space where students were also able to share thoughts and ideas about the facilitation of class that were informed by their various identities. At times, we invited them to help decide how we might proceed in class, at other times we made the decision, but always shared the background details of how we arrived at the decision. This was important to us because the material we were teaching about – diversity, equity, and justice – mattered a lot, but it did not matter if they did not learn how it shaped the ways we navigate the influence of interpersonal dynamics. We wanted what we were teaching to make a real-time relational difference. We did not just want to teach concepts, we wanted to create a container for safe and transformative experiences.

One formative experience we had together happened outside of the classroom and outside of any conversation or planning session for class. At some point before or during the quarter we were co-teaching, we were walking back to our cars together and had to cross the street on a crosswalk. The way I (Jessica) remember it is that when it was safe to cross, I hurriedly walked across the street while Justine (in my opinion) seemed to take their time. My (Justine's) memory of these details is a bit different, and it seemed we were waiting at the crosswalk for a minute or so and the cars were not stopping for us. So I stepped into the crosswalk, while Jessica appeared to be hanging back, wanting to wait for the cars to yield to us. I remember saying something like, "We have the right of way Jess, come on, they have to stop for us." Now, setting aside the details of exactly how it transpired, we both noticed a difference in how we approached something as simple as a crosswalk. In debriefing with one another, we realized that something as seemingly mundane as crossing the street was a racialized experience. I (Jessica) felt that if I appeared to take my time and space, drivers would see me, an Asian American woman, and attribute all kinds of negative thoughts and assumptions about my race. "Look at that slow inconsiderate Asian woman;" "Asian people are so _____." My (Justine's) reflections were along the lines of "It's our right of way as pedestrians!" This seemed to reflect my taken-for-granted white privilege and the differing racialized socialization I experienced growing up, which taught me that I had rights and could take up space in a way that I did not need to be apologetic for. Though a bit humorous, this interaction gave us both increased insight into how much our identities shape choices, behaviors, thoughts, and relational stress in every facet of our daily living.

We wanted to make it exceptionally clear for our students that we actively attuned to, and navigated with one another, the varied ways that power and identity organizes relationships and relational dynamics. This became an explicit conversation in our class when we facilitated a fishbowl activity around the social construction of race. Part of this lesson was to unpack the construct of race and deconstruct the belief that race is a biological reality. Part of what we had students do was to sit with other students in the class whom they believed they shared the most genetic similarity. As predicted, many of the students sat with other students that outwardly appeared to share similar ethnic and racial identities. While we took care to deconstruct the idea of race with our class, we were also intentional to name the real effects of race on lived experience, even if it was a social construct. As part of this activity we wanted each racial grouping of students to discuss some of the stereotypes and assumptions that they felt were often made about groups and people who looked the way they did, and some of the challenges or experiences this created for them in their lives. We wanted this to be a witnessing activity with one group at a time sitting in the center of the circle and having a conversation with one another about this.

The part of this activity that really brought in discussions of power and identity was when it came time to negotiate the question of which group should share first. Jessica and I discussed with the class some of the thoughts and conversations we had. We shared that we had thought through multiple ways of possibly doing this portion of the activity and our concerns about each of the possibilities. On the one hand, we thought it might be appropriate to have the group of white students share first, and that in some way choosing this may account for power in a way that it would ask them to be vulnerable with the group first. The concern about having them go first was that white people are often the ones noticed and heard from first, so would this potentially reify a position of power for white students? If a group of students of color go first, would this also support more equity in the room by allowing their voices to be centered and heard first, or did asking them to go first burden them with more vulnerability? We shared that we had not come to a conclusion about what was best, and invited their input and feedback, but we were also transparent with them that no matter how we decided to move forward as a class, the learning was in asking these questions. Recognizing and accounting for the ways we arrive at particular decisions, and the potential consequences of those decisions, should always be a part of how those decisions get made, even if there are no clear answers or perfect solutions.

