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Critical Approaches to Media Literacy in Teacher Education: Accounting for the Challenges of Post-Truth Politics

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Abstract: Over the last decade, digital platforms have served as vectors for the spread of false information about election results, climate change, the pandemic, and racial justice. In today's post-truth digital environment, the tools proffered by critical media literacy are commonly co-opted for divisive, profit-motivated, or hateful purposes, resulting in myriad forms of symbolic and literal violence. Teachers and teacher educators face the challenge of designing curricula and facilitating learning in a digital information landscape that is radically transformed from the one in which they came to conceptualize meaning-making. In this Voices from the Field essay, two teacher educators detail pedagogies for critically addressing this digital environment within literacy teacher education classrooms. They focus on education related to internet ecosystems, new roles for readers online, and the increased importance of emotions within online reading events as central beginnings for discussing critical digital media literacy with in-service and preservice teachers.

Keywords: digital literacy, media education, critical literacy, anti-racism, teacher education



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As literacy teacher educators and former secondary ELA teachers, we (Aimee & Brady) have always incorporated elements of media literacy into our teaching practice. We view media literacy as “the everchanging set of knowledge, skills, and habits of mind required for full participation in a media saturated society” (Hobbs, 2021, p.4). We are also guided by principles of critical media literacy, wherein media literacy is “tied to the project of radical democracy and concerned with developing skills that will enhance democratization and participation” (Kellner & Share, 2005, p. 372) and can be utilized as an approach to both name racial harm and heal through the production of counternarratives (Baker-Bell et al., 2017). In the past, we have actualized this by teaching adult and adolescent students to find authoritative sources, to seek out multiple perspectives, and apply the critical literacy tools we build with print texts to investigate power in digital media.

However, lately we are not so sure our previous approaches are enough to sustain democracy in a radically transformed information environment in which truth and meaning-making have morphed. Actually, we *know* these approaches are not enough. The digital media ecosystem we navigate includes seemingly endless information, including misinformation (false information spread unknowingly), disinformation (false information spread deliberately for nefarious purposes), and algorithm-mediated communication that is more likely to feed users content they find agreeable. Media literacy education also faces its own existential crisis (boyd, 2018; Nichols & LeBlanc, 2021). Over the last decade, the very approaches at the heart of media literacy have been co-opted by white supremacist groups, climate change deniers, and authoritarians of varied stripes to undermine the concept of truth and to further emotionally-charged politics of resentment, a phenomenon Bacon (2018) refers to as

cosmetic criticality. In cosmetic criticality, the tools of critical literacy are employed but empty of a discussion of power. Thus, the skepticism and questioning that underlie media literacy approaches are applied in the service of pre-existing, emotionally-charged ends that reify dominance. Our current sphere of influence is teacher education, so we have turned our attention to preparing teachers to enact the media literacy that youth need.

In this essay, we document our in-progress inquiry into addressing the post-truth digital media landscape within literacy teacher education courses. We conceptualize a post-truth environment as one in which social, technological, political, and emotional factors lead true information to be less highly prized and less easily spread than untrue information that affirms ideological and emotional positions (Barzilai & Chinn, 2020; Boler & Davis, 2018). Considering this context in relation to teacher education, we have specifically asked: How could we prepare teachers to critically address the nuances of meaning-making in today’s digital information environment? How can we prepare them to address complex topics like emotional rhetoric, dis/misinformation, and the systemic way in which information moves across spaces? What methods would prepare teachers to enact a media literacy education that identifies and disrupts mechanisms that further injustice?

