“Troubling and Beckoning the Imagination”: The (Im)possibility of Antiracist Pedagogy for White Postsecondary Educators

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Abstract

If the potential of higher education to foster transformative, emancipatory learning is to be realized, it is necessary to consider the historical forces and social formations by which postsecondary education is (re)shaped. White supremacy operates in and on educational contexts. The classroom, steeped in power dynamics and characterized by the relational dynamics of teaching and learning, is a critical site of potential disruption to forms of structural dominance. In this dissertation, I utilize critical theoretical frameworks to explore the (im)possibility of antiracist pedagogy as taken up by white postsecondary educators. In my research, antiracist pedagogy is conceptualized as an approach to teaching that critically interrogates racialized power formations with the aim of unsettling white supremacy. Employing narrative inquiry and ethnographic methods across two iterative phases of data collection and analysis, I consider white educators' conceptualizations of antiracist pedagogy, their approaches to enacting antiracist pedagogy, and students' experiences of those efforts. The (im)possibility of antiracist pedagogy for white educators is explored across five chapters of data analysis and synthesis. I conceptualize each chapter of analysis as a "constellation of insights" that points to key concepts, questions, and tensions in participants' conceptions and experiences related to whiteness and antiracist pedagogy. These insights, illustrated through rich qualitative data excerpts, trouble "best practice" approaches to antiracist teaching and point to enduring tensions in white educators' efforts at antiracist pedagogical practice.

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A democratic society depends upon equitable access to education that serves to liberate rather than indoctrinate (hooks, 1994; Simpson, 2014). At the same time, the U.S. system of education is steeped in structural oppression and constituted by a history of systematically denying access to particular groups of people (McLaren, 2015; Watkins, 2001). Even as access to postsecondary education increases for historically marginalized groups, systemic oppression continues to asymmetrically shape learning experiences and outcomes at colleges and universities. Research points to the detrimental impact that hostile campus climate can have on students' educational and social outcomes (Harper & Hurtado, 2011; Rankin, 2005). If the potential of higher education to foster transformative, emancipatory learning and disrupt systems of domination is to be realized, it is necessary to consider the historical forces and social formations by which postsecondary education is (re)shaped and to actively disrupt white supremacy[1] as it operates in educational contexts.

A formalized site of potential learning, the classroom exists as a microcosm of the institution of education and is characterized by similar relationships of power, hegemonic social formations, and dominant discourses. I am drawn to this research by desire and curiosity rooted in my experiences in postsecondary education, both as a learner and as a

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[1] I use white supremacy as an encompassing term to include ideologies and enactments of racism and white dominance. This usage is informed by Leonardo's (2004) assertion that the rhetoric of "racism" fails to acknowledge white supremacy specifically and directly, limits the ability to critique what is occurring, and serves to protect the sensibilities of whites. Distinguishing white supremacy as structural acknowledges its systemic *and* ideological nature. My conceptualization of white supremacy encompasses ideologies and enactments of racism and white dominance at intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural levels.

teacher. I am eager to explore and critically consider the teacher-student power dynamic, more specifically the degree to which antiracist pedagogy can be enacted within formal educational spaces like classrooms where teachers have power and authority over students, perhaps despite their desire to flatten this power imbalance. This curiosity, initially sparked by Ellsworth's (1989) self-reflexive analysis of efforts to practice critical pedagogy in the postsecondary classroom, has deepened and evolved through exploration of various critical pedagogical frameworks (i.e., hooks' (1994) engaged pedagogy, Grande's (2004) red pedagogy, Kumashiro's (2000b) anti-oppressive pedagogy, Love's (2019) abolitionist teaching, Rendón's (2008) sentipensante, or sensing/thinking, pedagogy) alongside the lived experience of attempting to apply critical pedagogy and, more specifically, antiracist pedagogy, in my own teaching practice. I seek not to uncover simple answers or provide descriptions of so-called best practices of antiracist pedagogy, but rather to deeply and perhaps unsettlingly engage with questions, struggles, paradoxes, and embodiments of antiracist teaching philosophy and practice. I come to this curiosity moved by Magda Lewis' (1998) suggestion that "The very best teaching is that which simultaneously *troubles and beckons the imagination* in a context where no less is at stake than the achievement of our collective commitment to democratic citizenship and social, environmental, and economic justice" (p. xiii, emphasis added).

Teaching is both a dynamic social practice and a subject position that concurrently responds to and influences power formations, such as white supremacy. Thus, teaching as an act and as a subject position both shapes and is shaped by discourses of race and racialization and the logics of white supremacy. Far from being a neutral endeavor, teaching is a political act (Freire, 1998; hooks, 1994) that works to disrupt

and/or reify dominant discourses and power formations. Focusing and narrowing my curiosity about the possibilities of antiracist pedagogy in formalized, power-laden educational contexts is the guiding question for this research: "How might white postsecondary educators work toward disrupting white supremacy through antiracist teaching philosophy and practice?" Central to this question is the assertion that focusing on individual white's experiences of privilege fails to adequately address the structural nature of white supremacy (Leonardo, 2004). While my inquiry was focused on individual actors (white postsecondary teachers), I sought to explore systemic and collective conceptions, constructions, and effects of whiteness and white supremacy as they inform and are informed by these actors' beliefs and experiences.

Leveraging critical pedagogy to create emancipatory educational experiences that resist and destabilize hegemonic epistemologies has been explored by scholars as one way to work toward disrupting white supremacy (hooks, 1994, 2003; Kumashiro, 2002; Linley, 2017; Love, 2019; Quaye, 2012; Ropers-Huilman, 2013). If such possibilities bear any possibility of being realized, teaching philosophy and practice ought to center an analysis of race that recognizes the systemic nature of white supremacy and an analysis of whiteness that extends beyond notions of one-dimensional, individual identity. While some emergent education scholarship takes up whiteness with increasing complexity and nuance, higher education research is largely characterized by conceptions of whiteness as personal identity (Cabrera et al., 2016). Relegating the idea of whiteness to a category of identity has significant limitations, including inadequate analysis of white supremacy as a system of power and insufficient consideration of the power formations that co-constitute discourses of whiteness (Leonardo, 2004). Additionally, an emphasis on identity alone

aligns with liberal, individualized analyses of power and the tendency toward conceptions of antiracism rooted in individual beliefs and behavior. Analyses focused on the individual level are drastically limited in their potential to disrupt systemic white supremacy. My inquiry assumed that complicating dominant notions of whiteness is necessary to exploring the social forces and power formations that shape white educators' efforts at antiracist teaching philosophy and practice.

The first chapter of this dissertation situates and contextualizes my inquiry; it begins with an exploration of the idea of race and an overview of whiteness studies, followed by a conceptual consideration of critical pedagogy. The culminating section of the first chapter is an exploration of my subjectivity as researcher and draws on personal accounts of my experience as a white scholar and postsecondary instructor. The second chapter reviews extant research on whiteness in education, illustrating significant gaps and limitations and exemplifying the need for postsecondary education research that considers whiteness with criticality and nuance. Together, the first two chapters contextualize and situate my inquiry about the social forces and power formations that shape white postsecondary educators' efforts at developing and utilizing antiracist teaching philosophy and practice. From there, Chapter Three outlines the methodologies and methods employed in the research. Chapters Four, Five, Six, and Seven each present analysis of the data gathered in the study. Finally, Chapter Eight synthesizes the insights generated across the four previous chapters and offers compelling questions and considerations about the (im)possibility of antiracist pedagogical practice for white postsecondary educators.

Theories of Race and Whiteness

Studying white educators' conceptualizations of antiracist pedagogy and their efforts to practice it calls explicitly on the idea of race. Exploring theories of race, and whiteness, in particular, is essential to contextualizing this research. Race is a concept rooted in centuries-old philosophies, shaped by shifting discourses, and institutionalized in political, economic, and social systems; it is also a mechanism of categorization and a discourse for meaning-making (Apple, 1993; Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Mills, 1997; Omi & Winant, 2015). A "fundamental organizing principle of the social system" (Omi & Winant, 2015, p. 3) in the Americas, race has been mobilized to perpetuate and normalize violence, exploitation, and dehumanization. While a comprehensive exploration of race is beyond the scope of this project, a consideration of the emergence and evolution of the concept serves to contextualize the inquiry. This section of the chapter briefly outlines selected theories of race and introduces critical approaches to theorizing whiteness.

Considering the Concept of Race

The concept of race is at the same time complex, significant, contested, and changing. Race is "socially and historically constructed" (Apple, 1993, p. vii) in the ways it has been understood and mobilized. The idea of race takes on meaning when it is conceptualized, interpreted, codified, embodied, politicized, and economized by various actors and systems (Back & Solomos, 2009; McWhorter, 2009; Mills, 1997, 2011). The historical period during which the modern, Western idea of race emerged is marked by significant societal changes including a shift from agrarianism to capitalism; a shift from theological to scientific ways of knowing; the spread of liberalism and its philosophies of individual rights and freedoms; and the development of nation-states characterized by

urbanization and industrialization (Mills, 1997, 2011; Omi & Winant, 2015). Deploying race as an analytical framework requires considering the historical and contingent nature of race and the ways race both contributes to and is influenced by social, political, epistemological, and economic change.

While the concept of race has shifted over time, its significance as a principal organizing framework of U.S. society—a master category—has not diminished (Omi & Winant, 2015). Race gains relevancy as a "naturalized" phenomenon when it is codified and written into law through the racialization of people and space, as theorized in Mills' (1997) notion of the racial contract. Serving as sociopolitical, moral, and epistemological code, the racial contract functions as a set of formal and informal agreements whose purpose is "differential privileging of the whites as a group with respect to the nonwhites as a group, the exploitation of their bodies, land, and resources, and the denial of equal socioeconomic opportunities to them" (Mills, 1997, p. 11). The racial contract operates as a societal meta-agreement, meaning that all people are impacted by the contract even if they do not consciously endorse it (Mills, 1997). This racial hierarchy operates within a U.S. context of shifting criteria of white identity (Jung, 2011; Roediger, 2007).

The idea of race in the United States cannot be taken up separately from the ideology of white supremacy. Rodríguez (2011) conceptualized white supremacy as a subculture of "social formation, statecraft, and nation-building" (p. 48) that functions like a centripetal force which keeps racialized violence and exploitation in continual motion around a central project of white racial superiority. This metaphor is useful in describing white supremacy as an active and lasting power formation, one that is co-constituted with other oppressive power formations such as settler colonialism, global capitalism, and

patriarchy in all of its manifestations. Omi and Winant (2015) characterized a significant shift in the shape of white supremacy ideology after World War II as a "shift from racial domination to racial hegemony" (p. 14). White supremacy is theorized in Mills' (1997) racial contract as the subpersonhood of nonwhites as established and maintained through violence and ideological conditioning. An epistemology of ignorance accounts for the cognitive and moral distortions that make it possible for whites to dehumanize nonwhites while preserving a sense of moral righteousness and a commitment to freedom and democracy (Mills, 1997). Despite shifts in race discourse, the "social organization of power along racial lines" (Omi & Winant, 2015, p. 15) has persisted and the very ways in which race is (re)constructed over time occur within the logics of white supremacy (Rodríguez, 2011). This profoundly affects how people understand themselves, how they perceive and interact with others, and how social systems and discourses are created and maintained.

Even a brief exploration of the idea of race ought to consider the co-constitutive relationship between white supremacy and capitalist exploitation. Many scholars have deemed these social formations mutually reinforcing (i.e., Cox, 2009; Kovel, 1984; Melamed, 2011; Rodríguez, 2011; Roediger, 2007). Any effort at disrupting white supremacy in formal education contexts necessitates simultaneous analysis of economic exploitation and systemic racism, for the two power formations are enmeshed. Mills (1997) pointed to the deep economic implications of the political, moral, and epistemological facets of the racial contract. Though neoliberal multicultural (Melamed, 2011) and color-blind (Bonilla-Silva, 2014) discourses would suggest the violence and exploitation of slavery, genocide, and white settler colonialism are no longer relevant to

the life chances of people living in the United States, racial disparities across all measures of well-being (including educational outcomes) indicate otherwise (Bonilla-Silva, 2014). Race has been (re)constructed and mobilized in different ways at different times for the purposes of systemic control and economic exploitation (McWhorter, 2009; Roediger, 2007; Watkins, 2001). The material effects of systemic white supremacy and capitalist exploitation continue to be relevant to everyday life in the United States, and any analysis of race must be undertaken with this in mind.

A concept as vast as race elicits countless theories across academic disciplines and epistemological frameworks. This research foregrounds conceptualizations of race that emerge from critical race theory (CRT) frameworks, as CRT has been utilized by postsecondary scholars to critically study race in education. A specific thread of critical social theory, CRT emerged during the 1980s in response to the perception that civil rights litigation had stalled in its efforts to address structural racism in the United States (Taylor, 2009). A practice of "race-based oppositional scholarship" (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015, p. 5), CRT examines "unequal and unjust distribution of power and resources along political, economic, racial, and gendered lines" (Taylor, 2009, p. 1). Critical race theory is utilized to theorize racial inequality in education and is often taken up alongside critical pedagogical frameworks (i.e., Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Patton, 2016; Tate, 1997). Foundational CRT literature conceptualizes core tenets which include whiteness as property (Harris, 1993); the persistence of racism as endemic to U.S. society; interest convergence theory; the importance of acknowledging historical context and effects of colonialism; experiential narrative, or counter-storytelling, as a means of knowledge production; and critique of liberalism (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015; Taylor, 2009).

Rooted in a CRT framework, racial formation theory is one approach to conceptualizing race that is often utilized in education research. Racial formation theory describes race as "a representation or signification of identity that refers to different types of human bodies, to the perceived corporeal and phenotypic markers of difference and the meanings and social practices that are ascribed to these differences" (Omi & Winant, 2015, p. 111). In this framework, race is a technology of signification, or a process of "making up people," as well as a technology of categorization, or a process of "othering" (Omi & Winant, 2015, p. 105). Racial formation theory is built, in part, on rejecting assertions that race is an illusory ideological construct or an objective condition. The theory describes racial formation as a process which occurs through connections between structure and signification. Racial projects do the ideological and practical work of bridging what race is understood to mean in specific discursive practices with the ways that structures are racially organized as a result of that meaning. In this way, a racial project puts forth "an interpretation, a representation, or explanation of racial identities and meanings, and an effort to organize and distribute resources (economic, political, cultural) along racial lines" (Omi & Winant, 2015, p. 125). Education itself is a racial project (Leonardo, 2013). Racial formation theory situates race as both a structure that organizes society and a set of signifiers that informs and influences all manner of social relations. This approach to theorizing race utilizes the notion of hegemony to account for systemic racism, deeming the cultivation of critical consciousness as necessary to the disruption of structural racism (Cabrera, 2014a).

Related in its embrace of CRT frameworks and relevance to education research, Bonilla-Silva's (2014) notion of color-blind racism seeks to account for the persistence of

structural racism in the contemporary United States. This framework centers the notion of racial ideology, or "the racially based frameworks used by actors to explain and justify (dominant race) or challenge (subordinate race or races) the racial status quo" (p. 9). Bonilla-Silva (2014) deemed today's dominant racial ideology color-blind racism, which is characterized by the "white commonsense view" (p. 25) that overt racism has largely ceased to exist. Using the concept of "racism without racists" (p. 1) to illustrate the theory, Bonilla-Silva asserted that a "new racism" (p. 25) has replaced overtly white supremacist structures and practices with subtle forms of discrimination and oppression that are in effect more efficient at maintaining a racial hierarchy characterized by white dominance. The ideology of color-blind racism explains racial inequality in the United States with nonracial rationalizations and makes it possible for whites to continue occupying a position of power in the racial hierarchy while claiming to believe in racial equality (Bonilla-Silva, 2014). Color-blind racism forms an "impregnable yet elastic wall that barricades whites from the United States' racial reality" (Bonilla-Silva, 2014, p. 95). The dominant race discourses, or ways that people understand and talk about race, characteristic of color-blind racism continue to (re)produce structural white supremacy (Bonilla-Silva & Forman, 2000).

Illustrating how racialized stereotypes serve as a tool in upholding white supremacy, Feagin's (2013) white racial frame theory complements Mills' (1997) epistemology of ignorance and Bonilla-Silva's (2014) notion of color-blind racism. Feagin suggested that perspectival frames are integrated into individual and collective consciousness and help people make meaning in day-to-day experiences. The dominant racial perspectival frame in the United States is the white racial frame, which Feagin

described as a "centuries-old worldview that has constantly involved a racial construction of societal reality by white Americans" (p. x). The white racial frame includes elements such as racialized stereotypes, ideologies, narratives, visual images, and emotions; it functions interpersonally and institutionally, serving to both rationalize and shape social interactions and structures (Feagin, 2013).

The study of race might also be taken up through the lens of discourse theory. In the context of my research, discourse is conceptualized as that which describes "the many and varied influences that are acting on and being expressed in a particular situation" (Ropers-Huilman, 1998, p. 2). One facet of poststructural theory, the concept of discourse assumes that narratives about the world are always already partial and deeply, complexly related to conceptions of knowledge and the workings of power. Aronowitz (1989, as cited in Ellsworth, 1989, p. 304) asserted, "Indeed, one of the crucial features of discourse is the intimate tie between knowledge and interest, the latter being understood as a 'standpoint' from which to grasp 'reality.'" Conceptions of language and discourse as fixed entities that describe reality are upturned in poststructural frameworks, which instead assume that language and discourses are "dynamic sites for the construction of meaning" (Allan, 2009, p. 31). Poststructural frameworks position discourse as an agentive factor in the construction of culture; Allan (2009) noted that "discourse not only reflects culture, but also actively produces it" (p. 31).

A poststructural approach to considering the idea of race introduces opportunities to explore how race-making occurs through discourse as well as to interrogate the operation of racialized power in and on discourses. For instance, Pollock's (2004) ethnographic study at a California high school focused on racial discourse and revealed

the paradox that "the very idea of 'race groups' is both contested daily and repeatedly imposed" (p. 18) by students, teachers, and administrators. Race talk, or discourses of race, matter in the sense that Americans daily reinforce racial distinctions by using race labels *and* reinforce racial inequality by refusing to use them. Pollock conceptualized racialization as a shifting, and at times paradoxical, process: "We *become* race-group members, or we must negotiate and resist so becoming, every time we are referred to in racial terms; and talking racially does prompt listeners to see the world anew in racialized ways" (p. 5, emphasis in original). Naming the discursive power of race talk, she described a constellation of forces and formations that sometimes seem to operate beyond one's control and/or rational consciousness while maintaining that humans are agentive subjects in our negotiating, resisting, perceiving, and enacting discourses. The both/and thinking and the embrace of paradox that inform Pollock's conceptualization of race create space to ask complicated and nuanced questions about race and racialization. At the same time, a danger of poststructuralist approaches to conceptualizing race is that they may fail to adequately consider effects of structural power formations (i.e., white supremacy). The study of race and, in particular, the study of whiteness requires persistent attention to the historical and material realities of white supremacy. Deliovsky (2010) noted, "Not keeping … issues of power central in whiteness studies can lead to conclusions that might deny the significance of 'race' in North America today" (p. 42). This concern is central to my inquiry, particularly given my subjectivity as a white researcher who is curious about white educators' efforts at antiracist pedagogy.

Race can be conceptualized and thus studied in a multitude of ways. Racial formation theory, color-blind racism, and other frameworks rooted in CRT are

increasingly well-utilized in higher education research (i.e., Cabrera, 2011; Charbeneau, 2015; Harper, 2012; Robbins & Jones, 2016). Less common in higher education literature is the use of discourse theory to conceptualize and study race and whiteness (i.e., schneider & Nicolazzo, 2020; Yoon, 2012). As discussed above, the utilization of poststructural approaches may offer new and different ways of analyzing race and racism in educational contexts. So long as they are taken up with caution for the potential for decontextualization and slippage toward post-raciality, the tools of discourse theory offer great analytic possibility to the study of race and whiteness in postsecondary education.

