

Don't Look Away book study with Schoenbaum Family Center



EVALUATION REPORT

AUTHORS

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Introduction

In the fall of 2020, a collaborative experience was created between the authors of *Don't Look Away: Embracing Anti-Bias Classrooms* (Iruka & Curenton) and educators from the A. Sophie Rogers School for Early Learning (ASR) and Early Head Start (OSU-EHS) Partnership Program, which are housed within the Schoenbaum Family Center at The Ohio State University (OSU). The purpose of this experience was to utilize *Don't Look Away* as a tool to accomplish the following goals:

1. introduce ASR and OSU-EHS educators to the concept that racism is a form of stress that leads to trauma in children and families;
2. raise educators' awareness via self-reflection and critical thinking about their implicit racial biases toward the children and families served;
3. leverage the strengths that children of color and their families bring into the learning environment: and
4. provide explicit anti-racist and anti-bias teaching strategies to change and improve classroom practices.

An additional purpose of this experience was to provide a working model of how *Don't Look Away* can be used with early education and care programming to advance systemic change around bias and to introduce concrete means for anti-bias programming in these settings.



Approach

The book study was conducted over seven weeks and included additional resources as follows:

Week 1: Introductory Session	Drs. Curenton and Iruka discuss the research for the book.	
Week 2: Session 1	Chapter 1	<i>Resource:</i> The Missing Links: Enhancing Anti-Bias Education with Anti-Racist Education
Week 3: Session 2	Chapter 2	<i>Resource:</i> Dr. Donna Y. Ford podcast, “ Black and gifted: A trailblazer’s backstory ”
Week 4: Session 3	Chapter 3	<i>Resource:</i> NAEYC’s “ Advancing Equity in Early Childhood Education ” Position Statement
Week 5: Session 4	Chapters 4 & 5	<i>Resource:</i> I Am From poem by George Ella Lyon (*useful for gathering information about families and sharing information about self. See sample here.)
Week 6: Session 5	Chapter 6	<i>Resource:</i> Talking to Young Children about Bias and Prejudice
Week 7: Session 6	Chapter 7	<i>Resource:</i> 5 Benefits of Human-Centered Design Thinking for Family Engagement (resource from book on pg. 114)

PARTICIPANTS

Twenty participants signed up to participate in the *Don't Look Away* book study offered by OSU's Schoenbaum Family Center. However, six never logged on after signing up, and two participants attended one or two sessions and needed to drop due to competing demands on their schedules. This left 12 participants who completed baseline and post-activity surveys and also engaged in all the book study activities. The participants were infant/toddler teachers, preschool teachers, family child care providers, assistant directors, and directors.

SURVEY

In November, participants were asked to complete a three-part survey. The first part focused on gathering information about them (e.g., gender, race, ethnicity, language, and education level). The second part focused on their racial awareness, beliefs, and attitudes based on a 22-item, six-point Likert scale of 1=Strongly Disagree to 6=Strongly Agree survey adapted from Fergus (2016). For example, participants were asked, "*Students of color do not experience racism.*" "*Regardless of family background, schools and classrooms cannot afford to make exceptions to disciplinary policy.*" The third part asked participants the extent to which they or their school team focused on anti-bias culturally responsive teaching practices. For example, from a scale of 1=Never to 5=Almost Daily, "*How often are anti-bias culturally responsive teaching practices part of your classroom interactions and activities?*" In February/March, participants were asked to complete a posttest survey.

RESULTS

We present the results of the baseline and posttest data. We first start with educator demographics, followed by their racial awareness, beliefs, and attitudes, and then their anti-bias culturally responsive teaching practices. We did not do significance testing due to the small sample size but observed trends.

Educator Demographics

Of the 20 participants who originally signed up, 17 completed the baseline survey (85% response rate); and of the 17, 12 completed the posttest survey (71% response rate). Females made up all of the participants. Based on the baseline data, 10 (59%) of the participants who completed the survey were Lead Teachers and the remaining were: Family Child Care Teacher, Master Teacher, Administrator, Assistant Director, Master Teacher/Early Childhood Specialist, Assistant Director, and Developmental Specialist. The participants included people of color (48%) and those who are white (52%). Education ranged from a high school diploma to an advanced degree. The average years teaching is about 15 years and range from three to 26 years. In the 12 months preceding the baseline survey, 73% of the participants reported attending two to four trainings or workshops on culturally responsive practices or pedagogy, racial equity, or anti-bias.