We approached this work having previously taught in the same city and having worked to prepare secondary English teachers within an explicitly justice-oriented tradition (Fowler-Amato et al., 2019). Aimee is a white, cis-gendered female. Her perspectives here are influenced by her previous research of adolescent critical literacies (Hendrix-Soto, 2021a, 2021b), but primarily drawn from her current work in literacy education courses for preservice teachers (PTs) who are most often Women of Color seeking middle grades and secondary

Table 1

Inquiry activities in foundational literacy courses

Inquiry Arcs	Investigating Literacy, Narratives, and Texts	Investigating Internet Systems
Who are we?	Identity and literacy in lives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • scholarship on asset perspectives of youth literacies (Greene, 2021; Stewart, 2014) • PTs' own identities and literacies using a literacy log and <i>This Book is Anti-racist Journal</i> (Jewell, 2021) • the literacy life of an adolescent case study participant 	New digital roles in the 21st century <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • scholarship on shifting digital roles (Mirra et al., 2015) • PTs' own experiences with new digital roles and digital literacies (literacy log and media log) • digital literacies in adolescent lives (case study)
What stories do we consume, produce, and distribute?	Representation in texts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • scholarship on representation in texts (Bishop, 1990; Toliver, 2021; Thomas, 2017) • the relationship of PTs' identities and their reading lives • identity and representation of literacies in YA novels 	Challenges of the 21 st century media landscape <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • scholarship on shifts in reading and meaning-making in digital spaces (Nash, 2021) • PTs' recent challenges in this media landscape • the evolving nature of algorithms, artificial intelligence, and data mining (future teaching)
What is the impact?	Altering unjust narratives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • counternarratives of Black experience education and media (Baker-Bell et al., 2017; Muhammad, 2020) • the impact of YA texts, especially those centering protagonists of color 	Altering injustice in the media landscape <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the relationship between recent shifts they have observed (e.g., increased extremism, conflicts regarding science) and the media landscape • scholarship on the impact of bias and systemic racism in digital (future teaching)

certification, at a culturally and linguistically diverse university located within the conservative policy context of Texas. Brady, a literacy teacher educator who identifies as a white, cisgendered male, worked for many years as a language arts teacher and district-level professional learning specialist who supported new teachers. In this article, he describes experiences leading a semester-long professional learning project with early-career in-service teachers in the U.S.

Southwest focused on critical media literacy in middle schools (Nash et al., 2023).

Throughout this the essay, we share two approaches to critical media literacy that account for the post-truth world and may hold possibilities for a way forward, toward justice: (1) Aimee writes about examining the post-truth media landscape with preservice teachers and (2) Brady writes about

working with in-service teachers to interrogate readers' sociocultural positionality and emotions in meaning-making.

Examining the Post-Truth Media Landscape

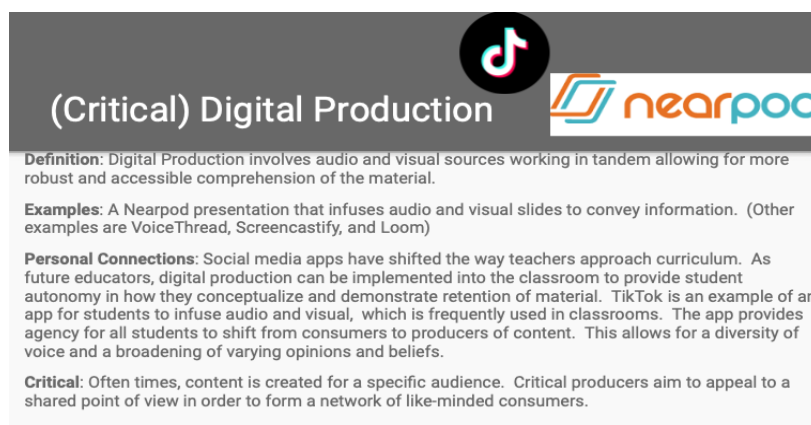
Following the events of recent years, and especially the 2020 U.S. presidential election, I (Aimee) vowed to increase the focus on critical media literacy in my teacher education courses and orient this learning toward the specific problems of the post-truth media landscape. These courses, which introduce PTs to literacy education, officially focus on reading skills, but in my teaching reading instruction is taught through critical lenses including anti-racist literacy education approaches. I engage this by exploring three questions with the preservice teachers (PTs): *Who are we? What stories do we tell? And what is the impact of those stories?* In the first half of the semester, PTs seek answers by investigating their conceptions of literacy, racialized deficit narratives of literacy, and representation in texts, through analysis of their own literacy lives, young adult texts, and scholarly readings (See Table 1 for details.) Later, we turn our attention to non-print/digital media specifically, frequently drawing on Baker-Bell et al. (2017) to understand the importance of empowering Black youth with tools to identify and disrupt anti-Black narratives in the media. Much of this happens through discussions, which have taken place face-to-face and online as course delivery modes shifted over the past few years.