Conceptualizing Whiteness

Duster's (2001) conceptualization of whiteness is that which most profoundly informs my research, as it uses both structural and poststructural approaches to describing how race and whiteness function in U.S. society to (re)create hierarchies of power. Duster conceptualized race and whiteness as simultaneously solid and enduring (i.e., a structural approach) *and* ever-changing and fluid (i.e., a poststructural approach). In this way, Duster's framework makes possible analysis of race and whiteness through the lens of discourse theory without sacrificing necessary attention to the historical and material realities of white supremacy. Duster described "the contingent character of race and whiteness" (p. 122) by analogizing its shifting nature between solid, fluid, and ethereal states to that of water:

> While water is a fluid state, at certain contingent moments, under thirty-two degrees, it is transformed into a solid state—ice. This is an easy binary formulation. But things get more complicated, because when H_2O, at still another contingent moment boils, it begins to vaporize or evaporate. And now the coup de

> grâce of the analogy of H_2O to race: H_2O in its vapor state can condense, come back and transform into water, and then freeze and hit you in its solid state as an ice block; what you thought had evaporated into thin air can return in a form that is decidedly and consequentially real . . . Race, like H_2O, can take many forms, but unlike H_2O it can transform itself in a nanosecond. (pp. 114-115)

Duster asserted that we cannot rely on a singular mode of conceptualizing whiteness, and suggested that the most promising approaches to researching whiteness are "attentive to the borderlands, addressing and analyzing the contingent, fluid character of whiteness: "*how the nature and shape of 'whiteness' can change nature and shape (morph!) and yet remain structurally privileged"* (p. 131, emphasis in original). Having described the conceptualization of whiteness in which this research was grounded, Chapter One further considers the idea of whiteness by addressing the consolidation of whiteness studies into an academic subfield.

Whiteness Studies

Whiteness studies is an interdisciplinary subfield in which "whiteness becomes the center of critique and transformation" (Leonardo, 2013, p. 7). In other words, whiteness is analyzed and critically interrogated in an effort to unsettle ideologies of white supremacy and disrupt white racial dominance. Whiteness studies is characterized by an intentional turn to whiteness in order to destabilize it as normal and unremarkable. Morrison (1992) provided a powerful framework for the task of interrogating whiteness with her work to "avert the critical gaze from the racial object to the racial subject; from the described and imagined to the describers and imaginers" (p. 90). As a field of study, its aim is to "make visible a history of whiteness that through its association with

‘normalcy’ and ‘universality’ masked its omnipresent institutional power” (Rankine, 2020, p. 17). Literature that would come to be recognized as foundational to the field of whiteness studies began to emerge in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Leonardo, 2013). Peggy McIntosh’s (1988) well-known essay on white privilege is typically credited as the origin of whiteness studies. However, Black scholars were engaged in whiteness studies long before McIntosh’s essay and the creation of this academic subfield in the 1990s (Cabrera et al., 2016). Duster (2001) commented on the long history of African American critique of white supremacy: “It is a necessity, if one is without formal power, to be attentive and especially alert to power relationships” (p. 132). The fact that whiteness studies was not legitimized as a field of study until white authors began contributing to the scholarly discourse is an indication of the white supremacy inherent in academia and other dominant knowledge production practices (Leonardo, 2013).

I employ whiteness studies as an element of my theoretical framework with a degree of ambivalence and skepticism. Multiple scholars have articulated concern about the consolidation of whiteness studies into an academic subfield, pointing out the potential consequences of centering an intellectual exploration of whiteness in the effort to unsettle white supremacy. Leonardo (2013), for instance, asked,

> What does it mean to center Whiteness in education, even while critiquing it, when the White-as-center was the original problem to begin with? This effectively remarginalizes people of color and becomes another excuse for White scholars to ignore the concrete lives of minorities. (p. 7)

In her book *White Femininity: Race, Gender, and Power*, Katerina Deliovsky (2010) articulated the paradox of whiteness studies, noting, “Whiteness even appropriates the

very criticism that challenges its centrality" (p. 18). Though not specific to whiteness studies, Lather's (1991) assertion that, "We are inscribed in that which we struggle against" (p. 20) further illustrates the inherent paradox. These critiques serve to remind us that the hegemonic power formation of whiteness operates on and within academic discourses, including whiteness studies.

My ambivalence about whiteness studies is most profoundly shaped by Ahmed's (2004, 2007) critique of the framework. This research takes seriously Ahmed's (2004) concern that whiteness studies as a field of scholarship might become "a spectacle of pure self-reflection" (para. 5) that reifies whiteness in objectifying it as something which can be and ought to be studied. Ahmed (2007) asked difficult and important questions:

> Does speaking about whiteness allow it to become an "essential something"? What does making the invisible marks of privilege more visible actually do? Such questions are addressed by scholars not in order to suspend the project of whiteness studies, but to consider what it means for a project of critique to be complicit with its object. (p. 149)

Ahmed troubled the utilization of the qualifier "critical" in the commonly utilized name of this still-forming academic field—critical whiteness studies. She suggested that "critical" deployed in this way "functions as a place where we deposit our anxieties" (Ahmed, 2004, para. 8). Ahmed (2004) elaborated,

> We might assume that if we are doing critical whiteness studies, rather than whiteness studies, that we can protect ourselves from doing—or even being seen to do—the wrong kind of whiteness studies. But the word "critical" does not

> mean the elimination of risk, and nor should it become just a description of what we are doing over here, as opposed to them, over there. (para. 8)

My approach to this research takes seriously the concerns about whiteness studies expressed by various scholars of color in education. In direct to response to Ahmed (2004), I have chosen to jettison the qualifier "critical" in naming whiteness studies as one component of the theoretical framework for this research. This rhetorical practice is intended to remind myself and the readers of this dissertation that my thinking, analysis, and writing are not immune to reifying white supremacist ideology or enacting epistemic violence. It is also intended as an invitation for critique, particularly from scholars of color, and a marker of the humility with which I enter whiteness studies discourses as a white scholar. I have grounded my approach to conceptualizing and studying whiteness in the work of scholars of color (i.e., Ahmed, 2004, 2007; Baldwin, 1997; Duster, 2001; hooks, 1997; Leonardo, 2004, 2013; Morrison, 1992; Yoon, 2012). I made this decision for two reasons, the first of which was a consideration of the limits of the white imaginary. White scholars' capacity (and, I would argue, willingness) to see and understand whiteness and white supremacy are shaped and limited by our white racialization. hooks (1997) described this dynamic when she noted the "'special' knowledge of whiteness gleaned from close scrutiny of white people [that] help[ed] black folks cope and survive in a white supremacist society" (p. 165). The second rationale for my decision to prioritize scholars' of color conceptualizations of whiteness was related to the political nature of citational practice and the reality of racialized epistemic violence in academia. Leonardo (2013) expressed concern that the consolidation of whiteness studies into an academic field will result in re-marginalization of scholars of color if/as white

scholars are increasingly centered in whiteness studies literature and discourses. My efforts to attend to critique offered by Ahmed and Leonardo are both necessary and insufficient; I remain ambivalent about utilizing whiteness studies as a grounding framework for this research, recognizing both its potential for critical disruption and its consolidation of white dominance in academia.

Whiteness studies literature includes extensive historical analysis of the invention and evolution of whiteness. A comprehensive exploration of that history, while important, is beyond the scope of this project. (See Allen, 1994, 1997; Painter, 2010; and Roediger, 2007 for historical tracings.) More useful in framing this research is distinguishing two approaches to conceptualizing whiteness that are relevant to education research: 1) whiteness as a constructed category of individual identity, and 2) whiteness as racial discourse and social concept (Cabrera et al., 2016; Leonardo, 2002). Higher education literature has tended to focus on whiteness as a form of identity, primarily taken up through the lenses of white students' racial identity development (i.e., Foste & Jones, 2020; Helms, 1990, 1997, 2008; Mercer & Cunningham, 2003; Reason & Evans, 2007) and white ally development (i.e., Edwards, 2006; Patton & Bondi, 2015; Reason et al., 2005; Robbins & Jones, 2016). An expanded notion of whiteness is necessary if the white supremacy that characterizes higher education is to be disrupted. Whiteness ought to be considered not simply as a category of identity, but also as a discourse, or a "mode of political and ideological practice" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 67), to better understand its function in shaping and responding to societal power formations (Cabrera et al., 2016). Leonardo (2009) noted, "'Whiteness' is a racial discourse, whereas the category 'white people' represents a socially constructed identity, usually based on skin color . . .

Whiteness is not a culture but a social concept" (pp. 169–170). Expanding conceptualizations of whiteness, such as through applying discourse theory, does not excuse inattention to material effects of the "white racial hierarchy" (powell, 2012, p. 75). Whiteness studies in higher education ought to "identify the contours of whiteness as a discourse *while* critically examining the material, psychological, emotional, and physical effects whiteness has on people of color" (Cabrera et al., 2016, p. 19, emphasis added).

The concept of white privilege has been explored at great length in whiteness studies literature. McIntosh's (1988) invisible knapsack essay is typically cited as the emergence of the white privilege concept, which has persisted as the dominant approach for conceptualizing, researching, and teaching about issues of race and racism in postsecondary education (Cabrera, 2017). The white privilege framework aims to make whites conscious of the many ways we are racially privileged and to "disrupt the normality of Whiteness in [our] lived experiences" (Cabrera, 2017, p. 80). Various iterations and evolutions of the white privilege framework have emerged in the last decade. One such example is w*hite fragility*, a concept increasingly utilized in higher education, refers to whites' lack of stamina for racial stress and intolerance for racial discomfort (DiAngelo, 2018). Describing the roots of white fragility, DiAngelo (2018) noted, "Socialized into a deeply internalized sense of superiority that we either are unaware of or can never admit to ourselves, we become highly fragile in conversations about race" (p. 2). Another extension of the white privilege framework is Applebaum's (2010) notion of *white complicity*. Focused on the beliefs and actions of well-intentioned white people, white complicity asserts that "white people can reproduce and maintain

racist practices even when, and especially when, they believe themselves to be morally good" (p. 3). Applebaum pointed to traditional understandings of moral responsibility as inadequate in exposing white complicity and suggested a rearticulation of moral responsibility which deemphasizes guilt and is "grounded in the understanding that preserving white moral innocence is impossible" (p. 5). White fragility and white complicity each extend the white privilege framework; as these concepts become more ubiquitous in higher education race research and scholarship, it is important to critically examine both their usefulness as well as their limitations in advancing whiteness studies and interrupting white supremacy.

While the white privilege framework has been useful in "push[ing] critical pedagogy into directions that account for the experiences of the 'oppressor' identity" (Leonardo, 2004, p. 137), it has significant limitations. Critique of the framework has become increasingly common in education literature that addresses whiteness following Leonardo's (2004) groundbreaking problematization of this approach to conceptualizing whiteness (i.e., Cabrera, 2017; Casey, 2017; Crowley & Smith, 2020; Lensmire, 2017; Lensmire et al., 2013; Stewart & Nicolazzo, 2018; Yoon, 2012). Central to the white privilege framework is an emphasis on individual whites' experience of privilege; such an emphasis fails to adequately address the systemic and ideological nature of white supremacy (Leonardo, 2004). The framework conflates the symptoms and causes of racism by emphasizing the advantages white people are granted rather than addressing structures and behaviors of domination and appropriation; in this way, "the discourse on privilege comes with the unfortunate consequence of masking history, obfuscating agents of domination, and removing the actions that make it clear who is doing what to whom"

(Leonardo, 2004, p. 138). Leonardo (2004) asserted that a meaningful and useful account of white privilege "must be complemented by an equally rigorous examination of white supremacy" since "the conditions of white supremacy make white privilege possible" (p. 137).

Emergent approaches to theorizing and interrogating whiteness in education mark a pivot away from the white privilege framework that has largely dominated whiteness studies discourses. Cabrera's (2017) notion of *white immunity* foregrounds the systemic nature of white supremacy (rather than the individual notion of white privilege) by pointing to the fact that white people in the United States have been largely protected (immunized) from the oppressive and dehumanizing conditions endured by people of color. Matias' (2016) work on the *emotionalities of whiteness* is grounded in CRT, whiteness studies, and critical emotion studies. She interrogates the origins and impact of the racialized emotions of white teacher candidates (college students preparing to become K-12 teachers), starting with the conceptualization that "whiteness as a social power and ideology normalizes white emotionality as nonracial and erroneously 'translates' disgust for people of Color to false professions of caring and empathy" (Matias, 2016, p. 26).

A final example of emergent approaches to interrogating whiteness in education is Yoon's (2012) notion *whiteness-at-work,* which describes the phenomenon that whiteness is constantly being (re)constructed in educational contexts. The phenomenon builds from an understanding that whiteness is (re)constructed in everyday discourse and action that occur within a structurally racist society. According to Yoon (2012),

> What permeates the functions of whiteness and the local contextual cues that feed into constructing whiteness is the paradoxical nature of the process. As multiple

> interests converge in an interaction, whiteness requires individuals and societies to embody and accept contradictions and hypocrisies. Hence, whiteness can create paradoxes or contradictions in individuals' actions and statements. (p. 590)

In her study on racially-based inequalities in a U.S. elementary school, Yoon focused on paradoxes of whiteness that were constructed by educators in their conversations with one another and with students. These paradoxes were "voiced" through strategies of whiteness-at-work, "signaling the unfolding and perhaps fleeting moment of construction—even though whiteness also exists in the context prior to any single interaction" (p. 590). Even well-meaning educators perpetuate racialized power formations in their thinking and doing: "Whiteness-at-work strategies can perform functions that, on first appearance, in reasoning, or by intention are anti-racist" (Yoon, 2012, p. 590). The work of Yoon, Matias, and Cabrera described above represents emergent approaches to conceptualizing and researching whiteness in education; these approaches signify a turn in whiteness studies discourses and an opportunity for education scholars to interrogate whiteness in different and more complex ways.

Without deep and careful consideration of racialized ideologies and attention to the effects of systemic white supremacy, analysis of racial inequities in education is ahistorical and decontextualized. This research is theoretically grounded in critical approaches to conceptualizing race and whiteness. By exploring the ideas of race and whiteness, this section of Chapter One has contextualized my research in light of existing theories and frameworks as well as emergent shifts in the study of whiteness in education. The next section of the chapter introduces the second key element of my theoretical framework: critical pedagogy.

Considering Critical Pedagogy

The work of resisting and disrupting oppressive societal power formations has been conceptualized through the practice of critical pedagogy (Kincheloe, 2008). Given its assumptions about the political nature of schooling (hooks, 1994; McLaren, 2015) and the possibilities of liberatory education (Freire, 1997; hooks, 1994), critical pedagogy is central in grounding and framing this research. It must be noted, however, that the very notion of pedagogy relies on and upholds a particular ontological and epistemological framework. Grande (2004) asserted that pedagogy itself is a Western concept characterized by "deep structures of colonialist consciousness" (p. 69), Western notions of time and space, and grand narratives of progress that value and prioritize individualism. The ideological systems that emerged out of Western cultural epochs undergird dominant conceptions of learning, even in spaces and times when teachers work to foster and apply critical consciousness (Grande, 2004). This limitation is important to name and consider in utilizing critical pedagogy as framework through which to approach this research.

Critical pedagogy is not a single, unified theory but rather a collection of various ideas brought together with a "commitment to the unwavering liberation of oppressed populations" (Darder et al., 2017, p. 9). This framework situates educators as political actors (Freire, 1998) who are at the same time influenced by power formations that shape society and agentive in their capacity to disrupt such formations (Kincheloe, 2008). Schooling is understood concurrently as a mechanism through which hegemonic processes play out (Darder et al., 2017) and a site of potential resistance. Rooted in the hope of fostering liberatory and humanizing learning, critical pedagogy understands

education as a systemic and inherently power-based social formation grounded in social, cultural, cognitive, economic, and political contexts (Kincheloe, 2008). Implicit to critical pedagogy is a steadfast commitment to enacting social change. Taking action based on critical analysis and political concerns is the most challenging task of critical pedagogy; practical hope serves the vital catalytic function of "rigorously understand[ing] 'what is' in relation to 'what could be'" (Kincheloe, 2008, p. x). Such a conceptual framework is ideal for considering the potentiality of white educators to disrupt white supremacy in the postsecondary classroom.

A critical pedagogical framework is shaped by a number of philosophical principles including political economy, dialectical theory, ideology and critique, hegemony, resistance, and praxis. Critical analysis and practice in line with these principles also reflects a consideration of the historical context which frames and gives meaning to the experience at hand (Darder et al., 2017; Kincheloe, 2008). Toward this end, it is important to be familiar with the origins of critical pedagogy to better understand its utility in today's postsecondary classroom. Foundational to the development of critical pedagogy was the work of members of the Frankfurt School, founded in Germany in 1923 on the belief that theory and practice must be leveraged to transform oppressive societal conditions (Darder et al., 2017). Their work produced new critical social theory to address complex societal changes of the 20th century, theory which informed the development of critical pedagogy. The emergence of critical pedagogy can be thought of as an effort to provide shape and organization to an array of critical theories and radical principles aimed at transforming schooling in the United States during the 20th century (Darder et al., 2017). Its development brought together

various ideas that shared the common goal of empowering "radical educators to engage critically with the impact of capitalism and gendered, racialized, and homophobic relations on students from historically disenfranchised populations" (Darder et al., 2017, p. 2). Critical pedagogy continues to be shaped by the notion that mainstream education supports the needs of the dominant culture(s) and reinforces hegemonic power formations.

A second foundational influence in the development of critical pedagogy was Brazilian educator and activist Paulo Freire, who worked to empower the dispossessed through literacy education. Freire's (1997) approach to learning centered the role of conscientização, or critical social consciousness, as essential to humanization and liberation from oppressive formations. The possibility of education, for Freire (1997), was collective empowerment and freedom from authoritarian regimes of truth: "Authentic liberation—the process of humanization—is not another deposit to be made in [people]. Liberation is a praxis: the action and reflection of [people] upon their world in order to transform it" (p. 60). The Freirean concept of praxis has remained at the center of critical pedagogy scholarship for decades.

Though not recognized nor cited in critical pedagogical scholarship nearly to the same degree as Freire, Grande's (2004) work is paramount in acknowledging and critiquing the limitations of the Western paradigm within which conventional critical pedagogy literature operates. Grande pointed to the inadequacy of critical education theory in accounting for its reliance upon Western ontological and epistemological frameworks: "Critical theories of education operate on the assumptions of individualism, rationality, anthropocentrism, and progressivism" (p. 66). Identifying the inherent

tensions between critical pedagogy born of Western traditions and indigenous epistemological and ontological paradigms, Grande proposed a red pedagogy which has as its overarching goal decolonization. For Grande, decolonization entails political, intellectual, and spiritual sovereignty for indigenous peoples. Intentional to resist providing a flattened definition or description of red pedagogy, Grande (2004) noted, "The process of defining a Red Pedagogy is necessarily ongoing and self-reflexive—a never-ending project that is continually informed by the work of critical and indigenous scholars and by the changing realities of indigenous peoples" (p. 166).

Grande's (2004) important critique of the epistemic violence incurred when Western paradigms are uncritically employed under the banner of critical social thought necessarily troubles critical pedagogy scholarship. Even while describing the limitations and oversights of critical pedagogy, Grande (2004) pointed to the potentiality of "revolutionary critical pedagogy" (p. 24)—or that rooted in Marxist critique of capitalist structures and historical-materialist analysis—to complement a red pedagogy in the goal of decolonization. In this way, Grande's thinking aligns with the structuralist approach utilized by Frankfurt School theorists to analyze class-based power relations. The emergence of critical race theory in the United States marked a turn in some critical pedagogy circles away from analysis of primarily class-based power formations toward analysis of race-based power formations in educational contexts (Darder et al., 2017). Jennings and Lynn (2005), for example, pointed to the failure of critical pedagogical frameworks to adequately engage structural power related to race. In response, they outlined the characteristics of a critical race pedagogy that was grounded in the African-American intellectual tradition and extended Ladson-Billings and Tate's (1995)

application of critical race theory to educational contexts. The relationship between critical pedagogy and CRT is evident in much contemporary education research that considers the role of race and racism in schooling. Racial disparities abound in U.S. schools; with increasing frequency, education scholars utilize CRT as a lens for analysis. Even with the shift among many critical pedagogy scholars from foregrounding class to foregrounding race, critical pedagogy as informed by the tenets of CRT continues in the structuralist tradition of the Frankfurt School theorists.

In response to evolving economic, political, and social systems and power formations, contemporary education scholars have elucidated a variety of critical pedagogical frameworks, some of which diverge from the structuralist foundations of conventional critical pedagogy. My research is informed by the "postmodern twist" (Darder et al., 2017, p. 16) of critical pedagogy. The turn toward poststructural theories by some critical education scholars might be thought of as related to the "crisis of representation" (Lather, 1991, p. 25) that impacted notions of truth and knowledge across various academic disciplines. The embrace of poststructural thinking signifies a rejection of traditional conceptions of rationality (Ellsworth, 1989; Kumashiro, 2001) and a departure from the notion of universal of knowledge (Darder et al., 2017). A deeper consideration of poststructural approaches to critical pedagogy will be taken up in Chapter Two.