Racial awareness, beliefs, and attitudes

Analyses showed that educators, on average, are moderately racially conscious, meaning that they understand that Black children and other children of color experience racism. They also hold relatively progressive beliefs about their role in addressing racism in their classroom. Participants are more likely to endorse items that focused on their roles as educators who disrupt inequities by learning about children’s race and culture, understanding their own culture and values, and providing the best learning environment for children to thrive and succeed regardless of their background. **The average score slightly increased from 3.36 to 3.45 from baseline to posttest** within the three-month time frame between the surveys. The top five survey items endorsed at baseline remained the same at posttest (see Table 1).

▼ **Table 1.** Highest rated items on racial awareness beliefs and attitudes (top 5)

QUESTIONS	BASELINE		POSTTEST	
	MEAN	RANGE	MEAN	RANGE
It is up to me as an educator to make sure that all children succeed regardless of the disadvantages they bring with them.	5.40	4-6	5.83	5-6
As an educator, it is my responsibility to learn about a child's race and/or culture and how it affects his or her performance in the classroom.	5.33	4-6	5.50	4-6
In order to teach effectively, I need to understand my own culture and values.	5.27	4-6	5.50	4-6
As an educator, it is my responsibility to raise questions about the ways the school system serves students of color.	5.13	4-6	5.50	4-6
In a White majority school, Black students are forced to deal with many pressures that threaten their identity as Black students.	5.07	4-6	5.42	4-6

Note. N = 12. The items ranged from 1-6.

Participants were least likely to endorse deficit beliefs about children, including that Black children’s culture makes it hard to teach them, children from disadvantaged communities do not value education, or Spanish speakers should not speak their language due to discomfort or others. Educators were also least likely to endorse the notion that children of color do not experience racism daily. While the trends for lowest-rated items remained the same from baseline to posttest, there was an indication of some change (see Table 2). For example, participants’ belief about having exceptions to disciplinary policies due to family background went from 2 to 2.4 (from disagreeing to somewhat disagree), meaning they started feeling that some exceptions should be made due to family background. The second item focused on whether children from disadvantaged households can succeed, with ratings going from 2.8 to 2 (somewhat disagree to disagree), indicating that participants were increasing their beliefs that children from disadvantaged families could succeed.

▼ **Table 2.** Lowest rated items on racial awareness beliefs and attitudes (bottom 5)

QUESTIONS	BASELINE		POSTTEST	
	MEAN	RANGE	MEAN	RANGE
Latino students who speak English should refrain from speaking Spanish at school so they don't to alienate other students or teachers.	1.47	1-4	1.75	1-6
Students from disadvantaged backgrounds do not value education as much as other students.	1.47	1-4	1.75	1-6
Black students' cultural attitudes and styles of speech make it hard for me to teach them.	1.8	1-5	1.50	1-3
Students of color do not experience racism on a daily basis.	1.87	1-3	1.83	1-6
Regardless of family background, schools and classrooms cannot afford to make exceptions to disciplinary policy.*	2.00	1-4	2.42	1-6
Disadvantaged students generally do not have the abilities necessary to succeed in the classroom.+	2.8	1-6	2.0	1-6