For some PTs these activities support them in bringing together their understanding of how racialized narratives are created and how they can be challenged through critical literacy work applied to print, digital media, and discourses in the world. In response to a question proposed in a Zoom chat ("How can critical media literacy address the persistence of racism?"), one PT wrote that "being able to see [racism] and identify it is the first step to

being able to do something about it...We fight back against it by making our own narratives." This PT drew upon the critical literacy techniques of investigating narratives, seeking multiple viewpoints, and altering the world through counternarrative that we had been building all semester, concluding that "having more narratives that are true to people's experiences will not get rid of racism, but I do believe it will help."

However, some students (primarily white PTs) enter and leave my course with exposure to critical literacy and media literacy methods but still resistant to using literacy studies to investigate and alter systemic racism. At times, they co-opt the techniques of critical literacy to argue against it, such as the PT who encouraged us to investigate the powers behind critical race theory and employed counternarrative to defend the dominant narrative of Christopher Columbus. Given the recent swell of book challenges and opposition to critical race theory, wherein books and curriculum investigating racism or heterosexism are framed as oppressive to dominant people, this form of supposedly critical meaning-making is not particularly surprising, but I do need to account for it in my teaching.

For these resistant PTs, I don't believe that the critical media literacy approaches I've previously employed will be effective in helping them teach youth a version of media literacy that disrupts dominance. Through conversations with these students, I have come to understand that the anti-racist perspectives of professors, peers, and the Women of Color we read have been discredited and labeled as oppressive beforehand. This implies that rather than filter bubbles (Pariser, 2012), where information may be unintentionally missing, the problem is one of echo chambers within which all outside voices are discredited (Nguyen, 2020).

Figure 1***A Slide Created by a Small Group of PTs Discussing Critical Digital Production***

This understanding has led me to the realization that the very media landscape I sought to challenge through critical media literacy was effectively blocking my students from learning. I also realized that none of the PTs' understandings of racism would be fully relevant to our times without an understanding of how it flourishes in online spaces. My first step in fostering that knowledge for PTs was to investigate the media landscape that brought us to this divided place, in partnership with them.

To do this, I returned to the guiding questions, now applied to digital spaces: Who are we in internet spaces? What stories do we tell there, and how is this impacting us? PTs engaged these questions while investigating our shifting digital roles, the dilemmas we encounter in our information landscape, and the impact of both (See Table 1 for more details). At first, I believed that I needed to bring my students a full plate of readings, videos, and discussion questions for a productive investigation. However, I soon realized that the PTs already had plenty of knowledge from daily life in this media landscape; while we still read about this, the more powerful work came from combining readings with their emic knowledge to form a bigger picture.