Central to critical pedagogy is imminence, or a concern with what could be (Kincheloe, 2008). A commitment to imagining and pursuing discourses and social practices that disrupt oppressive formations can be seen in Freire's (1998) call to educators to reinvent his work rather than replicate it. hooks (2003) asked educators to

utilize honest dialogue to "illuminate the space of the possible where we can work to sustain our hope and create community with justice as the core foundation" (p. xvi). Duncan-Andrade (2009) asserted that critical hope "requires analysis of systemic oppression, intentional action to disrupt oppression, and consistent self reflection" (p. 20). And Rendón (2008) explored the manifestation of "a new dream of education" (p. 1) that emphasizes wholeness in teaching and learning characterized by balance between intellectualism and insight. Critical immanence is essential if educators are to move beyond theorization and toward social transformation, such as the meaningful disruption of white supremacy and racial inequity in education. In considering the (im)possibility of antiracist pedagogical practice for white postsecondary educators, critical pedagogy is a generative framework in its analysis of the power formations at work in schooling, its positioning of teachers as political actors, its commitment to liberation and humanization as the most desired outcomes of learning, and its emphasis on critical hope. Whether rooted in conventional critical theory, poststructural theory, or both, critical pedagogical thought and practice has at its core the interrogation of power. Critical pedagogy works today to critique the power formations of education policies and practices as well as the capitalist, nationalist, imperialist, and white supremacist logics that co-constitute them.

Critical pedagogy and critical theorizations of race and whiteness constitute the theoretical framework through which this research was conceptualized, designed, and conducted. In addition to articulating a theoretical framework, adequately contextualizing my research requires positioning myself in relation to the issues under study. The final section of Chapter One is an exploration of my positionality in relation to this inquiry.

Researcher Positionality

Composing a positionality "statement" is both necessary and insufficient. The reflexive practice of considering how my subjectivities and relationships to power shaped this research was and is *dynamic*. I do not conceptualize the work of positioning oneself as a task that can be completed so much as an ever-unfolding practice. As such, this articulation is not a statement or declaration; it is an insufficient and incomplete account of an ever-changing dynamic. At an earlier time in my scholarly journey, I would have approached the work of positioning myself by listing my social identities. My choice to do so would have been informed by the desire to (attempt to) account for sites of dominance and marginalization, to employ the acting of naming as a means to identify how my positioning in varied and intersecting networks of power shaped the research process. At this moment in my scholarly journey, I believe that attempting to describe my positionality with a list of identity categories flattens, freezes, essentializes, and decontextualizes the complex, shifting, tension-filled relationships among identity, power, discourse, and knowledge. As such, I work toward positioning myself through exploring my *relationship to power formations* in specific contexts and capacities. This effort is undertaken with the acknowledgement that it is inevitably shaped by the limits and assumptions of the ontological and epistemological frameworks I have been socialized into. Through sharing reflective narratives of my experiences as a teacher and a researcher, I explore my positionality.

Desire

> "The desire to teach, . . . especially a desire to teach students outside the mythical norm, cannot revolve around solely the desire to reason; it must also involve a desire to attach and touch, a desire to enter stuck and uncontrollable places, and a desire for crisis."
> (Kumashiro, 2000a, p. 8)

I begin with an exploration of my desire to take up this research. Freire (1998), hooks (1994, 2003) and Kumashiro (2000a) discussed the central role of desire in teaching for liberation and emancipation. As a teacher and scholar, I feel passion for exploring questions of whiteness to help make meaning of my own white racialization as well as to inform my pedagogy and practice. While I do not always find practicing critical self-reflexivity about the ways I have internalized white supremacy enjoyable, I do feel deeply drawn to reading, reflecting, discussing, and writing about whiteness. I am amazed and often ashamed as I uncover layers of socialization related to race, whiteness, and dominance. The approach I take to attempting to work through and unsettle such deeply embedded, often subconscious emotions and beliefs is to continue studying race and whiteness and striving to minimize the ways that I enact racialized harm by replicating white supremacist ideology. At the center of this commitment is deep humility informed by a constant striving to ground such efforts in my desire to build and restore beloved community rather than in desire to be seen and validated as a "good white." hooks' (2003) essay "What Happens When White People Change" serves as a foundational reminder that the work of healing from white supremacy is difficult, continual, and very much relational; at the same time, it is urgent. hooks asserted, "If white folks can never be free of white-supremacist thought and action, then black folks/colored folks can never be free" (hooks, 2003, p. 57). While acknowledging and honoring the powerful role that desire plays in bringing me to this inquiry, it is important to trouble such desire. Applebaum's (2010) exploration of white complicity pointed to two troubling aspects of well-intentioned whites' desire to take action for racial justice. White moral agency, a force informed by such desire, is both complex and dangerous in

that it "recenters the white subject as the authority who brings about change and also assumes that the white subject can transcend the critique of whiteness that provokes the question being asked" (p. 5). Remembering, as Lather (1991) asserted, that "[I am] inscribed in that which [I] struggle against" (p. 20) was a critical and constant practice as I engaged in this research.

Webs of Power: My Relationship to Imperialism, White Supremacy, and Patriarchy

Having explored what drew me to this research, I next consider how my relationship to multiple power formations shaped the inquiry. Smith (2012) helps me to recognize that the "pursuit of knowledge is embedded in the multiple layers of imperial and colonial practices" (p. 2), a reflection of the struggle between interests and ways of knowing of (1) the West and (2) the Other. Values and notions that I have for years taken to be universally good and desirable—democratization, a sense of personal identity, knowledge production and consumption in the name of progress—are in fact contextualized by Western, imperialist paradigms (Grande, 2004). Imperialism and white settler colonialism, as power formations, deeply and profoundly influence all aspects of my scholarship and my everyday life. While I cannot entirely unsettle the Western gaze which shapes my epistemological worldview, I can continuously work to become aware of and interrupt taken-for-granted value systems and ways of knowing. After listening to Dr. Linda T. Smith address a room of education scholars at the American Educational Research Association annual meeting in 2018, I wrote this reflection exploring how her remarks connected to my own experience:

> *Technologies of colonization and genocide and imperialism mirror the technologies of education. They are present in my gaze, my body, my mind; they*

> *bring shape to my feelings, my desires, my dreams. Dr. Smith's assertion that* being *and* becoming *are not developmental but simultaneous is both confusing and comforting. I have a hard time not conceptualizing learning and growth as striving toward some other point, some other state. Here I feel myself bumping up against the edges of my Western worldview, seeing in a new way the limits of my imagination. At the same time, I feel a sort of sense of relief, or comfort, in the thought that such striving as I often experience is perhaps not necessary or even useful. What would it mean for me to embrace being and becoming as simultaneous? What of my desire to teach and to learn in order to gain and share more knowledge? How does my Western worldview set up knowledge as a commodity?*

The relationship to power I explored in this reflection is one whereby my epistemological stance, even while I question its underpinnings, is one that affords me power and validity in the context of formalized education in the United States. While I believe it is crucial that I continue to question and trouble my Western gaze, I do so as someone who benefits from the power formations of imperialism and white settler colonialism. Grande's (2004) reflection on the "luxury of academic perseveration" (p. 92) serves as a continual reminder to me to that, materially, I occupy a position of privilege and have access to significant power based on the formations of imperialism and white settler colonialism.

Another facet of my subjectivity that shaped this research was my lived experienced encountering intersecting power formations as an instructor. To illustrate the complicated and at times paradoxical power relations that shape and are shaped by my teaching

practice, I share a narrative exploring one experience I had navigating race- and gender-related power dynamics in the classroom:

> *I was sick last Thursday and Orkideh solo instructed in my absence. At the next class, we are having our weekly check-in with students to discuss how we are individually and collectively showing up ready to learn with and from one another. It comes to light that class was pretty rowdy last week on the day I was gone. Multiple students link this energy, which they describe as "wired," to my absence. More specifically, one student compares the classroom dynamic to days in high school when there was a substitute teacher. Another student notes that there was a missing feeling of "authority." Both of these students are white cisgender women. I have a strong emotional reaction to the race and gender power formations at play in this unfolding dialogue. The operation of white supremacy and patriarchy in the students' thinking is clear to me; I, a white, masculine-presenting instructor, am seen in the students' eyes as having more authority and credibility than Orkideh, a feminine-presenting woman of color instructor. For a moment, I am uncomfortable in my uncertainty about the "right" way to proceed. How is Orkideh feeling? Would my pointing to the racism and sexism at play serve to strip her of agency to name her own experience? Does my leading the way in raising questions of power and identity further the students' association of my racialized and gendered body with knowledge and authority? I decide to speak strictly from my perspective in an effort to simultaneously name what I'm observing without assuming how my co-instructor is feeling. I share my observations about the students' differential*

perceptions of Orkideh and I as teachers. When I ask the class if they think it's possible that and race and gender are at play in the different ways they perceive their co-instructors, my question is met with 25 blank stares.

This teaching experience is one that deeply informed my approach to this research. I come to teaching, just as I came to this research, as a white person. My relationship to the power formation of white supremacy must be examined carefully and critically if I have any possibility of taking up teaching and research in ways that work to disrupt racial injustice. Though certainly not for the first time, this experience in the classroom clarified the degree to which I am granted power, authority, and competence because my body is racialized white. Understanding and remembering how white supremacy shapes others' perceptions of me as credible, knowledgeable, and worthy of respect was paramount to designing and carrying out this research with integrity and humility. In addition to the power granted me by others' racialized perceptions, I also consider the effects of white supremacy on my internal sense of self. I am every day puzzling through the ongoing experience of "becoming white" (Thandeka, 2006, p. 20), at times paralyzed by grief, shame, fear, confusion. In the narrative above, I was quick to recognize the racialized aspect of the students' thinking though I was not so adept at understanding in the moment how internalized white supremacy was shaping my thinking, feeling, and acting. It was comfortable for me to preserve an understanding of myself as a "good white" whose desire to interrupt racism in a poignant pedagogical moment landed me on the correct side of the struggle. Applebaum's (2010) notion of white complicity is useful in considering my positionality through a lens of race. I agree with Applebaum's assertion that white moral agency, which leads well-intentioned

whites to ask what we can do to disrupt white supremacy, is both complex and dangerous in that it "recenters the white subject as the authority who brings about change and also *assumes that the white subject can transcend the critique of whiteness that provokes the question being asked*" (p. 5, emphasis added). I am not convinced such transcendence is entirely possible for whites. My approach to this research took shape from *within* the contours of a white imaginary; there are certain ways of knowing and being that are beyond my comprehension. Even as I was committed to critically examining my internalized white dominance and becoming more aware of the contours of my white imaginary, there remain limitations. While I may have been able to periodically bump up against or strive to defy these limits, I cannot say that I overcame them. In my work of designing and conducting this research, there were limits to what I could and would "see" and "understand" because I am wholly enmeshed in the white imaginary.

The curiosity and desire that compelled me to conduct this research about whiteness and antiracist pedagogy were accompanied by concern that my approach to conceptualizing whiteness would have the opposite effect of what I intended (i.e., it would perpetuate white supremacy rather than interrupt it). To attend to this concern, I worked to consistently consider complex questions about whiteness as always contextualized by the power formations and discourses at play and the historical-materialist narratives leading up to the moment in question. Biss (2015) offered a helpful reminder in this practice. Responding to Claudia Rankine's essay, "The Condition of Black Life is One of Mourning," published shortly after the Charleston church massacre, Biss wrote, "Sitting with her essay in front of me, I asked myself what the condition of white life might be" (para. 8). Coming back to this question—what is the condition of my

white life in this moment?—throughout my inquiry served as a grounding and contextualizing practice and a necessary yet insufficient effort to provide an account of myself.

The teaching narrative I shared above reveals not only racialized power at play in the classroom, but also power formations responding to and shaping perceptions and subjectivities related to gender. Arguably, race and gender power formations mutually constructed the students' perceptions and meaning-making about my instructional authority in relation to Orkideh's. Whiteness and masculinity both exist as sites and sources of power. Even though students were aware that I am both younger and less experienced as a teacher than Orkideh, they mapped authority onto my white, masculine body and behaved differently (according to their own account) on the day that I was not present. My realization as this classroom conversation unfolded that white supremacy and sexism were operating in lockstep was unsettling not because I felt uncomfortable about my whiteness, but rather because I was not accustomed to being perceived as a white man. Assigned female at birth and socialized as a white girl and woman, my lifelong familiarity with patriarchy and sexism comes from having it directed toward me. My positionality as a transgenderqueer person must also be taken up thoughtfully in situating this inquiry. While I do not consider myself a man, I believe I am perceived by most strangers as such. Based on Western imperialist binary understandings of gender, I presume that I am most often read as a cisgender man and thereby benefit from male privilege even while I do not consider myself a man. There is paradox in the fact that it is my marginalized transgenderqueer subjectivity in combination with cisheteronormativity that leads people to assume I am a man and (consciously or not) grant me power based on

the logics of patriarchy, sexism, and misogyny. In the instance described above, students knew that I am trans* and yet presumably understood me as the more masculine and thereby the more authoritative instructor in the course.

Reflecting on power formations at play in the teaching experience shared above illustrates two important considerations that shaped this research. First, whiteness and masculinity are intricately co-constructed identity categories and sites of power. Even while my writing treats these as discrete identity constructions and power formations, I recognize that logics and discourses of dominance flow through and constitute both in ways that cannot be broken down for single-axis analysis. Second, I benefit from the enmeshment of white supremacy and sexism even while I do not consider myself a man. This feels particularly important to acknowledge. While I do not intend to diminish the marginalization I and other trans* people face, I also feel strongly about acknowledging that my current relationship with sexism, patriarchy, and misogyny is characterized overwhelmingly by receiving power. Failure to acknowledge this by remaining only in the analytical space of reflecting on how these power formations marginalize and invisibilize my trans* identity upholds liberalism's emphasis on the individual. The capacity of poststructural thinking for holding paradox and contradiction was useful as I conducted this research. The poststructural notions of power, discourse, identity, and knowledge were useful tools with which to continuously reflect upon my ever-shifting positionality while at the same time maintaining critical awareness about the life conditions and relationships to power formations that shaped and were shaped by this inquiry. Applying a pedagogical lens to the ongoing work of considering and accounting for my researcher positionality, "confronting new yet discomforting forms of knowledge"

(Kumashiro, 2000a, p. 10) continuously (re)shaped my understanding of self and the epistemological frameworks through which I engaged this inquiry.

Conclusion

Chapter One has situated and contextualized this research. It established the theoretical framework through which I conceptualized and conducted the study by exploring of the ideas of race and whiteness, describing the academic subfield of whiteness studies, and outlining the history and evolution of critical pedagogy. The culminating section of the chapter explored my subjectivity as researcher, further contextualizing the study. Next, Chapter Two will provide an overview of the literature that informs this research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The second chapter of this dissertation reviews extant literature that informed my research. First, a review of research on whiteness in education points to significant gaps and limitations, exemplifying the need for postsecondary education research that considers whiteness with criticality and nuance. A selective review of conceptual and empirical literature about critical pedagogy follows. The chapter culminates with a consideration of research that addresses both whiteness and critical pedagogy in postsecondary contexts.

In reviewing such literature, it is important to consider the landscape within which critical research efforts occur. Neoliberal and color-blind discourses dominate education (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Giroux, 2014) and shape the trajectory of postsecondary education research. Higher education has historically suppressed and/or co-opted disruptive and transgressive ways of knowing (Ferguson, 2012; Melamed, 2011), limiting the proliferation and publication of research that transgressively seeks to unsettle white supremacy. Employing Bonilla-Silva's (2014) framework of color-blind racism, Harper's (2012) content analysis of higher education research articles about racial disparities revealed a failure to explicitly name systemic racism. Even while race is increasingly addressed in postsecondary education research, it is commonly conceptualized as individual identity and "critical analyses of what this means in terms of systemic racial inequality are generally not discussed" (Cabrera, 2017, p. 16). The higher education research landscape seems to be shifting toward an embrace of critical theoretical and methodological approaches, as evidenced by the 2012 launch of the *Journal of Critical Thought & Praxis* and the 2015 launch of the *Journal of Critical Scholarship on Higher*

Education and Student Affairs. Considering the landscape within which extant and emergent literature was produced is an important element of contextualizing this research.

Whiteness Research in (Postsecondary) Education

Education research that utilizes a whiteness studies framework has expanded exponentially in the last two decades. The bulk of this literature, however, is specific to K-12 contexts (Jupp & Lensmire, 2016; McCarthy, 2003) or narrowly focused on teacher preparation programs in postsecondary contexts (i.e., Crowley & Smith, 2015; Hawkman, 2020; Marx, 2004; Matias et al., 2014; Sleeter, 2016). The emergent subfield called *white teacher identity studies* has as its focus the effort to "prepare and conscientize a predominantly White preservice and professional teaching force for teaching and learning across cultural differences in public schools" (Jupp et al., 2016, p. 1151). The subfield is distinct from higher education research in that literature is produced and published by scholar/practitioners in teacher preparation programs, which are typically housed in departments of curriculum and instruction. The expansion and evolution of white teacher identity studies in the last two decades demonstrates the relevance of interrogating whiteness in research about teaching. White teacher identity studies is well-enough established as a body of literature to have had multiple waves of scholarship (Jupp & Lensmire, 2016), and yet a parallel body of literature in higher education research has yet to emerge.

Despite the increasing attention to whiteness in education literature on teacher preparation, whiteness research in postsecondary education literature remains limited. A small but growing body of higher education research addresses whiteness, though extant

literature largely underutilizes critical and interdisciplinary approaches to studying whiteness (Cabrera et al., 2016). Whiteness research in higher education conceptualizes whiteness primarily at the individual level as a category of identity (Cabrera et al., 2016) and focuses almost exclusively on racial identity development and frameworks of allyship for white students (Cabrera, 2014b). As noted in Chapter One, conceptualizing whiteness solely as an identity inadequately attends to the complexity of white supremacy (Cabrera et al., 2016; Leonardo, 2004). While aligned with student development theory (which tends to be a focus of higher education literature), conceptualizing whiteness as an identity that develops in stages oversimplifies the phenomenon of racial formation (Omi & Winant, 2015). The complex experience of "becoming white" (Thandeka, 2006, p. 20) is artificially flattened and woefully under-theorized when research focuses on white racial identity through a student development framework. In addition to the limited focus on identity, higher education whiteness research is characterized by an emphasis on undergraduate students (Cabrera et al., 2016). Extant research does not adequately consider how other actors in the postsecondary context (i.e., administrators, instructors, graduate students) shape and are shaped by whiteness and white supremacy.

Another trend in extant research is inadequate intersectional analysis of whiteness. May (2015) described intersectional analysis as addressing enmeshed multiplicities of identity and power and interrogating privilege and oppression simultaneously by employing both/and logics. An intersectional framework rejects single-axis categories and cumulative, atomized identity formations (May, 2015). Postsecondary education whiteness research often essentializes whiteness by taking it up as a single-axis formation. In other words, whiteness is conceptualized as a stand-alone

power formation, which occludes the interlocking nature of structural oppressions. Conceptualizing whiteness non-intersectionally reifies the hegemonic power of white supremacy and uncritically centers a discourse of whiteness (Leonardo, 2013). Turning away from single-axis logics in research on whiteness is imperative because these frameworks "have real, detrimental consequences when it comes to our collective yearnings and efforts to abolish unjust practices and systemic inequality" (May, 2015, p. 81). Limited higher education research that considers whiteness alongside another identity formation (typically gender) frames race and gender as discrete, overlapping identities rather than mutually constituted and reinforcing power formations (Cabrera, 2012, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c; Linder, 2015; Robbins & Jones, 2016). This is a reflection of the centrality of student development theory in shaping postsecondary education research. Higher education research on whiteness has been dominated by conceptualizations of whiteness as an individual, single-axis identity (Cabrera et al., 2016). As a result, the primary approach to dismantling white supremacy in postsecondary education has been employing the white privilege framework to educate white students about racism. As discussed in Chapter One, this framing is inadequate. By expanding the notion of whiteness beyond single-axis, discrete identity, higher education whiteness research can and must shift from focusing on the individual as the unit of analysis to considering systemic power formations. Complicating notions and discourses of whiteness creates possibilities for richer analysis of racialized systems of dominance in postsecondary education.

