

How Teachers of Different Racial Backgrounds May be Supported to Develop an Antiracist
Teaching Practice

by

Laura Roeker

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

(Curriculum and Instruction)

at the

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

2022

Date of final oral examination: 4/29/2022

The dissertation is approved by the following members of the Final Oral Committee:

Nicole Louie, Assistant Professor, Curriculum and Instruction

Maxine McKinney de Royston, Assistant Professor, Curriculum and Instruction

Linn Posey-Maddox, Associate Professor, Educational Policy Studies

Mary Klehr, Professor, Curriculum and Instruction

© Copyright by Laura Roeker 2022

All Rights Reserved

Abstract:

This study examines the experiences of six K-5 elementary school teachers in professional learning spaces for antiracism. Teachers from two elementary schools established school-university partnerships to begin antiracist work: one on a whole-school level, the other a group of teachers meeting voluntarily with university faculty. Given the paucity of research on teachers of color and antiracist professional learning spaces, I sought to understand how teachers from different racial backgrounds experience professional learning spaces aimed at developing antiracist practice. In this study, I ask, how do teachers from different racial backgrounds experience professional learning spaces aimed at developing antiracist practice?

Contents

Introduction.....	1
Literary and Theoretical Underpinnings of This Research.....	5
Research Design and Methods.....	25
Findings: Teachers of Color.....	44
Findings: White Teachers.....	84
Discussion and Implications.....	134
References.....	160
Appendix 1: First Interview Protocol.....	166
Appendix 2: Second Interview Protocol.....	168
Appendix 3: Sample Exit Slip.....	170

Introduction

This dissertation is situated in a unique moment in local, national, and global history. During the summer of 2020, the United States erupted in racial protests in response to the murder of George Floyd and countless other acts of antiblack police violence. Students, their families, and many teachers participated in these protests, and calls to disrupt institutional racism spanned not only police departments in the United States, but also other public institutions such as schools. Additionally, the Covid-19 pandemic swept the globe, disproportionately affecting and killing people of color. Schools shut down during the onset of the crisis and students began virtual learning, highlighting the gross disparities in resources and access between students of color and their white peers. Amidst the racial uprisings and disparities in pandemic schooling, many school districts and administrators have recognized the urgent need for antiracist reform. In line with this commitment, Eastwood Elementary and Lawrence Elementary, two elementary schools in a mid-sized Wisconsin city (called Kingston in this work) formed partnerships with faculty at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (UW) to dive into antiracism with their teachers and staff. Antiracist work in schools such as Eastwood and Lawrence is particularly relevant in this moment; however, as teachers are integral in antiracist school change, more research is needed on how to support teachers to develop an antiracist practice.

The partnership between Eastwood Elementary and UW began in the spring of 2019, when a Black teacher, Desmond (all names are pseudonyms) reached out to faculty at UW for help. A white student at Eastwood had repeatedly called Black teachers the N-word, and Black teachers and the greater school community felt a lack of support from school and district leaders. A school-university partnership formed in the summer of 2019 when a coalition of 23 staff joined UW faculty to interrogate race, racism, white fragility (DiAngelo, 2018), and the

reproduction of racial inequality at the school. The summer work was the beginning of a school-university partnership that spanned the 2019-2020 school year and summer. With new administration at the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year, school-wide work was put on hold. However, approximately eleven Eastwood staff committed to bimonthly meetings outside of contract time to continue the partnership.

Lawrence Elementary is a small neighborhood school in Kingston, Wisconsin. The principal was only in her second year there but was previously the Assistant Principal at Eastwood Elementary. A leader with a strong commitment to antiracism, she welcomed UW faculty to meet her staff and begin a school-university partnership. In our many conversations about the relevance of this work, the principal shared students of color repeatedly report feeling a lack of belonging at Lawrence on the annual school climate survey. The antiracist work was done school-wide through professional development and school-based leadership team meetings. The smaller staff and student body at Lawrence made it an ideal site to attempt school-level antiracist change.

I sought to understand how teachers at Eastwood and Lawrence experienced professional learning spaces aimed at developing antiracist practice. In this study, I ask, how do teachers from different racial backgrounds experience professional learning spaces aimed at developing antiracist practice?

At the onset of this study, I was a second year PhD student in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. I was finishing up classes for the semester, feverishly writing final papers, and thinking about my future as a PhD student in the department. After two years of pursuing my PhD, I felt I had a clear sense of what I wanted to research; with many school districts beginning to reckon with the racism present in

their schools, I wondered how teachers could be best supported to develop an antiracist teaching practice. This question was not solely academic in nature, but personal as well. As a white teacher who taught third, fourth, and fifth grade students from many racial and linguistic backgrounds, I relentlessly pursued professional learning opportunities to make my teaching more culturally responsive for my students. I use the phrase “culturally responsive,” because, at the time, I understood my job as a teacher to bend and adjust the rigid corners of traditional schooling to reflect my students and their cultures. However, once in graduate school, I began to see a teacher’s job to be explicitly antiracist, to radically re-envision schooling, to identify and dismantle the oppressive structures that educational institutions intentionally have in place to marginalize students of color. However, I wondered how teachers could be supported in their learning in meaningful ways rather than one-day professional development seminars. So, when Dr. Carl Grant called me to ask if I wanted to be part of a professional learning space with local elementary school teachers to address racism at their school, I jumped at the chance to be part of this important work.

The first summer of the 2019 work consisted of roughly 23 staff at Eastwood, along with their principal, a white woman named Lisa. At the time, Dr. Kathleen Nichols, Dr. Grant, and Dr. Leema Berland were the facilitators of the space. My role was to collaborate with the team and take field notes during the sessions. In an effort to build a true partnership and make teachers feel comfortable, we met at Dr. Grant’s house; each week we offered food and drinks and engaged in friendly conversation before and after the meetings to get to know folx. After six weeks of meeting in the summer, Lisa and her staff unanimously agreed they would like the work to continue into the school year. As a result, the research team began meeting regularly with the school’s School Based Leadership Team (SBLT) to discuss antiracist changes that

needed to happen at Eastwood. Additionally, in the spring of 2020, Dr. Mariana Pacheco and Dr. Nicole Louie joined the team of facilitators. The schoolwide work with Eastwood teachers continued through the end of the summer of 2020, when a new principal was appointed at Eastwood and discontinued the partnership with UW. After that, teachers from Eastwood met voluntarily with UW facilitators on a monthly basis until the spring of 2021.

In the winter of 2020, the team reached out to the principal at Lawrence Elementary, a white woman named Lori, to see if she would like to establish a schoolwide partnership. Lori had been the Assistant Principal at Eastwood prior to becoming the principal at Lawrence, and the research team knew she was an administrator committed to antiracist change. Lori was grateful for the offer, as she had been trying to establish an antiracist vision for Lawrence in her short time as principal there. The UW team collaborated with Lori and her main leadership team, the school social worker and her instructional coach, to plan for and implement antiracist professional development meetings for the whole staff once a month during the spring semester of 2021. Additionally, the facilitators offered a six-session summer retreat in the summer of 2021 that the majority of Lawrence staff attended.

During my time on this project, I was welcomed as a full team member. Our team collaborated in planning meetings once a week for two years to determine how to best support antiracist teacher learning at Eastwood and Lawrence. I attended every planning session and co-facilitated many of the professional learning sessions at both Eastwood and Lawrence. Though my role was officially as a graduate assistant on the project, I was fortunate enough to work with university faculty who gave me opportunities to be an equal partner in the work the team was doing. My role and positionality in this study will be discussed in greater detail in my methodology.

Literary and Theoretical Underpinnings of This Research

What do we know about how teachers can be supported to develop an antiracist teaching practice?

There is a paucity of empirical work on teacher learning for antiracism (Lawrence, 2005; McManimon & Casey, 2018) and even fewer studies on effective strategies to support teachers to grow as antiracist educators (Mills & Ballantyne, 2016). Furthermore, the empirical work that exists on teacher learning for antiracism is rife with variations in language and goals for the outcomes of antiracist learning, which may contribute to the diverse range of empirical studies and conceptualizations of the field. Additionally, much of the empirical literature on antiracist teacher learning is problematic; methods may be proposed without empirical findings, unproven strategies might be suggested, and/or questionable growth measures for teacher learning are used to gauge the “effectiveness” of certain strategies.

I group studies on teacher learning for antiracism into those dealing with critical examination of oneself and one’s practice (typically focusing on deepening teachers’ understanding of racism in the United States or challenging teacher beliefs about students of color); developing antiracist pedagogy and curricula for enacting antiracist teaching; and developing teacher agency to disrupt institutional racism. I will outline some of the strategies used in each arena to provide an overview of how teacher learning for antiracism has been studied in the field, as well as highlight the gaps in the existing literature that this dissertation aims to address.

Studies aimed at developing teachers’ knowledge of race and racism

Much of the research on teacher learning for antiracism is aimed at deepening teachers’ knowledge of race and racism but falls short of supporting teachers to develop an antiracist teacher practice. For example, many studies provide teachers with experience-based activities to

help foster their understanding of the role of race in education. The types of experiences vary, but the ultimate goal is helping teachers begin to see schools as racialized spaces and themselves as racialized beings. Teacher educators might have teachers engage in community-based fieldwork (Sleeter, 2001) to interact with people from diverse backgrounds, read fiction and non-fiction texts about racism and its historical roots in the United States (Case & Hemmings, 2005; Coleman-King & Groenke, 2015), participate in parent-teacher simulations and reflect upon racially-charged classroom scenarios (Khasnabis, et al., 2019), or create digital stories that explore the ways teachers began to understand their own racial identity (Matias & Grosland, 2016). However, the efficacy of experiences that aim to deepen teachers' racial literacy is unknown and has not demonstrated a change in antiracist teacher practice.

Studies aimed at changing teachers' deficit ideologies and beliefs

When teacher learning for antiracism does begin to develop teachers' antiracist teaching practice, it typically focuses on helping teachers critically examine racialized, deficit ideologies they hold about students of color. This inward-facing work focuses on changing teachers' dispositions and beliefs as a necessary step in antiracist education. To this end, a frequently utilized strategy is leading teachers in critical conversations about racism and white supremacy, examining how these phenomena affect students of color in U.S. schools (e.g., Case & Hemmings, 2005; Vaught & Castagno, 2008; Coles-Ritchie & Smith, 2017; Blaisdell, 2018). These conversations are often fraught with tensions and teacher resistance; while white teachers tend to become defensive, emotional, or deny white supremacy, teachers of color often wonder how the conversations apply to them (Vaught & Castagno, 2008; Kohli, 2018) or experience "racial battle fatigue," "the psychological, emotional, physiological, energy, and time-related cost of fighting against racism" (Smith, 2010, p. 298, as cited in Pizzaro & Kohli, 2018).

Furthermore, teachers of color often leave conversations about racism feeling harmed by white colleagues who deny the existence or the magnitude of racism in the United States (Brown, 2014). Studies have documented the tension that arises when teachers question what practical applications come from simply having conversations about racism, often demanding, “Yes, but what do I *do*?” (Pollock et al., 2010, p. 211). This tension is echoed in studies that assert simply having conversations about race and racism does little to achieve antiracism in schools (Ball & Forzani, 2009), as there is lack of evidence that critical conversations lead to a change in teacher practice. Furthermore, this tension points to the need for teachers to develop agency as part of an antiracist practice and to see the ways they can take action in response to learning that occurs in these conversations.

Studies aimed at developing antiracist curricula and pedagogy

While critical examination of self is important in antiracist teacher learning, some researchers assert the majority of teacher learning for antiracism is too narrowly focused on changing teachers’ beliefs rather than looking at the ways instructional practices affect students (Pollock et al., 2010). Therefore, there has been a pivot in some conceptualizations of teacher learning for antiracism, moving from critical conversations to helping teachers develop antiracist curricula and pedagogy. For example, Sleeter (2018) researched the efficacy of a framework for integrating students’ culture into curriculum to disrupt the rampant Eurocentrism present in most textbooks. In addition to providing scaffolded support for a teacher to revamp a social studies curriculum and draw upon students’ funds of knowledge (Moll, 1994), the researcher also consulted with the teacher, leading her in guided reflection about the curricular changes she made. Though the study found that the teachers’ classroom practice demonstrated marked improvement, the teacher did not identify the positive shifts in her practice. This finding suggests

that, when learning to be antiracist educators, teachers need explicit examples of how their practice improves students' experiences in school. Critical examination of one's practice is insufficient when it stops at identifying deficit ideologies and areas needing improvement; rather, as teachers develop and enact antiracist practice, they must critically examine aspects of their practice positively impacting students and sustain these changes. Similarly, Philip (2011) found that explicit consultations with teachers and direct intervention to disrupt deficit thinking about students helped teachers focus on pedagogical shifts they had to make. In working through problems of practice with teachers, Philip found he had to push teachers' normative and deficit ways of thinking, often becoming more explicit than he had anticipated at the onset of the study. Rather than structuring the course to be open-ended and hoping teachers turned the lens on their pedagogical practices, the researcher found he needed to be straightforward in addressing the teachers. Both Sleeter's (2018) and Philip's (2011) studies point to the need for teacher learning for antiracism to attend to explicit examinations of teachers' pedagogical practices. However, the dearth of research on teacher learning for antiracist curricula and pedagogy suggests more research is needed on how to best support teachers to investigate taken-for-granted ways of thinking about and interacting with students that reproduce racism in tangible ways.

How can research on supportive communities of practice inform teacher learning for antiracism?

Existing research suggests teachers benefit from supportive communities of practice (Wegner, 1998) when making shifts in their teaching, particularly when transforming their practice from traditional to non-dominant ways. Given the paradigmatic shift required from teachers to develop antiracist practice, both *relational* and *positional* resources (Louie, 2017; see also Nasir & Cooks, 2009) are important in supporting their growth. *Relational* resources are

connections with other professionals that provide teachers a sense of belonging and solidarity in working toward a shared vision. *Positional* resources have to do with how a teacher is positioned in the learning space (e.g., as an expert or novice). *Positional* resources offer teachers the feeling of support that comes with being positioned as a competent member of a professional community. Together, *relational* and *positional* resources can have a powerful impact on how supported teachers feel to grow in their practice, particularly in a task as rigorous as becoming an antiracist teacher. As Louie (2017) posits, “Relational and positional resources support teachers by fostering *identities* that motivate and encourage learning” (p.17, emphasis original). For example, *relational* resources, such as members of the learning community agreeing with a belief a teacher shares, may help the teacher feel validated in their thinking; *positional* resources, such as members of the learning community demonstrating a belief in a teacher’s capacity, may help a teacher affirm their identity as an antiracist educator.

Other research on teacher learning highlights the need for teachers to be supported in a myriad of ways, particularly when learning to disrupt normative ways of teaching. For example, researchers of *Critical Professional Development (CPD)* (Kohli et al., 2015) assert that professional learning must foster *cooperation*, giving teachers opportunities to engage in authentic dialogue rather than traditional lectures or “sit and get” models of professional development. Furthermore, learning spaces must establish *unity* through a shared sense of camaraderie and safety in expressing like-minded views about social justice. Lastly, professional learning must position teachers as experts who share in the *organization* of learning, flattening the hierarchy of typical professional development where teachers simply receive information.

The existing research on teacher learning points to the need for professional learning spaces to ensure teachers experience supportive communities of practice where strong

connections with other colleagues are fostered, they are united in a shared vision, and are positioned as competent and capable. This dissertation will contribute to this existing body of research, specifically examining the ways teachers may be supported in becoming antiracist educators.

How are the needs of teachers of color conceptualized in teacher learning for antiracism?

Given the predominance of whiteness in the teaching field, conceptualizations of teacher learning for antiracism often leave teachers of color out. For example, though many studies on professional learning for antiracism focus on developing teachers' understanding of racism, it is unclear what teachers of color get out of teacher training that work to develop teachers' racial literacy; while some literature points to the need for all teachers, including teachers of color, to "understand how racism exists" (Brown, 2014), more research is needed on how to make this learning meaningful for teachers of color. Given that teachers of color have lived experience with racism, they have different learning needs than white teachers in professional learning spaces for antiracism.

Considering the challenges and isolation teachers of color experience in professional learning spaces that discuss race and racism, some scholars have paid particular attention to the ways teachers of color can be supported in developing antiracist practice. For example, Pizzaro & Kohli (2018) found that teachers coped with racial battle fatigue best when they were surrounded by people who affirmed their identity and helped them develop healthy ways to confront racism in their schools. Furthermore, the teachers of color in the study noted affinity groups at professional development meetings as supportive. Being in spaces with other teachers of color validated their experiences with racism and helped them form a community of support to turn to in times of need. Other researchers have found affinity groups to be useful spaces for

teachers of color to share teaching ideas and avoid some of the harm done by white colleagues who are struggling to understand the realities of racism (Bristol, 2015). More research is needed to enrich the field's understanding of how teachers of color experience teacher learning for antiracism.

Gaps in the Literature

Within the small body of research on teacher learning for antiracism, existing studies tend to focus on a single outcome; the work aims to help teachers better understand the role of race in education without delving into antiracist curricula or pedagogy, or perhaps helps teachers examine curricula without positioning teachers as agentic to disrupt racism outside the walls of their classroom. This research study will help fill these gaps by attending to three areas of developing teachers' antiracist teaching practice and the connections between them: seeing oneself as agentic, critically examining self and practice, and enacting antiracist pedagogy in curricula, pedagogy, and institutional policy. Furthermore, the study aims to gain a deeper understanding of how all teachers, including teachers of color, can be better supported in developing an antiracist teaching practice.

What is antiracist education?

Because of the inequities that have plagued the U.S. school system, there has been a continual call for antiracist reform in both teacher education and K-12 schooling. Though antiracist education is a relatively new term in the field of education, its roots run back several decades. Theorizations of antiracist education draw upon the work of many scholars who have focused on equity-oriented education. Researchers in multicultural education (e.g. Banks, 1993; Grant & Sleeter, 1989; Nieto, 1992), funds of knowledge (Moll, 1994), culturally relevant

teaching (Gay, 2000), culturally responsive pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994), and culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris & Alim, 2014) have all worked to theorize and reenvision education with a common goal: to make schools more equitable and just places for students of color.

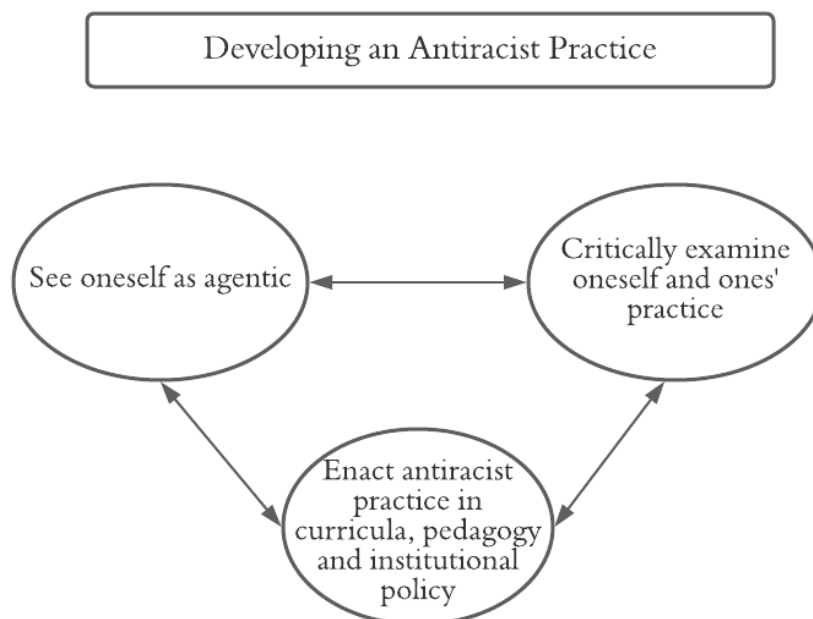
In contrast to the ways multicultural education is often taken up by teachers in practice (superficially celebrating diversity (Kishimoto, 2018) or implying students of color ought to assimilate to dominant, Eurocentric culture (Blakeney, 2005)), antiracist education serves to upend racism and works toward liberation. An antiracist education involves teachers and students critically examining white racial dominance and taking action against white racism that pervades society, policies, and institutions (Welton et al., 2018). It refers to “an active resistance to the ways in which knowledge, status, value, and competence have been framed to give preference to white interests” (Thompson, 1997, p. 14). Furthermore, in antiracist education, both teachers and students examine their relative positions of power and privilege to dismantle oppressive systems (Dei, 2000). A key belief of many antiracist theorists is that the only way to dismantle racism is to consistently name it, identify it, and work to break it down (DiAngelo, 2011; Welton et al, 2018; Kendi, 2019). Therefore, antiracist teachers engage in collective, critical consciousness-building dialogue to help their students see and take action against the manifestations of oppression in society. Antiracist teachers see their classrooms as “site[s] of resistance” (hooks, 1994, p. 21), working toward a liberatory education that frees all students from the weight of racism and other forms of oppression.

Teachers must be taught how to enact antiracism in their teaching practice. I posit that teacher learning for antiracism must attend to both the “what”--what teachers actually need to learn about race and racism--and the “how”--the types of learning experiences that get teachers to this understanding. First, I identify the components of teacher learning for antiracism and what

teachers must learn to develop an antiracist teaching practice. I argue that teacher learning for antiracism must help teachers see themselves as agentic, critically examine themselves and their practice, and enact antiracist practice in their curricula, pedagogy, and the institutions in which they work. Next, I outline how teacher learning for antiracism occurs, through helping teachers disrupt racism present in their curricula, pedagogical practices, and their schools. I examine the existing literature on what is known about supporting teacher learning for antiracism, identifying the gaps this dissertation research aims to fill. Finally, I offer a study design, research methods, and data analysis to illustrate findings and highlight the ways teachers from varying racial backgrounds can be supported to develop an antiracist teaching practice.

What do teachers need to learn to enact antiracist practice?

In order to enact antiracist practice, teachers critically examine and disrupt racism in their practice and the institutions in which they work (Coles-Ritchie & Smith, 2017; see also Blaisdell, 2018; Khasnabis, Goldin, Perouse-Harvey, & Hanna, 2019). Drawing on prior work on racial literacy (Sealy-Ruiz, 2011), I argue that antiracist practice has three components: 1) seeing oneself as agentic to identify and disrupt racism, 2) critically examining racism in oneself and one's teaching practice, and 3) enacting antiracist practice. This process is not linear (e.g. first one sees oneself as agentic, then one is able to critically examine racism in their teaching practice). Rather, developing an antiracist practice is an iterative process of learning and action. Engaging in critical examination and enacting antiracism helps teachers further develop agency, and vice versa (see Figure 1).

Figure 1*Developing an Antiracist Practice*

Developing an antiracist practice is complex; teacher educators and teachers engage in the co-construction of knowledge to understand how racism functions in their particular context. While there is not a set curriculum for developing antiracist practice, teachers must learn several key components of antiracism. First, though the inward facing work and self-interrogation of racist beliefs is important for teachers to identify, developing an antiracist practice moves beyond the individual to help teachers develop a “robust knowledge” of race and racism (Milner & Laughter, 2015). Teachers must learn racism stretches beyond ideologies and beliefs; it is structural and systemic (al-Gharbi, 2019). Furthermore, teachers must understand the historical roots of racism and the way history is linked to contemporary forms of racial oppression (Lawrence & Tatum, 1997; Blakeney, 2005; Coleman-King & Groenke, 2015). All teachers, including teachers of color, must “unlearn” misinformation and stereotypes they have been

conditioned to believe about themselves and others (Milner & Laughter, 2015), and how race-based status beliefs affect their daily interactions with students. Finally, developing teachers' antiracist practice positions them as agentic, with the capacity to see racism as a social construct that must be challenged and dismantled (Lawrence & Tatum, 1997; Dei, 2000; Case & Hemmings, 2005; Sealy-Ruiz, 201, Milner & Laughter, 2015). It is not enough for teachers to learn about race and racism; rather, teachers must use this knowledge to take action against oppression in their practice (Chubbuck, 2010). I will briefly outline each component of antiracist teaching practice, then expound upon each one as it relates specifically to teachers' curricula, pedagogy, and the institutions in which they teach.

See oneself as agentic

As schools are institutions that reproduce social inequalities (Freire, 1970; MacLeod, 2008, Lewis & Diamond, 2015), teachers must develop a *sense of agency* (see also “self-efficacy,” e.g., Bandura, 1989) to disrupt racism. The higher a person's perceived sense of agency, the higher goals they set for themselves and the more committed they are to achieving these goals (Bandura, 1989). Sense of agency is not a binary, something one does or does not have. Rather, teachers' sense of agency can be thought of as a continuum, with the degree to which people believe in their sense of agency affecting the amount of motivation they put forth and their perseverance in the face of challenges. In other words, “The stronger the belief in their capabilities, the greater and more persistent are their efforts,” (Bandura, 1989, p.1176).

Teacher agency is crucial to develop antiracist practice. In a field where teachers are growing less autonomous due to neoliberal reform, standardization, and high-stakes accountability, many teachers feel powerless. However, researchers in the field warn that

teachers must feel empowered to critically examine and critique hegemonic norms that reproduce school inequity, or they begin to think it is not their job to do so (Milner & Laughter, 2015).

Critically examine oneself and one's practice

As teacher learning for antiracism fosters teachers' sense of agency in their school setting, teachers must also learn that critical self-examination is crucial to being an antiracist educator. This inward-facing work is often talked about as changing teachers' "hearts and minds," and is typically a top priority of teacher learning for antiracism because of the predominance of white teachers in the profession. However, all teachers who are socialized in America need to learn how to reflect scrupulously on their ideologies, beliefs, what they teach, and how they teach; without critical examination of dispositions and interactions with students, racist ideologies about students of color go unchecked.

Enact antiracist practice in curricula, pedagogy, and institutional policy

While inward-facing work is important in antiracist education, teacher learning for antiracism is often too narrowly focused on changing teachers' dispositions and beliefs about students of color. Researchers in the field have highlighted this as an important issue to address, arguing that dispositional work does little to make meaningful antiracist change (Diggles, 2014). I argue that teacher learning for antiracism must attend to both critical examination of self as well as help teachers utilize their agency to take antiracist action in their practice. As teachers begin to understand how schools reproduce racism and their complicity in this reproduction, teachers must enact antiracist practice by making active, antiracist changes in their curricula, pedagogy, and institutions.

To further exemplify sense of agency, critical examination, and antiracist enactment, next I illustrate these facets of antiracist practice and their connections in three domains of teachers' work: curricula, pedagogy, and institutional policies.

Curricula

An essential aspect of developing an antiracist practice is for teachers to *critically examine* their curricula and challenge the hegemonic normativity of Eurocentrism present in what they teach (Dei, 2000; Skerrett, 2008; Kishimoto, 2018). Dei (2000) argues, "Some educators do not even recognize that what they see as a 'normal' curriculum suited to all students is actually a White, Eurocentric curriculum" (p. 26). In his seminal lecture to Harlem teachers in 1963, James Baldwin cautioned teachers about perpetuating the myths that are told in U.S. history books, saying, "What passes for identity in America is a series of myths about one's heroic ancestors," highlighting the Eurocentric norms that frame American history and erase non-dominant perspectives. Current antiracist scholars who call for curricular reform conceive of these changes much in the same way Baldwin did almost 60 years ago, calling on teachers to carefully examine their curricula to identify what representation looks like: whose stories and voices are included, whose are excluded, and why (Lawrence & Tatum, 1997; Chubbuck, 2010; Kishimoto, 2018; McManimon & Casey, 2018). Furthermore, teachers must connect the present sociocultural context of racism to the historical context, examining the relationship between myths in curricula and dominant myths that circulate about historically oppressed groups of people in the United States (DeLeon, 2006). Antiracist practice requires teachers to think critically about the normative notions of Eurocentrism that dominate current curricula.

In addition to critically examining their curricula, teachers need to *enact* antiracist practice by taking explicit action in what they teach. Not only is it important for students of color

to see themselves represented in the curriculum, but also for white students to see a wide variety of representation that disrupts norms of white racial dominance. As Hall (1997) put it, “Representation is the power to symbolically mark something and is significant because of the ability to label what is different or normal” (p. 338). Thus, antiracist educators must make it a practice to include balanced and varied representation in their curricula. However, teachers must be wary of adopting an “Holidays and Heroes Approach” (Banks, 1988) to curricular reform, an add-on approach where students celebrate a cultural holiday without learning more about the culture on a consistent basis throughout the year. Instead, teachers should aim for a “Decision-Making and Social Action Approach” (Banks, 1988), where the basic assumptions of curriculum are challenged, students learn content from many perspectives and points of view, and students are encouraged to take action on social issues. In addition to transforming curricula to be social-action oriented, teachers must discuss race and racism in their classrooms (Lawrence & Tatum, 1997; DeLeon, 2006; Kishimoto, 2018). Teachers cannot treat classrooms as race-neutral spaces or avoid conversations on racism, but need to make these conversations foundational to their curricula, “creat[ing] performative spaces in which the commonplaces of racism can be unsettled” (Thomson, 1997, p.35). Researchers in the field argue that classrooms are not apolitical or ahistorical spaces; teachers cannot shy away from conversations about racism and oppression with students (Coles-Ritchie & Smith, 2017; Kishimoto, 2018). Not talking about racism does not make it cease to exist; rather, it further entrenches racism into our society. First, teachers need to critically examine the content they teach for cultural stereotypes and dominant discourse (Lawrence & Tatum, 1997; Lopez, 2008). Once teachers conduct this critical analysis, they bring these revelations to light with students and engage them in conversations about why certain narratives have gone unchallenged throughout history. Finally, teachers must ensure their

curriculum is academically rigorous and students have ample support to be challenged intellectually (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). An antiracist teaching practice supports academic rigor well, as students participate in collective meaning-making about social, cultural, and political issues. This meaning-making is extended to authentic projects of social and civic action, demanding much more of students academically than a traditional banking model of education.

Teachers' *sense of agency* plays an important role in both critical examination and enactment of antiracist practice in curricula. Though some teachers may feel bound to a mandated curriculum or afraid to engage in conversations about race and racism, they must exercise agency in two ways. First, teachers must see themselves as agentic to transform curriculum that reproduces racism in their classroom. Second, they must view themselves as capable of engaging in racial discourse with their students, despite these conversations not being part of an "official" curriculum or not their area of expertise. Seeing oneself as agentic in antiracist practice likely means going off script to avoid teaching the same dominant curriculum that has reproduced racism in schools for decades.

Pedagogical Practices

While there has been a call for more rigorous and culturally relevant curricula in an effort to make educational spaces antiracist, some scholars warn against viewing curricular change as sufficient antiracist change. Teacher learning for antiracism must also address the ways teachers deliver instruction, stating that these interactions often reinforce educational inequality. As Kishimoto (2018) argues, "Antiracist pedagogy can be implemented into anything a person teaches because antiracist pedagogy is about HOW one teaches" (p. 546, emphasis original).