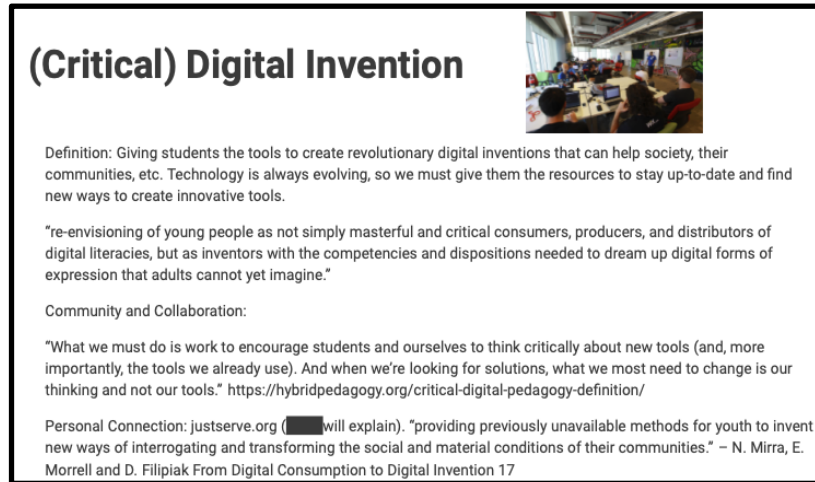
Investigating Shifting Digital Roles

Mirra et al. (2018) say that we must move past focusing on the more passive consumption that marked the 20th century. In response to that article, PTs in several classes worked in small groups using their lived experiences to explain how we are/should be critical consumers, producers, distributors, and innovators in the digital world. PTs drew upon their lives in order to understand the roles described in the article and recorded their collective understandings on slides that they later shared with the whole class.

Though critical consumption is more familiar territory, PTs updated our understanding by describing it as now involving “fast-evolving forms of media” and requiring different tools for meaning-making than more static print forms. They also noted that these evolving forms (specifically TikTok) provide youth agency to be creative producers (See Figure 1). PTs writing about critical distribution, called attention to our ability to now be distributors through reposting information on social media or using “catchy hashtags” to promote the viral spread of media. In the whole group debriefing, one student summarized a breakout group discussion where they reflected on the crucial nature of distribution recently, citing the need to quickly (re)distribute information on mail-in voting due to last-minute

Figure 2

A Slide Created by a Small Group of PTs Discussing Critical Digital Invention



shifts prior to the 2020 presidential election and information about aid following a devastating winter storm in Texas.

In one class, PTs quoted from the Mirra et al. (2018) article, highlighting the need to re-envision “young people as not simply masterful and critical consumers, producers, and distributors of digital literacies, but as inventors with the competencies and dispositions needed to dream up digital forms of expression that adults cannot yet imagine” (p. 17). To explain the concept of digital invention, this group utilized an example of digital innovation that made local service opportunities easily accessible (see Figure 2).

Figure 3 displays the work of a group from another class who named recent digital innovations that solved problems (e.g. robotic pizza deliveries during the pandemic lockdown) as well as problems they wanted to solve in the future with digital innovation (e.g. food availability, more contact free deliveries). Since no groups connected this to our previous discussions of race, I provided an example from the streaming series “Dear White People” (Allain et al., 2017-2021), wherein a character creates an app that crowdsources information on physical safety for

Black people in public spaces, thus engaging in digital innovation to intervene in racism. Though the PTs have been educated, worked, and lived through these shifts, taking stock of the multiple and relatively new roles helps them wrap their minds around the ways the media landscape has become more complex in response.

Naming Dilemmas of the Post-Truth Landscape

Investigating shifts in digital roles also laid the foundation for identifying the dilemmas of our media landscape and assessing the impact. Whereas the discussion of roles was more positive, this topic took on a bleaker tone as PTs utilized asynchronous and synchronous discussions to explain recent experiences. Though I originally named the speed of information, widespread distrust, and echo chambers to begin the discussion, I discovered I could wait and see what emerged as important in PTs’ discussions. I asked them questions like, “What makes our current media landscape so complex?” and “What is essential to teach youth about this?”. Their answers covered the dilemmas I had previously named and more.