Critical Pedagogy

Having described trends and limitations of whiteness research in education, this literature review next addresses critical pedagogy. The body of literature on critical pedagogy is expansive and diverse, spanning a variety of academic disciplines and reflecting divergent epistemological paradigms. This review addresses scholarship which is most relevant to my research, judged based on its alignment with my conception of critical pedagogy and/or its direct and specific focus on whiteness and antiracist teaching philosophy and practice.

bell hooks' (1994) *Teaching to Transgress* is a notable critical pedagogical text that utilized CRT and narrative inquiry to imagine an "engaged pedagogy" (p. 15) that conceptualized "education as the practice of freedom." hooks' work "celebrate[s] teaching that enables transgressions—a movement against and beyond boundaries" (p. 12). What set engaged pedagogy apart from conventional critical pedagogy was its emphasis on well-being; hooks asserted that "teachers must be actively committed to a process of self-actualization that promotes their own well-being if they are to teach in a manner that empowers students" (p. 15). Freire's influence was felt in hooks' emphasis on liberation and critical consciousness in educational contexts. hooks rigorously applied Freire's emphasis on consciousness-raising to her own teaching philosophy and practice, exhibiting significant self-reflexivity in her essays about teaching. Critical social theory, and CRT specifically, were evident in hooks' analysis of power in education; she repeatedly pointed to the impact of structural racism and intersecting power-based social formations on teaching and learning. hooks' scholarship utilized poststructural approaches to conceptualizing critical pedagogy and exploring the possibility of

education as the practice of freedom: "Teaching is a performative act. And it is that aspect of our work that offers the space for change, invention, spontaneous shifts, that can serve as a catalyst drawing out the unique elements in each classroom" (hooks, 1994, p. 11). In addition to calling on the poststructural notion of performativity, hooks explored the concepts of desire and pleasure and the role of the erotic in her scholarship on teaching. She complicated and troubled essentialized notions of identity, challenging teachers to complexly consider our r*elationship* to power structures (i.e., white supremacy, capitalism, heteropatriarchy) rather than relying on identity categories as shorthand for determining our status as oppressed or oppressor. hooks' (1994, 2003) elucidation of engaged pedagogy as well as her engagement with desire and hope as essential elements of teaching deeply informed this research.

A second significant influence on my understanding of critical pedagogy came from scholar Elizabeth Ellsworth, whose critique of the centering of rationality in traditional conceptions critical pedagogy opened the door for an unsettling of the dominant logics that shape the discipline. Ellsworth's (1989) autoethnographic inquiry into her teaching philosophy and practice in a course focused on antiracism troubled the very meaning of core critical pedagogical concepts (i.e., *critical*, *student voice*, *empowerment*, and *dialogue*). Ellsworth (1989) noted,

> Our classroom was the site of dispersed, shifting, and contradictory contexts of knowing that coalesced differently in different moments of student/professor speech, emotion, and action. The situation meant that individuals and affinity groups constantly had to change strategies and priorities of resistance against oppressive ways of knowing and being known. The antagonist became power

> itself as it was deployed within our classroom—oppressive ways of knowing and oppressive knowledges. (p. 322)

Ellsworth (1989) called explicitly on poststructural approaches in describing the challenges of critical pedagogy, pointing to the need for educators to "think through the implications of confronting unknowability" (p. 321). Feminist and poststructural analysis framed Ellsworth's vision of a critical pedagogical practice that embraces the unknowability inherent in constantly shifting classroom power arrangements. This scholarship laid bare the challenges and opened up the possibilities to "act on and in the university both as the Inappropriate/d Other and as the privileged speaking/making subject trying to unlearn that privilege" (p. 323).

A third significant influence on my conception of critical pedagogy is Rebecca Ropers' research on feminist teaching philosophy and practice (Ropers-Huilman, 1996, 1997, 1998). While Ropers' work focused on feminist teaching philosophy and practice and this research addresses antiracist pedagogy, Ropers' poststructural approach to exploring power, identity, and knowledge in feminist teaching informed my conceptualization of antiracist pedagogy. Her work demonstrated possibilities for critically interrogating complex questions about the influences between and among power and identity in the classroom as well as feminist teaching discourses and practices:

> Students and teachers construct classrooms in which they work, learn, and teach with and for each other. While their characteristics, practices, attitudes, and philosophies are not the only factors shaping this environment, students and teachers are actors and enactors simultaneously and fluidly in their classroom practices. (Ropers-Huilman, 1997, p. 342)

In this work, teachers' identities were understood as layered, complex, and continuously negotiated amidst fluid and shifting relationships of power and struggle in the classroom. This work took up questions of identity and power alongside questions of discourse, exemplifying the analytical potential of utilizing both critical theory and poststructural theory in studying antioppressive teaching philosophy and practice: "Power relations were not static in these classrooms. Students and teachers had power in different ways based on their multiple identities, all of which were tentative and fluid" (Ropers-Huilman, 1997, p. 332). The theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches Ropers utilized to study feminist teaching deeply informed the ways I conceptualized, designed, and conducted this research.

A fourth scholar of critical pedagogy whose work significantly shaped this research is Kevin Kumashiro. Applying poststructural approaches to critical pedagogy, Kumashiro's (2000a, 2000b, 2001, 2002, 2009) scholarship on anti-oppressive education extended Ellsworth's (1989) critique of rationality: "By realizing that anti-oppressive education necessarily involves crisis and getting stuck, educators can change the problematic ways in which their approaches to teaching and learning privilege rationality" (Kumashiro, 2000a, p. 7). Crisis was further described in Kumashiro's (2000b) scholarship as the "paradoxical condition of learning and unlearning" (p. 44). Kumashiro (2001) offered two frames as generative approaches for considering anti-oppressive education. The first frame addressed the inherent partiality of all knowledge and recommended "approaches to teaching that embrace unknowability and paradox in education, embark on multiple ways of knowing, and look beyond what is already known" (Kumashiro, 2001, p. 8). The second frame responded to the tendency of

students (and society) to resist change by preferring not to learn about the ways they are complicit with oppression. Kumashiro (2001) named this frame “resistance, crisis, and resignifying the self” (p. 3) and noted “learning to overcome one's desire for the comforting repetition of normative knowledges, identities, and experiences involves learning to desire the discomforting process of unlearning. Desiring change involves desiring to learn through crisis” (p. 8). Rather than relying on routinized notions of teaching, Kumashiro (2001) suggested that anti-oppressive education “involves desiring and working through crisis rather than avoiding and masking it” (p. 9). Both frames call on poststructural theory to trouble rational approaches to anti-oppressive teaching practice.

Kumashiro (2000b) also advocated that critical educators labor to change harmful citational practices and discourses rather than prohibiting harmful words or simply raising consciousness about them, insisting that “the very ways in which we think are framed not only by what is said but also by what is not said” (p. 42). Kumashiro (2009) asserted that “no practice is always anti-oppressive” (p. 3), making space for paradox and tension in the process of striving to enact anti-oppressive pedagogy. He conceptualized teaching not as a representational act, but a performative act that constitutes reality as it names reality (Kumashiro, 2000b). Kumashiro’s work significantly shaped my thoughts about critical pedagogy and informed the ways I engaged in this research.

Kumashiro, hooks, Ellsworth, and Ropers each considered critical pedagogical thought and practice through poststructural frameworks while acknowledging and interrogating power formations as always already shaping formalized education. These scholars’ approaches grounded and informed the ways that I came to this inquiry. Having

considered critical pedagogy broadly, this review of literature next pivots to a narrower consideration of antiracist pedagogy.

Antiracist Pedagogy

Various forms of critical pedagogy have evolved as education scholars, informed by differing disciplines and epistemologies, have responded to new iterations of critical social theory and changing social, political, and economic conditions. Critical education scholars have articulated many frameworks in the last three decades, including: engaged pedagogy (hooks, 1994), culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995), anti-oppressive pedagogy (Kumashiro, 2000b), red pedagogy (Grande, 2004), social justice education (Adams & Bell, 2016), multicultural education (Banks, 2019), and abolitionist pedagogy (Love, 2019). In the context of this research, I use the terms *antiracist pedagogy* and *antiracist teaching* to refer to teaching philosophy and practice that specifically and intentionally emphasize race and white supremacy with the aim of unsettling dominant racial discourses and disrupting the power formation of white supremacy. My definition of these terms was informed by extant literature on antiracist approaches to teaching; a review of such literature further contextualizes this research.

Antiracist Pedagogy: Conceptual Explorations

A recent content analysis of literature about antiracist education identified important patterns and emergent trends in how educators have conceptualized antiracist pedagogy. Lynch et al.'s (2017) content analysis included 43 peer-reviewed articles about antiracist education published between 2000 and 2015; the authors noted that "a central common description of anti-racist education is that of a deliberately politicised pedagogical approach, concerned with confronting systemic and structural oppression"

(p. 134). In utilizing such a framework, educators sought to look beneath and/or beyond individual student attitudes and behaviors about race and racism in order to critically explore the systemic, structural formations that differentially impact and shape life chances. The content analysis included articles about varying levels of formal education, with roughly half focused on postsecondary settings. The authors did not address in their content analysis any questions related to the racialized subjectivities of the antiracist educators whose scholarship they reviewed; this gap is noteworthy in asserting the importance of my research. The content analysis revealed three common goals of antiracist education: "(1) identifying or making visible systemic oppression; (2) challenging denial of complicity in such oppression; and (3) ultimately transforming structural inequalities" (Lynch et al., 2017, p. 135). One paradox emerged in the content analysis; while authors regularly described achieving systemic change as a primary goal of their antiracist teaching efforts, their self-reported methodological approaches to classroom instruction overwhelmingly focused on individual-level interventions and learning activities. Seldom were teaching methods reported that included engagement with others aside from students (i.e., faculty, staff, community members) or that encouraged structural approaches to disrupting racism (i.e., transforming education policy). In analyzing the theoretical frameworks that informed the body of literature under review, Lynch et al. found two main groupings. Critical pedagogy frameworks informed 56% of the articles (i.e., work by theorists including Paulo Freire, Henry Giroux, bell hooks, Joe Kincheloe, and Kimberlé Crenshaw), while poststructuralist approaches informed 25% of the articles (i.e., work by theorists including Judith Butler, Michel Foucault, and Vivienne Burr). A small proportion of the reviewed articles relied

heavily on concepts related to white privilege. (Lynch et al. acknowledged that marking these theoretical frameworks as distinct artificially flattened their interplay and that analyzing the articles in this way diminished the instances when multiple frameworks were utilized.) The content analysis revealed that the concept of intersectionality, defined as "the analysis of interlocking systems of oppression, such as 'sexism, heterosexism, ageism, disablism and classism'" (Lynch et al., 2017, p. 137), was drawn on across theoretical frameworks and served as a central facet of antiracist education.

In addition to the general overview of conceptual approaches to antiracist teaching provided by Lynch et al., this research was contextualized by conceptual literature that addressed the affective elements of antiracist teaching. Wagner's (2005) discussion of antiracist pedagogy emphasized that "the *process* of learning antiracism" (p. 261, emphasis in original) can be expected to "evoke visceral reactions" (p. 263) from students. Positioning antiracist pedagogy as necessarily unsettling, Wagner noted that emotional discomfort is likely to be experienced differently among white students and students of color. To leverage the learning potential of conflict and discomfort, instructors have a responsibility to teach students the skills needed to dialogue through conflict. Wagner's conceptualization of antiracist pedagogy as unsettling and affectively evocative echoed Kumashiro's (2000a) thinking about anti-oppressive education: "By realizing that anti-oppressive education necessarily involves crisis and getting stuck, educators can change the problematic ways in which their approaches to teaching and learning privilege rationality" (p. 7). Spanierman and Cabrera (2015) further explored the affective dimension of antiracist teaching by outlining a taxonomy of the emotions of white racism and antiracism. In their conceptualization, one aim of antiracist pedagogy is

to move white learners away from the emotions of white racism (melancholia, anger, apathy, and fear) toward the emotions of antiracism (productive guilt and empathy). The authors acknowledged the role of racialized power dynamics between teachers and learners, noting that "white students are more likely to be receptive to learning about power, privilege, and oppression from white educators" (Spanierman & Cabrera, 2015, p. 21). The authors pointed to the potential impact on students of color when white students' emotional experiences and needs are centered in classroom dialogue about race and racism. These conceptualizations of antiracist pedagogy highlight the pedagogical limitations of teaching about race and racism solely through rational frameworks and advocate for deeper consideration of students' affective experiences, which are asymmetric and themselves racialized.

Antiracist Pedagogy: Empirical Explorations

Moving from literature that conceptually explores antiracist pedagogy to that which addresses it empirically, it is useful to reemphasize the critical pedagogical concept of praxis. Central to my research and to the philosophy of critical pedagogy, praxis was described by Freire (1997) as "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (p. 33). For critical pedagogy scholarship to be useful to teachers and generative toward the goal of disrupting structural oppression in formal education, it ought to attend closely to questions of praxis. Research that meaningfully explores critical pedagogical practice, and, particular to this research, antiracist teaching practice, is necessary to expanding and troubling notions of "what works" in the classroom. The remainder of this section highlights emergent research that empirically addresses antiracist teaching in higher education contexts.

Grosland's (2011) dissertation research explored the experiences of students in a graduate course designed and taught through an antiracist pedagogical framework. Situated in a college of education, the course topic addressed issues of race and ethnicity in higher education. Utilizing CRT to analyze data collected through participant-observation, interviews, and document review, Grosland explored students' experience of the instructor's approach to antiracist pedagogy. Conceptions and constructions of racial identity were found to be influential in making up students' experiences, particularly in light of the instructor's use of story-sharing as a learning tool. Grosland (2011) found that students of color engaged in class and with the instructor more often than white students, and identified a pattern whereby white students were "watching instead of participating" (p. 85). This finding pointed to both the potential and the pitfall of story-sharing as a tool of antiracist pedagogy:

> The counterstories in class helped us learn about each other, but people of European ancestry overly sought out these stories in their quest to understand racism. Their consumption became so imbalanced that they seemed to gaze on the "other" rather than engage with us. (pp. 98–99)

Grosland (2011) explored the emotional responses students displayed in response to various antiracist teaching practices, noting, "Paradoxically, those more affected by racism, more racially aware, and/or more culturally competent were less emotional" (p. 156). Grosland suggested differentiated learning opportunities for students as an avenue to minimize the consumptive white gaze and better meet the needs of all students regardless of the degree to which they are aware of and/or impacted by racism and white supremacy.

A second study about graduate students' experiences employed a CRT framework to examine how students of color in higher education and student affairs Master's programs described classroom race dynamics (Linder et al., 2015). While this study explored students' classroom experiences broadly, it briefly addressed pedagogical approaches to social justice education. Linder et al. reported that graduate students of color expressed disappointment with instructors' efforts to enact "inclusive pedagogy" (p. 178), even in courses and programs which explicitly prioritized diversity and social justice as core values. Instructional practices that did contribute to inclusive learning environments included "recognizing the role of emotion in learning, naming, and discussing power dynamics in the learning space; applying course content to events that are relevant in students' lives; and engaging authentically" (p. 186). Based on this finding, Linder et al. asserted that instructors bear the responsibility of facilitating "hard conversations" (p. 186) to reduce the burden on students of color to correct peers' misperceptions about race and racism. While contributing important empirical insight about antiracist teaching in postsecondary classrooms, neither Grosland (2011) nor Linder et al.'s work meaningfully addressed questions of instructor positionality.

Whiteness Studies and Antiracist Pedagogy: Empirical Explorations

A paucity of empirical literature addresses how postsecondary instructors' positionality impacts their conceptualization of and approach to antiracist pedagogical practice (Kishimoto, 2018). Ropers' influential research (Ropers-Huilman, 1996, 1997, 1998) illustrated the necessity of complexly considering power and identity in exploring educators' efforts at feminist teaching; the same critical questions are necessary in exploring educators' efforts at antiracist teaching. The study of antiracist pedagogy in

higher education cannot ignore demographic realities and the racialized power dynamics they produce; while students of color comprise increasing percentages of incoming classes, the professoriate remains overwhelmingly white. Emergent empirical scholarship addresses what Charbeneau (2015) deemed "a particular scarcity of literature examining how whiteness intersects with faculty members' pedagogical practices" (p. 660). These projects bring whiteness studies frameworks to explorations of teaching philosophy and practice in postsecondary contexts, marking an emerging line of inquiry in higher education research.

Quaye (2012) explored white postsecondary educators' efforts to engage students in constructive classroom discussions about race and racism. The two instructors in this case study analysis spoke primarily about facilitating racialized dialogue with white students, expressing the belief that "white students most needed support in discussing and understanding racial issues" (Quaye, 2012, p. 108). By facilitating classroom dialogue, the white faculty communicated to students the importance of race in their lives and took on responsibility for raising racial issues in the classroom—labor which typically falls on faculty of color. The research pointed to the impact of emotional engagement on racial discourse and called for white educators facilitating these types of classroom conversations to "be cognizant of reflecting on their own white racial identities and examining the developmental places of white learners in order to respond appropriately to resistance among white learners" (Quaye, 2012, p. 116).

Charbeneau's (2015) research framed pedagogical practice as the "principal way white professors enact their whiteness as they work and relate in the classroom" (p. 656). Based on interviews with 18 white professors in various disciplines at a research

university, the study identified teaching practices participants reported using to "surface and undermine white dominance" in the classroom (p. 657). Charbeneau's analysis focused on transformative enactments of whiteness, or those behaviors which have the potential to disrupt white dominance in everyday interactions, including:

> (1) expressing racial awareness by disclosing personal white identity, acknowledging and attending to racial plurality, and revealing one's location in a system of white privilege and hegemony; and (2) challenging white dominance by creating alliances with people of color and white diversity advocates, and acting to alter structures and cultures that support normative patterns of whiteness. (pp. 662–663)

Extending this conceptual framework to pedagogical practice, Charbenau reported more types of transforming enactments among participants in the social sciences than those in the humanities and the natural sciences. This research identified the complexity and necessity of pedagogical interventions by white postsecondary instructors who seek to disrupt white dominance in higher education.

More recent research addresses racial consciousness and pedagogical decision-making among white faculty. Haynes (2017) utilized constructivist grounded theory to qualitatively explore the relationship between racial consciousness and teaching behaviors of white instructors at a liberal arts university. The resulting White Racial Consciousness and Faculty Behavior (WRC/FB) model, developed through analysis of survey, interview, and participant-observation data, consists of three interdependent dimensions: racial consciousness, faculty behavior, and White interests. Haynes' research demonstrated that, "White faculty with higher levels of racial consciousness employ

behaviors in their classroom reflective of an *expansive view of equality* in their pursuit of social justice, which they consider synonymous with excellence in teaching" (p. 87, emphasis added). The WRC/FB model asserts that increased racial consciousness is a result of white instructors' willingness to interrogate how whiteness shapes their worldview; such "interrogation and critique of whiteness allows White faculty to gain greater sensitivity to race and racism not only in their lives, but also in their classrooms (Haynes & Patton, 2019, p. 90). White faculty whose teaching behaviors reflect an expansive view of equality and an understanding that the classroom is a racialized structure take steps to "shift the pedagogical culture from one where sole expertise is rooted in White ways of knowing to one where minoritized (and all) students' perspectives are valued" (Haynes & Patton, 2019, p. 90). Rooted in CRT, the WRC/FB model theorizes the role of interest convergence in shaping the behavior of white faculty. Haynes posited that "racially minoritized students' interests in equitable educational outcomes will be accommodated only when, and as long as, those interests converge with the interests of White faculty" (Haynes & Patton, 2019, p. 89). Haynes' research and conceptual framework contribute important insights about white postsecondary instructors' pedagogical behaviors and highlight the importance of critical approaches to studying whiteness in higher education.

A different approach to empirically exploring this issue can be seen in a collection of articles that used a self-study methodology. Responding to Applebaum's (2010) call for white postsecondary educators to write about their attempts to implement antiracist pedagogy in the classroom, Teel (2014) used a whiteness studies framework and autoethnographic methods to explore "the possibility of white antiracist pedagogy" (p. 3).