Note. N = 12

* = one of the lowest five items at baseline but not at posttest

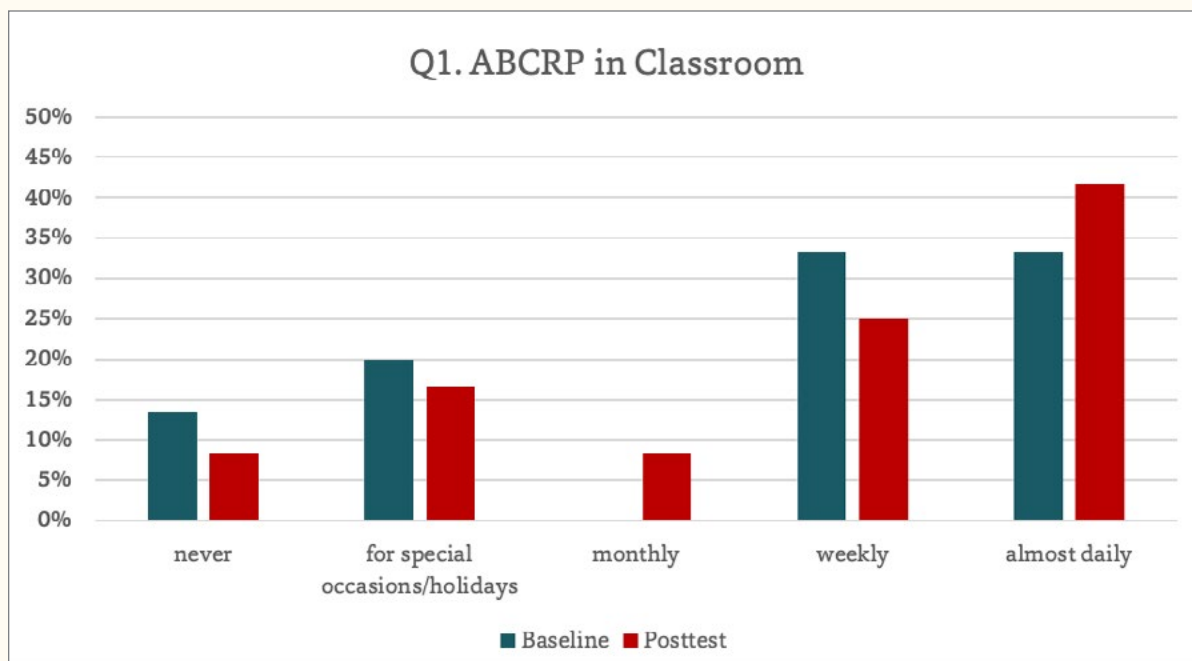
+ = one of the lowest five items at posttest but not at baseline.

Anti-bias culturally responsive teaching practices

Participants were asked four questions regarding engagement with anti-bias culturally responsive practices (ABCRP) with response options ranging from 1=Never to 5=Almost Daily.

The first questions asked: *How often are anti-bias culturally responsive teaching practices part of your classroom interactions and activities?* While over 60% of participants report they incorporate ABCRP as part of their classroom activities at baseline and posttest, there was an increase in the number who did it almost daily at posttest compared to baseline (42% vs. 33%) (see Figure 1).

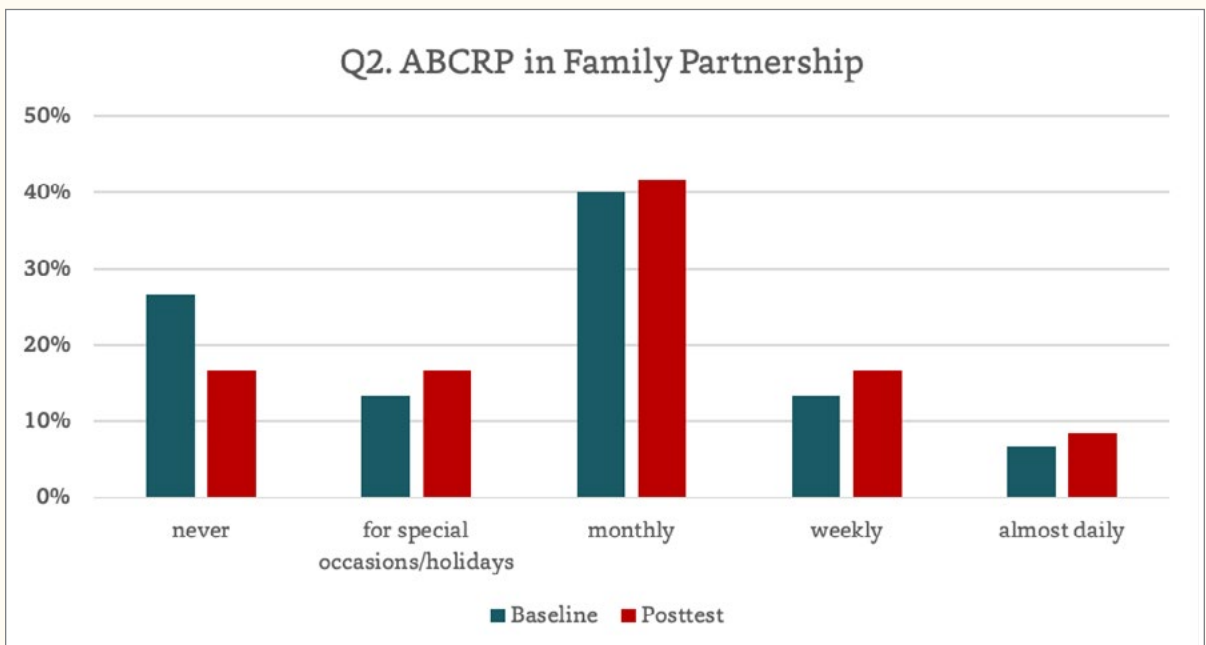
▼ **Figure 1:** Participants rating of how frequent they incorporated ABCRP in their classroom at baseline and posttest