In their discussions, PTs named the speed and scope of information as an internet problem, but also

Figure 3***A Slide Created by a Small Group of PTs (2) Discussing Critical Digital Invention***

(Critical) Digital Invention	
Past	Future
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Facebook (<u>Zuckerburg</u>) - Twitter - Tik Tok - Uber - Zoom - Electric Cars (Tesla) - Domino's mobile drop off using a car without a driver 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gas problems - Food availability - How money is produced and used - Illness prevention - Advanced Calculations - Mobile deliveries of all things (food, clothing, materials)

explained the divisive impact, citing Twitter as an example where there is a user-generated “surplus of information that will have few credible leads, resulting in arguments where both parties can be just as wrong as the other.” Another PT highlighted the fact that incorrect information can be deliberate: “stories [are] being falsified for mere views. The truth is not valued, and it is often twisted and manipulated in order to persuade the [reader] into believing the content.”

Many of the PTs provided extended explanations of filter bubbles and echo chambers, noting that “algorithm is the scariest thing. It leaves us in our own bubbles, more so manifesting that bubble for good.” PTs also went on to explain how these bubbles are created, highlighting the role of data gathering and profit-driven need for constant engagement in bolstering confirmation bias. One PT wrote:

Search engines, social media, news organizations, and the web browsers themselves are tracking and sorting and categorizing everything we do on the internet, then using that data to serve us more ‘content’ like that which we already see,

hoping to keep us locked into their ecosystems longer. They're designed to find what we respond to, bait the hooks with it, and keep us on the line as long as possible.

Another student explained how this works on a specific platform (TikTok) which “filters your own narrative, so the algorithm within the app, will provide you with visuals and video to support what you believe.” Finally, another PT pointed out that “while the results may seem unlimited, they are often curated specifically for the browsing individual” and connected this to division, especially in what information we can access and read. Their comments highlight the entanglement of evolving platforms, algorithmic communication, and our own biases. When crowdsourced in this way, a clearer picture of the forces ramping up the division and hostility that have fed hate over the past few years, emerges. The picture is still bleak, but at least they have identified the trouble, which is a step toward deciding how we all might respond as teachers.

One PT's comments in an asynchronous online discussion have pointed me toward the next step I will take in teaching, as well as more insight into how

Figure 4***An Example of One Teacher's Digital Literacy Inquiry***

Note. In this image, the teacher depicts the role of different digital platforms within her life in the southwestern United States and Mexico.

need to navigate this landscape in ways that move them, and our society, toward justice.

Foregrounding Positionality and Emotionality as Critical Practices

Brady has been working in a separate literacy teacher education context, engaging inservice teachers in a semester-long inquiry-based professional learning community (PLC) related to critical media literacy curriculum from explicitly sociocultural, asset-based lenses. In this setting, one middle school English department composed of five teachers, three of whom identified as Latinx and two who identified as white, participated in weekly two-hour online meetings that functioned similarly to a university course. The ultimate goal of this endeavor was to co-design a media literacy curriculum that was responsive to today's media environment and to the lived realities of the students in their classrooms. In this setting, teachers:

- read and engaged dialogically with research articles about digital reading
- conducted inquiry projects into their own digital literacies
- critically examined their local teaching contexts
- synthesized information from across these experiential and textual sources (e.g., their own experiences as readers, the research they were reading, their pedagogical knowledge as teachers).

These activities supported the teachers in developing new approaches to critical media literacy curriculum design. The inquiry-based nature of this learning community entailed responsiveness to the teachers' lived contexts as they explored their own literacy, their teaching, and the literacy practices of their students. As one example of an early-semester activity, the teachers conducted inventories into their own digital literacy practices online (Skerrett & Bomer, 2011), taking note of the digital literacies they

engaged with over the course of a week and then created visual representations of their literacy practices. The teachers shared these with each other as starting points for the group's collective thinking about what digital engagement looks like today (see Figure 4 for an example).

The teachers' inquiry-based examinations of digital literacy led to discussions of the unique challenges of making meaning on the internet today. In turn, these discussions informed their design of an innovative curricular approach to today's digital information environment. The PLC progressed in three phases, each of which successively built upon the previous phase: (1) digital literacy inquiry and research, (2) dialogic engagement with research about digital reading, and (3) curriculum brainstorming and design (see Table 2).