Teachers must *critically examine* pedagogical practices that reinforce white racial dominance and control, causing harm to students (Solomon, 1995). The reproduction of white cultural norms occur in countless avenues of schooling, from school discipline to tracking, from teacher beliefs about student ability to expectations of student participation (Lewis & Manno, 2011; Lewis & Diamond, 2015). For example, white teachers who have a lack of racially diverse experiences and beliefs of “culturally appropriate behavior” (Hines-Datiri, 2015, p. 128) may disproportionately punish students of color for not raising their hand to speak. These negative interactions widen the chasm of cultural disconnects between the student and the school environment (Delpit, 1995). In order to exhibit a deep commitment to the academic achievement of all students (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Lopez, 2008), teachers must reevaluate how they engage with students pedagogically. For example, who teachers call on, what type of participation they value, the expectations they hold for different groups of students, and how students’ funds of knowledge are incorporated into the classroom are all pedagogical practices that must be under fierce evaluation (Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992; Blakeney, 2005; Lopez, 2008; Kishimoto, 2018).

Teachers must also *critically examine* deficit ideologies they hold about students of color, views they may not even be aware of because of their strong belief in “colorblindness” (Thompson, 1997; Neville, Lilly, Duran, Lee & Browne, 2000; Diggles, 2014). Challenging one’s racial biases and deficit views of marginalized student groups is imperative for teachers if they are to authentically hold high expectations for all children (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Delpit, 1995; Lawrence & Tatum, 1997; Chubbuck, 2010). Though holding high expectations for students is ideological (i.e. believing all students are capable of succeeding), it is also interactional in nature: providing students with rigorous material, encouraging them to achieve

high standards, and creating a safe environment where students are comfortable to take risks in learning. Diamond (2007) reports that white, middle-class students are more likely to receive “interactive pedagogy,” or teaching practices that engage students in higher-order thinking and problem-solving skills, while low-income students and students of color are more likely to receive surface-level, question-and-answer instruction, or “didactic pedagogy” (p. 288). Thus, many antiracist scholars argue that focusing on curriculum is not sufficient to achieve the goals of antiracism; rather, teacher learning for antiracism must include an analysis of pedagogical practices.

My conceptualization of *enacting* antiracist pedagogy builds upon Antrop-González and De Jesús’ (2006) theory of *critical care* and Ladson-Billings’ (1994) theory of *culturally relevant pedagogy*. Teachers who demonstrate *enact* antiracist practice pedagogically pay particular attention to several aspects of student learning and engagement. First, teachers hold high academic expectations for students and support them in meeting these expectations (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Antrop-González & De Jesús, 2006). According to Antrop-González and De Jesús (2006), teachers who demonstrate critical care “recognize that students of color will not benefit from forms of caring that are not tied to the expectation of academic excellence” (p. 424). Supporting students to meet high expectations means being accessible to them, genuinely listening to understand their questions, and investing time to make sure students have firm command of the material. In tandem with high expectations, teachers who exhibit *critical care* form meaningful relationships with their students that forge a “sense of family and community,” where all members of the community feel safe and respected (Antrop-González & De Jesús, 2006, p. 421). Meaningful relationships go far beyond asking students what they did over the weekend or making small talk. Instead, teachers “become familiar with their students

and cultural realities” (Antrop-González & De Jesús, 2006, p. 420) and understand who students are on a deeply personal level. Meaningful relationships extend to forming personal relationships with students’ families and working together to best meet the needs of each student. Lastly, teachers who demonstrate *critical care* engage students in problem-posing and critical dialogue (Blakeney, 2005) rather than the “empty vessel” approach where the teacher holds all the knowledge. Teachers act as facilitators of learning (Antrop-González & De Jesús, 2006) and are active participants in the learning process (hooks, 1994), decentering traditional power dynamics and authority. This collaborative learning space supports students to think critically and take transformative action to disrupt oppressive structures and systems in the school system and broader community (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Lawrence & Tatum, 1997; Dei, 2000; Lopez, 2008; Kishimoto, 2018).

Transforming one’s pedagogical practices to be explicitly antiracist requires teachers to have a *sense of agency*. Though one might assume altering pedagogical practices to align with antiracism is easier than transforming a mandated curriculum, teachers (especially white teachers) are often unsure of how to change the way they interact with students to not reinforce white racial dominance and control. In addition, it can be difficult for teachers to conceive of incorporating students’ cultural norms and funds of knowledge that have been historically excluded from mainstream education. For example, some teachers may fear that letting students be more vocal in answering questions rather than traditional hand-raising to speak will appear out of control to other teachers or administration. However, teachers must see their agency in transforming their pedagogical practices to disrupt the status quo of student engagement in the learning process. As with curricula, altering ones’ pedagogical practices requires teacher agency to unsettle the norms of education that have kept students of color on the margins of education.

Institutional Policies

Critically examining personal beliefs, curricula, and pedagogical interactions with students is important in order to disrupt racism in one's teaching practice. However, antiracist action requires more than teachers altering their individual hearts, minds, and practices; teachers must also disrupt racism in institutional policies, as schools systemically perpetuate racial inequality (Diggles, 2014; Lewis & Diamond, 2015; al-Gharbi, 2019). Furthermore, the research critiques strategies that stop at changing individual teachers' dispositions, arguing that this examination must go hand-in-hand with an examination of institutional and structural racism present in their school contexts (Vaught & Castagno, 2008; Chubbuck, 2010; Kishimoto, 2018). As Kishimoto argues, "When racism is understood only as individual prejudice, racism embedded in institutions is ignored. At the same time, focusing only on institutional racism allows individuals benefiting from racism to avoid any responsibility" (p. 542). Focusing on teacher beliefs falls short when there is also an opportunity to examine how racist ideas and policies become programmed into individuals and enacted through teachers' behavior and school policies (Pollock, et al., 2010). Furthermore, much of the research on antiracist teacher education stresses that teachers must understand that racism goes beyond individual prejudice and is intentionally structural and systemic in nature (Coleman-King & Groenke, 2015; Kishimoto, 2018). As Milner and Laughter (2015) argue,

If teachers are not taught to question or to critically examine power structures like race and poverty, the teachers are still learning something—possibly that it may not be essential for them to critique power structures in the world in order to change them (p.349).

This research urges teachers to investigate the racism inherent in policies (Kendi, 2019) and to see that systemic racism is not about bad people who hold racist beliefs, but rather is “a function of behavioral patterns--and unjust allocations of resources and opportunities--that systemically advantage some and disadvantage others” (al-Gharbi, 2019, p. 2).

Thus, teachers need to learn to *critically examine* how racist ideas become programmed into taken-for-granted policies and school norms (Pollock, et al., 2010). For example, teachers might learn to question the functionality of a hallway policy that asks students to walk down the halls silently with their hands behind their backs. School policies that serve to dominate and control students of color, rather than help them achieve a feeling of belonging, need to be critically examined and disrupted. Furthermore, teachers must question the facets of school that exist outside of their classrooms, such as the unjust allocation of opportunities and resources that lead to systemic racism in schools (al-Gharbi, 2019). Once teachers understand their personal racism in conjunction with the institutional racism inherent in schools, they can begin to see themselves as powerful agents of change, capable of disrupting institutional practices they may have previously ignored (Chubbuck, 2010; Welton et al., 2018). Furthermore, they can begin to see their collective accountability to work toward equity in their schools (Vaught & Castagno, 2008).

Research Design and Methods

This dissertation research is situated within a larger research project conducted by five university faculty. The team explored the ways a school-university partnership collaborated to build an antiracist learning community. I utilized a qualitative, comparative case study (Yin, 2018; Bartlett & Vavrus, 2016) with teachers from each site, Eastwood and Lawrence Elementary, to understand how different teachers experienced professional learning spaces aimed at developing antiracist practice; specifically, in this study, I ask, How do teachers from varying racial backgrounds experience professional learning spaces aimed at developing antiracist practice? While the primary focus of the research was on the professional learning space through the university partnership, I also asked teachers a few questions about other professional learning communities that may (or may not) have helped them develop their antiracist practice. Comparing and contrasting each teacher as a case allowed me to develop a rich description of each teacher's experience in the university professional learning community. As case study research "investigates a contemporary phenomenon...in depth and within its real world context" (Yin, 2018, p.15), it was an ideal methodological approach to examine the ways different teachers experience these spaces, spaces that are shaped by policy, school culture and climate, and social actors. Importantly, as much of the research on antiracist teacher practice focuses on white teachers and their experiences, this study sought to contribute to literature that explores the unique experiences of teachers of color in professional learning spaces aimed at developing antiracist practice. Both white participants and participants of color were chosen for the study (see more under "Participants").

Comparative case study (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2016) uses a "processual approach" to comparison that compares "the way similar phenomena unfold in distinct, socially-produced

locations that are connected in multiple and complex ways" (p.51). This made it an ideal methodological approach in this study, as I was able to compare the ways teachers experienced a similar phenomenon of antiracist professional learning spaces, attending to the complex ways these spaces unfold. In addition, comparative case study values "the inclusion of cases that are quite distinct and generate insights via juxtaposition" (p.47). This "juxtaposition" is of particular importance in this research study because teachers of color experienced the professional learning spaces aimed at developing antiracist practice differently from one another and from their white peers. This study explores the similarities and differences in the ways each teacher experienced the professional learning space aimed at developing antiracist practice, as well as what the teachers identified as supportive in developing their practice. In addition, rather than grouping non-white teachers into a broad category of "teachers of color," I was able to more thoroughly explore the nuances between how teachers from varying racial backgrounds experienced the professional learning space and develop their practice. However, it is important to note that I am not generalizing teachers' experiences to a population, but rather to contribute to the field of antiracist professional learning to include a broader range of teachers' experiences.

The scope of this project offered many data sources and possible lines of inquiry. Spending two years with teachers offered our research team plentiful data, but not all said data will be explored in this dissertation. In this dissertation, I am solely focusing on teachers' experiences in the professional learning space; thus, I rely heavily on interview data to develop a rich description of teachers' experiences and feelings of support as they worked to develop an antiracist teaching practice. As a member of the larger research project, there are other lines of inquiry currently being pursued by the team that examine field notes, recordings from the professional learning space meetings, and interactional data between participants in the spaces.

For example, in one paper, our team explores the ways antiracist discourses can align with racist narratives and, in turn, center whiteness (Berland et al., 2022). This article drew on interactions and field notes from the professional learning space at Eastwood and examined discussions about whether the antiracist learning community should explicitly focus on Black students and their families, or if it should have a broader lens on all students and families of color. The principal and many teachers at Eastwood argued for a focus on Black students exclusively, stating that they wanted to make Eastwood a “pro-Black” school community. In the paper, we argue that, while these discourses position some participants in the space as race-conscious individuals, some of the narratives embedded in these discourses served to reinforce white supremacy and anti-Blackness. Thus, as this line of inquiry (and others) are explored in other works by the research team, this dissertation is intended to focus solely on teacher’s experiences of support in the professional learning spaces at Eastwood and Lawrence Elementary.

Data Collection and Analysis

Settings

Eastwood Elementary and Lawrence Elementary are two of 32 elementary schools in the Kingston School District (KSD). Kingston is a city with a progressive identity; many of its citizens are self-proclaimed liberals. Despite this, Kingston is racially stratified; in fact, Kingston resides within Blaire County, a county with some of the worst racial disparities between white people and people of color in the nation. These stark racial disparities are mirrored in the school district, despite a rhetoric of equity and inclusion. Often framed as an “achievement gap” between white students and students of color, the root cause stems from “deprivation of basic educational opportunity” and “daily practices in the city’s institutions...[that] reinforc[e] racial hierarchies,” (Kohlenberg, as cited in Girard, 2020). The school district has responded with an

expressed commitment to antiracist change; in particular, a main focus of KSD's antiracist work is a focus on "Black Excellence." School leaders at both Eastwood and Lawrence Elementary asked university faculty to partner with them around antiracist school change and establish professional learning communities for their school staff. Teachers from these professional learning communities will be the focus of this study.

The local context of Kingston shapes antiracist work in key ways. Because Kingston has a reputation as a liberal city, many teachers in KSD outwardly proclaim to have liberal ideologies; that is, they posit a progressive attitude toward race and equity and assert themselves as teachers committed to social justice. However, the "liberal persona" of Kingston may actually serve to hinder antiracist efforts. For example, Schick (2000) points out that a liberal discourse may help teachers maintain a "positive self-presentation" (p. 88); in other words, though teachers may convey a commitment to antiracist practice, they may perceive themselves as teachers who already know what they need to do as antiracist teachers, thus stunting opportunities for growth. In antiracist educational reform, liberal discourse can serve as a "veneer, covering over complicity, apathy and fear" (Gillespie, Ashbaugh, & Defiore, 2002, p.240), and can actually hinder antiracist efforts. Furthermore, many teachers in KSD have espoused their commitment to the district's focus on "Black Excellence," often donning "Black Lives Matter" shirts at school and positing in conversations that they are "pro-Black." However, despite this liberal discourse in KSD, given the racial disparities that exist there, it is evident that deep-seeded antiblackness has shaped the local context of schools in Kingston.

In addition to the liberal discourse that shapes the context of Kingston and the teachers in KSD, other sociopolitical factors impact how teachers in KSD engage in antiracist work. For several years prior to this research study, many incidents of teachers using racial slurs surfaced in

the news; in fact, these incidents were occurring so often that KSD district leaders instituted a zero tolerance policy—anyone who used a racial slur, regardless of the context, would be immediately terminated. In one incident, a Black Kingston high school student called a Black security guard the N-word. In response, the security guard told the student not to call him the N-word. Because of the zero tolerance policy, the Black security guard was fired immediately; only after the story made international news and Kingston district leaders received immense outside pressure was his contract restored. Because of these incidents and the zero tolerance policy, many teachers in Kingston feared talking about race at all. In their view, if a Black staff member could be fired for telling another Black person not to use a racial slur, surely they could be terminated for less. Thus, despite being “committed” to antiracist efforts, a culture of fear and hesitancy had led many teachers to shy away from topics of race and racism in their schools.

Eastwood Elementary

Eastwood Elementary is one of the larger elementary schools in KSD with a student population of around 450 students, over 70% of whom receive free-and-reduced lunch. The student demographics at Eastwood are quite diverse: approximately 25% of students are Hispanic or Latinx, 25% are Black/African American, 18% are multiracial, 17% are white, and 8% are Asian (primarily Hmong). However, most of the teachers are white. The current school climate is such that several Black teachers have left due to feelings of isolation and lack of support, and white Eastwood teachers regularly express feelings of anxiety and uncertainty in how to navigate the complexities of racism at their school. In the last few years, Eastwood has been under fierce district and community scrutiny, even making the local news several times due to issues of social injustice and racism. Students at Eastwood often have very poor academic outcomes, signifying them as a school with high needs and intense district supervision. School

leadership changed a little over a year ago, and the school continues to repeat its history of high teacher turnover.

Lawrence Elementary

Unlike Eastwood, Lawrence is the smallest elementary school in the district with a student population of about 175 students. Similarly to Eastwood, over 70% of students at Lawrence receive free-and-reduced lunch. Lawrence's teacher and student demographics are similar to Eastwood's as well; over 75% of students are students of color while over 90% of the staff are white. Thirty percent of Lawrence students are Black, 30% white, 15% Hispanic or Latinx, 12% Asian (primarily Hmong and Lao), and 10% multiracial. Although there are a handful of veteran staff at Lawrence, several teachers have cited a problem with turnover. However, both veteran and new teachers alike share pride in working at the school, which is often described by school staff as "small but mighty." Despite the principal's newer position as an administrator, district administrators appear to trust her leadership abilities. Lawrence's equity vision expresses a commitment to ensure all students grow as learners, to elevate the experiences of Black and Brown students by listening to them and creating safe spaces, and for all students to feel a sense of belonging at school.

Participants: This study examines the experiences of six teachers, three from Lawrence Elementary and three from Eastwood Elementary; these participants identify as white (n=3), Black (n=1), and Latina (n=1) and Mexican (n=1), as shown in the table below:

Table 1: Participants

Eastwood	Lawrence

Desmond Black male, over 20 years of experience, Kindergarten and 3rd grade teacher	Irene Mexican female, over 10 years of experience, Kindergarten Teacher
Alyssa White female, less than 5 years of experience, special education teacher	Claire White female, less than 5 years of experience, special education teacher
Camila Latina female, over 20 years of experience, Bilingual Resource Specialist	Paige White female, over 20 years of experience, 5th grade teacher

The participants were chosen through purposeful sampling; both their expressed commitment to developing antiracist practice and their race were key factors. The teachers I selected shared both a strong verbal commitment to antiracism and demonstrated this commitment by questioning racist policies and procedures, expressing urgency at the need for the school to be more equitable for students of color, and thoughtfully reflecting on their own antiracist practice. Because of the lack of research in the field about how teachers can be supported to develop antiracist practice, I was interested in learning how teachers committed to antiracism experience professional learning for antiracism.

Data Collection and Analysis

Phases of the Research Project

Part 1: Eastwood, School-Based

The UW-Eastwood partnership began in the summer of 2019 with 23 Eastwood teachers and staff who volunteered to be part of an antiracist coalition. The group primarily worked through the “inward facing” work of acknowledging their racial biases and understanding white

fragility (DiAngelo, 2011). The summer 2019 antiracist coalition extended into the 2019-2020 school year and focused on establishing relational trust and rapport with administration and the School Based Leadership Team (SBLT). The UW team attended SBLT meetings once a month and focused on engaging in discussions about race and inequality, gathering information about common concerns voiced amongst the staff, and observing the school environment. In addition, the research team met weekly with school administration to determine how to best support school-wide, antiracist change the principal was working to implement with staff. In the summer of 2020, twenty Eastwood staff began focusing more concretely on antiracist curricula and pedagogical practices. At the end of the summer 2020 retreat, teachers were in the beginning stages of writing grade-level antiracist action plans for the upcoming school year.

Data sources for this phase of the project include observational field notes from summer 2019 and the 2019-2020 academic year. They also include video recordings, observational field notes, and written work created by the Eastwood staff during the summer 2020 retreat.

Part 2: Eastwood, Voluntary Faculty/Staff Group

At the end of summer 2020, the formal partnership with Eastwood came to a close. However, a select number of Eastwood staff requested to continue meeting with UW faculty outside of their contract time. This voluntary group included eleven Eastwood staff, five of whom are classroom teachers. The group agreed to meet twice a month on Thursday afternoons to discuss problems of practice and engage in collaborative problem-solving around issues of race and racism.

Data Collection: I engaged in participant observation in the professional learning space; all meetings were video recorded and field notes were taken. In addition, I conducted one or two interviews with each participant to gain a deeper understanding of their experience in the group

and determine what they experience as the most meaningful and supportive to their development of antiracist practice; the amount of interviews conducted were based on teachers' availability. These interviews occurred beginning in March of 2021 and lasted through August of 2021.

Part 3: Lawrence

The partnership with Lawrence staff was established in the fall of 2020 and concluded in August of 2021. In the fall of 2020, we began collaborating weekly with Lawrence's principal, school social worker, and instructional coach to both plan school-wide antiracist professional development and determine the work to be done outside of the professional development time. UW faculty conducted monthly professional development meetings with all school staff on antiracist education; specifically, the team focused the school-year meetings on radical belonging looks like for students and families of color, theories of critical care, and curricular applications of antiracism in the mathematics classroom. At the end of the school year, UW faculty offered an optional summer learning retreat that focused more explicitly on classroom practice and curricular applications of antiracism in mathematics and literacy. I recruited participants for this study based on several criteria. I chose teachers who: 1) had attended the schoolwide professional development sessions and the optional summer retreat, 2) that had an expressed interest in developing an antiracist practice, 3) taught different grade levels, and 4) came from different racial backgrounds. These criteria were given in the hopes of developing rich cases for this research.

Data collection: I engaged in participant observation in the professional learning space; all meetings were video recorded and field notes were taken. In addition, I conducted one or two interviews with each participant to gain a deeper understanding of their experience in the group and determine what they experience as the most meaningful and supportive to their development

of antiracist practice; the amount of interviews conducted were based on teachers' availability. These interviews occurred beginning in March of 2021 and lasted through September of 2021. Lastly, I analyzed written work teachers completed during or after our sessions, such as action plans outlining antiracist curricular plans or reflective exit slips on sessions.

Table 2: Data Sources

<i>Data source</i>	<i>Number</i>
Participant-observation in PD settings	
Part 1: Eastwood (field notes only)	60
Part 2: Eastwood (field notes and video)	7
Part 3: Lawrence (field notes and video)	10
Teacher interviews (See Appendix)	
Part 1: Eastwood	0
Part 2: Eastwood	6
Part 3: Lawrence	9
Written work (e.g. Action Plans, Exit Slips)	18

I was aware that my role as both a facilitator and researcher may have made participants feel uncomfortable answering certain interview questions, particularly about aspects of the professional learning space they found to be unsupportive or mishandled by facilitators. Thus, I collected data in other formats to offer participants various means of expressing their experience in the professional learning space. Our research team asked participants to fill out exit slips after each session, noting how the professional learning space did or did not support their development of antiracist practice. These exit slips offered more immediate feedback that I was then able to follow up on in more detail in interviews. The following are sample questions from these exit slips (Multiple choice options of “strongly agree,” “agree,” “disagree,” “strongly disagree”):

- What we did today supported me to feel like I have the capacity to disrupt racism at my school.
- What we did today supported me to deepen my critique of racism in my beliefs and in the school.
- What we did today supported me to take antiracist action.
- I felt my voice and opinions were valued in our session today.
- Comments about today's session (e.g. What are things that you would like to change about this group? What are things you would like to continue? How can we better support you in developing an antiracist practice?)

Data Analysis

RQ: How do teachers from varying racial backgrounds experience professional learning spaces aimed at developing antiracist practice?

A key analytic task in this question was to look within and across cases to compare and contrast the ways each participant experienced the professional learning space. I used constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2000) to analyze my data. Using my conceptual framework of how teachers develop antiracist practice, I first iteratively coded interview data, field notes, and teacher exit slips for instances of teachers feeling supported to see themselves as agentic, critically examine themselves and their practice, and enact antiracism in their practice and institutional policies. I analyzed each teacher's case and identified themes of how they felt supported to grow in these three areas (e.g. When identifying how they felt more agentic to disrupt racism, what were the conditions that supported them to experience this sense of agency?). I then looked across cases in a cross-case analysis to identify which salient themes

emerged from the participants' data (e.g. What types of conversations and activities supported teachers of color to enact antiracist practice compared to white teachers? Were they the same activities, or did they differ?). I looked for themes across participants, paying careful attention to the similarities and differences in the ways teachers from similar racial backgrounds experienced the spaces. As themes emerged, I wrote informal analytic memos and sketches about connections I saw within and across cases. Additionally, I discussed them with participants to triangulate data and ensure my interpretation of their experiences was accurate.

Though my dissertation is written linearly with my theoretical framework ahead of my findings, my theoretical framework was not predetermined prior to the onset of this study. Throughout our time working with teachers at Eastwood and Lawrence, our team was in constant discussion about what antiracism meant to us as facilitators, as well as how we would “know” if teachers were developing as antiracist educators. Because of my role in the project and the fact that I was immersed in these discussions, I was constantly thinking about what I was seeing with participants at both research sites, what discussions were unfolding week-to-week, and what teachers spoke about in regards to their evolving understanding of antiracism. Thus, developing this conceptual framework was an interactive, cyclical process informed by what our research team was doing with teachers in the moment and the ongoing data we were collecting.

Limitations/Constraints:

The nature of virtual teacher learning during Covid presented challenges in my data collection and analysis. Virtual communication platforms proved to be obstacles in building community and relationships. Additionally, because this research spanned two years, there were certain recall limitations when asking teachers to think back to experiences they had during the first summer of the professional learning space. I asked teachers to remember as best they could

and use field notes to try to help teachers recall circumstances of certain interactions and conversations. This was not a frequent issue that I ran into, however.

Research Positionality

I come to this research with my own personal history, a history that shaped how I approached this project, how I thought about the teachers who participated in this study, and how I think about antiracist work in more general ways. Prior to coming to graduate school, I was a teacher for almost ten years, seven of which were spent teaching elementary school students in the Kingston School District. Throughout my career, I had gone through an evolution of what kind of teacher I was. After many professional learning opportunities, I had adapted my teaching to be more culturally responsive; at the time, I had no idea what it meant to be an antiracist teacher. I began to get to know my students and their families outside of school by spending time in the community, I started focusing more on centering Black and Brown voices and ideas instead of policing Black and Brown bodies during lessons, and I focused on learning engagement while holding my students to high expectations instead of trying to get through a certain amount of curriculum. While these changes yielded positive results in my students and their learning, the changes in my teaching were not transformative—I was bending the rigid corners of a white supremacist school system, yet I still perpetuated racial violence toward students unconsciously, and I still upheld racist pedagogical practices like grouping students according to standardized assessments.

Though I had tried my best to become a better teacher for students of color, I knew I needed to attend graduate school to spend serious time considering the systemic changes that needed to happen in our schools to transform the current manifestations of oppression for students of color. I was especially curious about how teachers (like me) could be supported to

undo the racial conditioning that led to reproductions of racism for students in U.S. schools. In many ways, I underwent the same types of feelings and shifts in thinking as many of the white teachers in this study who learned about racism and antiracism through their professional learning spaces. Thus, my identity as a white teacher and a former teacher in Kingston shaped the way I approached this research with white teachers. Having been a former teacher in the same district as the participants in this study, I have a certain level of credibility when talking with other white teachers who are tentative to admit their own racist ideologies and practices. However, being a white researcher comes with inherent biases. First, I have bias that may have skewed how I analyzed white teachers' responses, either by giving them too much grace in an interpretation of a racist response, or in reading a response too harshly in the interest of being critical. Finally, racism is often coded and nuanced; as a white person, it is likely that I missed both subtle and blatant racism exhibited by other white teachers because of my own racial bias and blind spots.

My identity as a white researcher also shaped the data that was collected and analyzed in this research. First, as a University of Wisconsin-Madison graduate student working with esteemed professors, I was granted privileged access to the site and scope of the research project. Additionally, being a white researcher may have been an obstacle in data collection with my participants of color. Teachers of color may not have been comfortable opening up to a white researcher about things they found (un)supportive in the space, particularly if it was something I did that made them feel unsupported. Furthermore, some teachers of color have been tired of talking about racism, as they experience it in their personal lives daily. Finally, the way I analyzed data collected from teachers of color may have been skewed; as a white researcher, I may have interpreted things differently than a researcher of color would. To address these

potential limitations, I engaged in a number of efforts to ensure the trustworthiness of my data. Therefore, the validity checks were crucial in my data collection and analysis.

Lastly, just as the antiracist work at Eastwood and Lawrence have been shaped by the local context of Kingston, I, too, have been shaped by the same local context. Having lived in Kingston for most of my adult life, the liberal discourse I espouse and embody may also shape my research. For example, if teachers at Eastwood or Lawrence used liberal discourse to covertly stall antiracist efforts, I may not have been as attuned to these nuances as a researcher from a different local context. Thus, conversations with my research team (which consists of people who are not originally from Kingston) were crucial in analyzing teacher conversations and interactions in the professional learning spaces.

Validity/Trustworthiness Checks

It was my hope to gain trustworthiness with participants by being up front about my positionality as a white woman, teacher, and researcher at the onset of the study. As a former teacher in this school district, I understood the demands placed upon teachers. As a white teacher, I also understand that opening up about one's racial biases can be uncomfortable, particularly in a group of mixed races. I hoped that by sharing my own racist ideologies and the ways I have challenged myself to become a more racially aware teacher, white teachers felt more willing to open up. However, I was also aware that my presence as a white teacher and researcher may have been uncomfortable for teachers of color. As a white person with my own racial biases, I may have committed microaggressions toward teachers of color, causing them to distrust me. In all my interactions with teachers, I had to be keenly aware of my positionality and ensure I was not bringing harm to any of my research participants.

To ensure the trustworthiness (Shenton, 2004) of my data, I:

- provided all interview transcripts to participants and thematic understandings of data as they emerge
- Respondent validation: member checks (from interviews, field notes from professional development meetings, and field notes from teacher meetings)
- Triangulated data through interviews, teacher meetings, and field note observations
- Was thorough in my investigation of the topic through long-term involvement: spent a year and a half with Eastwood staff and seven months with Lawrence staff
- Kept meticulous notes and documents for data collection
- Recognized the limitations of this study

While conducting this study, I had a role as both a researcher and facilitator in the professional learning spaces. For most of the sessions, I had a small facilitation role (e.g., leading a discussion about an article teachers read, facilitating small-group discussions, leading teachers in a short activity), but for several of the sessions, I held a larger facilitation role (e.g., leading teachers in an antiracist literacy activity and facilitating whole-group discussions about the activity). My position as a facilitator in the professional learning spaces necessitated a methodological decision about data collection. When proposing this dissertation research, I was unsure that teachers would feel comfortable telling me about points of the session they felt were mishandled, troublesome, etc., especially since I had a role in facilitating the sessions. Therefore, the exit slips I provided participants to fill out (anonymously) addressed prompts about their learning. Though I can never fully know if participants were completely comfortable sharing their thoughts and critiques with me in interviews, there were some participant responses that indicated trust had been established. For example, when asked if there was anything challenging about the space (in a negative way) and how facilitators could have better supported the teacher's

learning, a white participant shared an example of how I had made her feel misunderstood when I challenged a comment she made related to students of color and their abilities. In three other separate interviews, a Latina teacher and two white teachers expressed they sometimes felt a disconnect between the lived experiences of teachers and the theoretical world the university facilitators brought to the sessions. These responses indicate that teachers felt comfortable sharing ways they did not feel supported in the professional learning space.

Lastly, to ensure validity in my data analysis and representation, I engaged in continuous member checks to ensure I accurately portrayed and interpreted participants' experiences in the professional learning spaces. I emailed participants' copies of my data analysis of their experiences and asked them to check for validity. In the event a teacher disagreed with what I wrote, we had a conversation about the point of disaccord to gain clarity. I revised sections accordingly after such conversations.

Methodological/Fieldwork Dilemmas and Personal Reflexivity

As I collected data, I practiced reflexive memoing and journaling to record my thoughts, reactions and feelings, and decision making. These exercises helped me make note of key tensions I experienced, follow up on important data points, and helped me with recall when writing this dissertation. When I began to write my dissertation, I was sure to include more of myself, how I came to this work, and how I experienced the antiracist work. It is my hope these reflections help me be more transparent with my readers. Furthermore, as a white researcher interested in antiracist education, these types of reflections and memos are important exercises in checking my positionality and helping me see how my position as the researcher shapes the way data is collected and analyzed, as well as the impetus behind the work.

As a white researcher focusing on antiracist work, it is important for me to be upfront about my positionality. There are several key points to make about who I am and why I focus my research on what I do. First, it is important to note that my focus on antiracist teacher learning is not on students of color, except in the way that their learning is bolstered by their teachers engaging in professional learning that is supportive to their development as antiracist educators. Second, in focusing on teachers of color as part of this dissertation, I seek to highlight their experiences in these professional learning spaces, spaces they have been historically marginalized in or completely erased from because of the focus on white teachers. Finally, as a white person interested in researching antiracist teacher learning, I feel the need to be very critical in my analysis of how whiteness typically gets centered in professional learning spaces. Though my critique is on whiteness and not white people, there are times where I must balance being critical and humanizing to my white participants in this study. For example, one white participant shared in group that, for some students of color, merely staying in the classroom is successful. When I challenged her on these low expectations, she felt misunderstood and not supported in the space. This is an important tension when working with white teachers in antiracist work; what they need to learn and grow as educators may not be the same as what they need to feel supported, though both are important to learn from this research.