Central to this research was Teel's questioning if/how white teachers can effectively be antiracist pedagogues; as a baseline, Teel (2014) asserted that "knowledge of the literature on multicultural education and social justice pedagogy is indispensable for white college professors who desire to teach effectively about racial justice concerns" (p. 6). Grounding her inquiry in intellectual humility and critical self-reflexivity, Teel questioned and problematized her motivation for and efforts at antiracist teaching. Asserting that antiracism and the work of antiracist teaching are not practices that come naturally to white educators but rather commitments that must be learned and fostered, Teel (2014) reflected:

> Slowly but surely, therefore, I am altering the way I teach. These changes feel frustratingly minute and excruciatingly gradual. As a privileged white person, I have discovered no shortcuts, either to understanding the need for antiracist pedagogy or to enacting it in the classroom. (p. 18)

In describing how she aspired to impact students through developing and employing antiracist teaching philosophy and practice, Teel prioritized engagement over particular learning outcomes: "I have focused on attempting to model antiracism, rather than on assessing developments in students' racial attitudes" (p. 10). Though published outside of higher education research venues, Teel's work is an important contribution to this emergent line of inquiry in our field.

Linley's (2017) autoethnographic approach to studying antiracist teaching was grounded in CRT, whiteness studies, and queer theory. Foregrounding her positionality and subjectivity as a white, queer educator, Linley traced how her early socialization and growing racial consciousness shaped the way she came to teaching. She described a

teaching practice of "centering whiteness for critical examination" (Linley, 2017, p. 7) and articulated an understanding of the asymmetric effects on white students and students of color. Reflecting on her effort to deconstruct whiteness as faculty in a higher education graduate program, Linley (2017) noted, "Teaching mostly white graduate students is as much about teaching them *how to learn* as it is about the content of the courses" (p. 11, emphasis in original).

A third illustration of a self-study approach to empirically exploring white postsecondary educators' efforts at antiracist pedagogical practice is schneider and Nicolazzo's (2020) discourse analysis. Grounded in queer theory and whiteness studies, their autoethnographic research explored how their subjectivities related to whiteness and transness shaped their respective efforts at antiracist teaching. Analysis of their shared conversation about "navigating discourses of race and gender in relation to enacting an antiracist pedagogy" (schneider & Nicolazzo, 2020, p. 154) revealed multiple "sites of rupture" (p. 161), or instances of paradox: "We utilised humour and paradox as tools to consider with depth and complexity our white racial identities, leveraging a close and trusting personal relationship as well as similar experiences of navigating systemic trans* oppression" (p. 161). schneider and Nicolazzo (2020) asserted the necessity of intersectional approaches to conceptualizing and studying white educators' efforts at antiracist pedagogy, noting that their discourse was meaningfully shaped by their "ways of knowing and practice of relating as trans* kin" (p. 161). Their findings suggested that queer frameworks, such as Nicolazzo's (2017a) trans*epistemology, offer new and different approaches to conceptualizing and studying antiracist pedagogy in higher education.

The emerging thread of empirical research represented in the literature reviewed above marks an important turn toward utilizing whiteness studies and critical pedagogy frameworks to consider white postsecondary educators' efforts to develop and employ antiracist teaching philosophy and practice. Understanding the shape, trajectory, and limitations of extant literature contextualizes the research I undertook in an effort to explore the (im)possibility of antiracist pedagogy for white postsecondary educators.

Conclusion

Working toward the democratic ideal of education requires that we make clear demands of postsecondary education to disrupt hegemonic epistemologies. Simpson (2014) eloquently asked, "What kinds of habits, ways of seeing the world, and social norms do universities affirm?" (p. 7). If critical educators strive to foster transformative, emancipatory learning and disrupt systemic white supremacy, inquiry into classroom power formations ought to expand beyond the largely theoretical lenses through which it is currently addressed to include empirical exploration of antiracist pedagogy. Necessary to disrupting white supremacy in education is a critical turn to whiteness (Leonardo, 2013). The review in this chapter of conceptual and empirical literature about whiteness and antiracist pedagogy postsecondary education informed the research questions that grounded my study:

1. How do white postsecondary instructors conceptualize antiracist pedagogy?
2. How do white postsecondary instructors strive to enact antiracist pedagogy, and what tensions do they navigate?

These questions centered the classroom as a site of possibility and positioned the teacher as political actor, one who both influences and is influenced by social forces and power

formations. The questions were grounded in extant literature and crafted within a borderlands theoretical framework (Abes, 2009) that utilized critical theory alongside poststructural approaches. These paradigms are often thought to be at odds with one another, but this research utilized both as tools for analysis rather than overarching ontological and epistemological frameworks (Ropers-Huilman, 1997). The research questions were not crafted with the intent of producing simple answers; rather, they were designed to explore with nuance and complexity the (im)possibility of antiracist pedagogy for white postsecondary educators.

Collectively, Chapters One and Two have established the theoretical foundation of this research and contextualized it within existing discourses and literature. Next, Chapter Three will describe the methodology and methods that were utilized to conduct the research. Following that, the remaining chapters present analysis and synthesis of the data in response to these research questions.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

The purpose of this research was to explore the possibilities of antiracist pedagogy as taken up by white postsecondary educators. In the context of this inquiry, antiracist pedagogy was conceptualized as an approach to teaching which critically considers racialized power formations with the aim of unsettling white supremacy. In particular, this inquiry paid attention to the ways that white educators conceptualize antiracist pedagogy and their experiences in striving to enact antiracist teaching. The study utilized a theoretical framework grounded in whiteness studies and critical pedagogy as discussed in the preceding chapters. This chapter introduces the methodological framework of the research and describes the data collection and analysis practices utilized to explore the research questions: How do white postsecondary instructors conceptualize antiracist pedagogy? How do white postsecondary instructors strive to enact antiracist pedagogy, and what tensions do they navigate? During the process of data collection, a sub-question of the second research question emerged: How do college students experience the antiracist pedagogical practice of white instructors?

This qualitative study employed multiple methodological approaches across two phases of data collection and analysis. In the first phase, which utilized narrative inquiry methods, 10 white postsecondary instructors were interviewed about their conceptions of and efforts at antiracist pedagogy. Phase two was an ethnographic case study situated in the classroom of one of the educators who had participated in phase one; the classroom-based case study included participant-observation as well as interviews with the instructor and students in the course. This chapter details both phases of study, including participant selection, site information, and data collection and analysis procedures. It also

illuminates the appropriateness of the research design by describing the chosen methodological approaches and highlighting extant research which utilizes these approaches. The chapter culminates by outlining the goodness criteria and detailing the scope and limitations of the study. Protocols and instruments that were utilized in the study are presented as appendices.

Phase One

Phase one of the study was designed to generate a broad understanding of white postsecondary educators' conceptions of and efforts toward practicing antiracist pedagogy. It entailed single-instance in-person interviews with 10 white instructors who taught in various disciplines at six colleges and universities in a Midwestern city. This section first outlines the methodological approach employed in phase one—narrative inquiry—and establishes its appropriateness for this stage of the study. Following that, the section describes in detail how phase one data were collected and analyzed.

Phase One Methodological Overview: Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry is grounded in people's lived experiences and meaning-making. It is a methodology which conceptualizes individual's narrative practice (storytelling) and experiential meaning-making as a source of knowledge. Rejecting positivist notions that knowledge is objectively discoverable and that research is the practice of experimentally revealing stable, decontextualized, generalizable truths, narrative inquiry emerged as a form of qualitative research in the social sciences relatively recently. Mishler's (1986) now classic text re-interpreting the research interview as a form of narrative exchange significantly influenced the emergence of this methodology. Expanded utilization of the methodology across disciplines has resulted in a variety of approaches to narrative

inquiry (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), yet a common point of departure exists across narrative research efforts. According to Clandinin and Rosiek (2007), "The most defining feature of narrative inquiry … is the study of experience as it is lived" (p. 69). Narrative inquiry is unique from other qualitative methodologies in that it positions narrative as simultaneously the phenomenon under study and the method of study (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). First-person accounts are paramount in this methodological approach, which centers on exploring life experiences as "narrated by those who live them" (Chase, 2011, p. 421). In the context of this methodology, *narrative* is a particular form of discourse that entails "meaning making through the shaping or ordering of experience, a way of understanding one's own or other's actions, of organizing events and objects into a meaningful whole, of connecting and seeing the consequences of actions and events over time" (Chase, 2011, p. 421).

Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) conceptualization of narrative inquiry serves as a useful jumping off point to further elucidate the methodological approach to this research; the authors discussed what it means to *think narratively:*

> Narrative inquiry is a way of understanding experience. It is collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus. An inquirer enters this matrix in the midst and progresses in the same spirit, concluding the inquiry still in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling, the stories of the experiences that make up people's lives, both individual and social. (p. 20)

I will expand upon key concepts in this statement by briefly describing three themes of the turn to narrative in social science research as well as three features of narrative inquiry which set it apart from other methodological approaches.

Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) described themes which characterize the turn to narrative and the emergence of this methodology. The three themes I will describe here are the move from the general to the particular, the relationship of the researcher and the researched, and the move toward a multiplicity of ways of knowing. Narrative inquiry is the study of the particular and is inherently case-centered, "attend[ing] to time and place of narration" rather than aiming to generalize across cases (Reissman, 2008, p. 76). This turn can be seen as a move away from generalizability and the desire to reveal grand narratives which account for human experience in a universal fashion. The turn was heavily influenced by Geertz (1983), whose utilization of narrative in research demonstrated "the power of focusing on the particular" in exploring phenomena (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p. 22). The second theme in the turn to narrative moved away from an objective conception of the relationship between the researcher and the researched toward one of contextualization and collaboration. In narrative inquiry, researcher and participant(s) "are in relationship with each other [such] that both parties will learn and change in the encounter" (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p. 9). Mishler's (1986) work initially recast the research interview as an iterative practice of collaborative narrative construction and subsequent narrative researchers have discussed at length the significant influence of context and the temporality of this relationship and the meaning-making it entails (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Gubrium & Holstein, 2009; Josselson, 2007; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007; Reissman, 2008). Pinnegar and Daynes (2007)

summarized the significance of this theme: “To use narrative as methodology and explore narrative as the phenomenon of interest, [researchers] must come to embrace a relational understanding of the roles and interactions of the researcher and the researched” (p. 15). Finally, the third theme traces the move toward a multiplicity of ways of knowing, or what Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) called “blurring knowing” (p. 25). This marks a clear turn away from positivistic conceptions of validity and highlights what narrative researchers deem the tentativeness of knowing: “Narrative inquirers recognize the tentative and variable nature of knowledge. They accept and value the way in which narrative inquiry allows wondering, tentativeness, and alternative views to exist as part of the research account” (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p. 25). This theme emphasizes embodied knowing, asserting that “knowledge is not decontextualized [but rather] it exists in the context of a narrative that gives it meaning, nuance, and application” (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p. 27). Narrative inquiry’s focus on the particular, embrace of collaborative relationality between researcher and participant, and move toward a multiplicity of ways of knowing align well with the theoretical framework of this research and the aims of phase one of this study.

Suitability of Narrative Inquiry

Having described narrative inquiry, I will next elucidate its suitability as the methodological approach for phase one of this study. Narrative inquiry aligned well with the foci of this inquiry as well as the theoretical framework which informed the research. Narrative research is well-aligned with the concept of praxis, which is at the heart of critical pedagogy. When taken up by practitioner researchers such as classroom educators, narrative inquiry is a practice-based form of research: “[Practitioner

researchers'] stories comprise their descriptions and explanations of practice . . . by offering these theories of practice, they are able to show how they hold themselves accountable for what they are doing and why they are doing it" (McNiff, 2007, p. 308).

As outlined in Chapter One, multiple scholars have identified the limitations of conceptualizing whiteness solely through the white privilege framework (i.e., Cabrera, 2017; Lensmire et al., 2013; Leonardo, 2004) and have called for "new theorizations of the identities and actions white people might take up in the name of antiracism" (Lensmire et al., 2013, p. 412). The practice of centering story and experience in narrative inquiry makes possible (re)considerations of whiteness that engage and seriously consider the complexity of white racialization without becoming unmoored from an overarching power analysis of the influence of systemic white supremacy. Increasingly, scholars studying whiteness in educational contexts utilize narrative methodological approaches (i.e., Foste, 2017; Kennedy, 2001; Linley, 2017; McManimon et al., 2018; Mohajeri, 2018; Tanner, 2016).

Narrative inquiry starts with careful listening to an individual's lived experience; from there, the methodology can be combined with critical and/or poststructural frameworks, making possible complex analysis which never loses sight of the larger structures of power that shape individual, lived experience. Narrative inquiry, grounded in the study of experience, acknowledges the importance of humility in ethically and thoughtfully conducting research. When one is conducting narrative inquiry, "a person's experience must be listened to on its own terms first, without the presumption of deficit or flaw, and critique needs to be motivated by the problematic elements within that experience" (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 50). The notion of listening *first* without

assuming deficit echoes Lensmire's (2017) call for conceptualizations of white racial identity that resist the white privilege framework's tendency to reduce white people to the "smooth embodiment of privilege" (p. 2). Given my positionality as a white person who desires to be competent and effective in my efforts at antiracism, it could be easy for me to listen to other white people's narratives through a lens of deficit in the (perhaps subconscious) effort to make myself out to be a better antiracist than them. Lensmire (2017) discusses this tendency among progressive whites as a scapegoating ritual that serves to do further harm by way of white-on-white hostility. Narrative inquiry's emphasis on listening to others' stories without presumption of flaw aligns well with my theoretical underpinnings.

Central to my epistemological framework is the belief that knowing is always partial, fluid, and contextual. Narrative inquiry aligns well with this standpoint, as it sacrifices certainty for tentativeness. Multiple readings of any given story or experience are possible, and thus narrative researchers

> work with an attitude of knowing that other possibilities, interpretations, and ways of explaining things are possible . . . [and] must think of any description of human meaning as tentative, if they are to keep the possibility that the description can change the quality of the experience being described. (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 46)

This articulation of the tentative nature of knowing in narrative inquiry aligns paradigmatically with the poststructural approaches that inform the theoretical framework of my research. The complex modes of meaning-making that characterize narrative inquiry made possible thoughtful exploration of the research questions that guided phase

one of this study. Having established the suitability of narrative inquiry for phase one of this research, I next detail the methodological approach including participant selection, data collection, and analysis.

Phase One Methods

In the first phase of this study, I interviewed 10 white postsecondary instructors who expressed a commitment to antiracism in their teaching. The purpose of phase one was to explore a breadth of conceptualizations of and efforts at enacting antiracist pedagogy. (The insights garnered in this process informed phase two of the study, as will be described in a subsequent section of the chapter.) In using a narrative methodological approach, I prioritized participant story-telling and sharing of experience in designing, collecting, and analyzing data. The aim of phase one was not to make judgements about the correctness of participants' conceptions or draw conclusions about the effectiveness their practice. Rather, my intent was to *deeply explore* white educators' experiences in working to enact antiracist pedagogy with particular attention to tensions and challenges they narrativized. Next, I explain with detail each of the methodological elements of phase one.

Research Setting

Phase one of the project was a multi-site inquiry; I conducted interviews with 10 instructors from six colleges and universities in a metropolitan area of Midwest State. This included two- and four-year institutions as well as public and private institutions. Each campus represented a unique context (i.e., institution type and size, mission, student demographics, faculty and staff demographics, specific location). Describing the broader

geographic region within which all of the institutions were located is an imperfect but important way of contextualizing phase one of the study.

The metropolitan area that was home to all six campuses is the largest and most densely populated urban center in the state. Postsecondary degree attainment in Midwest State is well above the national average; 50% of the adult population (ages 25-64) had earned an associate degree or higher as of 2015, ranking the Midwest State in the top 10% of the nation on this metric (Midwest State Office of Higher Education, 2016). However, significant racial disparities exist in education outcomes. As of 2015, postsecondary degree attainment rates for White and Asian adults in the state was 45% and above while degree attainment rates for American Indian, Black, and Hispanic adults were 30% and below[2] (Midwest State Office of Higher Education, 2016). Degree attainment is just one material indication of the operation of systemic white supremacy in education; the drastic racial opportunity gap in this state contributed to my decision to pursue this research in this geographic region.

Participants

Participants in phase one of the study were white postsecondary instructors who strove to address issues of racial injustice through their teaching philosophy and practice and instructed at least one in-person course at a college or university. A pool of potential participants was generated by disseminating a call for participants (see Appendix A) via strategic email listservs and digital postings. This recruitment message was shared with campus units focused on faculty/instructor development and/or anti-oppressive pedagogy

[2] These demographic terms reflect those used in the data as reported by the Midwest State Office of Higher Education

as well as posted on various higher education listservs related to social justice in education. The call for participants was also shared with key faculty, instructors, and colleagues in the region whose scholarly interests and/or teaching practice included critical and/or antiracist approaches. My intent in so doing was to invite these individuals to further share the call for participants as they saw fit and/or express their interest in participating in the study. This approach to identifying potential participants was meant to cast as broad a net as possible by allowing individuals to identify themselves as a white instructor who held a commitment to antiracist pedagogy or to share the call for participants directly with a colleague whom they believed fit the research criteria. Participation was open to white-identifying instructors of any rank (i.e., full professor, pre-tenure faculty, lecturer, graduate instructor) from any accredited higher education institution in the specified region. The subject, level (i.e., undergraduate or graduate), and modality (i.e., in-person, online, hybrid) of the course(s) taught were not delimitations in the call for participants, though the potential participant questionnaire (see Appendix B) did request these details.

Individuals interested in participating completed an online potential participant questionnaire (see Appendix B). This set of questions served as a tool to ensure that potential participants met all criteria. It also collected contact and demographic information, details about where and what an individual taught, and brief answers to questions about their teaching experience that would help inform participant selection. Of the 24 individuals who completed the interest form, 22 were eligible to participate (2 of the respondents taught outside of the specified region of the study). Given the robust response, I had to be selective in inviting participants since phase one was designed to

include interviews with no more than 10 instructors. I used purposive sampling (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) to select participants who represented a broad array of identities and teaching experiences; for the latter factor, I looked specifically at institution type, rank, and discipline. Respondents to the call for participants tended to teach in the humanities and social sciences. On a rolling basis, I extended invitations to take part in the study until I had 10 confirmed participants. (See Table 1 in the following chapter for information about the 10 instructors who participated in phase one of the study.)

Data Collection

In narrative inquiry, the data collected are texts which can take a variety of forms. Before describing how I collected data in phase one of the study, it is important to consider the nature of data in a narrative inquiry methodological framework. As already discussed, narrative is a collaboratively constructed form of discourse. Narrative data are not unmediated experience but rather "materials that were constructed by socially situated individuals from a perspective and for an audience" (Reissman, 2008, p. 23). With this contextualization in mind, I proceed to describe the data collection methods I utilized.

Individual, in-person interviews were conducted with all 10 participants. Each interview took place in a location chosen by the participant; most occurred on the campus where the participant taught, either in the participant's office or in a private conference room. One interview occurred in a participant's home, at her request. Prior to each interview, I shared a written consent form with participants (see Appendix C). I asked participants to read the form and alert me of any questions they had about the study. Once they had reviewed the form and I addressed any questions they raised, I invited them to

sign the form if they agreed to participate. I collected the signed consent forms and gave each participant a copy of the form for their records. The interviews were audio recorded and followed a semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix D). In line with my methodological approach, the protocol was designed to encourage elaborated narrative responses (Reissman, 2008). I designed the interview protocol in light of Reissman's (2008) description of narrative interviewing as a data collection method which aims to "generate detailed accounts rather than brief answers or general statements" (p. 23). When participants' responses strayed from interview questions, I flexibly followed their turn of focus even when it brought the conversation in an unexpected direction. Across all 10 interviews, I covered the same topics and questions even if the order or wording shifted. In narrative interviewing, the precise wording of questions is "less important than the interviewer's emotional attentiveness and engagement and the degree of reciprocity in the conversation" (Reissman, 2008, p. 24). With this in mind, I fostered an approach to interviewing that encouraged participants to open up, including asking open-ended questions and following up with probes. Interviews lasted on average 81 minutes, with the shortest lasting 65 minutes and longest lasting 100 minutes. The audio recordings were transcribed verbatim, checked for accuracy, and then shared with participants for member checking (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Data Analysis

Because narrative inquiry is an emerging methodology with significant variation in the way it is utilized by researchers from differing paradigmatic and disciplinary backgrounds, there is no established set of analytic practices. My analytical approach entailed thematic analysis of participants' narratives. Thematic analysis is most easily

described as the "what" participants are communicating (Reissman, 2008). What distinguishes thematic analysis in this methodological framework from that of grounded theory is that "narrative scholars keep a story 'intact' by theorizing from the case rather than from the component themes (categories) across cases" (Reissman, 2008, p. 53). Focusing on whole stories and preserving narrative sequences as units of analysis is characteristic of narrative research, as opposed to other qualitative methodologies which utilize coding practices based on segmentation. Attending to context (i.e., time and place of the narration) makes narrative thematic analysis case-centered rather than striving to generalize across cases. Additionally, thematic analysis in narrative research does not preclude data analysis being guided by prior theory as is the case with grounded theory. This distinction is useful, as I entered into data analysis with a firm grounding in whiteness studies and critical and poststructural theories of teaching.