In this section, I (Brady) discuss two challenges of post-truth online engagement and the pedagogical approaches the teachers developed to address them: (1) the increased role of readers' sociocultural positionality in online literacy events, and (2) emotionally-driven meaning-making and sharing on the internet. Throughout, I make reference to how I have applied ideas that emerged from this PLC to my current English teacher education courses for preservice teachers, even as I focus primarily on the work and learning experiences of the inservice teachers within the central PLC.

Interrogating Positionality

One challenge the teachers identified is the inertia that propels existing views forward. In a discussion of their own experiences online, and specifically on social media, the teachers repeatedly noted that online "research" - a term they at times referred to in scare quotes to indicate a kind of internet inquiry conducted in bad faith to enforce predetermined conclusions - held tremendous potential to stop,

rather than to further, learning or engagement with any form of difference in the world. Reflecting research that has highlighted the ways in which news consumers reinforce biases more than they process and learn from new information (Hobbs, 1985, 2020), the teachers noted that posters they saw on social media, and even they themselves, do not seek out and comprehend information as blank slates. Rather, they tend to seek out sources and information that accord with their existing interests and proclivities. As one teacher described the furtherance of hateful views through online engagement, "if you're bringing hate, you're reading hate."

Drawing upon existing anti-racist commitments in their approach to teaching middle school reading, these teachers felt that this meaning-making process led to the spread of prejudiced outlooks. They worried about their students delving deeper and deeper into "rabbit holes" that reinforce their existing beliefs (see Roose, 2020) or sharing content that failed to account for the diversity of perspectives in the world. This technosocial process can amplify existing biases as readers explore within filter bubbles (Pariser, 2012). In the second half of the semester, the conversations shifted from a focus on conceptualization and into a focus on curriculum design. At this point, the teachers gathered the collective conceptions they had identified in the first five weeks of the semester in a shared Google Doc and began brainstorming how they would manifest these ideas in their design of curricula and learning activities.

One approach they developed involved asking their middle school students to examine their own biases as a part of a critical reading process. Although examining positionality has a long history in critical theory and pedagogy (Freire, 2000) and in transactional theories related to the reading of literature (Rosenblatt, 1995), it has often taken a backseat to critical analyses of external texts, a

Table 2***Progression of the Teachers' Learning Activities Over the Course of the Semester***

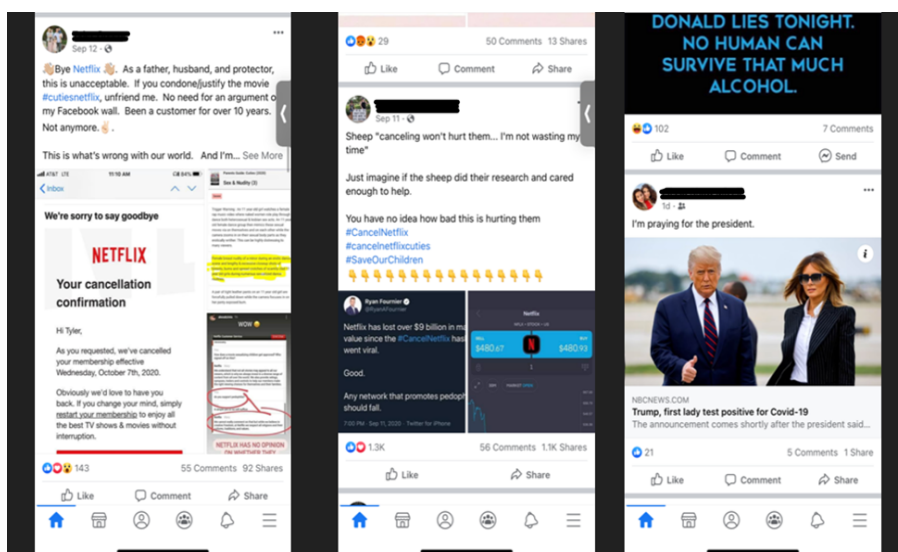
Phase	Activities
1. Inquiry (Weeks 1-2)	Teachers conducted inquiry projects into their own digitally literate lives. They then shared and discussed these inquiries with one another, engaging in a larger discussion of what it means to be a (critical) reader online.
2. Research (Weeks 3-5)	The teachers read research on digital reading and discussed this research in relation to the ideas that had surfaced during their discussions in Phase 1. They generated ideas that they planned to apply to curriculum design.
3. Curriculum Design (Weeks 6-10)	The teachers drew upon the ideas generated in the first two phases and began to plan a critical media literacy unit. They designed a unit outline and progression, and planned specific lessons related to media literacy.