However, my positionality could be incredibly problematic in this work. First, I directly benefit from my participants' (particularly my participants of color) stories and experiences given that they support the completion of my PhD and future publications. Additionally, race and class privilege have eliminated many of the barriers to pursuing a PhD that my participants likely would not have avoided if they were to pursue a PhD; while I am the one telling their stories, it is important to note the privilege that comes along with being the narrator. Additionally, while the

small stipend I have offered my participants for their invaluable time and insight is not sufficient, it is my hope that sharing their experiences will contribute to literature in the field that will further support teachers of color and their learning in professional learning spaces for antiracism. For these reasons, I have been strategic in selecting my dissertation committee members; the people I have asked to support me in this work have a fiercely critical eye for antiracist work and will hold me accountable for ways in which my position as a white researcher is going unchecked or potentially exploiting my participants. In addition, three of four committee members are researchers of color and understand the ways white supremacy and whiteness have shaped the field of education in warped and problematic ways. I thank them profoundly for helping hold me accountable in this work.

Findings: Teachers of Color

In this chapter, I focus on how teachers of color in the professional learning communities at Eastwood and Lawrence experienced their respective spaces. Desmond's case shows how facilitators lifting the burden of educating one's colleagues about racism allowed a teacher to hone his existing antiracist practice both within and outside of his school. In comparison, Camila's case highlights how the professional learning space supported a teacher to feel more agentic in disrupting internalized racism in her own practice and racism that surfaced at Eastwood. Lastly, Irene's case illustrates the ways teachers can feel empowered to enact antiracism in their teaching practice, as well as how the professional learning space affirmed the teacher's racial identity. After presenting each case, I discuss themes across the participants and the aspects of each professional learning space that contributed to participants' feelings of support, or lack thereof.

Desmond

The professional learning space at Eastwood began because of Desmond, a kindergarten teacher who identifies as African American. He called on university faculty for help after he and several other Black staff had been called the N-word by white students, and it was glaringly apparent that administrators and other white staff were unsure how to respond. In addition, Eastwood had a history of students exchanging racial slurs with little to no discussion from staff. Desmond felt university faculty were needed to help teach his administration and fellow staff about antiracist work; he hoped establishing a professional learning space for antiracism would support more teachers to recognize their own racist biases and develop an antiracist practice. To him, a key building block for antiracist work was for teachers to understand their racial biases,

unlearn racial stereotypes they had learned and internalized, and, in essence, “become part of the solution instead of being part of the problem” (1st Interview, 5/15/21).

Desmond’s commitment to antiracist education has been life-long and intergenerational. His parents were both teachers and activists in many antiracist organizations, such as the NAACP and Parents of African American Students (PAAS). Watching his parents fight racism in schools and in his own educational career inspired him to carry the torch into his teaching practice; as he said, “I was born into it” (Interview, 3/22/21). Desmond had experienced many forms of racism in KSD, both as a former student and teacher in the district. He shared openly about the racism he endured as a student; unfortunately, that racism extended into adulthood when he pursued a career as a teacher. He faced many barriers to becoming an educator. As he said, “I had to fight...to BE a teacher, I had to fight....so I learned a lot about being an antiracist educator from advocating for myself” (Interview, 3/22/21; see also Chou, 2007; Futrell, 1999; Dilworth, 1990, as cited in Villegas & Clewell, 1998; Bristol, 2015; Kohli, 2018). The racism Desmond experienced in pursuit of a teaching license did not end once he became a teacher, either:

I have racist administrators, racist teachers, you know, racist parents....So you’re dealing with it from all over, and the only people who aren’t racist are the kids, which is cool because that’s what I’m here for anyways (Interview, 3/22/21).

The racism Desmond experienced in all facets of life as a teacher in KSD was overwhelming: white families that pulled their children out of his class after finding out he was Black, administrators who refused to give him leadership opportunities despite him advocating for them, and colleagues who rebuked his antiracist stance by wearing American flag clothing the day after Desmond wore a “Black Lives Matter” shirt. However, all these incidents built up and

culminated in Desmond as a desperate desire for something to shift at Eastwood, something to occur that would change the ways students of color experienced school.

How the Space Shaped Desmond's Growth as an Antiracist Educator

For Desmond, the professional learning space with university faculty supported him in further developing his antiracist practice in several key ways, as shown in the blue highlighted areas of Figure 1. First, the facilitators fostered a learning environment that lifted the burden for Desmond of having to educate his colleagues about racism, allowing him to focus on his own learning. Additionally, the professional learning space built collegiality amongst the staff, which helped Desmond feel more agentic to disrupt racism at Eastwood. Finally, the professional learning space supported Desmond to hone his antiracist practice in ways that made enacting it both within and outside of Eastwood more impactful.

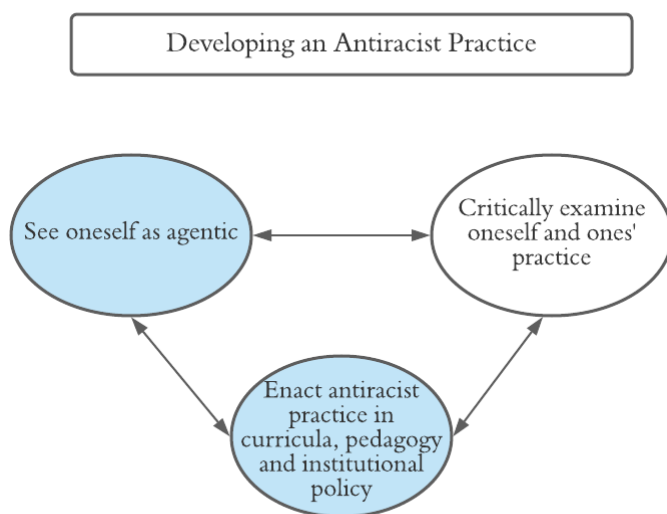


Figure 1

Seeing Himself as Agentic

Desmond felt the way the professional learning space was facilitated was monumental to his experience within the space. Having facilitators of color lead the professional learning space was a new experience for Desmond, and, in his opinion, drastically shaped the learning environment to feel more supportive to him. Given the predominance of white people in education, Desmond was accustomed to white facilitators conducting antiracist professional learning. In these situations, Desmond was often called on to help enlighten the white folx in the room about racism in education. In the university professional learning space, however, there were multiple facilitators of color who took on this responsibility. Desmond was especially appreciative of learning from Dr. Carl Grant, a Black university professor who has had a long legacy of antiracist work throughout his career. Desmond's sentiments about Dr. Grant were of deep admiration:

I mean, he's...almost like a living legend, you know. He's done a lot...so to have time...in his presence, to learn from him as another Black man, to me, is you know, priceless...there are certain people that just being in their presence is what you're looking for (Interview, 3/22/21).

Having Dr. Grant facilitate the professional learning space made Desmond feel comfortable and seen as a Black man. Desmond said, "He goes to the hospital, he sees discrimination like I do" (Interview, 3/22/21). Not only was it helpful to Desmond to have facilitators of color, but to have a Black facilitator specifically, someone who had shared life experiences with Desmond, was affirming. Not having to be the "authority" on racism or the onus of educating his colleagues freed Desmond up to be in the position of a learner. As he said, "There's very few rooms where I'm not the instructor...so that's why I like to place myself in a room with Carl and stuff, so I can

actually be the student. It's very exciting to me, it's very, very stimulating to me" (Interview, 3/22/21). For Desmond, being put in a position of learner in the professional learning space lifted a burden and allowed him to feel supported in his own growth rather than supporting others'.

It was not just having facilitators of color that helped Desmond feel supported in the professional learning space, but the ways the facilitators fostered a sense of community that made Desmond more agentic to disrupt racism at Eastwood and enact antiracism. According to Desmond, Dr. Grant helped all teachers feel comfortable and "able to express their feelings and their emotions...[without being] worried about repercussion" (Interview, 6/21/21). In KSD, many teachers were fearful of having conversations about race in their classrooms, getting the sense from the district that this topic was "off limits." Thus, the university facilitators began the Eastwood antiracist work with having teachers acknowledge that all teachers have racial bias. Teachers got in small groups and shared experiences of the first time they noticed race and racism in their lives. After discussing racist incidents in more depth, the facilitators connected these experiences to those of Eastwood students, asking teachers to see how racism manifests at Eastwood. That night, teachers were asked to go home and say "I am racist" in the mirror in order to begin taking accountability and become comfortable with acknowledging their own racism. According to Desmond, this activity fostered an environment in which teachers felt more comfortable to be vulnerable to open up and reflect. Other teachers in the space expressed the ability to be "deeply vulnerable" with one another, and Desmond attributes much of this feeling to this initial exercise. Desmond also felt that teachers acknowledging their racism was a crucial first step for the antiracist work at Eastwood. Therefore, having facilitators who made teachers feel as though they could be vulnerable enough to critically reflect on racial biases was key to helping Desmond feel supported in the antiracist work at Eastwood.

The sense of community fostered by the facilitators in the professional learning space made Desmond feel safer to agentically resist racism at Eastwood. Prior to coming to the space, Desmond tried having conversations with staff at Eastwood when he witnessed racism, but he was met with resistance, denial, or anger. However, having university facilitators explain the complexities of racism and encouraging teachers to admit their own role in racism at Eastwood opened the door for Desmond to continue these conversations. Seeing his coworkers shift from denial to a willingness to acknowledge racist practices was a crucial step toward antiracist transformation at Eastwood, and in Desmond's antiracist practice:

Teachers are more open to having that conversation and accepting...that what they said could have potentially caused harm, and I think that conversation is an easier conversation now because of the [professional learning space]...to me, that's huge! If [teachers] go from refusing to accept [that racism exists] to having a conversation about it, that seems like something (Interview, 3/22/21).

Being able to confront racist practices at Eastwood and have colleagues take ownership was key to helping Desmond feel supported in his antiracist practice. Importantly, a sense of personal safety was also achieved in the professional learning space. Desmond himself had experienced racism at the hands of fellow teachers, but he felt a shift after the year spent with other teachers in the school-university partnership. After telling me about the teacher who wore an American Flag dress the day after he wore a Black Lives Matter shirt to school five years ago, he stated confidently, "That wouldn't happen, right now, today. And the [professional learning space] probably had a lot to do with that not happening" (Interview, 3/22/21). Desmond felt a sense of personal safety that the chances of him experiencing racism from his colleagues were smaller as a result of the professional learning space. In turn, this made him feel more agentic to express his

personal views and denounce racism, such as wearing a Black Lives Matter shirt, without worrying about the response from other Eastwood staff.

While the end result of having critical conversations about racism with his colleagues was feeling safer to disrupt racism at Eastwood, it did not come without its challenges for Desmond. As many teachers of color experience in antiracist professional learning spaces, Desmond experienced Racial Battle Fatigue (RBF; e.g., Smith, 2010), particularly in the first sessions that focused on white teachers acknowledging their racial biases. After experiencing racism first-hand and witnessing it occur with students at Eastwood, Desmond felt validated when facilitators of the professional learning space explicitly taught facets of the racialized history of the United States and the ways racism shows up in schools, as well as pushed teachers to acknowledge racist beliefs that impact their teaching. However, these feelings of validation were accompanied by feelings of frustration as Desmond watched his colleagues shake their heads in disbelief, roll their eyes with a “tsk,” or struggle to provide examples of how racism occurred in their classrooms. As Desmond recalls,

I know there were some people that had a hard time initially accepting that they...might be racist or they might have racist tendencies To me, it was hard to listen to somebody that I knew had racist tendencies not accepting that they had racist tendencies ... So that was a little difficult ... I was glad someone was telling them, but by them not being aware and not being open, that was a little frustrating. Because they weren't admitting, you know, what I knew was true (Interview, 6/21/21).

To experience racism was painful enough, but to hear fellow teachers deny its existence was something Desmond found difficult. Not only was it frustrating to him, but spending so much time getting white teachers to “accept” racism took away from the group’s ability to move

forward. Rather than acknowledging the existence of racism as a baseline on the first day, several sessions were spent highlighting the history of racism, time that could have been spent on furthering teachers' antiracist practice. Although Desmond understood that these conversations were necessary and ultimately felt that they were effective in achieving a more antiracist climate at Eastwood, it was still challenging at times for Desmond to bear witness to them. Interestingly, when asked if he experienced any harm in the professional learning space with Eastwood teachers and university faculty, Desmond said he had not. When I pushed him on this situation specifically and asked if he considered hearing white colleagues deny racism to be harmful, he said,

You have to understand that, being Black, I run into these things on the daily. So, I mean (shrugs), I guess you could look at that as a form of harm, but for me specifically, it just bounced right off because that's just what you have to do to navigate this world as a Black man. That's just what it is, that's just part of the territory (Interview, 1/24/22).

While it is important to consider the ways that teachers of color often feel harmed by white folx in professional learning spaces for antiracism, Desmond's response also challenges the notion that teachers of color as a monolith who need emotional protection in these spaces. While it was certainly challenging and frustrating for Desmond to hear colleagues deny racist behaviors, he did not experience these conversations as emotionally harmful.

Desmond also faced some interpersonal challenges with his white principal, Lisa, which limited his agency to make antiracist changes at Eastwood. Despite Lisa's expressed commitment to antiracism, her resistance to critically reflecting on her own racial bias and the racist policies that had been created under her administration were problematic. Furthermore, Desmond had asked her on several occasions for more antiracist leadership opportunities at

Eastwood, but Lisa told him, in front of university facilitators, that she did not trust him. When asked by university facilitators why she did not trust Desmond, Lisa cited personal conflict that had nothing to do with the professional learning space or antiracist work Desmond sought to lead at Eastwood. The interpersonal dynamic with Lisa was never resolved and was certainly a limitation of the professional learning space and its support of Desmond as an antiracist educator. While Desmond did feel more agentic to disrupt racism at Eastwood, the action he felt he could take was limited by the interpersonal relationship with his principal.

Enacting Antiracist Practice

In addition to feeling safer to agentially disrupt racism he witnessed at Eastwood with his colleagues, Desmond felt the professional learning space supporting him in his capacity to enact antiracist practice. According to Desmond, he felt he was already enacting antiracism in his curricula and pedagogy prior to coming to the professional learning space. However, the space supported him in adding to his current repertoire of skills. For example, after the murder of George Floyd and the racial protests in the summer of 2020, the facilitators helped teachers make action plans for how to talk to their students about this racial unrest at the start of the school year. According to Desmond, he and his fellow kindergarten teammates used the action plans they created during the summer professional learning space right away in September. Having facilitators tackle difficult topics with Eastwood teachers and helping them bring this learning directly into their classrooms supported Desmond to hone his antiracist practice and that of his teaching teammates'. Furthermore, Desmond felt the professional learning space supported him in his capacity to enact antiracism outside of Eastwood. As an antiracist activist in the school district and surrounding community, Desmond had led many groups and professional workshops of his own, including a professional learning series on the 1619 project. Being part of the

Eastwood professional learning space further validated the need for antiracist teacher development and supported his growth as a leader in this movement:

While in the [professional learning space], I became the--I don't even know how to explain it, but I led at a higher rate than I've ever led in my career. And I give some of that to [Carl] for showing me and leading me ... and giving me the confidence that I needed to take that extra step (Interview 6/16/21).

Desmond went on to explain that he had been asked to speak on antiracist education at several events, and he felt being part of the professional learning community affirmed the competencies he had as an antiracist educator to share with others. The validation he gained in the professional learning space supported him to take on greater leadership roles not only at Eastwood, but also in the broader community in which he lived.

Desmond's case demonstrates the ways he felt supported to further develop his antiracist practice, particularly because of the way the professional learning space was facilitated.

Additionally, his case highlights how a teacher who was already taking antiracist action was able to see himself as more agentic to take antiracist action within and beyond his school community as a result of the modeling done for him in the space.

Camila

Camila, a Bilingual Resource Teacher at Eastwood, identifies as Latina. Like Desmond, Camila had both experienced and witnessed many forms of racism working in KSD for five years. After moving to the United States from Mexico in 2003, Camila found limited opportunities to use her teaching degree and six years of teaching experience, as her certification did not transfer to the state to which she moved. Barriers to pursuing teaching positions in KSD

pushed her to use her master's degree in social services, where she worked as a social worker in child protective services. After ten years in that position, Camila felt drawn back to the education system and applied to work as a special education assistant (SEA), and eventually, as a bilingual resource teacher on an emergency license in KSD. Despite KSD's commitment to recruiting and retaining teachers of color, and despite her vast experience and extensive educational background, Camila, like Desmond, found many barriers to becoming a teacher in the district. In fact, at the time of our first interview, Camila was still finishing up the necessary requirements for a license to teach in KSD after working there for almost six years.

Being a Latina teacher whose first language is Spanish in KSD was not easy for Camila. She outlined many experiences of isolation and racism. Having not experienced many incidents of racism prior to moving to the United States, these experiences were shocking to her. In particular, the lack of acknowledgement of her existence in the schools was one of the most egregious forms of racism Camila experienced in KSD:

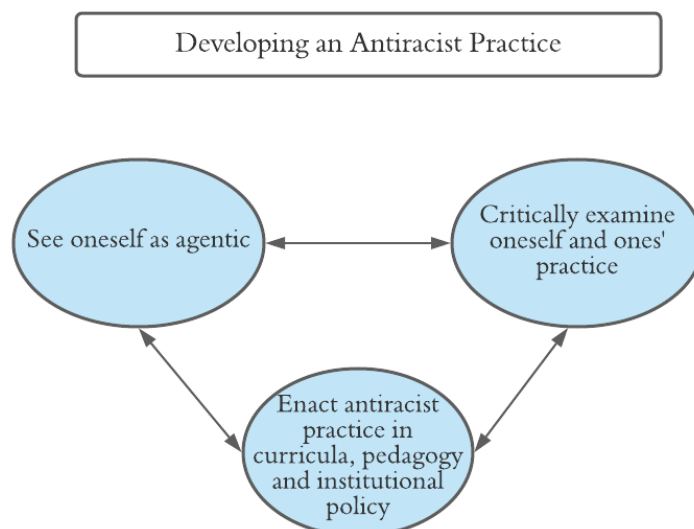
Most of the time, I felt like a ghost in the school, like I was the only [teacher of color]... I was [working as] a float SEA, so I went to a lot of schools for, like, long-term positions and stuff like that. I felt, really, like a ghost. I didn't connect with anybody. I was one of the only Black or Brown teachers, and I never got acknowledged. I remember passing by ... the principal many times a day and I never even got a good morning. I didn't even think, like, most [people] knew my name (Interview, 5/15/21).

Experiencing these types of racism herself was eye-opening for Camila, as she began to think about what her students of color must go through every day in KSD. She said, "If I feel like that as an educator, as an adult, how do [sic] a child feel being the only one, the only student of color, or one of the only ones?" (Interview, 5/15/21). Despite being able to empathize with her students

of color, however, she was unsure what power she had to take action against racism at Eastwood; after all, if an administrator did not even know her name, would they really support her in speaking out against a racist policy under their administration? Therefore, when a voluntary professional learning space for antiracism arose at Eastwood, Camila was eager to join.

How the Space Shaped Camila’s Growth as an Antiracist Educator

According to Camila, the professional learning space at Eastwood was an “incredibly important” space that helped shape her antiracist teaching practice. She felt the voluntary professional learning space with university facilitators helped her develop all three facets of an antiracist teaching practice to varying degrees. The professional learning community helped Camila feel a greater sense of agency to speak up against institutional and systemic racism she witnessed, experienced, and inadvertently perpetuated in her own practice at Eastwood. In addition, being part of the professional learning space supported Camila to rethink her own practice and make important antiracist changes to both what she taught and how she taught it.



Seeing Herself as Agentic

Because of the ways white supremacy permeates every facet of American schooling (Vaught, 2011), Camila felt little agency to disrupt the varying forms of racism at Eastwood prior to coming to the professional learning space with university faculty. However, Camila's perception changed when the facilitators of the space discussed forms of racism in schools and challenged the ways racism was going unchecked at Eastwood. In one session, teachers spoke about the pressure they are under to maintain silence in the hallways. After further discussion, facilitators found out that students at Eastwood were expected to walk "like scholars," which meant walking with their hands behind their back in silence. Dr. Grant exclaimed, "Oh, come on! That is *prison*!" (Field notes, 7/16/19). However, the white principal, Lisa, did not back down; instead, she insisted that walking silently in the hallways was a way to keep students safe: "Without lines in the hallways, we have fights in the hall" (Field notes, 7/16/19). Many teachers, particularly white teachers, agreed with her. One white teacher said, "Maybe I'm so buried in my white fragility that I can't think of another way to move students safely in a school" (Field notes, 7/16/19). Despite the fact that Camila may have disagreed with the hallway policy, she felt she lacked power to disrupt the status quo. During the conversation, she said, "These are some of the things that are beyond us as teachers" (Field notes, 7/16/19). Camila did not feel it was her "place" as a teacher to go against a schoolwide policy and feared repercussions from administration for not enforcing the hallway policy. This concern was substantiated by comments made by her principal, Lisa, in the conversation, who said with conviction, "Oh, I'm judging if the hallways are loud. I'll say that" (Field notes, 7/16/19).

After a lengthy discussion about what Eastwood's hallway policy meant for students, how it dehumanized students and eroded school climate and culture, most of the staff in the professional learning space began to see how racialized policies such as this one are aimed at

controlling students of color. Hearing the facilitators illustrate these forms of racism that Camila had experienced and seeing the understanding on her colleagues' faces made her feel validated. She remembered her feelings that day, saying, "You know what? I'm not wrong. I'm not crazy" (Interview, 5/15/21). Despite knowing that racism was happening at Eastwood, Camila felt relieved to have the facilitators highlight the ways that white supremacy and racism surface in discussions about taken-for-granted school policies and procedures. These conversations in the moment helped Camila think deeply about what her role was in upholding racist systems at Eastwood. Soon, she began to scrutinize other commonplace practices in her school community and bring them to the attention of her colleagues and administrator. In addition, Camila left these conversations in the professional learning space feeling more agentic:

So then reflecting on some of those things--I feel empowered. A lot of times you don't feel that empowerment because you don't have someone to give you that empowerment...You know, a lot of times, even though you know something is wrong, you don't want to, you don't always want to pull the racist flag, because then every time, 'Oh, here it comes, because she's a teacher of color, she's just pulling the racist flag all the time.' And then, we were able to identify that [the hallway policy] was actually racist, you know, being able to just say it...So I feel like we were, everybody who was in the coalition, we were really ready for a change, and the change was empowerment and advocacy, because if we don't do it, well, nobody else is going to do it (Interview, 5/15/21).

Racism had become so ingrained in Camila's everyday experience as a teacher of color in KSD that speaking up against it had come to feel like "pulling the race card." However, having facilitators surface racist policies and practices at Eastwood helped Camila feel empowered to

explicitly name racism without repercussion or dismissal from white colleagues. In fact, the professional learning space fostered a sense of collegiality and unity for Camila. Rather than thinking she was going to be disregarded when speaking up about racism, she felt power in knowing her colleagues were also accountable to this work:

And then also knowing that you have allies too, that it was then you know it's not just your fight but the whole school, that you have allies at school that support you and in in the [space] too, being able to come back to the meetings and share an experience or ask questions about, 'What do you think about this? Should I say something about this?' Just being able to share your experiences with somebody else that have the knowledge and that you feel comfortable with, it was very powerful for a lot of us (Interview, 5/15/21).

It was a transformative shift for Camila to go from feeling a forced resignation about the presence of racism at Eastwood to feeling as though she had antiracist allies that would support her in speaking up about racism at their school and that she could problem-solve with.

Critically Examining Herself and Her Practice

In addition to feeling more agentic as an antiracist educator, the professional learning space supported Camila to critically examine internalized racism in her own thoughts and actions with students at Eastwood. For Camila, the first step was acknowledging the racialized ideologies she had internalized in the first place. The conversations facilitators and Eastwood staff engaged in about race and racism at the onset of the professional learning space were not only eye-opening to Camila, but fostered a shared trust so that teachers could be vulnerable with one another. During one of the first sessions in the summer of 2019, facilitators asked the staff to share their stories of first noticing race and racism in their lives. People broke off in small groups of three or four people and shared these stories with one another. Afterward, during the whole-

group discussion, the facilitators asked the staff if anyone wanted to share their experience.

Later, they asked staff what they noticed about people's experiences with race, and what these stories had to do with their work with students at Eastwood. During these conversations, Camila began to build trust with her colleagues, saying:

I remember some of our first meetings we talked about vulnerability and putting ourselves in those uncomfortable positions, or even talking about those uncomfortable topics...I feel like we started talking freely and openly, without feeling judged or like, just speaking our truth! And that was, I feel like that was really powerful (Interview, 5/15/21).

The types of conversations had in the professional learning space were not the types of conversations Eastwood staff had ever had with one another during their staff professional development; for some of them, they may have never spoken about when they first noticed race or racism in their lives. Thus, these conversations were powerful and fostered a sense of trust that led people, in Camila's view, to be able to speak "their truth" without fear of what other people would think of them. Because of this shared trust, Camila felt she could do the difficult work of critically examining herself and the ways she had internalized racial biases about students of color. When she first made the realization of these biases, she said, "Being able to recognize that was sort of like, a sort of shock. Because it's hard to accept" (Interview, 5/15/21). However, it was not until Camila did the work of critically examining herself and her practice that she was able to think about how these beliefs impacted her work as a teacher and work to disrupt them. Later, she said, "Reflecting and looking back, of course we all have those times of judgment and biases that we don't even realize. And we need to call it out" (Interview, 5/15/21). Despite being

a teacher of color and experiencing racism herself, these deep conversations with her colleagues supported her to acknowledge her own racial biases.

In addition to conversations about race and racism, facilitators asked staff to read literature about the ways racism gets reinscribed in U.S. classrooms during many of the sessions. The readings ranged in focus, from theoretical perspectives on the historical underpinnings of racism in schools and how antiblackness shapes students' of color experiences in U.S. schools, to more practice-oriented pieces, such as rethinking teacher-student relationships in more humanizing and caring ways and how teachers can talk to their students about race and racism. Camila was grateful for these readings, saying that they opened her eyes to things she had begun to become inured to. Camila talked about how these readings helped her become aware of racism she was unknowingly perpetuating in her practice having been surrounded by white teachers for so long:

The articles that we [read were] really, really relevant to read and just really important for us, even though...some of us were black and brown teachers; I feel like being surrounded by a bunch of...white teachers, we tend to sort of mimic or follow what they do, because they're the majority. And learning that, it was sort of like a wake-up call (Interview 5/15/21).

Here, Camila is talking about how literature in the professional learning space helped her critically examine her own practice, even though she was a Latina woman and had experienced racism firsthand. Because of the ways white supremacy works to reproduce itself, even teachers of color can internalize white supremacist ways of thinking and being in schools. Particularly in situations where teachers of color are isolated and have been shut down repeatedly for speaking up against racism, one can see how teachers of color might begin to internalize and uphold racist

policies and procedures, often unknowingly. Whiteness becomes so easily centered in schools that even teachers of color who recognize racism can begin to “go with the flow” and stop naming it. For Camila, having literature that anchored this learning was important for her to both recognize the ways in which white supremacy had crept into her practice and in offering antiracist ways of rethinking the ways she engaged with her students. She began to recognize that her students shared the same sentiments of invisibility at school that Camila faced from white colleagues and administration. She described the racism her students faced, saying,

I guess we’re so used to just demand things from our students without giving an explanation. And our students are so used to just hearing directions and instructions and demands from us that they don’t, they don’t question... a lot of our Black and Brown students are used to--don’t speak up, don’t question, don’t ask--because you become invisible, you don’t matter...and I don’t know, like it becomes sort of the culture. So being able to hear from the [facilitators] that it wasn’t okay...it was impactful for me as an educator (Interview, 5/15/21).

Just as Camila had become accustomed to the ways racism had permeated her everyday lived experience as a Latina woman in KSD, she was unaware of the ways white supremacy had shaped her classroom practice and the ways she engaged with students. After reading literature on centering love and care in teacher-student relationships, she saw the juxtaposition of these relationships with traditional classroom dynamics based on hierarchies of power. Additionally, she recognized how vastly different her relationships with students had to become in order to be an antiracist teacher.

Enacting Antiracist Practice

Critically examining her practice and feeling agentic to make antiracist change at Eastwood led to Camila enact antiracist practice in several ways. Because the facilitators explicitly named examples of institutional racism at Eastwood (examples Camila knew to be true but had not felt comfortable confronting with her coworkers), the professional learning community came together to hold one another accountable in disrupting racism. They knew they would fall back into familiar habits and routines that were entrenched in racism if they did not work together to unravel racism when they saw it rearing its head. This accountability amongst staff helped Camila feel more secure in addressing racism with her colleagues; if they were all accountable to calling out racism as a common practice, it felt much safer for Camila to take action. As Camila explained,

Just to have a space where I wasn't the only one who thought all these things were wrong, it was important...And making the change and speaking up [were important]. We talked about, "If you see [racism], say something." And that was something, because how many times we have seen, as Black and Brown educators...a lot of racist injustices, but we tend to look the other [way] just because, I don't know...it's sort of like the norm, that's what most people do (Interview, 5/15/21).

The ubiquity of racist policies and actions at Eastwood, coupled with the racism Camila had experienced herself and the fear of being a Latina teacher who "pulled the race card," had made taking antiracist action at Eastwood feel nearly impossible to Camila. Prior to the professional learning space, Camila felt calling out racism to be a futile exercise. However, the professional learning space gave her license to speak up in important ways with her administration and fellow teachers, people who were all accountable to the same mantra: "If you see something, say something."

The “if you see something, say something” motto the professional learning space took on was an important call to antiracist action for all staff at Eastwood. However, for Camila, being encouraged by the professional learning community to be on the lookout for racism at Eastwood caused Camila to critically examine her own teaching practice and to make substantial changes in her teaching. According to Camila, many students of color at Eastwood had stopped speaking up about the racism they experienced because issues of racism had been historically ignored by school faculty. However, the ongoing call from facilitators to acknowledge the racism present in their own practice and ways of working with students spurred Camila to teach her students to speak out against racism at Eastwood. She realized she needed to explicitly teach her students who had been historically silenced to speak their truth. In her words,

Being able to hear from the [facilitators] that this wasn’t okay...it was impactful for me as an educator. And I noticed also a change, sort of like surprise, from our students when we started giving them the space to really speak up and express themselves, which is something that most of them weren’t even used to (Interview, 5/15/21).

Being part of the professional learning space helped Camila see that there were other ways of engaging with students, ways that had nothing to do with dominance and control. Because of this, she made the important shift to give her students more autonomy and voice in their learning. Humanizing her students by giving them a say in what they learned and be able to “speak up and express themselves” was an important antiracist shift to Camila’s teaching practice, a change she felt proud of.

Camila’s case shows how a Latina teacher was supported to critically examine racialized ideologies she believed and that permeated her practice. Furthermore, it demonstrates the

feelings of empowerment that led her to see herself as agentic and capable of disrupting racism at her school.