Note. N = 12

The second question asked: *How often do you partner with children’s families to support the inclusion of anti-bias culturally responsive teaching practices into your program’s learning goals for children?* The majority of participants partnered with children’s families to support the inclusion of ABCRP into their program’s learning goals for children at least monthly (see Figure 2). Furthermore, between the baseline and posttest, more participants endorsing doing this at least weekly (20% vs. 25%), and those who reported never doing this decreased from 27% to 17%.

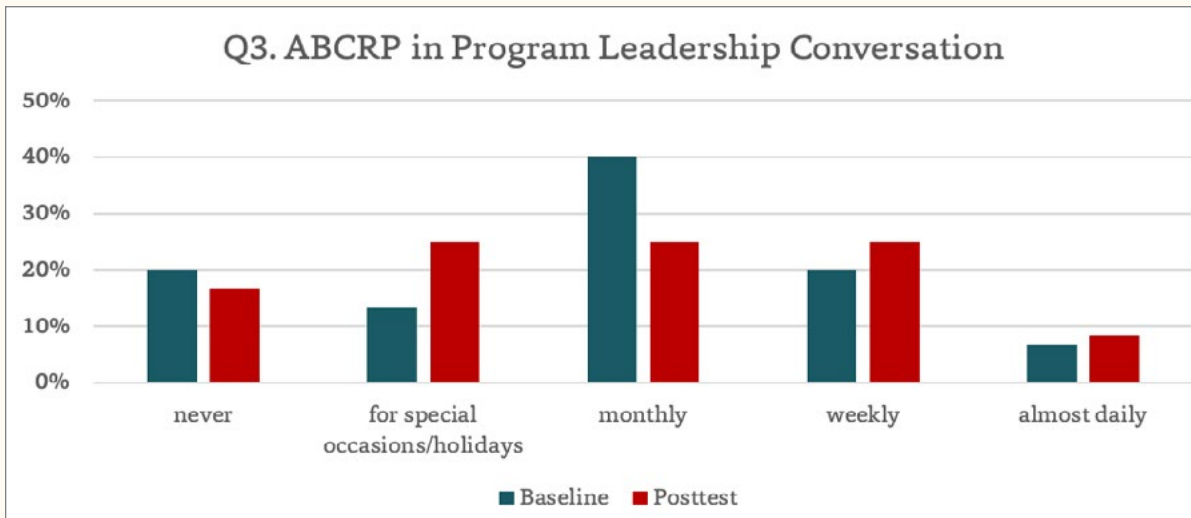
▼ **Figure 2:** Participants rating of how often they partnered with children’s families to support the inclusion of ABCRP into the program’s learning goals for children at baseline and posttest



Note. N = 12

The third question asked: *How much does your program director, principal, or supervisor engage in conversations about race, ethnicity, and culture with families, children, and/or community leaders?* The majority of participants report that they engage their program director, principal, or supervisor engage in conversations about race, ethnicity, and culture with families, children, and/or community leader at least monthly; however, this was higher at baseline than posttest (67% vs. 58%) (see Figure 3). However, when looking at those who engaged in this practice at least weekly, there was an increase from 20% at baseline to 25% at posttest. There was also an increase from baseline to posttest in conversations for special occasion and holidays from 13% to 25%.