hallmark of media literacy curriculum (Nash, 2021; Nichols & LeBlanc, 2021). To ignore one's self within meaning-making, however, is to ignore a crucial element of the process that leads readers to form meanings and understandings of the world.

As the semester moved from conceptualization to curriculum design, the teachers drew upon their initial conversations about how they engaged online, and how they saw readers engaging online more broadly, in the design of classroom activities for their students. In the design that arose from this progression, students (1) begin critical media literacy units with inquiries into their own digital literacy practices and then (2) explore, notice, name, and share the places and spaces they are engaged with online. This opening activity allows students both to celebrate a wide diversity of digital literacies and to prepare for a critical accounting of what each reader brings to the table when it comes to developing understandings of the world online. As part of these initial inquiries, students then (3) conduct a *social media audit*, in which they map their engagements online, noticing whose perspectives they are seeing

most, and whose perspectives are missing from their individually constructed networks.

In the teachers' curriculum design, they engaged students in an activity in which middle school students examine their own positionality, entitled "Check Yourself" (Nash et al., 2021). I have since employed this activity in my current courses for preservice English teachers as well. In this activity, which includes a short questionnaire that asks students to consider their own geographical, cultural, linguistic, and political background in detail, students are invited to prime themselves to name, notice, and keep in mind a holistic image of their positionality as readers. Questions include, "where are you from (geographically)?" and "What beliefs are common in your community?" Throughout media literacy units, students can return to and reflect on how these elements of their world might influence both the texts and perspectives they have chosen to engage with online as well as the interpretations they construct as they are engaging online texts. In my current courses, I situate this activity within discussions of critical literacy, with an examination of positionality being one component of an approach

Figure 5***A Teacher-Created PowerPoint Slide Showing Social Media Posts for Analysis***

designed to help preservice teachers (and by extension, their future adolescent students) critically examine the construction of meaning in relation to culturally- and historically-situated meanings constructed within larger power frameworks.

Exploring the Role of Emotionality

A topic that emerged from the teachers' discussions in the PLC, and subsequently became a central facet of our discussions surrounding critical media literacy, was the emotional nature of reading online. In the initial PLC with inservice teachers, this issue arose through the teachers' initial digital inquiries when they noticed and named instances of readers online sharing content that seemed to arise from and be driven more by emotions and identity commitments than through intellect (Gee & Zhang, 2022; Smith, 2022). As Claire, a second-year teacher in the PLC, explained, "people share things online not cause they're true, but because they feel good sharing them or they feel angry sharing them, they feel like they're telling the world how angry they are." Here, Claire highlighted the connected nature of emotions and

identities, both of which are wrapped up together with news and information when we consume, compose, or share on social media. Later in the semester, this group took up these ideas as we moved into curriculum design, shaping several lessons that asked students to consider emotionality in meaning-making.