Irene

Irene, a kindergarten teacher at Lawrence Elementary, identifies as Mexican American. Irene's family moved to the United States from Mexico when Irene was a baby. From the ages of nine to eighteen years old, Irene was raised in a small, predominantly white town. In her words, "We didn't really discuss race at all, because it was just *white*" (Interview, 6/16/21). Irene had big dreams for what an antiracist school community would look like, many of which came from what she did or did not receive from her own teachers growing up as an historically marginalized student in an all-white space. For example, Irene prided herself on forming authentic relationships with students and families, something she felt was crucial for all teachers to do in an antiracist school. This intention to foster family relationships as a means of achieving student and family belonging came from her own unbelonging in school:

I think the biggest thing that I always come with is that, you know, the positive relationships and connections make a world of a difference for families to feel like [they belong]. My parents didn't always feel like they could come to school because they felt that their language was just a barrier. And so having to come to musical performances, they just felt kind of like out of place. And so, I've always carried that with me as a teacher, how I would want somebody to, you know, a parent, student...to feel included? (Interview, 6/16/21)

Having experienced the pain of existing outside the white, monolingual norms of education shaped Irene's practice drastically when she had a classroom of her own. In some of our

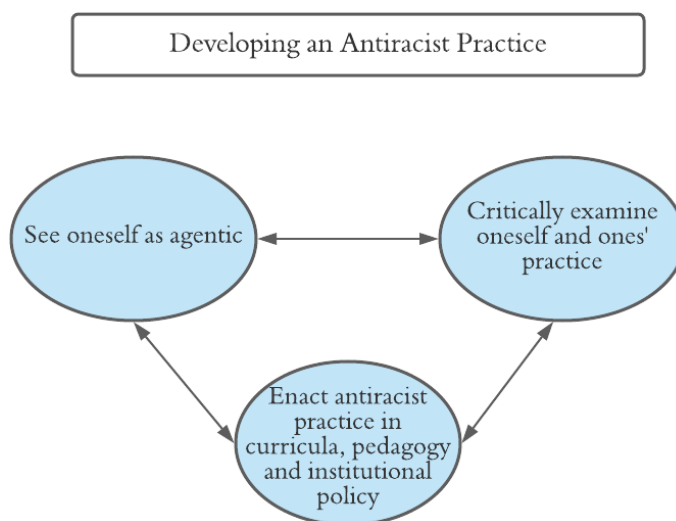
interviews together, she recalled what it felt like to have teachers who fostered the sense of belonging she tried to emulate with her students:

When I was younger, growing up in school where it was just, you know, very, very white, and my family not being able to help me with my homework because it was all in English, I think it was-- the things that stood out to me, the practice-- was the teacher genuinely wanting to reach out and say, 'Hey, how can I help? I want your child to feel like they belong, and they are important.' And I always want my family and my students to know that I do care about them; it's not just a school-teacher [relationship], this is it, the partnership in that sense--it really is everything, outside of school (Interview, 6/16/21).

Despite this lived experience as a Mexican-American student in U.S. schools, Irene came to the professional learning space wanting to know more about what antiracist teaching looked like in practice. In addition, she was passionate about putting Lawrence “on the map” as an expressly antiracist school community.

How the Space Shaped Irene’s Growth as an Antiracist Educator

According to Irene, the professional learning space at Lawrence helped her put ideas of what antiracist education was into practice. Additionally, it supported her in realizing how her identity as a Mexican-American teacher could affirm her students of color and foster belonging in her classroom. Lastly, the professional learning space launched the beginnings of making Lawrence an antiracist school, something Irene desired but felt unable to do on her own.



Critically Examining Herself and Her Practice

Irene felt the professional learning space offered her time to critically think about and reconceptualize her teaching practice and her identity as an antiracist educator. Though there were times in the professional learning space where Irene felt uncomfortable, she felt the discomfort was supportive of her learning and necessary for her to grow as an antiracist educator. In particular, Dr. Grant “called out” teachers at times, pointedly asking them to think more deeply about a subject or explain their thinking to the group. When Dr. Grant “called out” Irene, asking her to explain how she might go about selecting a text to read with students, she felt being put on the spot made her think more deeply. In her words,

Like I said, it feels uncomfortable, but it really nudges you to like, ‘Okay, I’m thinking about this, and how do I now apply it to my practice?’ (Interview, 6/16/21)...[I]t never feels *great* to get, quote ‘grilled,’ but I think it also was good...I enjoy those moments, because it challenges you. And so when [Carl] and I were discussing back and forth, I was like, ‘Okay, what? I’m not sure what he’s trying to get at.’ But it pushed me a little

more, like ‘Okay, this is the stuff that I wanted and want to continue when I’m doing this independently.’ Because that’s what the whole point of this work is...to really make you think outside of the box (Interview, 8/4/21).

To Irene, being put “on the spot” forced her to think, prompted her to solidify thoughts she had about antiracism, and did not let her retreat into familiar ways of conceptualizing education. To feel supported, Irene felt she needed to be pushed to think in new ways.

The professional learning space helped Irene rethink many commonplace curricular practices in her classroom. For example, university facilitators taught Lawrence teachers about the racist underpinnings of educational grouping practices that many teachers in the United States employ. The facilitators showed teachers how these practices are rooted in eugenics and reconstitute racial hierarchies in schools, positioning white learners at the top and students of color at the bottom. This was new learning for most teachers, including Irene:

I’m still pondering how we’re going to [rethink groups] this coming year with how we see “smart.” And I thought that was very powerful...we just never really, like, look too deep [at these practices] because we just get into our routines, we’ve just been used to doing it this way, and that’s how we do it--we’ve grouped by [doing] running records, it’s like, ‘This is where they’re at’...So I’m living with things I never really, I think I probably dabbled with, but never really fully thought about on a deeper level (Interview, 8/4/21).

For many years, Irene (and most other teachers at Lawrence) had grouped her students into reading groups based on an assessment administered at the beginning of the year called a running record. The assessment focuses largely on a student’s ability to decode a text accurately. Students with similar scores on running records are grouped together and are often kept in these groups for months at a time. However, the professional learning community pushed teachers to

think about new ways of grouping students, such as according to interest or skill need. The facilitators also helped teachers see how these groupings have historically served to reinforce stereotypes of white students as “high,” “smart,” and “advanced,” leaving students of color to be stereotypically grouped as “low,” “dumb,” or “struggling.” Though Irene had used groups daily in her teaching practice, she had never thought “on a deeper level” about how this may have served to reinscribe racism in her classroom. As a result of the professional learning space, Irene stated she and her teammates had stopped grouping students by running record scores and began some of the strategies shared by facilitators.

The time spent critically examining racialized ideologies in the professional learning space was challenging for Irene, especially when she engaged in critical reflection about her own identity as a Mexican-American teacher. During the first session of the summer retreat with Lawrence staff, university facilitators asked people to recall the first time they noticed race and racism in their lives. Irene felt that these conversations helped her feel comfortable and vulnerable to share her life story with fellow staff. In addition, university facilitators modeled vulnerability with Lawrence staff when admitting racist beliefs they held about certain student groups; this exercise was done in the hope that teachers would feel comfortable admitting to their own bias and begin steps to address it. These exercises were very powerful for Irene, but they were not easy. She expressed how she challenged herself to dig deeper into how she had suppressed her own identity for the sake of assimilation. She recalls this painful realization, saying, “I can’t believe...for the longest time, I was ashamed of my language” (Interview, 8/4/21). She also saw herself in her students and the ways they felt pressure to “fit in” by not speaking their first language, saying, “It hits home when you hear a former student of yours also going through the same thing, and how it took [the professional learning space] to be like, ‘AH!

If only he knew how powerful it is to know [another language]!’ (Interview, 8/4/21). Despite being a person of color, the professional learning space pushed Irene to acknowledge the ways internalized racism had operated to suppress her culture throughout her life. Additionally, she began to think deeply about what messages she wanted to instill to her students of color about being proud of their culture (Interview, 8/4/21). In her words,

So in that sense it's it was like icky to admit like, ‘What have I been doing all the time?’...I've just been trying to embrace my own culture. And part of it was....we had to assimilate because we were in a town that didn't have any of those things...And just, I think over time, you get used to those things that you don't even think about anymore. And just, in some ways, you have assimilated so much...and then, again, you don't think about until you're an adult like, why did I resent my parents? I mean it was just so many things that, I wanted to be just like my friends, and my friends had no sense of my culture, because they've never been exposed to it really. So, [I've] just kind of been grappling with that. I've been listening to more of my own music...my Mexican music that I grew up on. So I think that was a challenge myself, not necessarily because you know, others were making--there was no uncomfortable feelings, but it was in my own reflection of myself as a human and then like how do I take that on as an educator role?

In this thoughtful reflection, Irene shares that, although she did not find the professional learning space to be uncomfortable as a result of others' words or actions, it challenged her to reckon with her identity. In many ways, she feels she grew both as a person and as an educator, because these moments of critical reflection of self forced her to think about her students and how she might support them to view their culture with pride. While helping students be proud of their cultural

heritage is only one piece of antiracist teacher practice, Irene found it to be of the utmost importance in her experience in the professional learning space. She experienced this journey in reclaiming her identity as “emotional.” In her words, “I’ve just been working on myself and what my identity is” (Interview, 8/4/21). Though Irene’s challenge of confronting the ways she had suppressed her racial identity seems personal, it has great implications for how teachers of color can be supported in professional learning spaces for antiracism. As Irene worked through her racial identity, she discussed having unsettling feelings, feelings she primarily processed on her own. Although she did ultimately work through these feelings and have positive identity development as an end result, this may not have been the case for all teachers of color in the space.

Enacting Antiracist Practice

Despite the difficult recognition that she had suppressed and internalized racist beliefs about her culture, Irene felt this space to confront these ideologies was helpful to her antiracist practice and in supporting her students. Shortly after the summer learning sessions, Irene reached out to a former student to wish him a happy birthday. Although this student and his family speak Spanish at home, Irene typically left voicemails in English. However, this time around, she felt compelled to leave the message in Spanish. To her, this felt like an important shift: “So just little things like that really do make a difference. And I’m being more cognizant about myself and how it impacts my teaching” (Interview, 8/4/21). Additionally, Irene felt the concrete ties made from theory to practice in the professional learning space supported her to enact antiracist practice in her instruction. Several sessions of the professional learning space aimed to help teachers critically examine their curricula and pedagogical practices that led Irene to make changes to her practice. For example, in one session, one of the university facilitators engaged

Lawrence teachers in a “math talk.” In this simulation, teachers played the part of students and the university facilitator was the teacher. Students were given a math problem and were asked to solve it without paper and pencil. During the math discussion simulation, one student shared a strategy to solve the problem. If other students had different strategies, they were encouraged to share. Many voices were encouraged, and students’ thinking was on display, rather than a “correct” or “efficient” solution. In the activity debrief, the facilitator urged Lawrence teachers to think about pedagogical moves she had made that reframed whose voices “counted” in the space and who was seen as “smart” in the activity. Using math in antiracist teacher learning was beneficial to Irene, because, in her words, “I didn’t even think about how math was even connected to...antiracist work” (Interview, 6/16/21). After the math talk, Irene shifted how she facilitated math discussions in her classroom. Umbrella ideas such as honoring all students’ ideas and voices over one “right way” of doing mathematics was important for Irene to reconceptualize how she taught. Irene recalls this shift, giving an example of how she encourages students to explain their different strategies: “It’s like, ‘I don’t know how you did it that way, can you tell us more?’ [Different strategies were] always accepted and we celebrate...each other’s answers (Interview, 6/16/21). Going through the math talk as an adult made Irene think back to her own experiences as a bilingual student in math and the embarrassment she felt at times:

I remember we were doing a lesson on thousands and how to...read a number in the thousands. And it wasn’t clicking, I just was-- I was also learning the language. So I just remember [getting] called on, and the teacher was like, ‘Well say it in Spanish.’ And I’m like, ‘This is my first time also learning...the concept itself, so I couldn’t say it! And I just felt so, so extremely, like down, because you know other kids were like, ‘She’s dumb’ because I couldn’t read it in English, I was still learning...I definitely felt like down, and

just like, ‘I’m dumb.’ A lot of the math stuff, like hating math, started then, because I remember first grade loving it and then second grade was just [exhales] *rough* (Interview, 8/4/21).

The professional learning space helped Irene rethink how racism occurs not just in what is taught, but in how teachers interact with students. Having strategies for engaging with her students in antiracist pedagogical ways helped Irene humanize her students in ways she had not been granted in her own education.

Irene also made antiracist changes to her literacy instruction as a result of the professional learning space. During a session focused on antiracist literacy instruction, a university facilitator modeled how antiracism could be used in both literacy curricula and pedagogy. First, the facilitator engaged teachers in an interactive read aloud, modeling how teachers can pose critical questions that get students to think about race and racism in texts (e.g. “I’m noticing that, even though all these children are laughing at this little girl for being from a different country and thinking her name sounds ‘weird,’ none of the adults are stepping in to help the little girl. Have you ever noticed this happen at your school?”). Throughout the exercise, the facilitator highlighted the ways the text was problematic, encouraging teachers to view the literature they use with students through a critical lens. Afterward, the facilitator spoke about the antiracist pedagogical moves that teachers can engage in during literacy instruction, such as focusing on reading rather than on monitoring bodies through dominance and control. Finally, the facilitator walked teachers through how to have a conversation about racism using a children’s text and gave teachers these guiding questions to think about before choosing a text, such as “What social constructs and injustice are stated (or implied) in this text that students may need help unpacking and disrupting?” (Field notes, 7/28/21).

Activities such as the math talk and interactive read aloud modeled for teachers how to enact antiracist practice in literacy and supported Irene to rethink her own literacy practice. According to her, she found it “very powerful” to see how texts could be used to develop students’ critical consciousness despite not being “antiracist” texts. Furthermore, it reaffirmed the pushback she had about district curriculum. During her time in KSD, Irene had questioned lesson plans and curricular initiatives handed down from the district office. However, though she questioned the merit and purpose of certain curricula, she had felt a sense of guilt or worry that she might be in trouble if district leaders found out she was not implementing curriculum with fidelity. Additionally, she did not feel she had the space or time to question district initiatives with her colleagues during the school year; especially during the pandemic, she knew other teachers’ capacity to push back against district protocols were limited. Therefore, going against the grain and implementing lessons she knew were culturally responsive for her students led her to feel isolated. After being part of the professional learning space with university facilitators, however, Irene felt a sense of solidarity with other Lawrence teachers that their collective mission of becoming an antiracist school community depended on each teacher enacting antiracist practice; to do this, they needed the professional learning space to collaborate, share ideas, and discuss how to disrupt the district curriculum they were handed. This also highlights how teachers often have to see themselves as agentic in order to enact antiracist change. Because antiracism goes against the status quo, Irene felt that enacting antiracist practice was a form of “push back” on district initiatives. The professional learning space helped her to see herself as agentic to engage in this necessary pushback. Despite knowing she needed to disrupt what the district was telling her to do, there was strength in numbers that helped her feel empowered to make more changes to her practice.

Seeing Herself as Agentic

Irene felt the professional learning space also encouraged her to be more agentic in her teaching practice at Lawrence. Irene felt the culture of being “called out” to speak up in the learning space supported her to feel a sense of ownership in disrupting racism outside the space. To her, the professional learning space emboldened her to question district-wide initiatives, curriculum mandates, and policies that did not serve students in antiracist ways. For example, there were times when she spoke out at district meetings about literacy curriculum rollout, challenging leaders to rethink their purpose. She recalls asking, “Why are we providing these lessons with these texts?...What are we going to do to make it meaningful?” (Interview, 8/4/21). Irene was passionate about no longer giving lip service to the idea of becoming an antiracist school community and making sure she and other Lawrence teachers were “walking the walk” (Interview, 6/16/21). For example, she talked about speaking up at school-based leadership team meetings, saying,

Things I’ve changed is just continuing that speaking up part. Like, it doesn’t always feel good, because you know, sometimes I am speaking on behalf of everybody, and that is part of the thing I have felt more--I’m taking that leadership role...[and] if I keep saying I’m going to speak up, what does that look like for all those who may not necessarily feel comfortable yet to do that? (Interview, 6/16/21)

Prior to pandemic learning, Irene did not consider herself someone who spoke out against district policies. However, she began to see the ways students of color were marginalized by virtual schooling and how little KSD seemed to do to ensure teachers were equitable in their teaching. Additionally, there were times when Irene felt the district was asking teachers to do things that were not in the best interest of students. For example, Irene shared that the district told teachers

they were not allowed to distribute tangible materials to their students during virtual learning, citing covid safety as the reason. However, Irene and the other kindergarten teachers were unsettled by this, as they knew young children learned best through hands-on learning. Additionally, Irene knew it was inequitable to expect students as young as five to be able to navigate the internet on their own while many of their parents worked all day; she knew they would need access to paper-and-pencil resources in times when they could not log on to virtual school. In this scenario, Irene felt the professional learning space fostered her sense of agency to push back on the district and advocate for what her students needed:

We just decided, like, well we're going to keep going, to advocate. It was like, 'Oh, but we already got a no.' And we had to rethink that, we had to say, '*For now*, we got a no *for now*.' But like really, how are we going to do this? (Interview, 6/16/21)

Irene and her team continued to push against the district, stating that they would ensure safety protocols while delivering supplies to their students and their families. In the end, Irene and her teammates successfully pushed back against district protocols and found ways to safely deliver necessary learning materials to their students and their families. As a result of the professional learning space and “being called out,” Irene felt a sense of duty to antiracist efforts and felt compelled to speak out when district mandates clashed with her understanding of antiracist education. She began to see herself as a powerful agent of antiracist change outside of the space.

Irene’s case demonstrates how teachers of color can be supported to disrupt internalized racism and the ways these ideologies shape one’s practice. Additionally, her case shows how explicit modeling of antiracist curricula and pedagogy can support teachers to make these changes to their own teaching practice.

Cross-Case Analysis

After analyzing how Desmond, Camila and Irene experienced their respective professional learning spaces for antiracism, several themes emerged across their experiences. In this cross-case analysis, I discuss the similarities and differences in how the participants felt supported (or not) to develop antiracist practice through critical examination of their ideologies and practice, enacting antiracist practice, and seeing themselves as agentic, highlighting the ways this study contributes to literature on teacher learning for antiracism.

Critical Examination of Self and One's Practice

While many professional learning spaces for antiracism explicitly focus on examining teacher ideologies about racism, these activities are typically geared toward white teachers acknowledging their racist beliefs. However, some researchers argue these exercises are important for all teachers, including teachers of color, to participate in because all teachers can internalize racist beliefs (see Brown, 2014). For Camila and Irene in this study, engaging in discussions about how racism showed up in their schools and in their own practice uncovered internalized racism both women were unaware existed. For Irene, these conversations led to uncomfortable realizations that growing up in an all-white town and having to assimilate to fit into her community may have led to internalized racism about her own culture, resenting aspects of her identity that set her apart from a white “norm.” These conversations were important for her to recognize, not just for her personal identity as a Mexican and Spanish-speaking teacher, but also for the ways these ideologies transferred to her interactions with students and families. After becoming cognizant of this internalized racism, Irene began to make changes to the ways she communicated with families and positioned her identity to students. It was her goal to model for students that being a person of color and being bilingual were two identities to be proud of; it

was her hope to disrupt the cycle of internalized racism with her students. Similarly, the conversations had during one of the first summer sessions about when teachers first noticed race or racism in their lives fostered a shared trust that allowed Camila to dig deep and critically examine the racist beliefs she harbored. Furthermore, the conversations about racist ideologies and school practices spurred Camila to recognize the ways she had internalized racism in her teaching practice (e.g. authoritative teaching rather than centering student voice and knowledge and upholding racist policies focused on controlling student bodies). She described her realization of internalized racism as a “wake-up call” and explained how being surrounded by whiteness had caused her to mimic white supremacy in thought and action. For Camila, coming to the United States and following the lead of white teachers may have inadvertently meant falling in line with white supremacy, even when she was not aware she was doing so. Conversations about racism in the professional learning space helped her realize the ways internalized racism had warped her teaching.

Desmond did not say that conversations about acknowledging racist ideologies were beneficial to his development as an antiracist teacher; in fact, he stated, “I mean, the [activity] didn’t have me leaving thinking I was a racist” (Interview, 3/22/21). While Desmond agreed that these types of conversations were important to moving forward with antiracist change at Eastwood, and that these activities served to build trust and vulnerability amongst staff, they ultimately did not help him further develop an antiracist teaching practice. Although Desmond, Camila and Irene are all people of color, it is clear that Camila and Irene felt activities focused on examining racialized ideologies were more supportive to developing their practice than Desmond is. This finding is important and suggests that facilitators need to pay careful attention to the varying racial backgrounds of teachers of color; rather than treating them as a monolith,

their needs are different based on their life experiences and the way their racial identities mediate their learning. For example, perhaps Desmond's identity as a Black man made it more difficult to ignore the ways white supremacy operated in his daily life, as antiblackness permeated much of it; assimilation was not an opportunity afforded him like it was to Irene. Additionally, coming from a family of antiracist activists likely modeled what disrupting racism in education looked like, thus helping him identify racist thoughts and actions readily in his day-to-day life. Unlike Camila and Irene who found conversations about racist ideologies in the professional learning space supportive in disrupting internalized racism, Desmond did not gain much personal growth in these discussions. The teachers in this study came to the professional learning spaces with unique experiences, experiences that must be treated as such in order for teachers of color to be supported to develop antiracist teaching practice in the ways that are most meaningful to them.

Enacting Antiracist Practice

Desmond, Camila and Irene felt the professional learning spaces surfaced the ways racism manifests in commonplace schooling practices and modeled for the participants how to take action against these practices. While all of the participants in this study would agree that racism was ubiquitous in their schools, the conversations had in the professional learning space helped them see explicit examples of institutional and systemic racism and collaborate with school staff to change them. The professional learning space helped the participants see the covert ways racism operated in ways they complied with; school procedures they thought were race-neutral actively served to reinscribe racism in their schools (see Lewis & Diamond, 2015). In the case of Eastwood, both Camila and Desmond had been compliant in following the hallway policy of enforcing zero voices in the halls and asking students to walk with their hands behind their backs. They followed this protocol because it was intended to "keep order" and decrease the

amount of “behavior issues” that occurred between students. However, in adhering to the hallway policy, Black students got reprimanded more often than other students (as reported in schoolwide behavior data), and the policy reinforced white supremacist ideas of control over Black bodies (see Yancy, 2008). The professional learning space at Eastwood helped teachers such as Camila and Desmond see that they could question school policies and be part of collective change to transform them. Similarly, in the professional learning space at Lawrence Elementary, Irene was pushed to rethink grouping practices in her classroom. Prior to participating in the professional learning space, she believed the purpose of grouping students in levels based on standardized assessments was to target their individual needs with similar peers. However, the facilitators helped Irene see the true nature of classroom grouping, which was rooted in eugenics and served to reinscribe racial hierarchies in schools. After being helped to reconceptualize a common teaching practice in many U.S. classrooms, Irene was able to make antiracist changes to her literacy practice.

The professional learning spaces for antiracism at Eastwood and Lawrence Elementary went beyond focusing on individual teacher beliefs and pushed school faculty to understand racism as institutional and systemic (see also Vaught & Castagno, 2008; Chubbuck, 2010; Kishimoto, 2018). The participants in this study gained a deeper understanding of racism in their school contexts; they began to see racism as existing outside of individuals, and operating at institutional and systemic levels that they were unknowingly upholding. Rather than following a prescribed curriculum of antiracist teacher development, the facilitators focused on issues specific to Eastwood and Lawrence; thus, the space supported Eastwood teachers to take action specific to their school context. While it is true that, without careful examination of how seemingly race-neutral policies (such as hallway policies or classroom grouping practices)

function to uphold racism, schools persist in reproducing racial harm to students of color, this study suggests that conversations about systemic and institutional racism may be more impactful when connected to teachers' school contexts. Rather than expecting teachers to translate isolated discussions of institutional racism into organized antiracist action at their schools, spending time in a professional learning space actually organizing for antiracist change against context-specific policies may be more fruitful.

Seeing Oneself As Agentic

This study contributes to the literature on teacher learning for antiracism that highlights the need for professional learning spaces to go beyond discussions of race and racism and for teachers to be supported in developing agency to take action against racism in their schools (Ball & Forzani, 2009; Pollock et al., 2010). All three participants felt more agentic to take antiracist action at the conclusion of this study. Both Desmond and Irene spoke about the way they were positioned (see Louie, 2017) in the group and how it impacted their sense of agency in antiracist work. For Desmond, this positioning came from both his colleagues and university facilitators. After his experiences with racism at Eastwood, his call to university faculty for support spurred the establishment of the professional learning space. To see so many of his colleagues voluntarily join the space and commit to establishing Eastwood as an antiracist school affirmed his ability to make powerful changes in his school community. Furthermore, university facilitators positioned Desmond as a competent, founding member of the space, bolstering his confidence in the professional learning space and in leading antiracist work outside of Eastwood. By ensuring he was included in collaborative planning meetings and debriefing meetings about the direction of the antiracist work at Eastwood, university facilitators reinforced Desmond's identity as an antiracist leader. Similarly, Irene felt the university facilitators positioned her as

someone capable of making important change with her students at Lawrence, pushing her to see herself as a dynamic force of antiracism. After the summer work with Lawrence teachers that focused more explicitly on curricula and pedagogy, Irene felt she and her colleagues were positioned as capable of making antiracist changes to their practice. When teachers would resist disrupting commonplace classroom practices, facilitators would push back and ask teachers why they felt they did not have the autonomy to make antiracist change. After having these conversations, Irene began to exercise more agency in her teaching practice: pushing back on district initiatives, choosing texts outside the district literacy curriculum, changing traditional grouping practices, and shifting the ways she interacted with students pedagogically (e.g. facilitating discussions differently in mathematics and speaking Spanish to her students more frequently). For Irene, the concrete work of identifying necessary antiracist changes in her practice and having university facilitators position her as agentic to make these changes supported her to transform curricula and pedagogy. These changes are important to the research on teacher learning for antiracism, as they highlight the ways teachers must be positioned as agentic to address racism in their schools (Chubbuck, 2010; Welton et al., 2018) and their collective accountability to antiracist work (Vaught & Castagno, 2008).

The relationships formed in the professional learning spaces at Eastwood and Lawrence Elementary also served as a resource (see Louie, 2017) to help participants feel more agentic to take antiracist action. For example, collaborating with university faculty of color whom he greatly admired served as a valuable resource for Desmond. Having university professors supporting Eastwood in their antiracist work made Desmond feel safer in addressing racism at Eastwood; as issues arose at the school, he knew he could reach out to the facilitators at any time and ask them for support. Furthermore, the collegiality built in the professional learning space

helped Desmond feel safer to disrupt racism. Desmond was clear that it did not always feel safe to speak out against racism at Eastwood prior to the establishment of the professional learning space; however, a sense of shared trust fostered a sense of safety that he could begin to take more action. This points to an important finding in this study; while literature posits that teachers must feel agentic to disrupt racism (e.g. Milner & Laughter, 2015), there must be conditions that foster agency with teachers in professional learning spaces for antiracism. If teachers do not feel safe to take action against racism (e.g. fearing losing their job for going against district protocols, fearing uncomfortable backlash from coworkers, etc.), it is unlikely they will do so. Like Desmond, Camila felt the relationships she built with teachers in the professional learning space fostered a sense of agency to disrupt racism at Eastwood. Camila noted the power she felt in having so many of her Eastwood colleagues attend the voluntary professional learning space; having strength in numbers helped Camila feel supported in making antiracist change at Eastwood. Camila's experience is mirrored in the literature on *Critical Professional Development (CDP)* (Kohli et al., 2015) which asserts that racial justice work and antiracist school change requires *unity*, a shared sense of camaraderie and collaboration amongst staff. Much of Camila's sense of agency developed when she felt united to confront racism with her colleagues. Additionally, Camila discovered in the professional learning space how much power she had to disrupt racism in her everyday interactions with students. Prior to the professional learning space at Eastwood, Camila felt that disrupting racism meant explicitly calling it out with fellow school staff, and she worried about being dismissed as someone who was just "pulling the race card." However, having facilitators of color explicitly name racism at Eastwood in discussions lifted the burden of Camila having to name it with her colleagues and also opened the door to having these conversations as a staff. While the professional learning space helped

her feel safer in addressing racism with other Eastwood staff, it also helped her see the ways antiracist pedagogy could be implemented into anything that she taught. Camila began to see how she could humanize her teaching by giving her students voice and centering their experiences in her classroom, something she found powerful not only for her students, but for herself as well. Whether it was in her own practice or with colleagues, Camila felt the professional learning space highlighted the agency she had to take antiracist change in a system in which she had previously felt powerless.

Findings: White Teachers

In this chapter, I examine the experiences of white teachers in the professional learning communities at Eastwood and Lawrence. Alyssa's case shows a teacher feeling supported to grow in all three aspects of developing an antiracist teaching practice: feeling agentic to disrupt racism, critically examining oneself and one's practice, and enacting antiracism. In contrast, Claire's case demonstrates a teacher feeling supported to engage in deeper critical examination of self, but not supported to feel more agentic or be able to readily enact antiracist practice. Lastly, Paige's case highlights a teacher who felt supported to critically examine her teaching practice and begin enacting it in her classroom in small ways, but was left with a lot of questions about antiracist teaching that made enacting it on a larger scale difficult. Within each case, I describe the aspects of the professional learning spaces that felt supportive and unsupportive to each teacher. After presenting each case, I discuss themes that emerged across the cases.

Alyssa

Alyssa, a white special education teacher at Eastwood, joined the professional learning space during the 2019 - 2020 school year. She had been a teacher for three years and was on the School-Based Leadership Team (SBLT) at Eastwood when several of the university facilitators came to speak to the team about leadership decisions at the school. SBLT was comprised of representatives from all facets of Eastwood, and Alyssa represented the special education department. When university faculty said they would be offering another summer professional learning space, Alyssa was eager to sign up. She had heard powerful testimonies from her colleagues about the previous summer space, "Carl's Kitchen Coalition":

I heard it was so amazing, and I heard that it especially helped one of my white colleagues really progress in her understanding of how she was racist and...how she could readjust and align her teaching to be antiracist. So that kind of brought me [to the space]. I also think I have had just an inherent desire to be better, and I think the more that I've learned about myself and how I grew up--and just how white people in Wisconsin grow up--just understanding that I have so much learning and relearning to do. So I think...when I see an opportunity that I believe is worth my while, I really want to engage in it and help have it support me (Interview, 5/26/21).