Conducting this form of analysis began during the process of collecting data. Data collection and analysis occur simultaneously in qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016); even while I discuss these as separate processes, I recognize them as iterative and concurrent practices. All 10 interviews were completed within a 4-week timeframe; during this immersive data collection experience, I made note of compelling stories and poignant moments. I began to notice some similarities in participants' articulated conceptions of antiracist pedagogy, including tension and uncertainty. I was also struck by the fact that all 10 participants hesitated to call themselves antiracist educators.

Once all of the phase one data were collected, I initiated a thorough process of analysis that involved engaging with participants' narratives in multiple modalities. A critical element of my analytical approach was listening multiple times to the recordings

of the interviews. I chose to start with listening to the data because I wanted to gain a holistic sense of each instructor's narrative immersed in the context in which it was generated. Listening to the recordings helped me to recall and make meaning of the *feeling* of the shared conversations, the unique contextual and relational dynamic I experienced with each of the 10 participants. Listening to the data multiple times, I became familiar with the narrative arc and the emotional milieu of each interview. After making note of poignant stories, lingering questions, and compelling convergences and divergences I observed while listening to participants' narratives, I moved on to a second modality of analysis. In my first reading of the interview transcripts, I identified narrative sequences that hung together and responded to my research questions. I devised a coding scheme focused on thematic analysis and compiled a codebook. Through multiple rounds of coding, I grouped and consolidated themes; I also compiled sequences of narrative (i.e., extended quotes) that illustrated themes. My thematic coding practice did not take place at the granular level; rather, I worked to "keep a story 'intact'" (Reissman, 2008, p. 53) as I interpreted and analyzed the data. As I engaged in ongoing analysis of phase one data, I crafted analytic memos to guide myself through the analytical processes of identifying emergent patterns and taking note of lingering questions. Saldaña (2013) described analytic memo writing as a "question-raising, puzzle-piecing, connection-making, strategy-building, problem-solving, answer-generating" (p. 41) practice. Composing memos was an integral step in generating and structuring a narrative rendering of the results of my analysis of phase one data, which are presented in Chapter Four.

This study was designed and carried out in two iterative phases. To this point in the chapter, I have outlined the methodological approach and described the methods utilized in the first phase of the project. Next, I will do the same for phase two. For organizational reasons, this chapter presents the phases as related yet discrete elements of the study. In actuality, the phases overlapped in time and process. Phase one informed participant selection for phase two, as one of the instructors I interviewed was invited to participate in the ethnographic case study that comprised the second phase. Additionally, phase one data analysis coincided with phase two data collection and initial analysis. The insights I was generating in the process of analyzing the 10 instructors' narratives informed my approach to conducting the ethnographic case study in phase two. The iterative two-phase approach incorporated breadth and depth in the overall research design and made possible the gathering of incredibly rich data in phase two of the study.

Phase Two

Using ethnographic methods, phase two of the study explored one white instructor's conceptualization of and approach to antiracist pedagogy as contextualized in a specific course. The instructor, who was selected from among the 10 participants in phase one, worked closely with me over the 11-month duration of this ethnographic case study. I used a variety of ethnographic methods to gather data in phase two, including: participant-observation in the instructor's course, ongoing interviews with the instructor, document analysis, and interviews with multiple students in the course. This section of Chapter Three describes the methodological approach utilized in phase two of the study (ethnographic case study, a component of which employed critical collaborative

ethnography), articulates the suitability of this approach, and outlines the details of data collection and analysis.

Phase Two Methodological Overview: Ethnographic Case Study

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) defined case study as "an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system" (p. 37), which might also be thought of as the *case*. It is the unit of analysis rather than the topic of study that characterizes a case study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016); the bounded system in this case study was a particular postsecondary course. While single case design eliminated the possibility of comparison between cases (Yin, 2018), comparison was not the goal of this research. Rather, the ethnographic case study that comprised phase two of this research prioritized thick description (Geertz, 1973) over comparison (Stake, 2003). Ethnography, according to Wolcott (2008), "is not in itself a comparative endeavor" (p. 91).

Ethnographic research is conceptualized as both a process and a product (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). "Doing" ethnography entails observation, interpretation, and analysis (Wolcott, 2008). One distinguishing characteristic of ethnographic research is context or location; "place and purpose have to intersect" (Wolcott, 2008, p. 38). Ethnographic inquiry relies on researcher immersion in the context under study. A second distinguishing characteristic of ethnographic research is thick description (Geertz, 1973), which refers to taking account of a particular context with richness and detail. Achieving thick description necessitates "a lengthy period of intimate study and residence in a given social setting [that includes] first-hand participation in some of the activities that take place there" (VanMaanen, 1982, as cited in Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 29).

Ethnographic research takes many forms. Throughout phase two, I employed a critical approach to ethnography. A distinguishing characteristic of critical ethnography is that it "begins with an ethical responsibility to address processes of unfairness or injustice within a particular *lived* domain" (Madison, 2020, p. 4, emphasis in original). This methodological approach is grounded in critical social theory and necessitates that researchers reflexively interrogate the operation of power in and on all elements of the research domain. Along with steadfast attention to people, processes, and power when conducting fieldwork, this methodology entails reflexive ethnography. The researcher's concern for positionality is conceptualized as "a turning back on ourselves [to] examine our intentions, our methods and our possible effects" (Madison, 2020, p. 23); this practice of reflexive ethnography is "concerned with the multi-layered process of self-awareness and self-critique as well as the element of observing the self within the full dynamics of the research process" (Madison, 2020, p. 23). Critical ethnography is not a neutral endeavor; it is characterized by the explicit intention of revealing operations of power in order to contribute to effecting change toward greater equity and freedom. This "politically motivated ethnographic practice" (Bhattacharya, 2008, p. 305) was the methodological approach utilized to conduct the case study in phase two of my research.

My approach to working with Erin, whose course served as the site of the ethnographic case study in phase two, was grounded in critical collaborative ethnographic methodology. Critical collaborative ethnography

> is invested in questioning the boundaries and power relations between the researcher and the researched for the specific purpose of bringing about social action and social change. Such an ethnography has a political purpose and is

> conducted in collaboration with the researched community at different levels. (Bhattacharya, 2008, p. 306)

In this methodological framework, *critical* denotes "an ethnographic practice that focuses on projects that challenge dominant hegemonic global structures" (Bhattacharya, 2008, p. 305). *Collaborative* denotes "critical research practices that are conducted hand-in-hand with the research subjects . . . with a purpose of bringing about positive change in the lives of the researched" (Bhattacharya, 2008, p. 305). The degree and form of such collaboration varies from study to study; however, a hallmark of this methodology is that the subject(s) of the study actively participate in one or more research practices. Despite the level or form of collaboration, the goal of mutual benefit for all collaborators remains steadfast. The concept of *praxis* deeply informs the methodology, which emphasizes the importance of affecting social change. Critical collaborative ethnography can be succinctly described as a power-conscious practice that is conducted in collaboration with participants and is designed to bring about social action.

Suitability of Ethnographic Case Study

Having outlined ethnographic case study as a methodological approach and described both critical ethnography and critical collaborative ethnography, I will next discuss the suitability of this methodological approach for phase two of the study. The appropriateness of this methodological approach is illustrated in part by the variety of existing and related educational research that employed similar methods. Numerous examples exist of researchers using ethnographic approaches to study teaching. A selection of this research utilizes critical and/or poststructural frameworks to explore questions of power and pedagogy in the classroom (i.e., Ellsworth, 1989; Kumashiro,

2002; Pollock, 2004; Ropers-Huilman, 1997); these studies informed my methodological approach. The suitability of ethnographic approaches to studying whiteness in education is also evident in extant research (i.e., Blaisdell, 2018; Eriksen, 2020; Stam, 2020; Tanner, 2017; Yoon, 2012). Because it is an emergent methodology, critical collaborative ethnography is less common in extant education research. In the last five years, the methodology has come to be used in higher education research by scholars whose work engages critical and poststructural frameworks to address (in)equity in education (i.e., Ashlee et al., 2017; Harris & Watson-Vandiver, 2020; Nicolazzo, 2016, 2017b). Ethnographic approaches to researching critical pedagogy and whiteness are well established in the literature, illustrating the suitability of my chosen methodology for phase two of the study.

The suitability of this methodological approach is further illustrated in considering the purpose of the research. The aim of the second phase was to deeply explore one white instructor's approach to enacting antiracist pedagogy in a specific classroom context, including whether/how that approach changed over time. A critical ethnographic case study was well-suited for this purpose given its emphasis on thick description, immersive fieldwork, and interrogation of power. Critical collaborative ethnography was an appropriate methodological approach to my work with the instructor due to its insistence on questioning the boundaries and power relations between the researcher and the researched. As will be described subsequently, the instructor and I worked together very closely in phase two of the study; our continued processing of what was occurring in her classroom (the field site) contributed to shifts in her approach to antiracist pedagogical practice. My use of a critical ethnographic approach to case study

was appropriately aligned with the theoretical framework that informed the research (i.e., critical and poststructural theory, whiteness studies, critical pedagogy) as well as with my rejection of "traditional notions of objectivity grounded in the possibility of making truth claims" (Bhattacharya, 2008, p. 309). This methodological approach entailed multiple and immersive data collection and analysis practices that were well-suited to address the purpose of this phase of the study. Having described ethnographic approaches to case study research and demonstrated the suitability of this methodology for phase two of the study, I will next detail the specific methods utilized in conducting the case study.

Phase Two Methods

The ethnographic case study that comprised phase two of the study was conducted over the course of 11 months and focused on one white instructor's conceptualization of antiracist pedagogy as well as her approach to practicing antiracist teaching. The purpose of phase two was three-fold: 1) to explore in depth the themes and tensions that emerged in phase one of the study; 2) to develop a richly contextualized understanding of one white instructor's efforts at practicing antiracist pedagogy; and 3) to understand how students in her course experienced those efforts. In using ethnographic methods, I prioritized thick description in collecting and analyzing data. As such, I collected data in a variety of ways, including: participant-observation in the instructor's classroom, ongoing interviews with the instructor, interviews with multiple students in the course, a course evaluation survey, and document review. Like phase one, the aim was not to make judgements about the correctness of the instructor's conception of antiracist pedagogy or draw conclusions about so-called best practices of antiracist teaching. Rather, my intent was to explore what antiracist teaching meant for the instructor, if/how her approach

changed during the course of our collaboration, and how students experienced her approach to antiracist pedagogy. The following sections of the chapter explain the specific methods used in phase two of the study.

Participant/Collaborator

The instructor whose classroom served as the site of the ethnographic case study was selected from among the 10 participants in phase one. In order to determine which of the phase one participants I would invite to participate in phase two, I conducted observations in four of their classrooms. Considering both the interviews and observations, I extended an invitation to Erin to take part in the second phase of the study. Erin is an assistant professor in the English department at Oakdale University in Midwest State. When we started our work together during phase one of this study, she was completing her third-year review and was thus pre-tenure. She had been teaching in higher education for 10 years, with a primary focus on literature and writing courses at the undergraduate level. Erin expressed commitments to various critical approaches in her teaching, including feminist and queer theory, critical race theory, post-colonial theory, and critical pedagogy. She identified as a queer, white woman. A fuller description of Erin is presented in Chapter Five, which is the first of two analysis chapters that discuss the ethnographic case study that comprised phase two.

My decision to invite Erin to participate in the ethnographic case study that comprised phase two was based on multiple factors. First, the context within which Erin taught was a determining factor in my decision. Erin was a faculty member in the English department at Oakdale University, a small, liberal arts institution that valued teaching. Given her discipline and the type of campus at which she taught, her courses tended to be

small (25 or fewer students) and highly discussion-based. This aligned well with one of the specific aims of my ethnographic fieldwork, which was to observe an instructor who was committed to antiracist pedagogy lead classroom discussions about race and racism. Second, it was evident from the interview and my observation in one of her classes during phase one that Erin's approach to teaching was informed by critical frameworks that aligned with the theoretical approach to the study (i.e., critical pedagogy, critical race theory, whiteness studies). Third, Erin shared in her interview during phase one that she planned to redesign one of her standard courses over the summer in order to have a more explicit emphasis on antiracism. She intended to incorporate an antiracist approach to grading and redesign the course structure to foreground the issue of structural racism. I was eager to work with Erin as a collaborator in phase two while she instructed her newly redesigned course for the first time.

The most significant factor in my decision to invite Erin to participate in the ethnographic case study was the highly dynamic nature of our conversation during the phase one interview. Critical collaborative ethnography emphasizes "the collaborative, dialogic process between the researcher and the research community" (Bhattacharya, 2008, p. 306). Erin had shared thoughtfully and vulnerably in the phase one interview, and I experienced our conversational dynamic as relational and mutual. We shared an enthusiasm for the work of critical pedagogy scholars Paulo Freire and bell hooks, and we related across queer subjectivities and feminist and antiracist commitments. For these reasons, I felt confident that Erin and I would be able to develop a collaborative working relationship and share rich dialogue.

Grounded in feminist and poststructural approaches to ethnographic practice, critical collaborative ethnography acknowledges that a researcher occupies multiple, overlapping subject positions that characteristically shape their interaction and collaboration with research participants. Due to its investment in questioning boundaries and power relations between researcher and participant, the methodology necessitates ongoing interrogation of power and positionality in the research endeavor above and beyond traditional notions of researcher reflexivity. Critical collaborative ethnography "requires careful attention to questions about the research situation itself and the researcher's position within it" (Bhattacharya, 2008, p. 303) and entails marked focus on the "details of situatedness and performance of experience" (Bhattacharya, 2008, p. 308). As a methodological practice, this means that researchers are "constantly negotiating these spaces they inhabit, both in collusion and collaboration with the worlds (physical and discursive) that they migrate across" (Bhattacharya, 2008, p. 318).

These methodological hallmarks informed the way I approached my work with Erin as a collaborator in this research[3]. After I invited Erin to participate in phase two of the study, she and I met to discuss what her participation would entail. I shared my research focus and described my commitment to collaboration and mutuality. It was important to me that Erin understood my desire that our work together feel manageable and valuable to her, and that decision-making about the details of my participant-observation in her course be collaborative. I was particularly attuned to not wanting my presence in her classroom to be burdensome. We discussed details of what the

[3] I conceptualize and refer to Erin as a collaborator in this research, emphasizing the nature of our work together.

collaboration might look like, such as which courses she would be teaching the following term and potential formats and frequency of data collection. Erin considered my invitation and agreed to participate as a collaborator. The nature of our working relationship evolved over the course of phase two (as will be described in Chapter Six); throughout, I maintained a reflexive stance in considering how power and positionality shaped our collaboration.

Site

The ethnographic case study took place in one of the courses Erin taught at Oakdale University. This section will first describe the university generally, then detail the specific course in which I conducted fieldwork. Oakdale University is located in an urban center of Midwest State; it is a small, residential campus nestled within the heart of the state's largest metropolitan area. A private, liberal arts institution, Oakdale prides itself on offering an immersive educational experience. The university, which enrolls about 2,300 undergraduate students, has a teaching focus; the student to faculty ratio is 12 to 1 and the average class size is 16[4]. Oakdale's student body is more racially and socioeconomically diverse than most colleges and universities in Midwest State; more than half of Oakdale undergraduate students are Pell grant eligible, and less than half are white. The student body has grown significantly more racially diverse in a relatively short period of time. In Fall 2018, 56% of the incoming class at Oakdale were students of color; five years prior in 2013, students of color made up just 30% of the incoming class. In Fall 2019, the semester during which I was a participant-observer in Erin's course,

[4] All of the statistics in this paragraph were referenced from reputable sources that cannot be shared in order to preserve the confidentiality of the research site.

Oakdale's incoming class was more than 50% students of color for the third consecutive year.

The specific course that served as the site of the ethnographic case study was a first-year writing class. Erin and I selected that course among the three she was assigned to teach in Fall 2019 based on two factors: 1) it was one of two sections of the course she had redesigned over the summer to incorporate antiracism, and 2) of the two sections, it aligned best with my availability for participant-observation. The college writing course is a graduation requirement at Oakdale, and nearly all students complete it in their first year. Erin is one of several instructors who teach the course. The class in which I was a participant-observer met in-person twice per week for 1 hour and 40 minutes each session. There were 18 first-year students in the class, all of whom were enrolled in the course to satisfy the graduation requirement. The students, who were in their first semester at Oakdale, represented a diversity of racial and ethnic identities; 16 of the 18 students in the class were students of color (including Latinx, Asian, Black, and multiracial students), more than a quarter of the students were multilingual learners, and several of the students identified as immigrants and/or refugees.

The focus of the course was fostering students' capacity for effective collegiate writing; for Erin, this entailed approaching writing instruction and evaluation through an antiracist lens. Her explicitly antiracist approach was not common among all instructors of the required writing course; Erin's sections of the course were unique in this regard. (Chapter Five will describe in detail the elements of the course related to Erin's commitment to antiracist pedagogy.) The course was largely discussion-based and conducted in a seminar style; students sat around a large, rectangular table and Erin,

when she was not lecturing, joined them there. The instructional dynamic of class was characterized by informality and relationality; Erin asked students to address her by her first name and built time into each class session for students to check in about how they were doing holistically in their first semester of college.

Data Collection and Analysis

Phase two data collection occurred over eleven months (April 2019 - February 2020) and included an array of ethnographic methods. The interview I conducted with Erin as part of phase one was the starting point of the case study, and our final interview in February 2020 marked the culmination of phase two data collection. (My study design had included additional interviews extending through May 2020; however, Erin's capacity to continue collaborating diminished due to increased teaching demands related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, by that point in the study I had collected a substantial amount of data with which to thoroughly address my research questions.) In addition to the consent form she completed for phase one of the study, Erin reviewed and signed a second consent form specific to the ethnographic case study (see Appendix C). Students from Erin's course who participated in formal interviews during phase two also reviewed and signed consent forms prior to those interviews being conducted (see Appendix C). The following sections describe the multiple modes of data collection I utilized in the ethnographic case study as well as the approaches I used to analyze each form of data.

Participant/Observation. I spent one semester attending Erin's writing course as a participant-observer. The course met twice per week for 1 hours 40 minutes per session; over the duration of the semester (September - December, 2019), I completed 19

participant-observations (totaling 31 hours and 40 minutes). Before the first class session, Erin and I discussed what type and level of participation on my part would feel most comfortable for her as the instructor. We agreed that I would participate alongside students in all in-class activities, and I expressed my intention to read all assigned texts and complete assignments in order to more fully contextualize what was occurring in class. On the first day of class, I introduced myself to the students as a PhD student and shared my purpose for being in the classroom. From that point forward, my engagement as a participant-observer was immersive; I spoke casually with students before, during, and after class each week. I worked and discussed alongside them during in-class activities, which occurred in every class session and typically included dyad, small group, and large group discussions. The classroom was arranged such that all 18 students and I sat around the perimeter of a large, rectangular table. Erin invited students to sit wherever they preferred, and I rotated my position at the table from week to week so as to interact with a variety of students (many of whom tended to sit in the same general area for each class session). I interacted with every student in the course multiple times. With a handful of students, I formed strong connections. For instance, some students regularly engaged me in casual conversation before class started and/or lingered at the end of class to talk with me. Additionally, they asked me questions about my interests and hobbies and offered details about their personal lives. Midway through the semester, it became apparent that some students thought I was a fellow Oakdale undergraduate student despite having introduced myself and my purpose on the first day of class. (When I became aware of this misperception, I reminded students about my position and purpose.)

Students understood that I had no authority in the classroom over their grades or their behavior, and many of them engaged me as a peer.

During participant-observations, I used an observation protocol and recording chart to document field jottings and note initial impressions or interpretations (see Appendix E). Following each instance of participant-observation, I elaborated the jottings I had recorded on the chart into narrative fieldnotes followed by an analytical memo. Additionally, I made note of specific events that occurred in class about which I wanted to ask Erin. The elaborated fieldnotes and analytic memos were collected in a fieldwork log such that, by the culmination of the semester, all of my descriptions, notes, and initial analysis of the 19 instances of participant-observation were compiled in one 50-page document.