5 Research-Based Reflections and Encouragements for Colleagues

We know from anecdotal experiences of minoritized faculty, as well as the literature on this topic, that co-teaching across identities is supported. The literature is clear about the negative impact for faculty of color in bearing the burden of teaching

diversity related courses on their own, particularly with a high percentage of white students in the room, which is often the case for most graduate couple and family therapy programs. For faculty of color, teaching white students about their privilege and whiteness often results in poor teacher course evaluations (Boatright-Horowitz & Soeung, 2009), and more critical ratings on teacher evaluations than white teachers (Williams & Evans-Winters, 2005). As teachers of color, Puchner and Roseboro (2011) talk about addressing this challenge by adopting what they call "A pedagogy of purposeful compromise." They suggest that in order to begin conversations about white privilege with white students they must begin by privileging whiteness and the experiences of white students instead of starting out with visibilizing the experiences of students of color. This requires faculty of color to background their own marginalized experiences, which also backgrounds the experiences of students of color in the courses as well. While adaptive, we see this as reflective of the lasting effects of colonization within academia, and that "pacifying white students is done at the cost of critical learning and silencing faculty and students of color" (McDowell & Hernandez, 2010).

Additional challenges faculty of color face include larger structural and systemic constraints at the university level. Ahmed (2008) noted university and anti-racist policy as a prominent barrier in effectively being able to teach from a critical perspective, drawing attention to the reality that although some universities promote acknowledgment of diversity and equity, they are often vague in their position statements. This creates conflicting messages about the extent to which "critical perspectives" should be incorporated into university curriculum (Ahmed, 2008), leaving faculty of color vulnerable to being questioned for taking bold and counter cultural stands. Again, we believe that co-teaching with mixed identity faculty has the potential to distribute this kind of burden more equitably so that the weight is not entirely placed on one professor.

These kinds of co-teaching relationships are particularly important as teachers of color continue to be asked and expected to bear the burden of responsibility for making power visible, confronting white supremacy, and illuminating the various effects these have on client experience and the field of therapy. Universities often try to couch these course assignments within the narrative of representation and inclusion, yet willfully ignore the personal and professional vulnerabilities this exposes faculty of color to, as classroom ratings directly impact evaluation for tenure and promotion. Overlooking these consequences reinforces structural racism. To counteract this, or to further expose the double standard in teaching evaluations, white professors should be stepping in alongside faculty of color in ways that do not contribute to them being the sole target of white students' fragility (Pewewardy, 2004).

What we have briefly outlined here certainly supports co-teaching efforts in these contexts whenever possible to do so. It was not until some time after that we were able to see the significance of this decision, and the ways in which it stood against the relational and systemic harm often perpetuated against minoritized faculty left to teach these courses on their own.

Our experience is one example of co-teaching and we certainly do not presume to have implications solely based on our experience and co-teaching relationship.

We do, however, have encouragements for our educator colleagues. Because a foundational value we hold is that "We teach who we are" (Palmer, 2017), these are our encouragements to you.

5.1 Consider Co-Teaching with Mixed-Identity Colleagues (Colleague-of-Color with White Colleague, Different Gender Identities, Sexual Orientations, Religious/Spiritual Background, etc.)

In a field such as family therapy where isomorphic processes exist across many relational levels (supervisor/educator to supervisee/student to client), we believe that mixed-identity co-teachers offer an ideal teaching dynamic. Because race is a fundamental stratifier in our society, having an educator of color and a white educator is not only valuable but perhaps even necessary for establishing psychological safety for both students and faculty.

5.2 Have Meta-Conversations About the Co-teaching Relationship

Having diversity with the co-teachers is not simply a box to check off. It is the starting piece of an enriching teaching and learning environment. Because of the different social locations of the co-teachers, it is important for them to be in conversation about their co-teaching dynamics inside and outside of the classroom. This is similar to what therapists often encourage couples to do; they promote meta-conversation about the relationship, rather than simply talk about what each person wants to do, eat, etc. The content of the course will be figured out, but more critical is the relational dynamics between the co-teachers, exploring how power and marginalization plays out in their interactions, and what it looks like to allow these awarenesses to be part of the teaching experience.

5.3 Allow What Matters to Your Colleague to Matter to You

Some of the challenges of teaching in the current climate is that it is too easy to put someone else into the category of "the other." The moment we sense that someone has a different opinion, point-of-view, political ideology, educational background, etc., we hold them at arm's length, often because of the fear or judgment we have. When co-teachers, with all their differences, can come together not only to talk

about their separate identities, but to really model caring for each other's communities, this is the most powerful influence on witnessing students.

We value the time readers have spent engaging with our reflections about our co-teaching experience. We hope that it encourages and challenges you to consider the complexities of faculty identities as they intersect with teaching diversity courses.

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