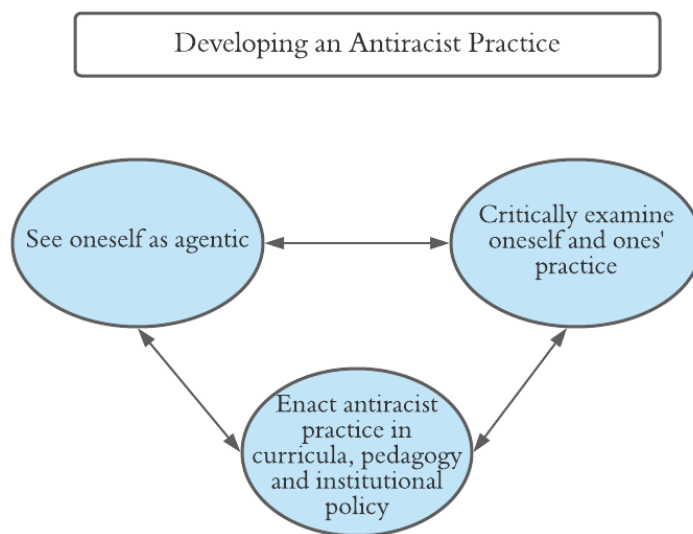
Growing up in predominantly white spaces in Wisconsin, Alyssa felt she had a lot to learn about race and racism. Her journey in becoming an antiracist educator and her understanding of what antiracism meant had evolved over the years. As a college student at a Wisconsin state university, Alyssa was a coordinator for alternative spring break trips. At the time, she felt the program had social justice aims, organizing groups of people to volunteer in areas “in need” across the United States. However, looking back, Alyssa realized how alternative break programs such as the one she led, particularly when organized and executed by predominantly white college students, are steeped in white saviorism. Alyssa recounted several moments of racial awakening similar to this one, and stated she was continuously reflecting on and readjusting her own ideologies as well as her understanding of systems and structures in education. She had become an active member in KSD’s teacher union and took advantage of the racial justice workshops they offered. Additionally, she made a point to seek out coworkers of color and fellow white colleagues committed to antiracism whom she could engage in thoughtful conversation with. Alyssa attended book studies at her school about Black history and sought opportunities to be in discussion with school leadership about necessary antiracist change at Eastwood.

Alyssa's desire to pursue more learning opportunities about antiracism was also spurred by two instances of racial awakening early on in her career in KSD. In one instance, Alyssa and several other Eastwood colleagues were giving a presentation at a weekly professional development meeting. During the presentation, one of Alyssa's colleagues used a term that several staff of color found racist and offensive. After the teachers of color spoke to Lisa, their principal, Lisa called a meeting with Alyssa and the other presenters, asking them to think more carefully about the term used and how it was a racist epithet. Alyssa recalled this meeting, saying she responded with white fragility; she felt guilty and ashamed, and she realized that she needed to do more learning about racial justice. In another situation, Alyssa was sitting in a teacher union meeting having conversations about racism in schools. White teachers in the meeting started crying in response to being called out on racist behavior, and Alyssa felt frustrated that the people of color in the room felt they had to comfort the white people, people who had committed harm in the first place. In that moment, Alyssa realized that it was not up to her colleagues of color to make her feel better when she was called out on racist behavior. In her words, "You have to sit in that uncomfortablity and really grow from it" (Interview, 5/26/21). Therefore, when the professional learning space at Eastwood offered another summer learning opportunity, Alyssa was certain she wanted to join.

How the Space Shaped Alyssa's Growth as an Antiracist Educator

Alyssa felt the professional learning space at Eastwood supported her to critically examine her teaching practice and the ways she reproduced racism as a white teacher in her school community. Additionally, she gained a deeper understanding of the systemic and institutional racism at Eastwood and began to see herself as agentic to disrupt it when she saw it.

Finally, she found concrete ties to her antiracist teaching practice particularly supportive in the professional learning space.



Critical Examination of Herself and Her Practice

The professional learning space at Eastwood helped Alyssa uncover and scrutinize racist beliefs she had about students of color and how those beliefs impacted her teaching. As someone who had been passionate about this work prior to joining the professional learning space, Alyssa was surprised to have realized racial biases she still harbored through the various conversations the group had:

There's definitely been some moments. I have a lot of unconscious preconceived notions about my families... I thought that [a student of color] in my class, her dad would never be involved because her mom set up the first conference with me. I was like, 'Okay, so mom's going to be my main contact.' And then dad picks her up from school every day! Dad is the one who reads with her. And I'm like, 'Why did I think that? Why did I think that he wasn't going to be involved?'...The fact that I *already* thought that in August in

my first communications with families, I mean– I like *constantly* have to think about how I’m thinking about my families (Interview, 1/26/22).

Alyssa began to understand that the way she thought about students and the implicit bias she had against students of color and their families impacted the ways she interacted with them and their families. Rather than ignoring these beliefs and believing she treated all students the same, Alyssa began to notice and sit with these racialized assumptions, determined to disrupt old patterns of thinking. The realization that she still had unchecked racist beliefs about students of color was an uncomfortable one for Alyssa, but also highlighted the necessary work of iterative reflection in antiracist work.

One of the most powerful supports for Alyssa in the professional learning space at Eastwood was having a space to discuss and critically examine the ways racism manifested at Eastwood. Alyssa felt these conversations shone a light on the institutional and systemic racism that persist in education and helped her critically examine the systems and policies in schools that reproduce racism intentionally, rather than perceiving racism as individual beliefs held by “bad” people. These discussions helped her to identify her complicity in upholding racism in her role as a teacher at Eastwood. Prior to coming to the space, Alyssa had seen some of the disparities that existed between schools that served more affluent students in KSD and Eastwood, a school that served predominantly low-income students of color. She saw the resources a more affluent school had access to compared to her students, and she was shocked that disparities like that could exist within one district. However, as she learned in the professional learning space about the ways systemic racism operates, she began to have a deeper understanding of racism:

This is a huge thing I took away, that everything is racist...it has helped me adjust my thinking and that every system is perfectly designed to have the outcome that it wants. So

like the education system was created for white people—white men, especially, straight men—to succeed, and for Black [people], queer Black women, Hispanic women, etc. to not do as well... it is perfectly designed to get whatever outcome that it wants...so I think it gave me a great understanding of the systems (Interview, 5/26/21).

The explicit discussions in the professional learning space of Eurocentric and whitecentric norms of education that reproduce racism in schools supported Alyssa to recognize the hidden forms of institutional racism in schools (e.g. classroom management that focuses on dominance and control). Importantly, Alyssa said the deep thinking she did in the professional learning space was not limited to the once-a-month professional learning sessions with UW faculty, but extended into her day-to-day interactions with her principal and other staff. There were enough staff members from Eastwood who were part of the space that the ideas shared in the group were discussed frequently during school hours:

It wasn't just the UW group, it was that my principal was also pushing me. We were working *together* on it. I would work with [a person from the professional learning space] and I would think about our relationship we had from the [UW/Eastwood group], and we would rethink how we were going through our work (Interview, 1/26/22).

The relationships Alyssa formed with her colleagues in the professional learning space at Eastwood were deeper and more profound than they had been prior to the establishment of the space. In the instance above, Alyssa is referring to the relationship she had with one of her colleagues and how it had transformed to be one of mutual trust, one that supported them to push one another in doing important antiracist work. While these conversations about racism were not always comfortable, Alyssa felt the trust built in the professional learning space amongst

Eastwood staff fostered an environment in which she felt safer having conversation about racism:

[T]hat trust and knowing that like ‘Okay, I might say something’ or... if I made a mistake, I know [my fellow staff] will come to me, and they will speak to me about it, and we can work together. And like we can have a real conversation about how race-- racism manifests at [Eastwood] and we can do something about it (Interview, 5/26/21).

Alyssa felt that a sense of shared trust had been established in the space, and this helped her feel more at ease knowing that, even though she might not always say the right thing, her colleagues would feel open to address issues with her. In her words, she was able to be “deeply vulnerable.” Additionally, having her principal, Lisa, be part of the space and supporting the work helped hold Alyssa accountable in day-to-day conversations about race and racism at Eastwood. In one situation, Alyssa recalls going to Lisa about feeling unsafe around one of her students, a Black student who had a disability and who lashed out physically toward Alyssa:

I went to Lisa and told her I was scared of this one child. She told me the narrative we have around Black boys who have disabilities is super important with how we treat them and how others treat them. If we criminalize them, it’s just going to perpetuate the system we live in. So that really made me think too (Interview, 1/26/22).

Rather than leaving the conversations in the professional learning space, Alyssa’s growth as an antiracist educator was ongoing and constant, both in and out of the space, because of the accountability she found from her colleagues and principal. Had the voluntary space been comprised of six teachers engaging in a book study about antiracism, this likely would not have been the case; however, having more than half of the Eastwood staff and her principal engaged in antiracist work with Alyssa supported her to extend her learning beyond the professional

learning space. Importantly, after the UW/Eastwood partnership came to a close because of an administrative change, Alyssa shared, “The last two years, we haven’t had the conversations we used to have at Eastwood” (Interview, 1/26/22).

Although she found discussions about racism in the professional learning space beneficial to her thinking, there were times when Alyssa wanted more feedback or validation from the facilitators that the teachers were on the right track in their thinking. She recounted some conversations that seemed to go in circles with teachers sharing the same sentiments:

I sometimes wished the facilitators—I’m just thinking Carl, because he was one of our main [facilitators], I was like, ‘Carl, are we saying the right things? Is what we’re saying right? Because I felt like it would just go on and on and on...and I’d be like, ‘Okay, what is the point? What are we trying to get to here?’ (Interview, 6/17/21).

While the goal of the facilitators in the professional learning space was to create a dialogic environment in which Eastwood staff came together to develop a shared vision of what antiracism meant at Eastwood, Alyssa wished that discussions would have had more pointed teaching from the facilitators. Although she valued the space and time to discuss racism and antiracism with her colleagues, she also wished for more explicit confirmation from facilitators that they were on the right track in their thinking.

Seeing Herself as Agentic

As a result of the conversations about racism at Eastwood, Alyssa began to see her responsibility in scrutinizing and taking action against institutional and systemic racism at Eastwood. While in the professional learning space, Alyssa found her voice to be an advocate for what she believed to be right in antiracist education. In the second session of the summer professional learning space, some teachers and Lisa, the white principal at Eastwood, expressed

concerns about making the antiracist work at Eastwood about all students of color; instead, they felt the work should focus explicitly on Black students, as they perceived Black students to have the worst experience of students of color at Eastwood. Alyssa vehemently agreed with this sentiment; to Alyssa, being an antiracist educator meant being explicitly pro-Black. In the summer 2020 retreat, facilitators had teachers read khiana ross' article, "Call It What it Is: Antiblackness" (2020) to discuss George Floyd's murder in depth. This article resonated with Alyssa; reading about the ontological positioning of enslaved Black folx as property in the United States and how antiblackness has positioned Black people at the bottom of the racial hierarchy societally resonated with what she saw Black children at Eastwood experience. In this way, Alyssa felt the most important way to address racism at Eastwood was to put the majority focus on supporting Black students (in her words, being "pro-Black"):

Culturally responsive teaching and being responsive to all cultures is our goal, absolutely. But, like, we cannot say that we're being pro-Black if we continue to just say we need to be inclusive of *all* ethnicities and *all* races. So I felt like if we're specifically talking about Black kids, but we need to specifically talk about Black children and how we're going to teach them....we have to specifically name and specifically address the way that we treat Black children in [KSD]. I'm not even talking worldwide—when you look at the data, it is Black kids in [Kingston] who are not succeeding (Interview, 5/26/21; Interview, 6/17/21).

Although the facilitators thought it was important that the professional learning space focused on all students of color for Eastwood to be a truly antiracist school, Alyssa did not feel this focus explicitly addressed the most egregious forms of racism that occurred at Eastwood, which happened to Black students. Therefore, Alyssa felt it was her responsibility to push back on facilitators. In a small breakout room, Alyssa challenged her university facilitator, Dr. Pacheco,

and said that the focus of the professional learning space needed to be on Black students at Eastwood. According to Alyssa, this moment of challenging Dr. Pacheco was very pivotal to her perception of agency in the name of antiracism at Eastwood:

I remember a moment where I felt like even in the coalition, we were like not being pro-Black...And Mariana was--I really pushed back against what she was talking about...I think I gained that ability, to be able to like push back, even people who are like experts. And like now, this year especially, since we have new administration, I've been like, 'I don't think this is right.' And I've been able to speak up more...I don't always have to be go-with-the-flow. I can say, 'This is wrong and we need to rethink about this.' So I think that was really valuable (Interview, 5/26/21).

For Alyssa, it did not matter that the person facilitating her group was a university professor; she pushed back regardless of Dr. Pacheco's status because she felt it was necessary for antiracist change at Eastwood.

The agency Alyssa exercised in the professional learning space extended into her interactions with colleagues outside of the space. For example, Alyssa shared an experience of challenging her white colleagues in a professional development meeting. In the meeting, some teachers expressed that "loud" learning environments hinder students' ability to perform well on assessments. Alyssa first listened intently to the teachers, something the professional learning space also helped her grow in, and then posed questions to disrupt some of the racist thinking she felt white teachers were sharing. She said,

'I really want to think about when we're talking about a quiet environment because I'm thinking about when our students are at home playing a video game, I know it's not quiet, but they are still so interested in what they're doing.' So I said, 'I agree that sometimes

our environments can be a distraction, I agree that that is one part of it. But we can't expect our classrooms to be silent because, like I said, that is our whitecentric view, to sit on the carpet quietly. But our students, if they care about what they're learning they're going to be engaged. So we have to think about the tasks and what we're teaching them' (Interview, 5/26/21).

Alyssa went on to say that she further challenged the assessments teachers were talking about in the first place, highlighting the racism present in standardized assessments. Alyssa felt she needed to speak up to her colleagues and challenge whitecentric views of classroom management and racism in standardized tests. To her, these teachers were putting the onus of student "achievement" on their students of color, rather than reflecting on how engaging their teaching was or how racially biased the assessments were they were using. Being able to disrupt deficit and racist thinking with her colleagues was something Alyssa attributed to being part of the professional learning space, saying,

I was able to speak up to them, because I was like, '*I know this.*' I know we cannot expect a silent room sitting at your desk. So it's helped me with how I pose questions to white people, understanding white people, and how, you know, just to talk about [racism] is important (Interview, 5/26/21).

The regular conversations about racism in the professional learning space, along with the modeling from facilitators about how to speak in ways that get teachers to listen and reflect rather than become defensive, helped Alyssa exercise her agency. When asked what about the professional learning space cultivated this sense of agency, she said,

I felt like it was a safe space. I honestly think my [principal] being part of it made me feel comfortable...[the facilitators] created spaces for us to be honest and for us to be

vulnerable, and for us to grow. And they pushed me, too—like I felt like they cared about me, and I felt like people in the coalition cared about me and me as an educator and making me better. Like it wasn't a PD that I went to and I listened to and we talked for 10 minutes. It was like okay, your input is valuable and talking about your experience is valuable, so I think that was really great... I think watching Carl... just like the way he spoke—it was like, 'Okay, you know we've got to get real about this.' Doing that, I think really modeled for me the ability to call out things. Because you know, what he does is, he'll listen and then he'll be like, 'Oh, okay,' like thinking about things. And so that's kind of what I do now, I'm thinking, and then I'm like, let's refocus or let's bring it back to being antiracist.' So I think that really modeled it for me (Interview, 5/26/21).

It mattered to Alyssa that she felt cared for by facilitators and her colleagues. The prolonged time university facilitators had volunteered to spend with her school focusing on their antiracist work made Alyssa feel supported in ways she had never felt in one-off professional development seminars. Therefore, when it came time to be “pushed” in her thinking, Alyssa took this as a signal that the facilitators cared about her growth as an antiracist educator rather than becoming defensive. In addition, facilitators such as Dr. Grant modeled how to thoughtfully push back on people's thinking. After watching him listen carefully to teachers and push back when he felt they needed to be challenged, Alyssa learned how to do the same with her colleagues. In situations such as the conversation about quiet learning environments with other Eastwood staff, Alyssa felt prepared to disrupt racism because of the way it had been modeled for her in the professional learning space.

Enacting Antiracist Practice

Though Alyssa's most powerful take-aways from the professional learning space at

Eastwood were engaging in critical examination of racism in her school and in becoming more agentic to disrupt racism, she did make antiracist changes to her teaching practice. In particular, Alyssa felt the action plans teachers made to discuss the racial uprisings of the summer of 2020 in response to George Floyd's murder were important to her work with her students. As a white teacher, discussing race was not a common practice for Alyssa prior to going into the education field. Therefore, when issues of race arose in her classroom, Alyssa often felt unprepared to address them and have conversations with students. She appreciated engaging in dialogue with other teachers and university facilitators about how to discuss race and racism with her students, saying, "That space was really good because, honestly, I didn't really know how to talk about it" (Interview, 6/17/21). To support teachers in having these conversations about race with their students, facilitators asked them to read articles such as "Brown Kids Can't Be in Our Club: Teaching 6 Year Olds About Race" (Tenorio, 2018) and various chapters of the *The New Teacher Book: Finding Purpose, Balance, and Hope During Your First Years in the Classroom* (Christensen, Karp, Peterson & Moè, 2019). These readings helped teachers understand not only why conversations about race and racism are important in antiracist classrooms, but also how to talk to students about these issues in humanizing ways. Additionally, Alyssa felt the action plan she created with her teaching teammates helped her frame the language she would use with students to discuss police brutality and racism, topics she previously felt too sensitive or difficult to talk about in her classroom. In her words, "I think the language we used, having that ready to go in my brain was really, really useful" (Interview, 6/17/21). However, it is important to note that these action plans did not fully support Alyssa to have further conversations about racism with her students. For example, when a student wrote, "I wish Black Lives Matter would stop," during a class lesson, Alyssa was caught off guard and unsure how to respond. Despite having

planned discussions about racism while in the professional learning space, having these conversations as a white teacher was still something she did not feel fully equipped to navigate.

Though Alyssa felt the action plans in the professional learning space helped her enact antiracist practice at Eastwood, there were times when she wished the connections to practice were made more explicitly by university facilitators. She became frustrated when conversations felt too “philosophical” and did not connect to concrete practice; in those moments, it felt as though the university facilitators lacked a firm understanding of the lived reality of the staff at Eastwood. Alyssa gave an example of an SBLT meeting where the facilitators broke Eastwood staff into groups and gave teachers a piece of paper with a process for solving problems printed on it. Though she could not recall the exact problem that was proposed to solve, she remembers feeling it was surface-level and centered on white teacher’s feelings rather than establishing antiracist practices at Eastwood. A key problem to her during that time was students of color being triggered by things teachers were doing, but those issues were not brought up in the meeting at all. In her words,

I was just like, ‘These people are coming in, they have no idea what the hell is going on in the school.’ At that time, like, I was being assaulted every day, all the time, and it was really physically and emotionally exhausting. And so I presented an idea about how we’re supporting special ed[ucation] students with their physical needs, and [another staff member] was like, ‘This is not the purpose of this activity.’ And I felt really attacked. I was like well, this is...one of the number one problems in our school right now, like understanding behavior, understanding the reason why it’s happening, and fixing it in ourselves and fixing our systems for our students...I felt like you all were coming in from the outside and you’d never really experienced what it was like at [Eastwood], especially

like in the pits, you know, like down there getting dirty in there. And then I just felt like we were... so philosophical– which is amazing– but like, this is the reality, like, this is my eight hours a day, I did this. And then I'm going to go and talk about this dream world almost...I just remember [Lisa] was always like, 'We're building a house, we're building a house.' While I'm like, 'We're missing the pillars of the house because we're not actually talking about the thing!' So that was a time where I was just like well, I honestly was like F this, I'm over this today, and I don't feel like this is an important conversation. Because if we're not going to talk about the real shit, then why am I here? (Interview, 6/17/21)

While Alyssa understood that theoretical framings of antiracist education were important to the work, she also felt like there was a balance to be struck between theory and practice, a balance she did not always feel the facilitators achieved. Additionally, Alyssa felt the facilitators did not always frame conversations with an understanding of what it was like to be a teacher at Eastwood. Instead, they were university faculty looking down from their ivory tower, not “in the pits” with the Eastwood teachers who interacted with students every day. She felt the professional learning space would have been more beneficial if the facilitators had interacted more frequently with teachers at Eastwood in their classrooms, observing how they interacted with students. If this had been the case, Alyssa thought that more ties to concrete practice could have been made to better support teachers’ antiracist practice.

Alyssa’s case highlights the ways in which relationship-building and shared trust can support teachers to be vulnerable in their critical examination of themselves and their practice. Furthermore, her case demonstrates how explicit modeling of disrupting racism can lead teachers to feel more agentic to disrupt it themselves. Lastly, it sheds light on the tension between theory

and practice in professional learning spaces for antiracism and how this tension can impede teachers' feelings of support in developing an antiracist practice.

Claire

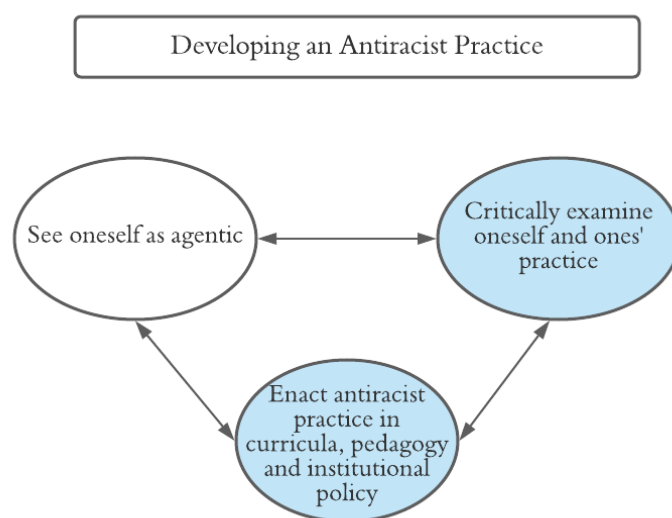
Claire is a white special education teacher at Lawrence and was in her first year of teaching when the school-university partnership began at her school. She grew up in a suburb of one of the largest cities in Wisconsin; despite its proximity to this metropolitan area, the town she grew up in was very white. Claire's understanding of racism was primarily through the few friends of color she had in her school. She recalls a moment in elementary school where a Black friend of hers had tried to explain racist thinking, saying that not all Black people acted a certain way or fit a stereotype, just like "not all white people are serial killers" (Interview, 3/3/22). In this moment, Claire began to recognize that she had been conditioned to believe stereotypes about people of color and the veil of colorblindness was lifted. She recognized that almost everyone around her looked the same, and wondered what it must have felt like for the few people of color she had in her classes.

When Claire went to college at UW-Madison, she had more moments of racial awakening that caused her to think more critically about the society in which she lived. For example, courses in the teacher preparation program shone a light on institutional racism, something that was never discussed in her upbringing or in her schooling. She appreciated these conversations and felt more prepared to become a special education teacher in a city like Kingston. However, though Claire had learned about the overrepresentation of Black children in special education throughout her teacher preparation program, she was shocked to "see it firsthand" when her entire caseload her first year was Black boys. During her first year of

teaching, she began to witness the ways racism operated to privilege white students and oppress children of color within U.S. schools. Therefore, when the UW facilitators joined their schoolwide professional development days in an effort to establish schoolwide antiracist practices at Lawrence, she was hopeful about what she might learn.

How the Space Shaped Claire's Growth as an Antiracist Educator

Claire felt the professional learning space at Eastwood most solidly supported her to engage in deeper critical examination and unpacking of racist ideologies she had, as well as how racism showed up in her practice and in her school. While she took some things away from the professional learning space to implement into her teaching practice, she ultimately felt like the demands placed on her by the district to teach certain content and her position as a novice teacher at Lawrence made it difficult to see herself as agentic to disrupt racism or enact antiracism in profound ways.



Critically Examine Herself and Her Practice

Claire felt that the professional learning space most strongly supported her in critically examining herself and her teaching practice. She felt the conversations about historical racism,

institutional racism, and critical care of students of color in the professional learning space made her think more deeply about her own beliefs and the ways she thinks about students and their families:

These conversations just really force me to think outside of my own just little bubble, and how what I'm doing, and what I'm saying, and my actions and my thoughts—*especially* my thoughts— affect how I'm presenting myself to students... I feel like that's the biggest takeaway— it was, it's really a space to think about and reflect on your thoughts and actions. And I think my thoughts were the biggest thing, especially during summer, like the things that I was thinking about students and how I really need to like--even just the thoughts that I'm having can affect how students are perceiving me, or how my actions are perceived (Interview, 9/2/21)

More specifically, the professional learning space pushed Claire to recognize racial biases she held toward her students of color. Recognizing and disrupting these thoughts was uncomfortable for her, but part of the necessary work of developing an antiracist teaching practice. She explained how the space helped her identify the negative assumptions she had made about students of color and their families:

I think a big part of what this work has done for me is really...the importance of not assuming something [about students of color]...not assuming dad is in one place or mom is in one place, or that they don't care, you know what I mean? Or if they get their kids to school late, you know, or their attendance [is poor]-- but like really trying hard to get those thoughts out of my head and not assume something based on very minimal information. And I think part of that is human nature, in a sense, but I also think some of it—a lot of it—is conditioned into us through the society that we live in. So I think I've

really, *really* tried to stop myself and reflect on, ‘Why am I thinking the things that I’m thinking? Why am I assuming these things about families or kids just because of where they come from?’ (Interview, 9/2/21).

As a white teacher, Claire was cognizant that social constructions of race and racism had shaped her worldview, but the professional learning space afforded her more opportunities to discuss how those views shaped her interactions with students. Though she understood the work of critically examining herself and her teaching practice was important work in dismantling racism, she also discussed the uncomfortable feelings that accompany the work of critical examination:

I think it's really hard to look in and see like, call yourself out on things. I think that it's a lot easier to call someone else out, especially when you're talking about racism, because it's such a taboo word. And I feel like so many people are like, ‘That's not me, I would never do that! I would never act that way!’ It's like, no, we all have. Whether you recognize it or not, yes, you have. So I think sometimes I’ve heard and seen some teachers—and even myself too— see these things as a personal attack on them. And I know that's not what it is. This is just the reality of [it] and you have to recognize it to move forward and change (Interview, 9/2/21).

Part of the reason Claire was able to more critically reflect on her racialized ideologies and actions without feeling as though she was being attacked was from the vulnerable modeling done by facilitators. In an effort to help teachers begin to critically examine their own racial biases, facilitators spent portions of certain sessions asking teachers to discuss how race and racism had impacted their lives. In one session, teachers were asked to discuss in small groups when they first noticed race in their lives; shortly after, they asked teachers to share when they first noticed racism. These conversations helped establish mutual trust amongst staff and helped them see the

different ways racism had manifested in each of their lives, either as a victim of racism or as a witness to it. Furthermore, the facilitators took turns sharing racist beliefs they held about certain racial groups and discussed how that impacted their interactions with students of color. For Claire, this modeling of how to be vulnerable and admit racial bias was crucial for her to do the same in her practice:

I feel like it brought it back down to like we're all human, like not one of us is better than the other. And I think that it just—it created a safer place for people to feel like they could share too. And to know that...you're not exempt from having racist thoughts or a racist past just because of the positions you're in now (Interview, 9/2/21).

For Claire and many other white teachers doing this work, having facilitators model how to admit racist beliefs made it safer for teachers to admit them as well. Additionally, it created a shared sense of trust and demonstrated how important this critical reflection is to developing an antiracist practice. These conversations showed teachers that racism is dangerous because it is socially conditioned, rather than bad thoughts by “bad” or “ignorant” people. Furthermore, it helped Claire see that admitting racism in oneself and one’s practice was part of the process and did not make her a “bad” person, a thought process many white teachers have that often hinders the work of antiracist teacher learning in the long run.

Claire also appreciated the readings and discussions on historical racism that occurred in the professional learning space. She felt she gained a deeper understanding of the inception of racism, as well as how it has transformed into the racism we now see in U.S. schools. She recalled reading “A Talk to Teachers,” a speech written and delivered by James Baldwin to teachers in Harlem in 1963. In the speech, Baldwin highlights the roles teachers have in addressing racism in America, particularly with their Black students. After reading “A Talk to

Teachers,” and seeing the plight of Black children in U.S. schools as relatively unchanged since 1963 when Baldwin delivered this speech, Claire was struck:

While I was reading, it felt like it was written today. I feel like the fact that so many of those things are still so true, that just really hit home and [made me realize] how important this work is...it *has* to change (Interview, 9/2/21).

Not only did readings such as “A Talk to Teachers” help Claire see the unchanging nature of racism in schools, it also made her think critically about the racism present in special education, as well as her complicity in reproducing racism in her role as a special education teacher:

The vast majority of my kids on my caseload this year and always—like any caseload I’ve ever had—it’s Black boys—like the majority of caseloads are Black boys. And so I think I my underlying issue... is why? Like *why*? I mean, I know why, but it’s like, why is this just continuing to happen? And then I also struggle with, ‘Well, but they also do have [needs]’ (Interview, 9/2/21).

Here, Claire is demonstrating how the professional learning space made her rethink the way special education works in schools, and how Black children are overrepresented in special education compared to general education. However, at the time of this interview, she was still grappling with her understanding; though she understood that Black children are disproportionately referred for special education programming, she also felt that her particular students had needs that could be met through specialized programming. While the space helped her critically examine her practice and the institutional racism in schools, she was still questioning what the right answers were to these issues.

Though Claire felt that the professional learning space at Eastwood supported her to critically examine her teaching practice and education as a system, much of the information

shared in the space was not “new” learning. Because Claire was a recent graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Madison and had both Dr. Louie and Dr. Grant as professors, as well as other professors who pushed her to think about racial justice in education, she did not feel as though the learning in the Lawrence space was novel. However, she appreciated the conversations and activities in the professional learning space as a necessary reminder of the ways antiracist teachers must decolonize their minds and the ways they have been conditioned to view students of color:

A lot of the ideas and the and the things that we're talking about I, I had already learned, but I also think that it's never a bad thing to continually come back to these things, because no matter what there's always going to be something new that I'm reflecting on in my own personal life that forces me to think about something of my experiences, or like, You know you have new kids every year, so reflecting on these things, something new, is always going to come up (Interview, 9/2/21).

Although Claire felt she had a solid baseline understanding of antiracist teaching, she also felt that continual conversations about antiracism were important for her sustained growth as a teacher because of the different needs and backgrounds of students that shift year after year. Despite not feeling as though the conversations in the space were “new” learning for her, Claire stated, “I didn’t feel like I was wasting my time. I feel like so much [professional development] is like, okay, it’s been three hours, I could have been doing [other things]. I never felt like that” (Interview, 9/2/21). Furthermore, the continued conversations about racism were different for her as a practicing teacher than having them as a preservice teacher in a teacher education program. For example, while she intellectually knew that Black children are overrepresented in special education, having conversations about institutional racism felt different after having a special

education caseload of all Black children and witnessing first-hand how racism played out in schools. Similarly, though she had done readings in her teacher education courses about historical racism, reading James Baldwin's "A Talk to Teachers" gave her a sense of urgency as a teacher who worked in a classroom with students every day instead of as a student conceptualizing what it would be like to have her own classroom. So despite the content not being "new," Claire still benefited from these conversations because the point of life at which she was having the conversations was different.

Claire felt one of the things that supported her to engage in critical examination in the professional learning space was hearing stories from people of color in the space. Because education is a predominantly white field, and Lawrence is comprised of predominantly white teachers, Claire felt hearing from people of color in the space gave her a different perspective on racism and antiracism:

I think a huge part of my learning is hearing from like, hearing about people who are not *me* and my background, and their experiences in school and opening up, which I know is like you know, asking [people of color] to be vulnerable, but I think when Carl shares stories about things, or when [people of color] share insight into what it was like being a minority in a school, and even Nicole sharing—I think those are things that really open up my eyes and allow me to see experiences that are not my own. I think when I'm talking to colleagues and stuff it's a lot of the same, because we *all* have very similar backgrounds and experiences (Interview, 9/2/21).