Working collaboratively, the teachers in the focal PLC developed several approaches to teaching students about the emotional nature of digital reading, approaches that I have since incorporated into media literacy curricula within preservice teacher education courses. Readings and discussions that make explicit the emotional meaning-making processes that drive readers (e.g., Boler & Davis, 2018; Gee & Zhang, 2022) serve as one first step. A second is examining together the charged emotional language used to spread often false or misleading information and drive engagement on social media. Learners at the secondary, university, or professional level can analyze social media posts and seek out personal examples as they apply this framework (see Figure 5).

During the professional learning experience, Melissa, a third-year teacher in the PLC, suggested that the group play an online game about disinformation, *Breaking Harmony Square* (Roozenbeek & van der Linden, 2020). This game foregrounds the emotional nature of meaning-making by asking players to use emotionally inflammatory rhetoric within a fictional town to sow chaos. Discussions of these playthroughs surfaced key terms related to contemporary media literacy, such as trolling, inflammatory language, and flame wars. In the lesson plans that they developed following their own playthrough, the teachers planned to explicitly teach these terms to students in tandem with a whole-class playthrough of the game with their students. Developing this kind of rhetorical language to discuss the emotional components of mis- and disinformation is unlikely to solve these problems once and for all, but, like the examination of positionality and internet systems, it puts readers in a better position to pause and critically consider their engagements online as they navigate in a landscape awash in ideologically and emotionally charged disinformation.

The perspective on meaning-making that emerged from the teachers' discussions and unit planning stands in contrast to the largely cognitive critical media literacy strategies the teachers had read about in research and in pedagogical chapters and articles (Leu et al., 2015; Turner et al., 2020). A central aspect of the spread of disinformation and both racist and fascist ideologies (which often go hand in hand) is the extent to which readers employ criticality in service to emotions, not necessarily the reverse. By drawing upon their own observations, these teachers were able to foreground the emotional component of meaning-making and criticality that has yet to be fleshed out in literacy or English education research on digital reading. In this sense, they were building theory alongside curriculum as they drew from their

own experiences and played these experiences in dialogue with existing research.

Conclusion

Our primary motivation in the teacher education work described here is to work toward a media literacy education that speaks to youth's digital lives right now and addresses the internet as it is now. Like many, including the teachers we worked with here, our daily observations of dangerous information, hatred, and division in U.S. society left us with questions. Because we are educators, our impulse is to work through those questions in inquiry with students, whoever they may be.

We believe that the "project of radical democracy" (Kellner & Share, 2005, p.372) that feels so tenuous right now requires teachers to engage with the ways that information and power circulate in the post-truth world, and as teacher educators, we must address this in their preparation. In order to know what to do in this situation that we also find overwhelming, we need to pause and consider the knowledge that educators, including ourselves, would need to respond pedagogically. The teachers we have discussed here emerged with a more comprehensive understanding of the post-truth media landscape and the amplified ways that our emotions and positionality impact individual and collective meaning-making in this context. When combined with an investigation of the ways that *all* of our texts can construct, bolster, or disrupt systemic racism, this sets the stage for ongoing inquiry (in our future classes and hopefully beyond) into the specific ways that this happens in ecosystems of online texts and digital communication, as well as our means for disrupting this.

The knowledge that the preservice and inservice teachers developed through the inquiry activities described here can certainly contribute to their

ability to be critical literacy educators who understand the dynamics of power in online spaces well enough to engage youth in these discussions as well. Since reading texts and understanding the forces that shape meaning-making has been an important part of literacy education for much longer than the post-truth landscape, we also think these approaches add to their foundational knowledge as literacy educators, which is not insignificant in a time where critical teaching of any variety is being positioned as a detractor (at best) or (worse) an

enemy of traditional academic skills. The next step for teachers and teacher educators is to transform our accumulating knowledge through the ongoing enactment of curriculum that engages youth in inquiry of this world, empowers them to navigate it, and moves us toward justice. This step will not be a singular one, as the ever-changing nature of information technologies requires ongoing responsiveness to both students and to a world that is never static.

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