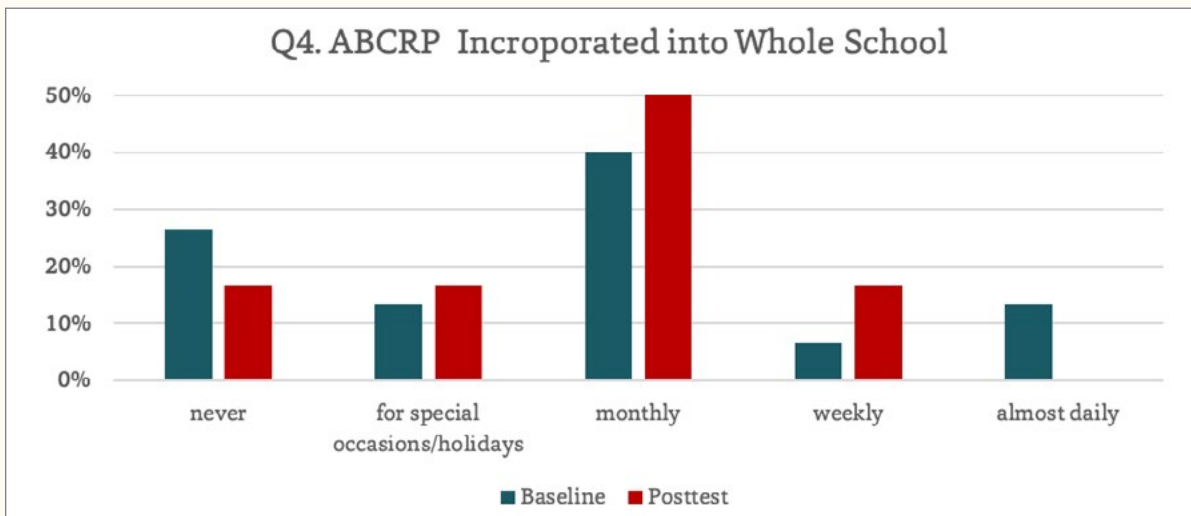
▼ **Figure 3:** Participants rating of how often their program director, principal, or supervisor engaged in conversations about race, ethnicity, and culture with families, children, and/or community leaders at baseline and posttest



Note. N = 12

The fourth question asked: *How often do you talk with your program director, principal, or supervisor about how to incorporate anti-bias culturally responsive teaching practices throughout the entire school or center?* The majority of participants report that they talk with their program director/principal/supervisor about how to incorporate anti-bias culturally responsive teaching practices throughout the entire school or center at least monthly (see Figure 4). There was a slight increase from baseline to posttest (60% vs. 67%). There was a small drop off for this activity from baseline to posttest (20% vs. 17%), with no one reporting they did this almost daily at posttest compared to 13% at baseline.

▼ **Figure 4:** Participants rating of how often they talk with their program director, principal, or supervisor about how to incorporate anti-bias culturally responsive teaching practices throughout the entire school or center at baseline and posttest



Note. N = 12

Satisfaction with Book Study

Participants reported high satisfaction with the book study. Over 90% of participants reported:

1. the book study provided new information,
2. the materials presented were valuable, and
3. they have a better understanding of how racism crosses all systems.



Summary

This book study involved highly educated, racially and ethnically diverse, and seasoned female teachers and early education professionals. Many of them were already exposed to several anti-bias culturally responsive trainings. At baseline, most participants seemed to be aware of racism and how it affects children’s learning and wellbeing, and the important role of educators in providing equitable learning opportunities free from bias. There was a slight positive shift in participants’ awareness about the daily stressors of racism in the learning enterprise and their role in disrupting biased and inequitable learning opportunities. Furthermore, there were several indications of positive gains in participants’ engagement in anti-bias, culturally responsive practices in their classroom and program, and engagement with families.

These findings are promising but can’t be causally attributed to the book study. As this information was collected through a self-reported survey, social desirability may play a role in the high ratings, especially with a sensitive topic. A future evaluation requires a more rigorous design and a larger sample size, and an examination of factors that lead to more anti-bias culturally responsive practices and more racial consciousness. There was some indication that outcomes went in the opposite direction as expected. For example, between the baseline and posttest, there was a slight shift in endorsing deficit attributes such as the use of home language at school, the ability of children from disadvantaged households to be successful, and making exceptions when it comes to discipline. It is important to note that this shift was slight from a response of disagreeing to somewhat disagree, for instance, and may not be statistically significant.

Conclusion

This is the first-of-its-kind evaluation of the *Don’t Look Away* book study method. The results provide some preliminary indication that educators’ knowledge, attitudes, and practices can be shifted with some support. There was more indication that for an educated group who have been to numerous anti-bias and equity training over the past 12 months, they still benefitted from this program in less than three months. For women educators who are working in highly stressed jobs, their engagement and satisfaction with this book study program provide us with evidence that educators are willing to participate and remain engaged on issues they find critically vital for themselves and their work.



Reference

Fergus, E. (2016) Social reproduction Ideologies: Teacher beliefs about race and culture. In D. J. Connor, B. A., Ferri, & S. A. Annamma (Eds.), *DisCrit: Disability Studies and Critical Race Theory in Education* (pp. 117-127). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.



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