The diversity of facilitators leading the space was very important to Claire's growth as an antiracist educator. Too often, the professional development spaces Claire had been a part of were facilitated by white folx and were comprised of predominantly white teachers. However,

she felt the personal stories shared by Dr. Louie, Dr. Grant and Dr. Pacheco were invaluable to gaining a more personal understanding of racism. Rather than hearing homogenous stories that were familiar to her, she appreciated hearing people recount experiences that opened her eyes to what her students of color experience in school.

Though the whole-group conversations helped Claire hear from many different perspectives, she felt the work done in small groups was the most beneficial to her learning because she felt the most comfortable sharing in small groups. Importantly, she told me that because she was a new, young teacher, she felt intimidated sharing out in the whole-group setting:

I feel like also, being a young teacher and like having all of these university professors in front of me and for me to want to share out in the big group—because I feel like you guys say, like ‘all experiences,’ but it's hard to share in front of such experienced educators, when I feel like I'm still so new. So I think having that small group time was really beneficial for me...just speaking in front of professors and people who have been doing this for so long—it's intimidating (Interview, 9/2/21).

Despite the fact that facilitators encouraged people from all backgrounds and teaching experiences to share out, Claire did not always feel comfortable doing so, which is why she appreciated the small group settings so much more. In those spaces, Claire did not feel she had to share the most profound thoughts or look like an expert; rather, she was in the company of a few colleagues and felt more comfortable speaking. Additionally, Claire felt there was less of a chance of being misunderstood in the small group time, something she did not always feel during whole-group conversations. At times, Claire felt that things she said in the whole group were “taken the wrong way”:

It might just be a me thing, but it just feels like sometimes [things I say] are not taken the way they're meant to. And then it's like the whole group, so I don't feel like I should keep, you know, keep putting my two cents in to say, 'No, this is what I meant' (Interview, 9/2/21).

When asked if there were specific instances of feeling misunderstood in the whole group, Claire recalled an interaction she had with Dr. Grant and me about holding students to high expectations. Claire had suggested to the group that perhaps we need to redefine what "success" means for some students, saying,

For me growing up, success was very tracked and very narrow. A big part of becoming an antiracist school is redefining what success looks like. For some kids, even being in the classroom for an hour is a huge success for them (Recording, 7/27/21).

Wanting to challenge deficit notions of students of color being successful as staying in the room, I pushed back on Claire and asked her if we really want to define some students' success by merely being in the room. She recalls this interaction between us and felt as though I did not assume positive intentions of what she meant, but she also did not want to "take up time" explaining herself in front of the group, so we just moved on. However, she felt upset by the interaction:

I'm a special ed teacher, so a lot of things I do are not lowering expectations for students, but also thinking--it looks different for them. That's kind of what I meant, because that's *not* (laughs and looks to the side)--ask anybody I work with, I don't lower expectations! (Interview, 9/2/21)

To Claire, she had been vulnerable in the group by sharing, something that she was not typically comfortable doing; however, the fact that I had misunderstood her intentions made her

uncomfortable and shut down. Given this negative interaction, Claire was reticent to share in the whole group after that, and, as it was the end of the summer retreat, there were no further opportunities to remedy her feelings. Reflecting back, Claire said she wished the professional learning space would have offered many more opportunities to share with each other in small groups with a UW facilitator being assigned to each group to keep the conversation moving forward. In her opinion, “I feel like I would have gotten a little bit more of my own sharing out, and getting feedback may have been a little bit easier” (Interview, 9/2/21).

Enacting Antiracist Practice

Claire felt she was able to enact antiracist practice more readily in her curricula as a result of the concrete ties to practice made in the professional learning space. In particular, Claire found the math talks modeled by Dr. Louie to be useful, and she had used them regularly with students. She appreciated the explicit modeling about how to get students to think about math solutions in more than one way. Additionally, Claire found the literacy interactive read aloud activity I modeled for teachers useful in her understanding of how antiracism could be applied to specific content areas. Claire appreciated how the activity modeled how to problematize a text with students and have deeper discussions about race using literature. Rather than only choosing texts that were unproblematic, Claire appreciated that the activity showed teachers how to think critically about texts and see the ways they could utilize them to disrupt certain social constructs with students. In her words,

I liked the way the whole group lesson was done as like stopping and critically thinking about certain things that are going on, and also realizing that every book doesn't need to be perfect but knowing that you're going to have to pick out those imperfections and have conversations around it (Interview, 9/2/21).

However, despite finding these concrete ties to practice useful, there were times in the professional learning space where Claire did not think the facilitators understood what it was like being a teacher at Lawrence. To her, they were “so far removed from being teachers” (Interview, 9/2/21) that some of the content did not match “the reality of some things we just have to do” (Interview, 9/2/21). While she appreciated certain conversations intended to make teachers rethink common schooling practices, she also did not always find them realistic given the needs of her students. For example, one session in the summer learning retreat focused on common literacy practices that reinscribe racism in schools. After already discussing how grouping students using racially-biased assessments reinforce stereotypes of white students as advanced or “good readers” and students of color as struggling or “bad readers,” the facilitators pushed teachers to think about new ways of grouping students, such as according to interest or need to work on specific skills on a given day. However, the message Claire got out of this conversation was that teachers should not pull small groups of students for literacy instruction. This was deeply unsettling for her:

The only thing that I'm struggling with, and I think a lot of teachers are still struggling with, is literacy groups. Because when I think about my job, a lot of times during independent work time, I pull kids and we do the [reading] intervention, or we do extra repetitions or things like that. So I think for me, on a smaller scale, it's hard to think about how I would do that without having leveled groups...And I know [two teachers who] are like, ‘We’re not doing reading groups this year.’ And I’m like, ‘I know several kids in your class who *need* intervention, they *need* to have that time, otherwise they’re never going to catch up to their peers (Interview, 9/2/21).

While the goal of the conversations about common grouping practices was to get teachers to envision normed ways of working with students that reinforce racial hierarchies such as grouping students by reading level, Claire (and other teachers she teamed with) walked away hearing that teachers should not pull students in reading groups at all. In her opinion, teaching this way was not giving students the individualized instruction they needed, something she felt was an equity strategy. It was difficult for her to conceive of a way that her students could still get the differentiated instruction she felt they needed and deserved without leveled grouping; the conversations in the professional learning space did not fully support her to rethink this common practice. Additionally, the structure of the professional learning space did not allow many opportunities for teachers to engage in collaborative problem-solving conversations to share how they were making sense of the learning activities. The sessions were relatively short—three hours—and were tightly packed with learning material. Likewise, the facilitators had few opportunities to understand how teachers were interpreting and making sense of these activities, or how teachers would intend on taking up the ideas in their own classrooms.

Reflecting back on the professional learning space at Lawrence and how it prepared her (or not) for her day-to-day interactions with students and families, Claire wished the facilitators had spent more time helping teachers learn how to discuss race and racism with their students. For example, there were times when Claire was working with a student of color and a behavior issue would arise; in some of these instances, the student would tell Claire she was punishing them because they were Black or say, “You’re racist.” Claire wished the professional learning space had supported her to have restorative conversations with her students in situations like these, modeling how to validate students’ feelings while still working through what they had perceived as racist in the moment. Furthermore, she felt having conversations in the professional

learning space about how to discuss race and racism with her students on a regular basis would have been helpful in establishing these types of conversations as the norm at Lawrence. While she did debrief these situations with her Black colleagues in an attempt to better understand how her students were feeling and which of her actions may have triggered them to say she was racist, she did not feel it was fair to ask her Black colleagues to educate her about this regularly.

Seeing Herself as Agentic

Claire did feel as though the professional learning space fostered a small sense of agency to combat racism at Lawrence, but this facet of antiracist practice was seemingly the least developed in the antiracist professional learning space. Having only been a teacher for a full year at the time of our interview, Claire felt her position as a novice teacher compromised her feelings of full agency in taking antiracist action:

In my first year, I didn't feel like I could disrupt [racism]. But going into the second year, and knowing these teachers more—you know I don't ever want to ruin a relationship with a teacher because that just makes it horrible for everyone involved— but I think this year I'm much more equipped. And I've even noticed myself saying things like, 'These are the things we know about the student, but just think this is a fresh year, this is a new start!' Like you know, "It's a different kid!" I don't know that I'm at the place yet where I would call it out and say, 'Actually, this is wrong— you really can't say that,' you know? I think part of it comes as being a young teacher, and part of it is that I don't want to ruin working relationships when you have to see these people every single day (Interview, 9/2/21).

Claire was often involved in conversations with other teachers where deficit and racialized ideologies about students of color would surface, but she did not feel as though she had the

knowledge, experience, or agency to disrupt those conversations or ways of thinking prior to the professional learning space. Though she wanted to be the type of teacher who could eventually “call it out” and openly challenge her colleagues in these situations, she also felt limited by her lack of teaching experience. Instead, she tried reframing conversations and ways of thinking about students in more positive ways, such as encouraging colleagues to give students a chance to be successful at the start of the school year with a “new start.” She went on to illustrate the confines of her sense of agency in this work, saying,

I think what makes it tough for these systems to change is when you have teachers who have been here for 20-30 years and they're not, they're not changing. But it's like, how do you go about calling a teacher racist or having racist actions or attitudes without ruining that working relationship?! (Interview, 9/2/21).

However, despite being a novice teacher and trying to maintain positive working relationships with coworkers, the professional learning space helped Claire gain a new understanding of how racialized ideologies surface in interactions with students and families. This understanding seemed to cause a shift in her thinking that would help her become more agentic over time, especially as she learned to navigate the dynamics of what it meant to be a teacher at Lawrence. Going into her second year at Lawrence, she felt “more equipped” to challenge racism when she witnessed it.

Claire’s case shows how a white teacher was supported to critically examine racist beliefs in herself and her practice after learning more about historical and institutional racism. In addition, it suggests that teachers need recurring access to concrete ties to practice to make changes to their own practice. Finally, her case highlights the ways a novice teacher felt limited in her ability to see herself as agentic, though did feel some changes that may lead to further

agency down the road.

Paige

Paige, a white fifth grade teacher at Lawrence Elementary, was in her eighteenth year of teaching when university faculty began working with her school on antiracist practices. Her understanding of antiracist education had evolved as her career had. When she first started as a teacher, she taught in the same school district she grew up in, a small, predominantly white town in Wisconsin. After three years in that district, she took a job as a middle school teacher in another predominantly white town in Wisconsin. During her time in these two school districts, she did not think much about antiracist education. In her words,

I'll be honest, when I taught [in those districts]--because those are predominantly white schools--and then I came over to [Kingston], it really was more of, even when I was reading books to the class, it really made me think more about, you know, I can't sit here and pick out all these white books about white children to read. You know? I really have to think about who's in my classroom, what's going on-- and even as I thought about that, even when I was at those schools that were predominantly white, still to bring in--I should have been bringing in more works about people of color, you know? But at the time, I'll be honest, I just wasn't really thinking about that (Interview, 6/21/21).

While she was teaching classes comprised of mostly white children, she did not “have” to think about cultural representation in her curriculum or ensuring students felt seen and heard, as most texts and curriculum centered whiteness. However, over the 11 years Paige had been working at Lawrence, she began to understand that her teaching needed to become culturally relevant to the diverse students who sat before her. She realized that she could not teach students of color in the

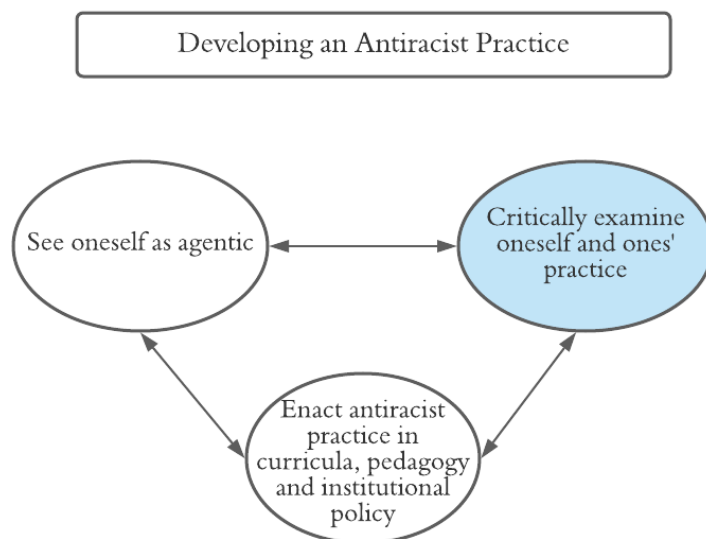
same way she had taught white students without further marginalizing them. She recognized this evolution, stating she had previously not given much thought to ensuring she had varied cultural representation in the texts she read with students, but had begun to use summers as times to read as many different books as she could that would reflect the diverse backgrounds of her students. She understood literacy as a means to discuss important issues with students and teach them to appreciate and value differences between them. However, when the professional learning space for antiracism began with UW facilitators, Paige acknowledged she still had much to learn beyond ensuring varied representation in her literacy curriculum. To her, an antiracist school community meant more:

I think [it's a place] where people—all people—are represented, voices are heard...kids feel safe, kids feel comfortable, and they can come talk to you about what's going on. And kids know that if something comes up that is racist or have a racist issue, that as teachers, we will talk about it, we will stop it, instead of allowing it to happen... And I think by doing that, that will make kids feel safer in the environment that they're at. And that they belong, that they belong there. I think that's the biggest thing...that they just feel like they belong there, that this is their place to learn. Because I think when kids feel like they belong in a place, they'll try harder, they'll do better, and they'll want to be more successful (Interview, 6/21/21).

How the Space Shaped Paige's Growth as an Antiracist Educator

Paige felt the professional learning space at Lawrence most strongly encouraged her to critically examine her own beliefs about students of color and how that impacted her teaching. While she did take some pieces of information away from the space that helped her enact antiracism at Lawrence, she did not feel supported to transform her teaching in ways that were drastically

different from her practice prior to joining the space. Lastly, she did not feel as the space (or the facilitators) supported her to feel more agentic to disrupt racism at Lawrence, given the heavy demands she felt were placed on her and other teachers in the district.



Critical Examination of Herself and Her Practice

Paige felt the professional learning space supported her to critically examine both her own beliefs about students of color and some of her taken-for-granted teaching practices. However, this critical examination did not come until a few months into the partnership between UW facilitators and Lawrence staff. Our first interview together occurred after UW facilitators had been working with Lawrence at their once-a-month race and equity professional development sessions. The team had met four times with Lawrence staff for roughly 8 hours total and had spent much of that time discussing what it would mean for Lawrence to be a place where students and families of color “radically belong.” While the facilitators engaged teachers in some practice-oriented activities (such as a math talk), they strived to make conversations about

antiracism a dialogic space for collaborative envisioning of what would make Lawrence an antiracist school community. However, Paige felt the conversation went in circles at times; she felt she could not deeply engage in critical examination until the conversation got more concrete, saying, “I think there’s a lot of us that, we’re like, ‘Let’s get to the point!’” (Interview, 8/12/21). Paige went on to say that the space seemed too open-ended, and left her with questions about the goal of the partnership:

I think, just at the beginning of it, I was just confused as to why we were doing this, or why you guys were here, or what was the purpose. But I think, as it went on, you know, obviously it clicked a little bit more, but at first, I think I was a little confused as to kind of what was happening (Interview, 6/21/21).

In contrast, Paige felt the summer professional learning space offered more pointed activities that supported her to engage in critical examination of herself and her practice. For example, in one session, facilitators had teachers watch Deborah Ball’s 2018 AERA presidential address on discretionary spaces. The video discusses the constraints many teachers in the field perceive—wanting to transform their practice to be racially just but feeling as though they “have” to teach a certain curriculum in a certain way. Instead, the video and speech encourage teachers to look at the discretionary spaces—the small, minute-to-minute interactions they have with students—to make important changes to their practice. The example Ball shows in the video is the way a teacher interacts with a Black student named Toni who laughs while asking a fellow student a question about her mathematical reasoning on the board. Rather than assuming the worst of Toni or reprimanding her for laughing as many teachers would, the teacher positions Toni’s question as mathematically valid and lets the scenario between the two students play out. After watching the video, the facilitators pushed teachers to think about the discretionary spaces they had with

students at Lawrence every day, and how this video applied to their own teaching. Paige found the video powerful and recognized ways she used racial biases to make snap judgments and, in turn, disciplinary actions against certain students:

There are a lot of times when I sit there and I think the kid is just being mean to that kid or being rude to that kid. And then kind of sitting back and thinking more about, ‘Maybe that’s not the case, you know, maybe that’s kind of their way of participating, and kind of wanting their voice to be heard.’ So that [video] did, that did actually kind of make me think a little bit more about when kids are called on. And it’s, I’ll be honest, it was hard, you know we’re going to have 24 kids in our class this year, so to have kids kind of call out like that it just kind of (makes hands indicating stress or tension). I know because I always assume the worst you know, and I shouldn’t, and that’s part of the problem...[students are] not always trying to be rude to other kids, they really have...something to share or something to say. And maybe they just don’t know how to say it (Interview, 8/12/21).

The video and subsequent group discussion made Paige pause and reflect on interactions she has had with students of color in the past; rather than assuming “the worst” intentions of students, she began to realize how those assumptions positioned some students as naughty or bad rather than a way to have “their voice be heard.” However, it is clear in this quote that she is still struggling with previous notions of classroom management as having a quiet, controlled learning environment with one speaker and how she had done things in the past contradict the new learning from the professional learning space.

The professional learning space also encouraged Paige to rethink her teaching practice in ways she had not done before. For example, after the math talk where Dr. Louie modeled how

teachers can focus on students' mathematical thinking and emphasizing the unique ways they solved the problem rather than solving it "one right way" or with a standard algorithm. This made Paige think about how she facilitated math discussions in her own classroom:

I remember when we were doing that math lesson...and kind of thinking about it as a lens with kids coming at it from different angles and different ideas and different thoughts. Because when I grew up, it was one way—the only way—and that's all that everybody did. And I think I'm thinking about that more in my teaching, which is huge...and I think sometimes as teachers, too, we move away from that because we're so focused on, 'We have to get through this, we have to get through that—'and we forget that sometimes to have those discussions is very important (Interview, 6/21/21).

For years, Paige had been feeling the pressure of accountability that many teachers face: needing to get through a certain amount of content for fear of "falling behind." However, this activity highlighted how powerful it is to position all students as capable, competent, and valued in the classroom. It also made her rethink the ways she was perhaps delivering content instead of putting students at the center of instruction. Paige appreciated the concrete nature of activities like the math talk and the Deborah Ball video on discretionary spaces because it supported her to think about what antiracism looks like in practice. Furthermore, she found the small-group conversations that followed these activities helpful in processing the material with her colleagues and giving more people a chance to speak and share ideas.

Though many of the conversations in the professional learning space supported Paige to critically examine her beliefs and teaching practices, there were a few moments when she felt unsupported to do so. In one conversation about the use of data to inform instruction, Dr. Louie explained that using one data point to define a student's success in a particular area fell in line

with white supremacy culture. When Paige heard this, she was caught off guard and became defensive:

You know you think about and you're like, 'Am I a white supremacist?! I don't think of myself like that!' Do you know what I'm saying.? And when you hear that, you're kind of like (raises eyebrows), 'Hm!' I think I was just taken a little bit aback. I mean, I understand how people say that there's a little bit of racism in everybody– you've said racist things, you've done racist things, you know. But then I kinda heard that and (pauses, looking unsure)--because when you think of a white supremacist, I think of someone in the KKK! (Interview, 6/21/21).

For Dr. Louie, a phrase such as “white supremacy” was not shocking or unusual to use when discussing school norms. However, Paige misconstrued the conversation as Dr. Louie calling her a white supremacist. I explained what the term white supremacy meant in our interview and asked her if perhaps grounding the professional learning space in terms such as antiracism would have been helpful to her learning, she agreed enthusiastically. She then added that facilitators using that language while assuming teachers understand what they mean can make teachers shut down, saying, “I think that's how people can get very defensive. And then they're not gonna listen to you” (Interview, 6/21/21).

Enacting Antiracist Practice

The professional learning space at Lawrence supported Paige to make some antiracist changes to her teaching practice, and she appreciated the turn the professional learning space took to be more concrete and practice-oriented:

I like the part where we finally got into some ideas of what does an antiracist school look like, or what are some antiracist practices. Because I think that's what a lot of us were

kind of looking for...if you walk into a room, what does it actually mean if you walk into a room that's antiracist? (Interview, 8/12/21)

A main change she made as a result of the space was stopping the use of leveled reading groups based on standardized assessments. To her, the most impactful discussions in the professional learning space were about disrupting these common grouping practices that were steeped in racism. As a veteran teacher Paige had used reading groups for many years and thought of them as beneficial to students. However, her thinking shifted after being in the professional learning space:

We're not going to do the reading groups this year. We're going to... try to do something different, because we're teachers that have been teaching a *long* time and we've taught with reading groups a *long* time. So we're really going to think about how we can revamp that...[It's hard] because we *like* our reading groups! You know? We like to read with kids and have kids share ideas, but I understand that idea of how kids can get targeted. And that's kind of been like that for, actually for a really long time. I remember being in school, and you knew, you *knew* who was in the high, and the low, and the medium. And we try as teachers not to make it so obvious (Interview, 8/12/21).

Though she did not have a concrete idea of what she would be replacing her leveled reading groups with, Paige left the space with an understanding that grouping students in such a manner reproduces racism, something she was committed to acting against.

Aside from dismantling leveled grouping practices, Paige did not share any other changes to her teaching practice as a result of the professional learning space at Lawrence. She did, however, share some questions she had about concepts in the space that were aimed at helping teachers enact antiracism. For example, while the math talk Dr. Louie facilitated was aimed at

helping teachers see the ways they could position students as mathematically brilliant and disrupt white supremacist views of “one right way” to solve problems, Paige was still questioning how this activity would work in a classroom:

I did like the math talks, I did like the idea of talking with kids through how they got this answer, how they're processing it and talking with each other. I still have issues with--I'm still kind of confused—cause' to me, math is, there's kind of like an answer that's right. You know? And through the math talk, I was still trying to figure out, is it not a big-- I mean if they don't get the right answer, it's Okay? Or do you ever discuss the right answer, or you don't discuss it? And I've been like trying to read some articles, and I'm still not quite understanding this whole—I've read articles on how they say math where you're trying to get the right answer is like white supremacy? (Sounds surprised) And I'm trying to wrap my head around that and what does that mean? (Interview, 8/12/21)

Despite Paige appreciating the math talk for highlighting the ways teachers can build off their collective knowledge to problem solve collaboratively, the activity also left her grappling with her previous, traditional understanding of math having a correct answer. Though the math talk was explicit in that math does have a correct answer but should emphasize multiple paths to solving, Paige did not leave with this concrete understanding. She continued to try to answer the question on her own, reading articles about math that discussed how “one right answer” was a facet of white supremacy. Still, she had questions, and the structure of the professional learning space did not offer much space to explore these questions outside of the whole-group discussion space. In the end, these questions precluded her from feeling completely confident in her ability to implement math talks in her classroom the way Dr. Louie had modeled.

Seeing Herself as Agentic

When it came to seeing herself as more agentic to disrupt racism at her school, Paige did not feel that the professional learning space supported her to be any more agentic. In fact, there were often times in our interviews where she voiced frustration at facilitators suggesting that teachers had more power than she felt they had, given all the ways they were held accountable to following certain policies and procedures. In one interview, she shared,

I'm not a firm believer in standardized testing or that it tells you what that kid can do; I mean, it's just like one little picture of what they can do. There's so much more to a kid than a test, I *firmly* believe that...I wish we could get rid of some of that, but it's there, you know?...It's there, we can't avoid it (Interview, 8/12/21).

Here, Paige is referring to a conversation had in the professional learning space about the math talk, one facilitator spoke about the ways Dr. Louie positioned all learners as capable, and reflected on how she had wrongly used standardized assessments that were “steeped in racism” to group students and determine what type of instruction they got. In response to this comment, Paige asked, “That is a question I have thought: we have so many assessments to give, and we have to give them, we can't avoid it. So then what do we do?” (Field Notes, 7/26/21). Despite the facilitator explaining that, while teachers may be mandated to give assessments, it was up to them to determine how they were used—either as a data point and nothing more, or as way to sort students into categories that ultimately limit their opportunities—Paige still left the conversation feeling as though she had to follow a particular policy of administering and using district assessments. She lamented this feeling of powerlessness in one of our interviews:

We're kind of caught, like, ‘We have to do this stuff!’ And you know, some people, you know we talked about how wondering how some people in the UW, when was the last

time you taught in the classroom? (Laughs) Because we're just stuck at times!...As far as like, even the foundational skills, when Nicole was bringing up, 'You know, that's way too much time for those foundational skills to be taught during the day.' And then I think someone had chimed in about, but these are district guidelines that we need to adhere to. So what do we do?... I really don't think it's [like]... 'We don't want to do this work.' It's just like, 'But the district's telling us we have to have this much time to do this'

(Interview, 8/12/21).

The group had a lengthy conversation about standardized assessments and how they could be used, but ultimately, Paige did not feel as though that conversation gave her any more autonomy to go against the use of standardized assessments in her classroom. This was consistent with other conversations about agency Paige experienced in the professional learning space; while she appreciated the facilitators encouraging teachers to disrupt racism in policies and procedures within KSD, Paige ultimately felt as though she was bound to do what was expected of her per district guidelines.

Paige's case demonstrates how concrete examples of antiracism in action supported a teacher to engage in deeper critical examination of herself and her practice by helping her understand how her current practice differed from antiracist education. Additionally, her case shows the ways a teacher felt limited to exercise agency to disrupt racism, despite having administrative support to do so.

Cross Case Analysis

After analyzing how Alyssa, Claire and Paige experienced their respective professional learning spaces for antiracism, several themes emerged across the cases. In this cross-case

analysis, I discuss the similarities and differences in how the participants felt supported (or not) to develop antiracist practice through critical examination of their ideologies and practice, enacting antiracist practice, and seeing themselves as agentic, highlighting the ways this study contributes to literature on teacher learning for antiracism.

Critical Examination of Self and One's Practice

The area where all three participants felt their respective professional learning spaces supported them the most was to be able to critically examine their racial biases and how these ideologies transferred to their teaching practice. The many conversations had in these spaces helped all three participants recognize racist beliefs they had either ignored or been unaware of, realizations that were uncomfortable but necessary in order to change. This finding is consistent with research in the field that states that white teachers must be supported to examine racialized beliefs they have about students in order to change their practice (See Matias & Grosland, 2016; Matias & Mackey, 2016; Cochran-Smith, Villegas, Abrams, Chavez Moreno, Mills, & Stern, 2016). This study contributes to the field by highlighting the various ways this critical examination can take place in professional learning spaces for antiracism, as the activities that supported the teachers in this study to engage in this critical examination were different. For Paige, watching Deborah Ball's address on discretionary spaces offered her a concrete way to rethink the ways she positioned students of color in her classroom. In particular, she recognized how she associated a student speaking without raising their hand as disrespectful; furthermore, she disproportionately associated this type of behavior with students of color. After watching the video on discretionary spaces, she began to examine the ways she could disrupt this way of thinking and assume positive intentions about all of her students, not just white students. As Paige was a teacher who desired concrete examples of what antiracism looked like in practice,

she appreciated the video as an explicit example of how teachers can reframe racialized interactions to be antiracist rather than more tacit conversations about the same concept.

While Paige felt the most supported to engage in critical examination with concrete examples of classroom practice, Claire and Alyssa spoke about appreciating the readings that provided an historical and systemic context of racism. As both of them grew up in white homogeneous towns, they felt these readings and discussions were eye-opening and pushed them to consider their complicity in reproductions of racism at their respective schools. Furthermore, learning more about institutional racism helped Alyssa and Claire begin to see their role in dismantling it. This finding contributes to literature on antiracist teacher learning that asserts teachers must not only examine their own ideologies, but the institutional and structural racism present in their schools in order for antiracist reform to take hold (see also Kishimoto, 2018; Chubbuck, 2010). Additionally, despite the fact that Alyssa and Claire had participated in critical examination of racism prior to the professional learning space, spending time engaging in further conversations did not feel like a waste of time to them. In particular, Claire had even had two of the facilitators as university professors in her preservice teaching program, yet she did not feel these conversations were a waste of her time. This finding suggests that facilitators of professional learning spaces may not need to be as concerned about the fact that some teachers may be “further along” in their understanding of racism or antiracism than other teachers; instead, this study suggests that the work of unlearning racism is ongoing and revisitation of these conversations is beneficial to teachers from varying backgrounds and levels of experience.

Mutual trust and shared vulnerability impacted how Alyssa, Paige, and Claire engaged in critical examination of themselves and their practice. For Alyssa, the longevity of the Eastwood/UW partnership fostered a space in which she and her colleagues felt comfortable

being vulnerable and challenging racism within themselves and with one another. Having regular conversations that positioned racism as a fact of life in America rather than something that made one a “bad” person helped her be more honest with herself and with colleagues. Additionally, the types of relationships Alyssa had access to in the professional learning space offered her support in developing her practice. For example, having her principal and many of her colleagues be part of the space supported her to have the conversations about racism extend beyond the professional learning space into conversations at Eastwood. Not only did Alyssa feel she was pushed to disrupt racism within the space, she also felt accountable to the work from her colleagues and principal outside of the space. Alyssa’s experience in the space mirrors literature on *Critical Professional Development (CPD)* (Kohli et al., 2015) that highlights the need for feelings of camaraderie and unity amongst staff in order to make antiracist school change. Unlike Eastwood, the UW partnership with Lawrence Elementary only lasted seven months (though this is still a relatively long time compared to most professional learning spaces). Paige and Claire stated they both appreciated the professional learning space as an opportunity to build camaraderie with other Lawrence staff, but perhaps not to the level that Alyssa experienced at Eastwood. For both Paige and Claire, small groups seemed to make them feel more comfortable opening up and being vulnerable discussing racism with their colleagues. They also both appreciated the explicit modeling of admitting racist beliefs done by facilitators; this helped them to see how admitting racial biases was an important step in becoming an antiracist educator. However, there were times that both Paige and Claire felt they were misunderstood by facilitators in conversations where they were trying to be vulnerable. When this misunderstanding occurred, the mutual trust that had begun to be established was broken, and both participants shut down (see also Vaught & Castagno, 2008; Kohli, 2018). Furthermore, the way relationships were fostered in each of the

spaces likely contributed to the different feelings of mutual trust between teachers and facilitators. For example, teachers at Eastwood began the professional learning space in the summer of 2019 meeting at Dr. Grant's house, sharing food and engaging face-to-face in a neutral environment. During the school year, they met in the library at Eastwood. In stark contrast, the Covid-19 pandemic precluded facilitators from meeting teachers at Lawrence face-to-face, forcing them to establish a virtual relationship through Zoom calls. The difference in time and more personal, in-person meetings limited the types of relationships that could form at Lawrence, which may have contributed to less feelings of mutual trust or vulnerability amongst staff and facilitators than what was established at Eastwood.