My approach to analysis of data gathered through participant-observation was ongoing and iterative. Initial impressions and interpretations were captured in analytic memos that I composed after elaborating daily fieldnotes throughout the semester. In addition, I wrote extended analytic memos about class events and dynamics that stood out as pivotal interactions in response to my research questions. A third form of ongoing analysis that I utilized during the timeframe in which I conducted participant-observations was consultation with a critical friend (Kember et al., 1997) who was familiar with the aims and methods of my study. Through discussing my initial insights and responding to the questions of a colleague who had knowledge of my work but was not immersed in the field, I was able to more deeply process what I was observing and experiencing in Erin's writing course. After all participant-observations were completed, I initiated a different approach to analysis designed to help me draw broad insights about

the arc of the course. In one sitting, I reviewed the entire fieldwork log (which included elaborated field notes and analytic memos for all 19 instances of participant-observation) and made note of sections that most stood out in terms of responding to my research questions. I comprised a timeline of the classes I observed as well as the ongoing interviews I conducted with Erin (discussed in the next session) to track the arc of significant moments in the class and how they aligned temporally with conversations Erin and I were having outside of class. As I conceptualized and wrote the analysis of phase two of this study (Chapters Five, Six, and Seven), I used notes recorded in the fieldwork log to illustrate and substantiate my meaning-making.

Ongoing Interviews and Conversation with Erin. In addition to conducting participant-observation in the classroom, I engaged with Erin for the duration of phase two through ongoing interviews in addition to informal conversation and email exchange. While I use the research language of "interview" to articulate my methods, these formal (i.e., scheduled) interactions more closely resembled conversations, or "a discourse between speakers" (Reissman, 2008, p. 24), where everyday rules of exchange such as turn-taking applied. (The evolution of the way that Erin and I interacted and built relationship is elaborated in Chapter Six, which demonstrates how collaboration characterized our work together.) Erin and I completed 12 interviews (or recorded conversations, as I came to refer to them) starting in April 2019 and ending in February 2020. The recorded conversations lasted between 22 and 119 minutes; on average, they spanned 66 minutes. The cumulative time of all 12 recorded conversations was 13 hours and 15 minutes. The conversations occurred in multiple places at Oakdale, typically in Erin's office or a private conference room. Often, the interviews occurred immediately

following a class session. By design, the recorded conversations were intended to be responsive to what was occurring in class and/or what was most salient for Erin in relation to her efforts at antiracist pedagogy. As such, I did not use a standard protocol across all 12 interviews. Our recorded conversations typically started with my asking Erin what teaching moments or experiences were standing out to her since our most recent interview. Occasionally, the recorded conversations included specific questions I had pertaining to dynamics or events I had observed in class. All of the interviews were recorded and transcribed, and the transcriptions were made available to Erin for member-checking.

Erin and I also engaged in informal conversation throughout phase two of the study. This occurred both in the form of casual conversation after class sessions and ongoing email exchange. Most days when class ended, I assisted Erin in rearranging the tables and chairs and erasing the whiteboard in order to reset the classroom. It was very common for us to discuss that day's class session once all the students had exited the room. As the semester progressed and our relationship became more established, it also became a regular practice that I walked with Erin from the classroom back to her office. During these informal conversations, we processed dynamics that were occurring in the class as well as discussed Erin's involvement in antiracist efforts more broadly at Oakdale. We also connected informally over email. Because of my commitment to mutuality in working with Erin as a collaborator, I had invited her to let me know if there were ways I could support her antiracist teaching efforts when we initially discussed her participation in phase two. Over the summer as she was redesigning the writing course, we occasionally exchanged emails to share resources about antiracist pedagogical

approaches to teaching writing. A few weeks into the Fall 2019 term, Erin emailed me to continue a conversation we had started after class one day about her efforts to address structural racism at Oakdale. From that time, we continued to engage over email more regularly, discussing both the writing class and also Erin's broader involvement in challenging structural racism at the institution. Between April 2019 and February 2020, Erin and I exchanged 161 emails. The dialogue we shared during formal interviews was often an extension of the informal conversations we had after class sessions and over email.

Analysis of the ongoing conversations between Erin and I occurred during and after data collection. After each formal conversation (interview), I listened to the audio recording at least twice and made notes of moments and exchanges that stood out. I composed detailed analytical memos to capture poignant elements of dialogue and begin drawing connections between what I was observing in her class and what we discussed outside of class. Once data collection for the case study had concluded and all 12 interviews had been conducted and transcribed, I shifted my analytical approach to focus broadly on the arc of our shared dialogue over time. Over the course of three days, I listened to the recordings of all 12 interviews in succession and took detailed notes about the overall shape and nature of our ongoing dialogue. I paid particular attention to discussions we had about specific class events and dynamics; using the timeline referenced above, I made connections between data collected through our ongoing conversations and that gathered through participant-observation. Reviewing the emails Erin and I exchanged was another approach to analysis that I utilized after I had completed fieldwork. Erin had shared with me early in our work together that her

preferred mode of processing was writing (as opposed to speaking). By identifying those email threads that connected to poignant class events and/or compelling exchanges in our formal conversations, I was able to deepen my analysis through contextualization and triangulation.

Course Evaluation Survey. In addition to exploring Erin's antiracist pedagogical efforts through my perspective (participant-observation) and through her perspective (ongoing conversations), phase two was also concerned with students' perspectives. To generate a rich understanding of students' experiences of Erin's antiracist pedagogical efforts, I utilized complementary methods of data collection that captured both breadth and depth. I analyzed students' responses on a course evaluation survey to generate a broad understanding of their experiences. Erin and I were both invested in asking for feedback from all of the students in the writing course about what they learned and how they experienced the course. In order to gain specific and qualitative feedback about her courses, Erin had a practice of administering her own evaluation in addition to the official Oakdale instrument. The data I collected and analyzed for this study were from Erin's supplementary evaluation, not the institutional instrument. A few weeks before the end of the course, Erin invited me to review and revise the evaluation form she had used in previous semesters. Specifically, she desired my input in creating a question about her efforts at antiracist teaching. Together, we drafted such a question and edited other elements of the instrument (see Appendix G to review the course evaluation instrument).

All 18 students completed the course evaluation anonymously during the final class session. To minimize the likelihood that students would feel uncomfortable in writing their responses, Erin asked me to administer the survey while she stepped out of

the room. Students were assured that their responses would remain anonymous and would not be shared with Erin until after final grades were posted. I collected the completed evaluations and compiled verbatim responses in a digital format. Once the term was over and grades were posted, I shared the aggregated responses with Erin.

For the purposes of this dissertation, my analysis of the course evaluations was limited to the three questions that most related to Erin's efforts at practicing antiracist pedagogy:

1. What idea(s) will most stick with you from this course? Why?
2. What aspects of the course (the overall structure of the class, in-class activities, the labor based grading system, writing workshops, conferences, focus on small-group work, course policies, etc.) did you find most beneficial to your learning? Least beneficial?
3. Early in the semester, I shared with you all that I wanted this class to not only help you become more effective writers but to also help you think about questions of race, power, and social justice in higher education. In your experience, what aspects of the class contributed to that goal? Where did I fall short? (Please be as open and honest as you would like to be.)

For these three items, I conducted thematic analysis to ascertain patterns across all 18 students' responses. The analysis focused on representing the magnitude of patterns in responses to each of the three selected questions; this was done in an effort to provide a broad and general summary of students' experiences. I compiled the narrative responses for each of the three questions and coded the responses by identifying key words and

phrases. The codes were grouped into categories, and counts were tabulated for each category (i.e., the number of responses that addressed each of the identified categories).[5]

Interviews with Students. To further explore students' experiences of Erin's approach to antiracist teaching, I conducted interviews with nearly half of the students in the course after the term was over and grades had been posted. This method of data collection generated specific insight from a selection of the students, which complemented the broad, general feedback shared through course evaluations. In consultation with Erin, I designed an approach to conducting student interviews that prevented concern or perception that participation would impact students' grades in the course. During a class session two weeks prior to the end of the term, I shared that I was hoping to interview students to learn about their experience of the course. I invited all students to participate in an interview if they were interested and explained what participation would entail. This included that interviews would occur individually and in small groups (two or three students) and that all participants would receive a $20 gift card. I was careful to note that interviews would occur after grades were posted, that Erin would not know who participated in an interview and who didn't, and that I would compile and share themes from the interviews with Erin but that students' responses would be de-identified.

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[5] While I did analyze the remaining items on the evaluation, that was done for the purpose of providing Erin with a complete summary of students' feedback; those responses were not directly relevant to my research questions and thus that analysis was not included in this project. Compiling and analyzing the responses and offering Erin a summary of the feedback was important to me as a way to make our work together as mutually beneficial as possible.

Nine students expressed interest in doing an interview and eight completed an interview. (One student was unable to participate due to scheduling challenges.) I conducted a total of five interviews; three individual interviews and two group interviews. One group interview included three students and the other included two students. The individual interviews lasted between 34 and 47 minutes. The group interviews were slightly longer in duration; one spanned 54 minutes and the other 69 minutes. All interviews were conducted in a conference room at the Oakdale library and occurred during winter break (January 2020), well after grades had posted for the previous term and shortly before the subsequent term began. In the semi-structured interviews, questions were designed to invite reflection on the following topics: general impression of the course and of Erin as an instructor; impression of the course's engagement with the issues of race and racism and of Erin's approach to addressing those issues; and whether/how Erin's teaching was antiracist. (See Appendix D for the interview protocol.) All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Transcripts were sent to all participants for member-checking.

Prior to the start of each interview, participants signed a consent form and completed a demographic questionnaire. All demographic questions were open-response with the exception of first-generation status, which was written as a yes/no item. (See Appendix F for the demographic questionnaire.) Of the eight students who participated in an interview, seven identified as students of color. I elected to do an individual interview with the one white participant to eliminate the possibility that her presence in a group interview would affect what or how students of color chose to share. In other words, both group interviews were exclusively students of color. Of the three individual interviews I

conducted, one was with a white student and two were with a student of color. (See Table 2 in Chapter Seven for a list of interview participants and their responses to the demographic questionnaire.)

After member-checking was complete, I coded the interviews for convergent and divergent themes and synthesized my analysis by composing an analytic memo. In a recorded conversation the month following the interviews, I presented the aggregated themes to Erin and shared de-identified quotes to illustrate my findings. This was done in alignment with my commitments to mutuality, transparency, and reciprocity throughout the critical collaborative ethnography.

Document Analysis. The final method of data collection and analysis I utilized in phase two of the study was document review. Throughout the ethnographic case study, I systematically collected documents related to the class and/or to my focus on Erin's efforts at antiracist pedagogical practice. This included: the course syllabus; handouts distributed by Erin during class session; slides Erin created and used to lecture and guide activities during class; and writing of Erin's that related to her institutional efforts (i.e., those outside of this course) to challenge structural racism at Oakdale. All of the documents collected and analyzed were either created by Erin or selected by Erin to serve as class material, contributing to the relevance and authenticity (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). These documents supplemented and triangulated the data I was able to collect through the previously described methods. Analysis of these documents occurred after my fieldwork had concluded. I re-read Erin's entire syllabus, taking note of language and sections that spoke directly to my research questions. My analysis also included reviewing the slides Erin utilized to guide class discussions and learning activities

directly related to race, racism, and antiracism. Each of these documents deepened my analytical process by adding detail and context to which I did not have access or by providing exact language that I was not able to record during participant-observations (i.e., in the case of lecture slides). Having outlined the various ethnographic methods I used to gather and analyze data in phase two of the study, this chapter will next describe the rigor with which the research was undertaken.

Trustworthiness and Rigor

Thoughtful considerations in research design enhanced the rigor of my study. Narrative inquiry and critical ethnography are both qualitative methods that are particularly attuned to researcher positionality. Unlike positivist approaches to inquiry, these methodologies are not concerned with minimizing the influence of subjectivity but rather revealing it. Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) asserted, "For the narrative inquirer, the fact that the inquiry is altering the phenomena under study is not regarded as a methodological problem to be overcome. It is the purpose of the research" (p. 45). My foremost effort in establishing rigor was positioning myself in relation to the inquiry by reflexively considering the multiple subjectivities I embody and interrogating the multiplicity of ways that power operated in, on, and through the various elements of this research. Chapter One included a narrative representation of my effort to do so. Such an endeavor is never complete, even while the fixedness of the written word would suggest otherwise. Critical reflexivity was a constant practice throughout my study, contributing rigor to the process and the product of this research.

The rigor of this study can be further illustrated through a number of means. First, a clear theoretical framework grounded this research, informing all elements of the study.

Epistemology, methodology, and method were intricately connected and thoughtfully selected, contributing rigor through alignment (Carter & Little, 2007). The iterative two-phase design of the study is another indication of rigor. My research design combined breadth and depth in multiple ways: across the respective methodological approaches to and the foci of phases one and two, and also across the multiple methods of data collection within the ethnographic case study that comprised phase two. Similarly, triangulation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2018) was utilized both across and within the two phases of the study. I gathered various forms of data and analyzed the data using multiple methodological approaches, contributing to the rigor of the study's design and implementation. This practice was particularly important in establishing rigor for the ethnographic case study that comprised phase two; as noted by Bhattacharya (2008), "Triangulation mainly refers to the multi-method focus of ethnographic research. The use of multiple methods helps in the attainment of a more rigorous, more in-depth understanding of the issue or phenomenon in question" (p. 310).

Important ethical considerations shaped participant recruitment and selection, contributing to the trustworthiness of the research. Informed consent is essential to conducting research ethically; from the initial stages of participant recruitment through the duration of the study, individuals had the ability discontinue their participation at any time. In order to be able to exercise such decision-making, participants needed to have the information necessary to understand what their participation entailed. As such, the call for participants clearly indicated these terms (see Appendix A). Transparency about the issue under study in my research was important not only in terms of informed consent, but also in terms of building trust and establishing rapport. As Josselson (2007)

articulated, “Every aspect of [narrative inquiry] is touched by the ethics of the research relationship” (p. 537). This relationship was built from my very initial interactions with (potential) participants; I worked to establish trust and protect confidentiality by handling all communication with (potential) participants with care. Potential participant questionnaires were collected and stored on my university-issued Google drive, which was password protected. This research was conducted under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board at the University of Minnesota, which reviewed the proposed study prior to the commencement of data collection and determined it to be exempt.

All interviews that I conducted were transcribed verbatim, and transcripts were made available to participants for member checking (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Throughout the design, implementation, analysis, and reporting processes, this research benefited from the guidance and feedback of my advisor and members of my dissertation committee. While this was an independently conducted research initiative, the guidance of content and methodological experts helped to ensure that it was carried out thoughtfully, ethically, and with rigor. These criteria demonstrate the rigor and validity of this research.

Given the methodologies utilized in this research, it is important to address the issue of interpretive authority in discussing the rigor of the study. Even with my intention to listen to participants’ narratives with the goal of understanding free from presumed flaw or deficit, it is possible that my interpretations diverged from participants’ meaning-making of their own experiences. In relation to narrative inquiry, Pinnegar (2007) asserted the importance of considering “different ambiguities that materialize when narrative inquirers live alongside the events, the lives, and the ideas they are attempting

to understand" (p. 247), and referred to participant narratives as "data that live" (p. 250). Similarly, critical ethnography emerged from the "performance turn" in ethnographic research and recognizes the "contingency of truth claims" (Madison, 2020, p. 20). I understand my observation, interpretation, and analysis of participants' narratives and experiences as limited and partial; my meaning-making is inevitably shaped by my positionality and subjectivities.

Organizing Analysis as a Practice of Rigor: Constellations of Insights

The insights generated through my analytical processes do not, in my mind, represent "the truth" but rather depict one of many possible readings. This position is in alignment with the theoretical framework and methodological approaches I have utilized, contributing to the overall rigor of the research. That alignment carries through in the way that I will subsequently present the analysis I have conducted. Each of the following four chapters of analysis is conceptualized as a *constellation of insights*; this analytical approach is intended to destabilize the notion of discrete and objectively discoverable "findings." Constellations, in the astronomical sense, are not fixed entities from the perspective of the human viewer on Earth; rather, they move around in the night sky. Depending on a multitude of factors—the time of year, one's geographic location on the Earth, the weather conditions—constellations appear differently and sometimes cannot be seen at all. Throughout human history, constellations have been linked to storytelling and meaning-making; a single collection of stars has imbued different meanings to different peoples over centuries. And it is the *collection* of a specific group of stars which distinguish a constellation; its likeness emerges from the stars' organization in relation to one another. All of these characteristics of astronomical constellations carry

metaphorically to my use of the term as a framework for presenting and organizing data analysis. Each chapter of analysis is a constellation of insights; those constellations are made up of a number of elements. It is the *relationship among the four constellations* as well as the *relationship among the elements in each given constellation* that generate meaning in response to my research questions. The constellation framework highlights connectedness and contingency; in other words, the elements of a given constellation are not discrete themes but rather threads that overlap and intertwine. (See Brown, 2018 and Powell et al., 2014 for similar methodological approaches.) Organizing my analysis in this way is intended to reinforce the notion that how one sees and interprets this collection of insights is necessarily influenced by their positionality and subjectivity; if, what, and how we "see" and make meaning are not static, objective processes but rather dynamic, contingent, and necessarily partial.

Limitations and Delimitations

As stated previously, this research was not intended to produce generalizable results or suggest best practices of antiracist pedagogy for postsecondary educators. Multiple limitations constrained the scope of this research. Time was a factor which artificially dictated both the research design and questions. If time were unlimited, I might have been compelled to conduct a longitudinal case study spanning multiple academic years to look for evolving patterns and turning points in participants' antiracist teachings experiences. Location was a second limitation; the research took place in a single metropolitan area of Midwest State. Conceptualizations of race, racialized dynamics and discourses, and manifestations of racism and white supremacy vary across

geographic regions in the United States. Exploring my research questions in just one geographic area undoubtedly shaped and limited this study.

In designing this research, I intentionally imposed delimitations to narrow the scope of the inquiry. The decision to focus only on self-identified white educators excluded a significant number of passionate and committed educators of color who are working diligently to interrupt systemic white supremacy in classroom contexts. This decision was two-fold. Firstly, it was informed by my interest in critically studying whiteness in an effort to challenge white supremacy. Secondly, the decision was made strategically given the overrepresentation of whites as instructors in higher education. In addition to limiting the study to self-identified white educators, I also chose to focus only on those who expressed a commitment to antiracism in their teaching. This delimitation intentionally narrowed my inquiry to exploring the conceptualizations, experiences, and struggles of white instructors who desire to work for racial justice rather than focusing on white resistance. The research design intentionally excluded teachers in K-12 classrooms; I was compelled to focus on postsecondary teaching in this project given the lack of empirical research about critical pedagogy and antiracist pedagogy at this level of schooling in the United States. Finally, the design intentionally excluded instructors whose courses were exclusively online. While the question of implementing antiracist pedagogy in virtual learning environments is thought-provoking, my decision to utilize narrative inquiry and ethnographic case study as the most appropriately aligned methodological frameworks given my research questions would have made difficult meaningful data collection in an online instructional environment. Additionally, this

research was conceptualized and the data were collected prior to the forced shift to virtual instruction caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Conclusion

This chapter has described the methodological frameworks and the methods employed to gather and analyze data across both phases of my research. Next, the dissertation pivots toward presenting and discussing the insights generated through the process of analyzing the data I gathered. Chapter Four explores the conceptualizations of and approaches to antiracist pedagogy among the 10 white instructors who participated in phase one of the study. Chapter Five introduces and contextualizes the ethnographic case study that comprised phase two by tracing Erin's understanding of antiracist pedagogy and describing core elements of her antiracist pedagogical practice. Chapter Six expands and deepens the analysis of Erin's approach to antiracist pedagogy by exploring the tensions she navigated, the ways her approach shifted over time, and the racialized context in which her efforts took place. Chapter Seven pivots to considering how students experienced Erin's efforts at antiracist pedagogical practice. Finally, Chapter Eight offers a synthesis of the insights shared in the four preceding chapters and poses questions and important considerations about antiracist pedagogy in theory and in practice.