Enacting Antiracist Practice

All three participants spoke about taking small steps to enact antiracism in their teaching practice. Alyssa stated that making action plans to discuss racism with her students was useful because it offered her conversational frames that made her more comfortable discussing racial issues she had not discussed with students in the past. In contrast, Paige and Claire felt they made more curricular changes in their classrooms, such as incorporating math talks into their math curriculum and using literacy as a means to have conversations about race and racism with students. The professional learning space at Lawrence that Paige and Claire were part of spent more focused attention on transitioning from theory to practice by giving teachers concrete examples of teaching in antiracist ways. Both the math talk and the literacy activities supported teachers with concrete examples of how they could make antiracist changes to what they teach, and Paige and Claire both mentioned these activities as being useful to them. This finding is consistent with literature that posits conversations about race and racism alone do not achieve antiracism in schools (Ball & Forzani, 2009) and that teachers need to be supported to develop

an antiracist practice in action (see also Sleeter 2018; Philip 2011; Lawrence & Tatum 1997). However, both Claire and Paige were left with significant questions about the ties to practice in the space, suggesting these activities were not as “concrete” as facilitators had thought. Because of time constraints in the professional learning space (e.g. only have once-a-month professional development days during the school year to work with staff and only having six days to work with teachers during the summer retreat), the facilitators spent one day on a math talk activity and one day on a literacy activity. Given the questions Paige and Claire had about these activities after the fact, it is evident that the professional learning space should have focused more sustained attention on these ties to practice. This study contributes to literature in the field on the tensions that exist between theory and practice; even when professional learning spaces attempt to make explicit ties to practice, this study suggests facilitators need to spend enough time on concepts and return to them regularly to clear up any confusion or misconceptions and ensure teachers feel confident translating these ideas into their own classrooms.

All three participants expressed frustration at times from feeling as though the conversations in the professional learning space were too theoretical, leaving them to feel unsupported to enact antiracism. This finding is mirrored in a common tension found in teacher learning for antiracism—while facilitators try to anchor teacher learning with theoretical perspectives in the field, teachers are left wondering how to enact antiracism (Pollock et al., 2010). Alyssa’s frustration stemmed from conversations had in her SBLT meetings. While she perceived the main issue of racism at Eastwood to be Black students lashing out because of feeling triggered by staff, the UW facilitators and other staff wanted to spend time in SBLT problem-solving unrelated issues. Despite her efforts to bring up this concern during the meeting, she was told that her issue was not what they were discussing, causing her to disengage from the

conversation. Likewise, Paige and Claire experienced conversations in the professional learning space at Lawrence that felt as though UW facilitators were “out of touch” because it seemed they did not understand what teachers at Lawrence were up against with district policies and student needs. When these feelings arose, they tended to shut down as Alyssa did at the SBLT meeting at Eastwood. The way the participants in this study felt suggests the need for professional learning spaces for antiracism to ensure teachers feel as though their needs (specific to their school and local context) are being met; if not, facilitators risk teachers shutting out new material and disengaging in learning. Additionally, the fact that all three participants felt that conversations seemed to go around in circles points to the need for professional learning spaces for antiracism to be dialogic, but with specific learning objectives in which teachers and staff have a shared stake.

Seeing Oneself As Agentic

There is little research on how teacher learning for antiracism must foster teacher agency to support antiracist action. Given the high-stakes accountability of neoliberal reform in education, many teachers do not feel as though they can take antiracist action without fear of repercussions. In this study, only Alyssa reported feeling more agentic to disrupt racism at her school after being part of the professional learning space. This was due, in part, to the sense of community and partnership that was fostered over a prolonged period of time with teachers at Eastwood. In addition, Alyssa’s principal stated an expectation that everyone who was part of the professional learning space be accountable to upholding antiracism in conversations within and outside of Eastwood. This common expectation and shared buy-in from her colleagues supported Alyssa to feel comfortable disrupting racism when she witnessed it. Furthermore, just as the relationships fostered in the professional learning space made Alyssa more comfortable in having

conversations that supported her to critically examine her beliefs and practice, so, too, did these relationships support her to be able to see herself as agentic to disrupt racism. The mutual trust established between Eastwood staff who were part of the professional learning space likely made it easier for Alyssa to “call out” racism with her colleagues, such as in the scenario where she disrupted whitecentric views of quiet classrooms as more conducive to learning; rather than worrying that her colleagues would be “mad” at her or offended for “calling them out,” Alyssa seemed to have confidence in the trust and relationships that were formed in the professional learning space to know that her colleagues would see her taking action as something they were all called on to do. This finding contributes to the ways in which teacher agency can be fostered in professional learning spaces for antiracism: establishing meaningful relationships over time may support teachers to feel more comfortable exercising agency when they need to without fear of repercussion from colleagues.

Claire and Paige did not leave the professional learning space at Lawrence with the same sense of agency that Alyssa did at Eastwood, but for different reasons. As a young teacher, Claire felt bound to the hierarchies of seniority at Lawrence in certain ways. She expressed a deep desire to disrupt racist conversations with colleagues and wanted to put student needs above relationships with other teachers, but she also feared severing a working relationship with veteran colleagues she needed to collaborate with every day. As facilitators, we did not support Claire and other teachers at Lawrence to navigate these barriers to holding one another accountable to antiracism at Lawrence. A common language or problem-solving protocol for how to challenge each other when racism occurred may have helped Claire feel as though she could disrupt racism without damaging relationships with other staff. For Claire to see herself as agentic to disrupt racism, she also needed to know there would not be repercussions to her

agency or be willing to accept certain risks. In a similar way, although Paige understood the objectives of the learning activities and the ways facilitators were trying to empower teachers to change their practice, she still felt unable to implement antiracist practices and disrupt racist policies in KSD. To her, there were too many district mandates she was accountable to as a teacher. Despite recognizing she was not going to be fired by her principal for not teaching reading in the exact way the district required her to, she still felt bound to systems and procedures she had adhered to in the district for the last two decades. The lack of agency Claire and Paige experienced in their spaces suggests that professional learning spaces for antiracism must support school communities to establish a shared commitment to taking collective action in antiracist reform. In the case of Lawrence, this shared commitment could have included supporting teachers in disrupting racism while preserving working relationships, as well as helping teachers navigate what actual barriers to antiracist education are versus perceived barriers.

The tension between theory and practice in the professional learning spaces also made it challenging for the participants to take antiracist action. In some ways, the feelings they had that UW facilitators did not understand their lived realities as teachers in KSD impacted their perceived sense that they could or could not be antiracist. For example, despite the conversation that facilitators had with Paige about utilizing standardized assessments that reinscribe racism, she felt the facilitators simply did not understand what was required of her as a teacher, and that using standardized tests was something she “just had to do.” In a similar way, when UW facilitators were engaging Eastwood’s SBLT team in problem-solving protocols that Alyssa felt were far removed from her day-to-day challenges as a teacher, she shut down. In these two examples, despite facilitators encouraging teachers to see the ways they were capable of taking

antiracist action, it had the opposite effect because it seemed out of touch with their reality as teachers. Thus, this study contributes to literature on supporting teaching agency and suggests that teachers may feel supported to see themselves as agentic if the problems addressed in the space are specific to their particular school context.

Interestingly, the principals at both Lawrence and Eastwood were active members in the professional learning spaces and assured teachers they should not fear negative ramifications for counteracting racist policies set by the district. Despite these teachers knowing they would not get fired for enacting antiracism, they still found it difficult to see themselves as agentic. This finding strongly supports the need for professional learning spaces for antiracism to spend explicit, focused attention on supporting teacher agency in antiracist reform. Even if teachers are given the time to critically reflect upon racism in their practice and establish practices to combat it, it means very little if they do not feel as though they are capable of implementing these changes (see also Ball & Forzani, 2009; Pollock et al., 2010). Facilitators of these professional learning spaces must be prepared for the many reasons teachers feel they cannot do this work and support them in navigating how they can.

Discussion and Implications

Summary of Key Findings

In this study, I asked, “How do teachers from different racial backgrounds experience professional learning spaces aimed at developing antiracist practice?” After looking across the experiences of Desmond, Camila, Irene, Alyssa, Claire, and Paige, it is evident that every participant had varying experiences and feelings of support throughout their time in the professional learning spaces at Eastwood and Lawrence. The teachers of color in this study—Desmond, Camila, and Irene—all stated feeling supported to develop an antiracist practice in several ways. For Desmond, the professional learning space at Eastwood offered a space for Desmond to connect with teachers educators of color he admired, hone his existing antiracist practice, and to foster deeper relationships with his colleagues that allowed him to feel safer to disrupt racism at his school. Similarly, Camila felt the professional learning space at Eastwood validated the racism she had witnessed in U.S. schools and empowered her to challenge racism at Eastwood. Furthermore, the conversations about racism in the space helped Camila unlearn internalized racism she had perpetuated in her own teaching practice, as well as develop a sense of agency to remedy these racial reproductions in her classroom. Like Camila, Irene felt the professional learning space at Lawrence was an eye-opening experience to critically examine the ways internalized racism had affected her teaching practice and the ways she interacted with students and families. Furthermore, the space supported her to take antiracist action in what she taught, both in her curricula and pedagogy.

The white participants in this study—Alyssa, Claire, and Paige—also felt supported in varying ways to develop an antiracist teaching practice in their professional learning spaces. Alyssa’s critical examination of herself and her teaching practice at Eastwood led to important

insights about the ways she reproduced racism in her school. Furthermore, the discussions about institutional racism and shared accountability with her colleagues at Eastwood emboldened Alyssa to be agentic and speak out against racism when she witnessed it. Lastly, having time to create antiracist action plans supported Alyssa to enact antiracism in her classroom. Unlike Alyssa, Claire and Paige did not feel the professional learning space at Lawrence supported them to be more agentic to disrupt racism. However, both Claire and Paige felt the critical examination that took place in the space supported them to uncover racist ideologies they held that impacted their teaching. Lastly, while Paige felt the professional learning space was supportive in enacting antiracist practice (e.g. abandoning traditional grouping methods in literacy), Claire felt the space helped her take smaller, concrete antiracist actions, such as using literacy read alouds to discuss race with students and using math talks to disrupt normative problem-solving techniques in mathematics.

After looking across the cases, several themes emerged in how participants felt supported to develop an antiracist teaching practice in the three areas of my theoretical framework. When it came to critical examination of oneself and one's practice, it was evident that this work supported most of the participants in the spaces, regardless of race. When looking at how the professional learning space supported teachers to develop a sense of agency to disrupt racism, teachers of color left the spaces feeling more agentic than white teachers. Finally, after examining how teachers were supported to enact antiracism in their practice and institutional policy, teachers at Eastwood felt more supported than teachers at Lawrence.

After discussing the themes that emerged within each area of my theoretical framework, I highlight the ways this study contributes to the field of research on teacher learning for antiracism. Then, I discuss implications for the field based on the experiences of the six

participants in this study. Finally, I reflect on future directions of research that could be taken based on the findings in this dissertation.

Critical Examination of Oneself and One's Practice

Interestingly, engaging in critical examination of oneself and one's teaching practice was a profound and important experience in supporting most of the participants in this study to develop as antiracist teachers. Given that most of the research in the field is conceptualized as supporting white teachers to acknowledge racist beliefs, it is interesting that several of the participants of color also found these exercises supportive to their practice. Prior to their partnership with UW facilitators, the participants in this study had all participated in professional learning spaces that tried to get them to acknowledge racial biases. When asked what type of critical examination work they had engaged in previously, most of the teachers stated their school administrators had the whole staff read *White Fragility* (DiAngelo, 2011), often year after year. The participants typically shared this information with an eye roll or a laugh, as if we had a mutual understanding that reading this book repeatedly was a futile exercise and did little to support their development as antiracist teachers. In contrast, when asked about their experiences in the professional learning space with UW facilitators and the critical examination work that took place there, the participants spoke excitedly and shared profound moments of insight. For instance, Camila described the professional learning space with Eastwood teachers as “powerful” and “important”; conversely, when asked if her prior schoolwide professional development had supported her in developing an antiracist practice, her response was, “Oh no, not at all” (Interview, 5/15/21).

So what made the learning opportunities in the school-university partnerships different from reading *White Fragility* several years in a row? First, unlike reading and discussing *White*

Fragility, the conversations had in the professional learning spaces were not solely targeted at white teachers' learning. While one could argue that uncovering racist beliefs is an exercise aimed primarily at white teachers, it is evident that the teachers of color in this study also benefited from these conversations and learned important things about their racialized beliefs and how these beliefs impacted their practice (see also Brown, 2014). For example, some of the articles on institutional and systemic racism helped Camila recognize the ways she had mimicked white teachers; recognizing this, in her words, was "a wake-up call" (Interview, 5/15/21), and something she needed to be aware of in order to change. Similarly, the conversations the Lawrence teachers had about when they first recognized racism led Irene to engage in further reflection throughout the entire summer professional learning sessions. In these reflections, she recognized the shame she harbored for her culture growing up in a predominantly white town and how she had buried her culture in hopes of assimilating. These types of reflective moments did not occur for Camila and Irene when reading *White Fragility* because the text is not geared toward teachers of color and their critical reflection.

Another reason the critical examination done in the spaces at Eastwood and Lawrence felt different than reading *White Fragility* repeatedly is that simply reading a text does not help teachers examine the ways in which their racist beliefs are at play with institutional and systemic racism; this was something the professional learning space aimed to support teachers to reflect upon. For example, in the reflective conversations in the professional learning space about when teachers first noticed race and racism in their lives, the focus did not just stay on teachers' personal experiences; rather, the facilitators asked teachers to make connections between these experiences and the experiences of their students at their respective schools. For teachers like Alyssa and Claire, this connection to their everyday interactions with students made them look

introspectively at what racist actions they perpetuate daily. Similarly, the session with Eastwood that asked teachers to look in the mirror and say, “I am racist” was followed with a conversation about what that meant for their practice as a teacher who taught students of color, and the conversation about discretionary spaces at Lawrence was coupled with a video that highlighted teachers’ ability to either fracture or reproduce everyday racism in their classrooms. The direct application of reflective conversation to concrete practice supported teachers like Paige, Camila, Alyssa, and Claire to think more pointedly about their role in racism than reading *White Fragility* ever had. The fact that these conversations were so powerful for many of the participants suggests that activities in professional learning spaces for antiracism may be more productive when they connect to teachers’ practice and specific school context in ways that get teachers to reflect concretely on this work. Furthermore, these findings contribute to literature on how teachers of color can be supported to develop an antiracist teaching practice—while many exercises in critical examination *are* aimed at white teacher learning, engaging in critical examination can be a profound tool to support teachers of color as antiracist educators when they do not center whiteness.

The only participant who did not say participating in critical examination of self was supportive to their development of antiracist practice was Desmond. In Desmond’s view, he had done the work of learning about racial biases decades prior to the professional learning space. This may have been in part because his parents were antiracist activists and taught Desmond about racism at an early age, and in part because of his lived experience as a Black man and not being able to ignore racism in everyday life. However, Desmond seemed to feel that conversations that helped his colleagues engage in critical examination of themselves and their teaching practice did support him in creating a safer and more collaborative work environment

for him to enact antiracist practice. As he stated, having coworkers who had gone through some work on critically examining themselves made having conversations about racism with his colleagues easier; in his mind, people had gone from denying the existence of racism to participating in open discussions about it. Additionally, Desmond felt his colleagues' work on critical examination of themselves made him feel safer to disrupt racism, such as in the case of wearing his Black Lives Matter shirt without fear of repercussion from other teachers. This finding is important to the field and suggests that even when teachers may not see conversations about race and racism as “for them,” this work can be supportive to their development as antiracist educators in other ways, such as seeing themselves as agents of change in antiracist reform.

Seeing Oneself as Agentic

Looking across the six cases, the professional learning spaces supported all of the teachers of color, but only one of the white teachers, to feel more agentic in this study. For the teachers of color, this increased sense of agency occurred regardless if they participated in the work at Eastwood or at Lawrence; of the white participants, only Alyssa (at Eastwood) stated feeling more agentic to disrupt racism after participating in the work at her school.

There may be multiple reasons for the disparate outcomes in teacher agency in this study between teachers of color and white teachers. First, it may be that the personal nature of racism in Desmond's, Camila's and Irene's lives had something to do with feeling a greater sense of agency than their white peers. As people of color, Desmond, Camila and Irene had all experienced racism firsthand; it was not a far-removed, conceptual topic they could talk about in the professional learning space and then set aside until the next meeting—it was their lived experience every day, and something they had experienced when they were students. Thus, once

their eyes were opened to the more covert ways racism manifested in U.S. schools, they had a strong sense of urgency to disrupt it from occurring further. For example, when the conversation about the hallway policy at Eastwood revealed racist narratives about students of color as dangerous and in need of control, Camila was eager to change the policy to avoid complicity in perpetuating such narratives. Similarly, when Irene began to further unravel educational inopportunity at Lawrence in the form of pedagogical interactions between teachers and students, she felt a sense of urgency to shift the ways she was interacting with her own students. It is plausible that a white teacher learning about systemic and institutional racism feels a different sense of urgency to disrupt racism because it has never negatively impacted them personally; on the other hand, a teacher of color who knows what racism feels like, particularly at the hands of teachers, would likely feel a greater sense of urgency in breaking the cycle of racism at their school once they became aware of it. The difference in how teachers of color and white teachers felt supported to see themselves as agentic to disrupt racism in this study offers insight into the complexities of supporting teachers' development from varying lived experiences. While white teachers may not have an innate sense of urgency to disrupt racism because they lack lived experiences combating it, professional learning spaces for antiracism may need to spend more focused attention on supporting white teachers to see their duty in taking antiracist action. Furthermore, teacher learning for antiracism may gain traction in antiracist change in schools by building on the innate sense of urgency teachers of color have in disrupting racism.

The connections the participants in this study had with other people, both within and outside of the professional learning spaces, may have impacted the ways they saw themselves as agentic to disrupt racism in their schools as well. For example, Desmond had a strong network of antiracist advocates outside of the professional learning space that he could lean on to discuss

racism and antiracism at Eastwood. Additionally, having facilitators of color in the professional learning space proved to be important relationships and connections of support for Desmond as he honed his antiracist teaching practice. The way he viewed Dr. Grant inspired him to have greater antiracist agency at Eastwood; being in the presence of what Desmond called “a living legend” and being able to “learn from him as another Black man” both modeled how to be an antiracist leader and reinforced Desmond’s capacity to lead important antiracist change at Eastwood.

Like Desmond, both Camila and Alyssa felt the relationships formed in the professional learning space supported them to feel more agentic and take action against racism at Eastwood. First, they felt power in having a large number of their colleagues participate in the space, and that feeling of power translated to a greater sense of duty to and safety in dismantling racism at their school. In Camila’s words, “Knowing that you have allies too, that it’s not just your fight, but the whole school...it was very powerful for a lot of us” (Interview, 5/15/21). Alyssa and Camila felt the relationships formed with their colleagues in the professional learning space served as a resource (see Louie, 2017) for them and supported their sense of agency as teachers at Eastwood. This finding is mirrored in the literature on *Critical Professional Development* (Kohli et al., 2015) and supportive communities of practice (Wegner, 1998) that highlights how teachers tend to feel a sense of unity to transform their practice when they collaborate around a shared vision of racial justice education with their colleagues. Furthermore, the mutual trust and shared accountability the facilitators in the space fostered amongst Eastwood staff helped Alyssa and Camila to use their agency outside of the space with their colleagues. The participants felt the facilitators supported the Eastwood staff to establish a shared language and vision for what antiracism meant at Eastwood; therefore, when it came time to disrupt racism with colleagues or

gently challenge one another to uphold antiracism on collaborative projects, Alyssa and Camila were not afraid of damaging their working relationships with other teachers.

In addition to relationships with their colleagues, Camila and Alyssa's relationship with their principal, Lisa, made a significant difference in their sense of agency to do antiracist work at Eastwood. In interviews, both Camila and Alyssa stated that having a leader who was part of the antiracist work and worked alongside them in the professional learning space was monumental in feeling like they were accountable to antiracist changes at their school. First, the conversations about racism extended beyond the professional learning space and into their daily interactions with their principal, who continued to challenge them to disrupt racist norms when they arose. Second, the mantra that was established in the Eastwood professional learning space of, "If you see something, say something," was encouraged by their principal and made Camila and Alyssa feel accountable to actively disrupting racism in their school. Having a relationship with an administrator where Camila and Alyssa were further supported to take antiracist action (as opposed to having to *fight* to take action) was instrumental in their capacity as antiracist educators. This finding contributes to literature on antiracist school reform that underscores the importance of teacher professional development occurring in tandem with administrative support and institutional change (e.g. Solomon, 1995; Lawrence & Tatum, 1997; Lawrence, 2005; Vaught & Castagno, 2008; Coles-Ritchie & Smith, 2017). Several of the teachers in this study were supported to develop as antiracist teachers because they also saw administrators putting in the work of examining institutional policies and structural changes that needed to occur at their schools.

The relationships Irene, Paige and Claire had at Lawrence Elementary seemed different than those of Desmond, Camila and Alyssa at Eastwood and may have impacted the sense of

agency with which they left the professional learning space. While Irene saw herself as more agentic at the end of the professional learning space, Paige and Claire did not feel the same way. This could be accounted for in several ways. As a member of the School Based Leadership Team (SBLT), Irene first met the UW facilitators in a meeting arranged by her principal with all members of the SBLT. At that time, the facilitators spoke to the SBLT about what their intentions were in forming a university-school partnership with Lawrence and asked them what questions they had about the work. Irene was excited about the partnership; having gone to UW-Madison as an undergraduate, she viewed working with university facilitators as an exciting learning opportunity. Additionally, as a member of the SBLT and someone who participated in shared decision-making at Lawrence, it is likely that Irene had connections and relationships with staff and administration that made her feel more comfortable taking antiracist action (e.g. pushing back on district initiatives and speaking up at meetings when schoolwide goals did not align with a vision of antiracism) than Claire and Paige did. As a new teacher, Claire likely did not see herself in a leadership position like Irene did. Furthermore, she may not have had the time or opportunities to foster strong relationships with other staff at Lawrence. Unlike Irene, who had been at the school for several years and established strong connections, Claire was only in her first year of teaching. While she understood it was necessary to disrupt racism at Lawrence to be an antiracist educator, she may not have had the types of relationships with other staff where she felt she could fully exercise her agency.

Unlike Claire, Paige had been a teacher at Lawrence for over ten years, and over fifteen years in total. While she did not name a lack of relationships as a reason she did not leave the space feeling any more agentic to disrupt racism, I wonder about how her relationships at Lawrence may have hindered her sense of agency. There were times when Paige referenced

talking to other teachers about what had occurred in the professional learning space and then followed with a reason she could not take antiracist action (e.g. “I think a lot of us are just wondering how...”). Unlike Desmond, Camila, Alyssa, and Irene, perhaps the relationships Paige had access to in her school community were not the types of relationships that supported her to feel any more agentic to disrupt racism. It may have been that Paige did have relationships and connections in the professional learning space that were important to her; however, unlike some of the other participants in this study, it may have been that those relationships reinforced the status quo of education and made it *more* difficult for her to see how she could transform her practice or break away from traditional methods of teaching that reinforced inequity. It is evident that the professional learning space did not support her in establishing any further relationships with others that may have supported her to take antiracist action, as she made no mention of her work with other Lawrence staff in our interviews.

The juxtaposition of experiences for participants in this study and how relationships seemed to have affected their sense of agency suggests it would be fruitful for facilitators of professional learning spaces for antiracism to spend focused, intentional time on fostering relationships. As other research in the field has highlighted, simply raising teachers’ awareness of racism will do little to counteract racism; rather, teachers must be supported to establish collective accountability to antiracist reform (Vaught & Castagno, 2008). This study bolsters what we know about collective accountability and how fostering strong relationships in professional learning spaces for antiracism may support that accountability.

Enacting Antiracist Practice

The participants in this study had varying experiences of support when learning how to enact antiracism at their schools. The participants from Eastwood—Desmond, Camila, and

Alyssa, along with Irene from Lawrence—seemed more supported to take antiracist action than Claire and Paige did at Lawrence. It may have been that time was an important factor for the participants feeling supported to take antiracist action. The professional learning space at Eastwood lasted approximately two years, which meant that teachers had many conversations about their classroom practice and their role in upholding institutional racism at their school. Conversely, the teachers at Lawrence were only part of the professional learning space for seven months, and only a few sessions of that time were focused on having teachers work on their classroom practice. Furthermore, the types of conversations that were had in the professional learning spaces varied. It seemed as though the conversations about racism became more frank and context-specific for Eastwood staff, which may have helped them be more concrete in enacting antiracism. For example, when discussing the racial protests following George Floyd's murder in the summer of 2020, facilitators urged teachers that it was their responsibility to bring these events into their classroom, not something they could shy away from. Thus, Camila, Desmond, Alyssa, and their colleagues were given readings about how to talk to young children about race. Furthermore, teachers were given collaborative time to create action plans together and determine how they would enact antiracism in their classrooms through these conversations.

Because of the duration of time UW facilitators spent with Eastwood staff, they could address and tackle context-specific issues that supported teachers to take antiracist action. For example, in the conversations about the hallway policy that made students walk silently with their hands behind their backs, Camara and Camila began to see how they could be part of collective action at Eastwood by coming together with their colleagues and taking antiracist action. Another reason participants at Eastwood may have cited being able to take antiracist action compared to Lawrence teachers may have been due to differences in how facilitators

supported teachers to enact antiracism practice. For example, the professional learning space at Eastwood set aside focused time for teachers to collaborate with one another to create action plans to discuss the racial uprisings of 2020 with their students. Therefore, when Desmond, Camila and Alyssa started school in September, they were equipped with language and plans for how to discuss these events with their students. Conversely, the conversations about antiracist practice that may have supported Lawrence teachers to take antiracist action were not followed with much, if any, collaborative work time. Instead, it was hoped that teachers would take the modeling done by facilitators in the professional learning space and apply it to their practice, something that largely did not happen. Perhaps having set times for teachers to collaborate and discuss the ideas shared in the professional learning space at Lawrence may have made them feel more prepared to enact antiracism in their classrooms. This finding is mirrored in the literature on supporting teachers to enact antiracism in their curricula and pedagogy; some researchers have found that teachers feel more supported to enact antiracist practice when they are offered supported time to make changes, as well as time to reflect on how the changes impacted their practice (see Sleeter, 2018; see also Philip, 2011).

While Irene was part of the professional learning space at Lawrence and did feel as though she could enact antiracist practice after the professional learning space, this may have been due to other experiences that supported her to make these changes. For example, Irene had engaged in more critical reflection prior to coming to the space than Paige and Claire had. When the Covid-19 pandemic caused learning to go virtual, Irene shared about how often she was startled by the vast inequalities that existed in KSD and which disproportionately affected her students of color. Being aware of the ways racism shaped students' schooling experiences prior to joining the space may have supported her to use the professional learning space to think about

her own role in reproducing racism. Furthermore, the critical examination Irene went through in the professional learning was more personal in nature and likely supported her to make the pedagogical changes she did after participating in the professional learning space. As a Mexican American teacher, Irene felt the space supported her to uncover internalized racism she had about her own culture and language; thus, when she made these discoveries, she attempted to make immediate changes to the ways she engaged with students and families (e.g. speaking to Spanish-speaking families primarily in Spanish to affirm their first language).

In contrast, as white teachers, Paige and Claire did not have these personal experiences of confronting internalized racism and feeling as though they needed to make immediate changes to their classroom practice in quite the same way Irene did. These findings suggest that teachers need different learning experiences and support to be able to enact antiracist practice because what may be impactful for one teacher may not be for another. Furthermore, this study points to the need for professional learning spaces for antiracism to spend focused time on helping teachers collaborate with one another and transform their practice in ways that feel manageable to them. It is unlikely that teachers will be able to take up implications for their practice and make changes without explicit time to work and reflect upon them. Prolonged time is needed to scaffold learning opportunities so facilitators can model what enacting antiracist practice looks like, for teachers to spend time collaborating and planning on making changes, and to come back together to reflect on how the changes impacted their practice.

How do teachers from different racial backgrounds experience professional learning spaces aimed at developing antiracist practice?

There is a dearth of research on how teachers may be supported to develop an antiracist teaching practice, and even less research on how teachers from different racial backgrounds

experience professional learning spaces for antiracism. The current literature on teacher learning for antiracism is predominantly conceptual in nature (e.g. Blakeney, 2005; Denevi & Pastan, 2006; Chubbuck, 2010; Bettez & Hytten, 2013; Matias & Liou, 2015). This research often offers suggestions on how teachers may be supported to develop an antiracist teaching practice, such as engaging teachers in discussions of race and racism and scaffolding scenario-based exercises where teachers think about a situation from multiple perspectives (Blakeney, 2005), attending to the fears of white teachers and how these fears inhibit teacher learning for antiracism (Matias & Liou, 2015), or providing a framework for professional reflection that challenges teachers' deficit views of students of color and their academic abilities (Chubbuck, 2010). In these examples, the proposed strategies could plausibly support teachers to develop an antiracist practice and epistemologically align with what antiracist education is. While conceptual literature is certainly necessary in research, this study offers empirical data from the experiences of six teachers to determine what they found most supportive to developing their practice. This study extends the empirical data on teacher learning for antiracism by adding to existing research on teacher agency in antiracist efforts, supporting prolonged approaches to cultivate all facets of a teacher's antiracist practice, and highlighting how myriad approaches in facilitating these spaces can support teachers' development in different ways.

Most of the empirical work on teacher learning for antiracism focuses on developing a singular facet of antiracist teaching practice; either the study focuses on bolstering teachers' racial literacy and focuses on critical examination work (e.g. Case & Hemmings, 2005; Vaught & Castagno, 2008; Matias & Grosland, 2016; Coles-Ritchie & Smith, 2017; Blaisdell, 2018; Khasnabis et al., 2019), or it aims to support teachers to enact antiracist curricula or a pedagogical approach (e.g. Moll, 1994; Philip, 2011; Sleeter, 2018). Attention to supporting

teacher agency in teacher learning for antiracism is limited; however, as seen in this study, teacher agency is instrumental in teachers' perceived capacity to enact antiracism in their practice and disrupt racism in institutional policies. Prior research on teacher agency has shown that conversations about racism that are explicitly tied to teachers' classroom practice and school context supported teachers to feel as though they could take antiracist action (e.g. Lawrence & Tatum, 1997). Furthermore, research has shown that acknowledging the myriad forms of resistance to taking antiracist action is important in addressing how teachers can be agentic in antiracist efforts in their schools. Lastly, the research has suggested that regular meetings over a long period of time was more supportive to teachers developing a sense of agency than typical professional development sessions that are one-day events (Lawrence & Tatum, 1997). This study extends the research on teacher agency in antiracist efforts by highlighting the ways teachers can be supported to see themselves as agentic. As in previous studies, prolonged time in the professional learning space seemed to support teachers to develop agency; it is highly unlikely that teachers would have felt as prepared to disrupt racism in their schools after a day-long teacher inservice session. Furthermore, this study extends what we know about the importance of relationships in communities of practice. The types of relationships participants in this study had with their colleagues, facilitators, and administrators led to varying degrees of teacher agency and would be fruitful in examining to a greater extent in future research.

Current research in the field has too narrowly focused on singular facets of antiracist teacher development. In part, this is due to the fact that professional learning opportunities are typically short in duration and need to be narrowly focused. However, it takes prolonged time for teachers to develop a holistic antiracist teaching practice. This study adds to our existing knowledge of supporting teacher learning for antiracism by highlighting the important

connections between critical examination of self, enacting antiracist practice, and teacher agency, as well as the time it takes to make these connections. In this study, the participants developed the various facets of an antiracist teaching practice to differing degrees, but the connections made between the different facets are of interest. For example, the critical examination Irene, Camila, and Alyssa engaged in shone a light on the institutional and systemic racism at their schools. Once they recognized these forms of racism, they felt a desire to be part of the changes in their school. The sense of agency they gained through the professional learning spaces (for Camila, “If you see something, say something”; for Irene, through being “called out” and emboldened to speak up on behalf of change; and for Alyssa, direct modeling from facilitators on how to challenge racism with others), supported them to take antiracist action in their schools. If these spaces had been singularly focused on getting teachers to admit racial bias, it is unclear what antiracist action they would have taken, if any. This finding mirrors literature in the field that warns teacher educators of assuming teachers’ self-reflection or participation in discussions of racism will lead to antiracist changes in their practice (Schick, 2000; Ball & Forzani, 2009; Liu & Ball, 2019). This study suggests that teachers need scaffolded support in developing all facets of antiracist practice and that honing their skills in one area of antiracist teacher practice reinforces learning in the other facets. However, we must dedicate enough time to this comprehensive approach to teacher learning for antiracism and abandon perfunctory professional development methods.

In addition to attending to all facets of antiracist teacher practice in these spaces, this work demonstrates how myriad approaches to supporting teacher learning over time can be more impactful than a singular approach. For example, when it came to critical examination of oneself and one’s practice, the participants in this study found varying activities supportive in reflecting

on racialized beliefs and practices. For some participants, like Alyssa and Claire, readings and discussions on historical and institutional racism were useful in reflecting on their complicity in educational racism. For other participants, such as Paige, concrete examples of how racism manifests in classroom practices and discretionary spaces were eye-opening to how she perpetuated race-based status beliefs in her classroom. Still for other participants, such as Camila and Irene, spending focused time discussing race and racism in their personal lives and making connections to their work as teachers uncovered internalized racism they harbored. There was not one “magic approach” that supported teachers to think critically about the role of racism in their own beliefs or classroom practices; rather, myriad approaches supported teachers in varying ways over time. This is an important finding in teacher learning for antiracism, as many professional learning spaces are brief or focus on a singular activity. Just as the participants in this study needed focused support in each area of antiracist teacher practice, they also benefited from multiple approaches to learning.

Implications

The findings from this study point to important implications for the field of teacher learning for antiracism. First, spending focused time on building supportive relationships may aid teachers to take greater antiracist action in the long-term. Furthermore, this study emphasizes the importance of paying particular attention to how teachers of color are considered in theorizations of teacher learning for antiracism, adding to the currently sparse body of literature on supporting teachers of color to develop as antiracist educators. Finally, this study yields important insights into how professional learning spaces for antiracism can strike the balance between theory and practical implications for teachers in the field.

Relationships

This study contributes to literature on supportive communities of practice (Wegner, 1998) and what teachers find most supportive within these communities when transforming their practice in non-dominant ways. The participants in this study had varying types of relationships with one another and with facilitators, and these relationships either served to support or detract from their learning. While some teachers were able to be “deeply vulnerable” as a result of certain learning opportunities, other interpersonal dynamics played out that hindered teachers from feeling as though they could be vulnerable in front of their colleagues. When thinking about the research that has been done on teachers transforming their practice from traditional to non-dominant paradigms and engaging in racial justice work, relationships are crucial to teacher support (Wegner, 1998; Louie, 2017). Relationships can help teachers feel connected with one another to unite around a shared vision, supportively challenge one another and hold each other accountable, and extend learning beyond the professional learning space into classroom environments. Given the stark differences in the relationships that were established at Eastwood versus at Lawrence, this study points to the need for relationship building in these spaces to go beyond surface-level icebreakers. Instead, facilitators might find more meaningful relationships are cultivated in more personal settings as teachers share food and other personal stories. Lastly, the relationships formed at Eastwood took time. In order to establish the kind of collegiality Desmond, Camila and Alyssa felt to be able to take action against racism at Eastwood without isolating one another, they needed prolonged time to establish this sense of mutual trust.

To the participants in this study, having supportive relationships bolstered the participants’ learning in all three areas of antiracist practice. First, relationships rooted in mutual trust and vulnerability were key to teachers feeling as though they could do the uncomfortable

work of critical examination that moved their antiracist teaching practice forward. Furthermore, having strong relationships allowed teachers to have difficult conversations with one another that challenged normative school practices without damaging working relationships, as well as to hold one another accountable in taking antiracist actions. Finally, strong relationships with one another emboldened teachers to feel as though they were part of a unified collective of antiracist educators at their school, thus fostering their antiracist agency. Conversely, when relationships were absent, such as in the case of Claire and her colleagues, it made it difficult for participants to feel secure enough to take antiracist action. Regardless of the strength of the content in professional learning spaces for antiracism, content does little to support antiracist reform in schools if teachers do not feel they have the capacity to actually make changes to their practice. The findings in this study suggest that spending dedicated and intentional time on fostering strong relationships in professional learning spaces for antiracism offers teachers relational resources that support their development of an antiracist teaching practice.

Teachers of Color

This study contributes to the relatively small body of literature on how teachers of color may be supported in professional learning spaces for antiracism. It is evident in this study that Desmond, Camila, and Irene had different needs and take-aways from their respective spaces. Rather than grouping all teachers of color into one category, facilitators of professional learning spaces would be wise to not treat teachers of color as a monolith. First, assuming that all teachers of color have had the same life experiences is dangerous and harmful to participants. What Desmond, Irene and Camila needed to thrive in the professional learning space was vastly different from one another, and that largely had to do with their very distinct lived experiences. Second, while the professional learning spaces were largely positive for Desmond, Camila and

Irene, they did experience some unsettling feelings that may have been better supported by facilitators in the space. One way to support teachers of color in professional learning spaces for antiracism could be to establish affinity groups (Pizzaro & Kohli, 2018; Bristol, 2015). This may be particularly helpful during times when white teachers are being asked to explore their own racist beliefs; in these scenarios, teachers of color get little out of the conversation and are often harmed by listening to teachers admit or deny racism. Furthermore, affinity groups may allow teachers to explore different topics that are supportive to their unique understanding and development as antiracist educators, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach. Lastly, professional learning spaces for antiracism must consider the unique needs and perspectives of teachers of color to strengthen these spaces. Facilitators would be wise to spend time identifying how teachers of color can be supported to further develop their practice and prioritize their needs in antiracist teacher learning.

Balance between theory and practice

Despite facilitators' intentions to do so, the participants in this study did not always feel as though the professional learning space struck the necessary balance between theory and practice. This finding suggests that teachers need scaffolded support in translating the theoretical ideas about antiracism into concrete ties to their everyday interactions with students and families. While facilitators in these spaces want to avoid gimmicky "tips and tricks" that water down what antiracist education is, this study suggests that teachers benefit from more explicit connections to practice specific to their school context. Rather than attempting many activities that link theoretical framings of antiracist education to practice, for example, facilitators may find it more impactful to choose one issue relevant to teachers' school context (e.g. a piece of curriculum, a policy, the ways families are involved at the school, a pedagogical practice such as grouping,

etc.) and use that activity to explicitly support teachers. For example, in this study, we saw how critical examination of racism was most impactful for teachers when it was paired with critical examination of institutional policies and systems. Furthermore, as we saw in this study, spending several hours on an activity will likely not be sufficient for teachers to take an idea and implement it into their practice. Rather, returning to the activity and offering structured time for teachers to collaborate with one another about how to enact antiracism in specific ways may be more effective for teacher learning in the long term.

Directions for Future Research

While this study yielded interesting findings and implications for the field of teacher learning for antiracism, there were certain lines of analysis that were not within the scope of this project that I would like to pursue in future research. As a participant observer at both Eastwood and Lawrence for two years, I was fascinated by the ways whiteness got centered in professional learning spaces for antiracism. I conceptualize *whiteness* not as simply equating to white bodies or skin color; rather, whiteness is intimately connected to the social construction of race. That is, whiteness is constituted by negating what exists outside its boundaries; it “involves a culturally, socially, politically, and institutionally produced and reproduced system of institutional processes and individual practices that benefit white people while simultaneously marginalizing others” (Applebaum, 2016).

There were times I witnessed whiteness get centered at Eastwood and Lawrence as a facilitator or participant, and there were times when my participants spoke about it. For example, when asked if he felt the professional learning space at Eastwood was geared toward white teachers’ learning, Desmond responded, resignedly, “The truth of the matter is that [KSD] is full of white women teachers. So that's just what it is” (Interview, 3/22/21). Desmond’s sentiment

about professional learning for antiracism being geared toward white teachers is mirrored in the literature on how teachers of color typically experience these spaces. Much of the research on teacher learning for antiracism focuses on helping white teachers develop “racial literacy,” or the ability to view the world and identify personal and institutional racism (Coles-Richie & Smith, 2017; see also Blaisdell, 2018; Khasnabis, Goldin, Perouse-Harvey & Hannah, 2019).

Emphasizing racial literacy as a primary goal in professional learning spaces for antiracism centers whiteness and white teachers’ needs, leaving teachers of color on the periphery (Vaught & Castagno, 2008; Kohli, 2018). In another example, in an effort to build authentic relationships with teachers at Eastwood during an SBLT meeting, Dr. Louie, Dr. Pacheco, Dr. Nichols and I shared a bit about our backgrounds and why the antiracist university-school partnership mattered to us. When it was Dr. Louie’s and Dr. Pacheco’s turn to speak, they shared about their personal experiences with racism as students. Their stories were compelling and vulnerable, and both Dr. Louie and Dr. Pacheco displayed palpable emotion as they recalled the pain of racism that had occurred decades prior. When they were done telling their stories, a white teacher raised her hand and asked how teachers are supposed to score a running record reading assessment when a student of color says, “aks” instead of “ask.” The moment was both shocking and typical, and whiteness was centered in three ways. First, despite witnessing the pain two people of color were in when recounting their deeply personal stories of racism, a white woman’s interests were prioritized in the discussion. Second, the teacher asked a question about how to “handle” a student of color’s way of speaking because it deviated from the white norm of standard English. Third, the question centered on how a teacher should navigate a student’s performance on a Eurocentric standardized assessment that is used as a means to reinforce racialized hierarchies in U.S. classrooms. In this seemingly small, mundane question, there is much to unpack. The harm

done to the facilitators in that moment mirrors literature on Racial Battle Fatigue (RBF) (Smith, 2009; Bristol, 2015) and the way many teachers of color are harmed in these spaces as a result of whiteness.

While these are two examples of how whiteness was centered within the professional learning spaces at Eastwood and Lawrence, the teachers of color in this study provided me with several others: feeling as though they get nothing out of schoolwide professional development sessions because the book they had to read, *White Fragility*, was only written for white folx, not even noticing when whiteness was centered because it was so ubiquitous in every conversation they had in their school professional development, and having affinity groups for teachers of color disbanded because white teachers complained they were being “segregated,” just to name a few. Attending to the ways whiteness gets centered in antiracist reform efforts is critical to dismantling white supremacy in education. In my future research, I wish to examine the ways whiteness gets centered in professional learning spaces for antiracism and think critically about how facilitators in these spaces can combat it.

This dissertation also points to important possibilities for future research in the field of teacher education. First, while teachers in this study did feel supported in varying degrees to develop as antiracist educators in the areas of agency, critical examination, and enactment of antiracism, the differences in their experiences suggest the need for professional learning spaces to develop strategic, multifaceted approaches to developing all three areas of teachers’ practice. In contrast to current research that focuses on singular approaches, future research on prolonged professional learning opportunities for teachers in antiracist education would be fruitful. Furthermore, the field of antiracist teacher education must contribute to existing conceptualizations of how to best support teachers of color in professional learning spaces.

Teachers of color bring a wealth of knowledge of antiracism, not only in terms of lived experiences, but in epistemological framings rooted in their cultural heritages. Rather than reproducing existing paradigms of teacher education, the field would benefit from researching the ways teachers of color and their unique knowledge can reframe teacher learning for antiracism in innovative ways.

Conclusion

It is evident that our current school system in the United States is not meeting the needs of our students of color; in fact, it actively perpetuates the marginalization and dehumanization of Asian, Black, Latina/o/x, and Indigenous youth. Antiracist school reform is necessary and urgent, and teacher learning should be viewed as a key lever to establishing antiracist practices in schools. To this end, researchers in the field of teacher learning for antiracism must strive to identify the ways teachers experience professional learning spaces and what is most beneficial to their development.

This research highlights the complexity of teacher learning for antiracism; instead of a singularly focused approach to supporting teachers to develop an antiracist practice, this dissertation suggests teachers may be better served by learning myriad ways to develop an antiracist practice holistically. Furthermore, this research contributes significant findings to the dearth of research on teacher agency and the importance of supporting teachers to see themselves as powerful actors for antiracist reform in schools. In a country where even talking about equity and diversity is taboo in many school districts, teacher educators must help teachers see themselves as capable to take antiracist action in their school communities.

It is my goal that my dissertation contributes to the field of teacher learning for antiracism in several ways. First, it is my hope that the voices of the teachers of color in this

study—Desmond, Camila, and Irene—are powerful in advocating for necessary changes to the current conceptualizations of teacher learning for antiracism. Their rich and diverse experiences in these spaces point to necessary ruptures from whitecentric approaches to supporting teacher learning in antiracist efforts. Second, I hope the field of teacher education takes seriously the voices of teachers in professional learning spaces, understanding the complexity of this work and dedicating the time to do it well. Our students of color deserve teachers who feel competent and capable of enacting antiracist change in their schools, and our teachers deserve spaces to support them in being these types of teachers for their students.

References

- al-Gharbi, M. (2019). Resistance as sacrifice: Toward an ascetic antiracism. *Sociological Forum*, 1-20.
- American Educational Research Association (2018, May 4). *AERA 2018 Presidential Address: Deborah Loewenberg Ball* [Video].
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JGzQ7O_SIYY&t=5033s
- Antrop-González, R. & De Jesús, A. (2006). Toward a theory of *critical care* in urban small school reform: examining structures and pedagogies of caring in two Latino community-based schools. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 19(4), 409-433.
- Baldwin, J. (1963). A talk to teachers. *The Saturday Review*. Retrieved from
<https://richgibson.com/talktoteachers.htm>.
- Ball, D. L., & Forzani, F. M. (2009). The work of teaching and the challenge for teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 60(5), 497–511.
- Bandura, A. (1989). Human agency in social cognitive theory. *American Psychologist*, 44(9), 1175-1184.
- Banks, J. A. (1989). Approaches to multicultural curriculum reform, in *Trotter Review*, 3(3).
- Banks, J. A. (1993). Multicultural education: Historical development, dimensions, and practice. *Review of Research in Education*, 19, 3-49.
- Bartlett, L. & Vavrus, F. (2016). *Rethinking case study research: A comparative approach*. Routledge: Oxfordshire, England.
- Berland, L., Louie, N., Pacheco, M., and Roeker, L. (accepted). Racism with antiracists: Examining sensemaking in a school-university partnership for antiracism. *Proceedings of the 16th International Conference of the Learning Sciences-ICLS2022*.
- Blaisdell, B. (2018). The new one-drop rule: Challenging the persistence of white supremacy with in-service teachers. *Teaching Education*, 29(4), 330-342.
- Blakeney, A.M., (2005). Antiracist pedagogy: Definition, theory, and professional development. *Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogy*, 2(1), pp.119-132.
- Bristol, T.J. (2015). Male teachers of color take a lesson from each other. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 97(2), 36 - 31.
- Brown, K.D. (2014). Teaching in color: a critical race theory in education analysis of the literature on preservice teachers of color and teacher education in the US. *Race Ethnicity*

- and Education*, 17(3), 326-345.
- Case, K.A. & Hemmings, A. (2005). Distancing strategies: White women preservice teachers and antiracist curriculum. *Urban Education*, 40(6), 606-626.
- Charmaz, K. (2000). Constructivist and objectivist grounded theory. In Denzin, N. K., Lincoln, Y. (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 509-535). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Christensen, L., Karp, S., Peterson, B., & Yonamine, M. (2019). *The new teacher book: Finding purpose, balance and hope during your first years in the classroom*. Rethinking Schools: Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
- Chubbuck, S.M. (2010). Individual and structural orientations in socially just teaching: Conceptualization, implementation, and collaborative effort. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 61(3), 197-210.
- Cochran-Smith, M., Villegas, A.M., Abrams, L., Chavez Moreno, L., Mills, T., & Stern, R. (2016). Research on teacher preparation: Charting the landscape of a sprawling field. In D.H. Gitomer & C.A. Bell (Eds.), *Handbook of research on teaching* (Vol. 5, pp. 439-547). Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association.
- Coleman-King, C. & Groenke, S.L. (2015). Enhancing antiracist teacher education: Critical witnessing through pairing YA literature and adult nonfiction. *The Alan Review* 42(2), 57-67.
- Coles-Richtie, M. & Smith, R.R. (2017). Taking the risk to engage in race talk: Professional development in elementary schools. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 21(2), Pp.172-186.
- Dei, G. J. S., & Calliste, A. (2000). Mapping the Terrain: Power, Knowledge and Anti-Racism Education. *Power, Knowledge & Anti-Racism Education: A Critical Reader*, 11–23.
- DeLeon, A.P., (2006). Beware of “Black” the Ripper! Racism, representation, and building antiracist pedagogy. *The Social Studies*, 263-267.
- Delpit, L. (1995). *Other people’s children: Cultural conflict in the classroom*. New York: New Press.
- Diggles, K. (2014). Addressing racial awareness and color-blindness in higher education. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, 140. pp. 31-44.
- Diamond, J.B. (2007). Where the rubber meets the road: Rethinking the connection between high-Stakes testing policy and classroom instruction. *Sociology of Education*, 80(4), 285-313.

- DiAngelo, R. (2011). White Fragility. *The International Journal of Critical Pedagogy*, 3(3), 54–70.
- DiAngelo, R. (2018). *White fragility*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury.
- Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group.
- Gay, G. (2000). Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Gay, G. (2010). Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Grant, C., & Sleeter, C. (1989). *Turning on learning: Five approaches for multicultural teaching plans for race, class, gender, and disability*. New York: Merrill.
- Hall, S. 1997. The spectacle of the "Other." In *Discourse theory and practice: A reader*, eds. Wetherell, M., Taylor, S., and Yates, S.J., 324-44. London: Sage
- Hines-Datiri, D. (2015). When police intervene: Race, gender, and discipline of black male students at an urban high school. *Journal of Cases in Educational Leadership*, 18(2), 122-133.
- hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Kendi, I.X. (2019). *How to be an antiracist*. New York, NY: One World.
- Kishimoto, K. (2018). Anti-racist pedagogy: from faculty's self-reflection to organizing within and beyond the classroom. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 21(4), 540-554.
- Khasnabis, D., Goldin, S., Perouse-Harvey, E., & Hanna, M.O. (2019). Race and the Mona Lisa: Reflecting on antiracist teaching practice. *The Educational Forum*, 83(3), 278-293.
- Kohli, R. (2018). Breaking the cycle of racism in the classroom: Critical race reflections from future teachers of color. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 35(4), 177 - 188.
- Kohli, R., Picower, B., Martinez, A., & Ortiz, N. (2015). Critical professional development: Centering the social justice needs of teachers. *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy*,

6(2), 7-24.

- Ladson-Billings, G. (1994). *The dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of African-American children*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Lawrence, S.M. & Tatum, B.D. (1997). Teachers in transition: The impact of antiracist professional development on classroom practice. *Teachers College Record* 99(1), 162-178.
- Lawrence, S.M. (2005). Contextual matters: Teachers' perceptions of the success of antiracist classroom practices. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 98(6), 350-365.
- Lewis, A.E. & Diamond, J.B. (2015). *Despite the best intentions: How racial inequality thrives in good schools*. Oxford University Press: New York, NY.
- Lewis, A. E., & Manno, M. J. (2011). Inside the K-12 pipeline for Black and Latino students. In L. M. Stulberg & S. L. Weingerg (Eds.), *Diversity in American higher education: Toward a more comprehensive approach* (pp. 25–35). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Lopez, N. (2008). Antiracist pedagogy and empowerment in a bilingual classroom in the U.S., circa 2006. *Theory into Practice*, 47, 43-50.
- Louie, N. (2017). Supporting teachers' equity-oriented learning and identities: A resource-centered perspective. *Teachers College Record* 119(020304), 1-42.
- MacLeod, J. (2018). *Ain't no makin' it: Aspirations and attainment in a low-income neighborhood*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Matias, C.E. & Grosland, T.J. (2016). Digital storytelling as racial justice: Digital hopes for deconstructing whiteness in teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 67(2), pp. 152-164.
- Matias, C.E. & Mackey, J. (2016). Breakin' down whiteness in antiracist teaching: Introducing critical whiteness pedagogy. *Urban Review: Issues and Ideas in Public Education*, 48(1), 32-50.
- McManimon, S.K. & Casey, Z. A. (2018). (Re)beginning and becoming: Antiracism and professional development with white practicing teachers. *Teaching Education*, 29(4), 395-406.
- Mills, C. & Ballantyne, J. (2016). Social justice and teacher education: A systematic review of empirical work in the field. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 67(4), 263-276.
- Moll, L. C., Amanti, C., Neff, D., & González, N. (1992). "Funds of knowledge for teaching: A qualitative approach to connect households and classrooms." *Theory into Practice* 31(2), 132–141.

- Nasir, N. S., & Cooks, J. (2009). Becoming a hurdler: How learning settings afford identities. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 40(1), 41–61.
- Neville, H. A., Lilly, R.L., Duran, G. Lee, R.M. & Browne, L. (2000). Construction and initial validation of the color-blind racial attitudes scale (CoBRAS). *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 47 (1), 59–70.
- Nieto, S. (1992). *Affirming diversity: The sociopolitical context of multicultural education*. New York: Longman
- Paris, D. (2012). Culturally sustaining pedagogy: A needed change in stance, terminology, and Practice. *Educational Researcher*, 41(3). 93-97.
- Paris, D. & Alim, H.S. (2014). What are we seeking to sustain through culturally sustaining pedagogy? A loving critique forward. *Harvard Educational Review*, 84(1), 85-100.
- Pizzaro, M. & Kohli, R. (2018). “I stopped sleeping”: Teachers of color and the impact of racial battle fatigue. *Urban Education*, 00(0), 1-25.
- Philip, T.M. (2011). An “Ideology in pieces” approach to studying change in teachers’ sensemaking about race, racism, and racial justice. *Cognition and Instruction*, 29(3), 297-329.
- Pollock, M., Deckman, S., Mira, M., Shalaby, C. (2010). “But what can I do?”: Three necessary tensions in teaching teachers about race. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 61(3), pp. 211-224.
- ross, k. (2020, June 4). Call it what it is: Anti-Blackness. *The New York Times*.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/04/opinion/george-floyd-anti-blackness.html>
- Sealey-Ruiz, Y. (2011). Dismantling the school-to-prison pipeline through racial literacy development in teacher education. *Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogy*, 8(2), 116–120.
- Shenton, A.K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information*, 22, 63-75.
- Skerrett, A. (2008). “Going the race way”: Biographical influences on multicultural and antiracist English curriculum practices. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 24, 1813-1826.
- Sleeter, C.E. (2001). Preparing teachers for culturally diverse schools: Research and the overwhelming presence of whiteness. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 52(2), 94-106.
- Smith, W. A. (2010). Toward an understanding of misandric microaggressions and racial battle fatigue among African Americans in historically White institutions. In E. M.

- Zamani-Gallaher & V. C. Polite (Eds.), *The state of the African American male* (pp. 265-277). East Lansing: Michigan State University Press.
- Solomon, P.R. (1995). Beyond prescriptive pedagogy: Teacher inservice education for cultural diversity. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 46(4), 251-258.
- Tenorio, R. (2018). Brown kids can't be in our club: Teaching 6 year olds about race. In *The new teacher book: Finding purpose, balance and hope during your first years in the classroom*. Rethinking Schools: Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
- Thompson, A. (1997). For: Anti-racist education. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 27(1), pp.7-44.
- Vaught, S.E. (2011). *Racism, public schooling, and the entrenchment of white supremacy: A Critical Race ethnography*. SUNY Press, New York, NY: pp. 1-250.
- Vaught, S.E. & Castagno, A.E., (2008). "I don't think I'm a racist": Critical Race Theory, teacher attitudes, and structural racism. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 11(2), pp.95-113.
- Villegas, A. M., & Clewell, B. C. (1998). Increasing the number of teachers of color for urban schools: Lessons from the pathways national evaluation. *Education and Urban Society*, 31(1), pp. 42-61.
- Villegas, A.M. & Lucas, T. (2002). Preparing culturally responsive teachers: Rethinking the curriculum. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 53(1), pp. 21-32.
- Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning and identity*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Welton, A.D., Owens, D.R., & Zamani-Gallaher, E.M. (2018). Anti-racist change: A conceptual framework for educational institutions to take systemic action. *Teachers College Record*, 120, 1-22.
- Yancy, G. (2008). *Black bodies, white gazes: The continuing significance of race*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers: Lanham, MD.
- Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (6th ed. ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Appendices

First Interview Protocol

Thank you for the opportunity to talk with you today! Today, we will be focusing on your experience in our professional learning space thus far. Our UW team is trying to understand how you have felt supported (or not) to deepen your understanding of antiracism at Lawrence, as well as how your participation in the group may or may not have supported you in this development. None of your answers will be shared with administration at Lawrence. The recording and transcripts from the interview will be shared with the UW team so we can learn from your experience and use this valuable information to inform how to plan the summer retreat and future work with Lawrence.

I anticipate that the interview will take about 45 minutes. We can stop at any time, and you can skip any questions that might make you feel uncomfortable. Do I have your permission to audio/video record this interview? Do you have any questions before we begin?

1. Can you please share how you identify racially and/or ethnically?
2. How long have you been at Lawrence?
3. Did you work in any other schools prior to coming to Lawrence?
4. What **would it mean to you to work at an antiracist school?** What would it look like, sound like, feel like?
 - a. [probe] Would your own practice be different than it currently is? How so?
5. **Have the Race and Equity PDs affected your thinking** about any of this at all? (specific activities?)
6. Have the PDs affected **your sense of your own capacity to do antiracist work?** (specific activities?)

7. Have you made any **changes to what you do, how you do it, or even just how you think** about it because of the PD?

8. Were there any times in the professional learning space lately that felt like **pivotal moments** for you? Maybe a time when you felt excited, empowered, shut down, silenced...?
 - a. How did you feel those moments were dealt with?

9. What, if anything, has felt **unsupportive** or challenging (in a negative way) in the professional learning space?
 - a. <Probe> How, if at all, has being a person of color been a challenge in this space?

11. We've talked about the antiracist PD at Lawrence, and I'm curious about your journey in developing an antiracist practice. Are there any **other spaces** that have been supportive for you in developing your antiracist practice?
 - a. <Probe> **Where do you turn for support** in developing your antiracist practice?
 - b. <Probe> What have you found the **most supportive** to your development?

- 12.. Would you like to add anything else?

Second Interview Protocol

It's so great to see you again! Thank you for the opportunity to talk with you today. Last time we spoke, we focused a bit on your development as an antiracist educator and what has supported you in your practice along the way, as well as how you are experiencing the professional learning space for antiracism. Today, I want to dig deeper into how you are experiencing the professional learning space and how it feels supportive or unsupportive in developing your antiracist teaching practice.

I anticipate that the interview will take about 1 hour. We can stop at any time, and you can skip any questions that might make you feel uncomfortable. Do I have your permission to audio/video record this interview? Do you have any questions before we begin?

1. Can you think of a moment, maybe a particular discussion, topic, reading, activity, etc. from the professional learning space that most impacted you? Please describe.
 - a. How has the professional learning space impacted your learning?
2. Since our last interview, do you feel any more **prepared to take action** against racism in your school?
 - a. Were there specific activities or discussions the professional learning space has provided that made you feel more prepared to take action against racism in your school?
3. What, if anything, has felt **unsupportive** or challenging (in a negative way) in the professional learning space?
 - a. <Probe> How, if at all, has being a person of color been a challenge in this space?
4. Were there any times in the professional learning space lately that felt like **pivotal moments** for you? Maybe a time when you felt excited, empowered, shut down, silenced...?
 - b. How did you feel those moments were dealt with by UW?
5. I want to talk for a little bit about some **particular moments** in the professional learning space, and I'm curious how you made sense of them.
 - a. It sometimes seemed implied that when we were talking about students of color at Lawrence, people often meant black students. Did you get that impression at all? How

did you feel about that?

- b. How did you feel about the curricular work we did this summer with the literacy and math activities? How, if at all, do you feel that work will impact your teaching?
- c. How did you feel about the UW folks sharing racist thoughts they have for the Lawrence staff? Did you feel that modeling was useful at all? If so, how? Does sharing those thoughts do anything for the work?
- d. Do you feel you walked away with a clear understanding of our activities? The Deborah Ball video of the math classroom, the math activity, Eugenics, the literacy activities? Did the facilitators make it clear why we were doing these activities and what they meant for your practice? If so, do you feel they helped you in developing an antiracist practice?

6. Antiracist work often meets with various kinds of **resistance**, for example, people questioning whether racism really impacts their school, or coming up with reasons that antiracist work can't take off, like maybe that they can't diverge from their prescribed curriculum, or they aren't given time to build stronger relationships with parents of color, just for example. **I'm curious if you've noticed anything that felt to you like resistance to antiracism in our group**, or even in yourself?

- a. If yes: How did you feel the resistance was handled within the group?

7. One other thing I am curious about is how whiteness gets centered in these professional learning spaces. Can you think of any moments when whiteness got centered in our space?

<Probe>: A lot of times, things are geared towards white teachers. E.g., When we were talking about when we noticed race and racism in our lives, I said, "As white teachers, we have to notice it in our lives so we can notice the ways it shows up in our classrooms." Or when we learned more about the racist history of the U.S., some white teachers said they were mad for not learning the correct history. How did you experience those moments as a person of color?

8. Is there anything else about how you experienced the space--what made it supportive to your growth or what was unsupportive--that you think is important and want to add?

Sample Exit Slip

3/27/22, 10:08 AM

Antiracist Coalition Exit Slip

Antiracist Coalition Exit Slip

* Required

1. Name *

2. What we did today supported me to feel like I have the capacity to disrupt racism at my school. *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

3. What we did today supported me to deepen my critique of racism in my beliefs and in the school. *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

4. What we did today supported me to take antiracist action. *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
☐ Agree
☐ Disagree
☐ Strongly Disagree

5. I felt my voice and opinions were valued in our session today. *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
☐ Agree
☐ Disagree
☐ Strongly Disagree

6. Comments about today's session (e.g. What are things that you would like to change about this group? What are things you would like to continue? How can we better support you in developing an antiracist practice?) *

This content is neither created nor endorsed by Google.

Google Forms