CHAPTER FOUR: EXPLORING WHITE INSTRUCTORS' EFFORTS AT ANTIRACIST PEDAGOGY

This first chapter of analysis focuses on phase one of the study, wherein 10 white postsecondary instructors who expressed a commitment to antiracism in their teaching were interviewed. As described in Chapter Three, the first phase of the study employed narrative inquiry to explore the educators' conceptions of and efforts toward practicing antiracist pedagogy. The constellation of insights presented in this chapter was generated through analysis of these educators' narratives. The participants held a variety of teaching appointments in various disciplines at six colleges and universities in a metropolitan area of Midwest State. Table 1 (see below) includes important contextualizing information about the participants in phase one of the study. The constellation of insights articulated in this chapter is composed of three elements, which, considered in relation to one another, illuminate patterns and tensions within and across participants' understanding of and approach to antiracist pedagogy. Using narrative excerpts from all 10 participants, the chapter elucidates the three constellation elements: conceptions of antiracist pedagogy, "antiracist teaching for whom?", and the (im)possibility of antiracist teaching for white educators.

Table 1

Phase One Participants

Name	Institution Type	Affiliated Department	Appointment Type	Years of Teaching Experience
Molly	public research university	education	non-tenure line instructor	11
Cameron	public regional university	philosophy	pre-tenure faculty	11
Avery	public research university	youth studies	non-tenure line instructor	10
David	public community college	history	tenured faculty	11
Jesse	private liberal arts university	English	tenured faculty	27
Anthony	public community college	English	tenured faculty	23
Susan	public community college	information sciences	non-tenure line instructor	8
Trevor	public research university	education	graduate student instructor	2
Erin	private liberal arts university	English	pre-tenure faculty	10
Elliot	public regional university	English, gender and sexuality studies	non-tenure line instructor	17

Constellation Element One: Conceptions of Antiracist Pedagogy

The first constellation element explores participants' conceptions of antiracist pedagogy. Analysis of their narratives revealed multiple convergences and divergences in the ways they imagined and described antiracist pedagogy. Engaging these similarities

and differences across three themes provides a robust illustration of the first constellation element, educators' conceptions of antiracist pedagogy.

Structural Racism (in Education)

Undergirding the educators' conceptions of antiracist pedagogy was an understanding of structural racism. Present in all 10 interviews, though to varying degrees, were articulations of racism as operating structurally rather than solely intra- and interpersonally. For example, Cameron noted, "I don't want the classroom to reify power structures and racist experiences that people are having outside of the classroom all the time." This insight points to a necessary baseline; white educators who strive to teach through an antiracist lens *must* understand racism and white supremacy as structural forces that operate in far more complex ways than individual bias and prejudice. Susan noted, "If we are going to practice antiracism, and antiracist pedagogy, we have to question the entire structure." In addition to articulating a structural understanding of racism broadly, most participants identified education itself as structurally racist. Jesse, Anthony, and Susan each utilized the metaphor "baked in" to describe the relationship of racism to education. Erin engaged the metaphor "voices at the table" to trouble the emphasis on "racial inclusion" in higher education, asking, "Are we still assuming that that's a white table?" This question points to a particular tension that white educators grappled with: What does it mean to practice antiracist pedagogy within academic disciplines and educational contexts that are inherently and foundationally racist? For Elliot, this tension indicated a deep contradiction in terms:

> I don't know that the university, structurally speaking, as it has existed historically and especially as it continues to exist in its neoliberal corporatized model, can be

> antiracist. I think it is structurally, foundationally racist. And so everything that it produces is racist, structurally speaking, which doesn't mean that it doesn't allow for lines of flight and open spaces and other things. But it's to say that when it gets reassembled, when it closes shop for the night, it comes back as that racist formation.

Elliot positioned antiracist teaching in higher education paradoxically. Given the foundationally racist nature of the institution of higher education, everything produced within that educational context is structurally racist. In this way, he understood "antiracist" and "higher education" as a conflict of terms; in other words, as contradictory or paradoxical. While Elliot did not foreclose the possibility of disruption (i.e., "lines of flight and open spaces"), he understood such acts as fleeting (i.e., "when [the university] closes shop for the night, it comes back as that racist formation").

All 10 participants articulated an understanding of structural racism as central to the conceptions of antiracist pedagogy. With varying degrees of criticality, they troubled the institution of education itself as structurally racist and pointed to resulting tensions in their conceptions of antiracist pedagogy. This insight illuminates a necessary baseline: white educators who strive to teach through an antiracist lens *must* understand racism and white supremacy as structural formations that act in, on, and through formalized educational contexts.

Content and Process: What and How to Teach

A second notable pattern in analyzing white instructors' conceptions of antiracist pedagogy was their engagement with questions of content and process. Participants' conceptions of antiracist pedagogy emphasized both content (i.e., "what" to teach) and

process (i.e., “how” to teach). Content/process tensions existed between and within the educators’ conceptions, though across all participants there was a general tendency to focus more on process. The next three sections illustrate participants’ engagement with questions of content and process.

Content: Responding to Students and Troubling “Representation”

In discussing antiracist pedagogy from a content lens, the educators broadly pointed to the necessity of challenging the dominant white narrative in their respective disciplines. Elliot, Avery, and Cameron discussed a practice of selecting course content based on what they believed would be salient for students given their race and other identities. Cameron noted,

> When I put together materials for class, I think a lot about who is likely to be in the class and how to represent the students that are going to be in the class in the literature that we're teaching. It changes from class to class, so sometimes I'll change things after I meet the students.

The concept of *representation* was discussed by Trevor, Erin, Elliott, and Jesse, all of whom taught literature courses. In this disciplinary context, representation describes the practice of assigning students to read literature by racially diverse authors. These four participants discussed having practiced representation in their teaching of literature while also problematizing the concept. Erin described her previous efforts at antiracist teaching as largely characterized by representation. In this narrative, she reflected on and troubled her thinking about representation, speaking first about white students and then about students of color:

> I think there can be that idea [in representation] of, “Go and enrich yourself and understand more about the world and experience culture.” So it's like cultural tourism; “Oh good, now you have been exposed to this.” . . . When I thought about my students of color, a lot of what I was thinking about was—and I think I got this from different narratives about teaching—there was a piece of like affirming you belong here. Like, “Oh look, here are texts that are about your experience, though I don't know what your experience is, but I'm going to just assume that this somehow is going to . . .” And sometimes it happens, you know? It's hard 'cause sometimes students are like, “Thank you for teaching that.” So there's the representation piece of like, “Okay, now we're gonna talk about race.” But I think a lot of that still was kind of—there's a little bit of patronizing, right? A little bit of like, “Okay. Good. Check mark. My students of color are going to feel like their experiences are somehow represented in my curriculum."

Elliot, too, described practicing representation and problematized the concept:

> [I] try and be very intentional in how I design my courses and my syllabi . . . to really persistently flag the way that race is informing whatever given topic it is that we're talking about, if it isn't overtly race . . . There's also an intentionality about, which is maybe more representational politics, but it's in the service of that structural intervention, intentionality about who shows up on the syllabus, in terms of who students are reading or what they're watching.

Elliot both practiced and troubled “representational politics” in course design, framing his attention to representation in selecting course content as a means toward an end (i.e., “structural intervention”) rather than an end in itself.

The emphasis in literature about antiracist teaching on so-called best practices indicates an impulse among many educators for straightforward answers about "what" to teach in order to practice antiracism in their classrooms. The insights generated in this section complicate and problematize "representation" of racial diversity through content selection as an antiracist pedagogical practice in and of itself. "Representational politics," as Elliot articulated, are limited and insufficient as a stand-alone approach to antiracist teaching. Insisting that discourses of antiracist pedagogy trouble representation and move beyond so-called best practices aligns with Kumashiro's (2009) disdain for a "common sense" approach to antiracist teaching. For many educators (and especially white educators) who are interested in better incorporating antiracism in their teaching, content (i.e., what to teach) is likely the first (and perhaps only) focus. For all 10 participants, however, questions of process (i.e., how to teach) were of equal, if not greater, importance in their conceptions of antiracist pedagogy.

Process: Framing, Classroom Facilitation, Grading, and the Role of Emotion

In addition to content, participants spoke at length about process, or teaching actions and policies, as central to their conceptions of antiracist pedagogy. This section of Chapter Four engages several teaching processes that participants indicated were germane to their conceptions of antiracist pedagogy.

Framing. Some educators discussed the practice of verbally framing the course as emerging from an explicit grounding assumption or starting point: that racism and white supremacy exist structurally. Molly shared,

> What I usually do, the way I usually approach it is with an acknowledgement in week one or week two that . . . the understanding that white supremacy organizes

> society in the United States and operates on all of us is a prerequisite assumption. And if you need to work on that, we do it in this office [gestures to the space we are sitting in], but we don't do it in class.

Here, Molly used the teaching action of introducing and framing the course as a pedagogical tool to make clear her antiracist approach to teaching. In so doing, she also set boundaries for students about what types of discussion would be given classroom airtime (and, therefore, validation as important to collective learning) and what types of discussion should occur with her one-on-one outside of the classroom environment.

Classroom Facilitation. Beyond setting expectations and boundaries carefully to reflect an antiracist pedagogical approach, participants elaborated on how classroom facilitation practices were informed by their antiracist commitments. As part of their antiracist conception of teaching, nearly all educators expressed a preference for dialogue-based learning over "teacher as authority and expert." Given this preference, Jesse addressed if/how he would intervene when a student made a racist or harmful comment in class discussion. He described a practice of modeling, distinguishing when he chooses to engage a comment or shut it down:

> That might be modeling how to deal with somebody who's said something that's offensive to somebody else, that tries to not just disparage, but does name it. Hopefully, not always, but hopefully naming it to say, not so much "I disagree with you," but really, "That might have offended people. But let's stop. Can you help us understand where you're coming from?" Occasionally shutting things down, and trying to say, "We're not going to talk about it in that way. I'm happy to talk with you further about this, but this is, I think it's having other kinds of

> impacts that we can't and shouldn't be doing here in this kind of way." It's never easy. I think I'm okay with people getting mad.

Related to Jesse's conception of modeling as an important element of his antiracist approach to facilitating classroom discussion, most participants described a practice of naming their whiteness in the classroom as an element of antiracist pedagogy. For example, Susan shared, "I do call out my [whiteness] . . . today I just did in class. We were talking about mainstream media, and I was like, 'Well who does mainstream media target?' Then I said, 'Probably people who look a bit like me.'" Jesse described his practice of naming whiteness:

> I will talk about being a white instructor from the get go, from day one, what that means . . . That's crucial. There shouldn't be things that are unmarked. Again, if I'm trying to make the tacit explicit, what are the . . . clearly my whiteness, and now my age, and certainly the way I carry myself, and I talk a lot about class and my own experiences. To name all these things is how I got here, and hopefully to license and liberate everybody that that has to be part of what we're all doing.

As seen in Jesse's narrative, participants' rationale for naming their whiteness in facilitating class discussion included making the "unmarked" (whiteness) explicit. They also described the practice as a way to model race-based power analysis, make explicit their racialized positionality, and model white responsibility-taking.

The teaching practice of naming one's whiteness during class discussion as an element of antiracist pedagogy marks a site of paradox. Naming one's whiteness, even when done with antiracist intentions, unavoidably *centers* whiteness. Participants' emphasis on dialogue-based pedagogy entailed an active effort to *decenter* themselves as

experts and authority figures in the classroom environment. Conceptions of decentering included considerations of power and authority related to the teacher role as well as to whiteness. Participants' practice of naming their whiteness as an element of their approach to antiracist pedagogy was rife with tension and contradiction.

Grading. While all participants discussed classroom facilitation in articulating their conception of antiracist pedagogy, just two participants described grading. For Erin and Cameron, the power dynamics inherent in evaluating student work necessitated that grading policies and practices be an element of their conceptions of antiracist pedagogy. Cameron conceptualized grading as a process that ought to be collaborative:

> I try to grade in a semi-collaborative way with students, trying to figure out what it is that they want to improve on, or what it is that they're interested in improving on. So, if they write a paper, there's certain points where they can set goals for themselves, and then I try to honor those goals.

Erin discussed her interest in labor-based grading, an explicitly antiracist approach to evaluating and grading students' writing explicated by Asao B. Inoue (2019). Although she had yet to incorporate this grading policy, Erin enthusiastically described the framework and the reflective questions it generated about her current approach to grading:

> Asao B. Inoue . . . he's in the comp-rhet field . . . [is] saying [labor-based grading] is an antiracist writing assessment pedagogy that is explicitly meant to challenge white language supremacy. And I'm just like, "Yes!" . . . I'm thinking a lot about then, "What does my assessment look like?" And I like the idea of labor-based

> grading, which is more about . . . there's feedback, but the feedback is not evaluative, it's not judgmental. Feedback is separate from the grade.

Erin ultimately chose to implement this approach to grading in her courses the term following our interview. Her integration of labor-based grading as an element of her approach to antiracist pedagogy will be discussed thoroughly in Chapters Five and Seven. While just two of the 10 participants explicitly addressed grading in articulating their conceptions of antiracist pedagogy, the importance of this power-laden teaching process should not be underestimated as an integral element of antiracist teaching. This assertion will be further explored and elaborated in Chapter Eight.

The Role of Emotion. Some participants' conceptualizations of process, or the "how" of antiracist teaching, included the role of emotion. Cameron, Anthony, and Jesse each discussed emotion in describing their understanding of antiracist pedagogy. Jesse, who served in an administrative leadership position in addition to being a tenured faculty member, described how his involvement with a campus social justice retreat challenged him to consider affective approaches to discussing race and racism with students:

> I was involved with a student affairs-driven conference on race and ethnicity. They would take a large group of students off campus to have 36 to 48 hour intensive discussions around race, with kind of a white enclave, a student of color enclave, and then different sub-racial identification enclaves . . . you go and you'd meet with your group and then you'd come back together. Pretty intense, pretty intense . . . That pushed me a lot to think about how I came at whiteness. Not that I didn't care about emotion or affective engagement around the issues. And not that I wouldn't still critique how affective engagements are also performative and

> shaped by culture and not authentic. That said, going to those experiences changed, I think for the better, the ways I pay attention to the affective in antiracist work.

For Anthony, embracing and expressing emotion in the classroom was a necessary element of his approach to antiracist pedagogy:

> I also get emotional in the classroom because this work is emotional. I'm not afraid of the emotion. I will put the emotion out there, and I think that makes a difference with students [because] that they see that it's real and it's emotional. And it's okay to be emotional.

Anthony elaborated on his understanding of emotion, and white guilt in particular, as an element of his continued commitment to antiracism:

> So much of this work is emotional work. I think guilt is associated with the polarization stage of development in the IDI [Intercultural Development Inventory]. I'm talking about the IDI because I just did the IDI training last week to be a qualified administrator, so that's on my brain right now. I was raised Catholic, and I'm queer, so I know all about guilt. But I've also learned guilt is a way of avoiding responsibility in a very, very counterintuitive way that if you just live in the guilt, you get to be overwhelmed by the emotion. You get to be paralyzed, and you get to absolve yourself from taking action because you feel so bad, right? I'm just not interested in that. I'm interested in emotions and living in them. I'm not interested in being overwhelmed or paralyzed by them. I think there's an important difference.

After making the distinction between living in emotions and being overwhelmed or paralyzed by them, Anthony went on to qualify his embrace of emotion in his efforts at antiracist teaching:

> When I cry [in the classroom], and I do cry, I'm very clear, no need to caretake. I can be sad. I'm a big boy. I will not be sad in five minutes. Let's not caretake because that's a dynamic that's not healthy, and it's not healthy for anybody. Part of that though, it is connected to patriarchy because we've demonized emotions and the expression of emotions, which is how patriarchy perpetuates itself. Let's learn to be comfortable with emotions.

Like Anthony, Cameron also discussed emotion in articulating her conception of antiracist pedagogy. She taught courses that satisfied her university's racial issues graduation requirement and often had students who were not personally interested in the course topic enroll purely to satisfy a requirement. Cameron described the role emotion can play in students' ability and willingness to learn about race and racism, particularly in situations like hers when enrolled students may have very little personal investment in the course topic:

> I think a lot of learning is about our emotional relationship to ourselves and to what we're learning. If you give people information, they can have all the information in the world and still filter it through their own biases or still find ways to reject it, whether that's outright not reading it at all, discounting the author, discounting their methods, or just not really processing it. People are really amazing and good at protecting the beliefs they already have, especially when those threaten their worldview. So, if people come to class, and they're

> either not ready to be a little vulnerable or, for them, accepting the things that we're saying or talking about the things we're talking about would be a different kind of vulnerability than it would be for other people, that can be a really difficult place for them. And I think the kinds of things I teach and the kinds of things I'm interested in, seem to be most threatening to white men.

Like Anthony and Jesse, Cameron understood emotion to play an important role in her conception of antiracist pedagogy. Cameron's final statement indicated that her conceptions of antiracist pedagogy include racialized considerations; this notion will be further explored in constellation element two, which addresses the question "antiracist teaching for whom?"

This section has illustrated that participants conceptualized antiracist pedagogy through various teaching processes, considering not just "what" to teach, but "how" to teach. Framing, classroom facilitation, grading, and the role of emotion in learning about race and racism stood out among participants' narratives as teaching practices, policies, and approaches that constituted their understanding of antiracist pedagogy. Content and process, both critical elements of teaching and learning, are often positioned dualistically (as I have done to this point in my analysis, for organizational purposes). However, the reality of learning environments is that content and process are often not discrete and distinct but rather connected and co-iterative.

Both Content and Process: Disciplinarity and Signaling

Two themes in participants' narratives so deeply straddled the line between content and process they could not be accurately deemed one or the other. The first such theme was disciplinarity. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the socialization processes of

graduate students into academia, participants' academic disciplines shaped their conceptions of antiracist pedagogy. Variously, participants framed their antiracist teaching efforts as through or against their respective disciplines. Cameron, for instance, framed her antiracist lens as in resistance to her discipline:

> I have a really complicated relationship with philosophy. It is traditionally taught as a very white male, Western, colonial subject. I have this belief that philosophy can be something other than that. So I teach a lot of philosophy courses in which a lot of philosophers probably would say I don't actually teach any philosophers.

Susan described a feeling of struggling against her discipline (library science), expressing deep concern with its epistemological assumptions and methodological frameworks:

> Right now I'm questioning everything about teaching a research class. Because of my working with antiracist [approaches to teaching], and the baked-in racism, and racism is necessary for capitalism, and all of it. So I'm questioning, is research an elitist, very white type of thing to be teaching?

David, a historian, conceptualized antiracist pedagogy both through and against his discipline. He described history as simultaneously responsible for perpetuating dominant narratives and an important tool for identifying and contextualizing white supremacy. David problematized the way history was typically framed and taught in the state he lives and teaches in: "One of the challenges with [Midwest State] history is the dominant narrative of the state is largely a white narrative despite the fact that we have a plethora of individuals that are either Native or do not identify as white." At the same time, David understood his discipline as a method for revealing and disrupting the effects of structural racism: "Historians have been [asking], 'How do we understand racism

without racists? How do we get at the structural aspect of it so people can understand?' And as historians, we've been unpacking that for a long time." For David, embracing antiracist pedagogy meant recognizing the ways his discipline perpetuated dominant, white supremacist narratives *and* leveraging the tools of his discipline to disrupt such practices. In the following narrative, David described his engagement with the emerging pedagogical practice of digital humanities, which applies computing technologies to traditional humanities disciplines:

> There's a lot of things where people go back in and they are re-inscribing a canon. So they go back and say, "Let's read all of Shakespeare, let's look at Homer." Because we can now use computers and map out all the places that Homer went. I was noticing this re-inscription of what they used to call Western civilization values. As a historian I'm like, "We've been working for 30 years to try and get people to think about the world and its collective values. As I'm engaging in this pedagogy of digital humanities, I don't want to be reproducing ossified bigoted notions of a uniform Western civilization." And so part of it is, I'm responding pedagogically . . . trying to think about, how do I do this in a—to some degree it's an anti-white supremacy behavior, but to some degree it's more of a—it's a world historical value. We want to represent the full diversity of humanity, accurately, not just go back and digitize what is the low-hanging fruit. Which is frequently going to be the stuff that has just got reproduced, which is a product of white supremacy.

David's narrative depicted how he conceptualized antiracist pedagogy both through and against his discipline.

Half of the participants had a disciplinary connection with English, either through their graduate studies and/or through their current departmental affiliation. Speaking to both literature and composition, the two primary "camps" in the discipline of English, these participants' conceptions of antiracist pedagogy were shaped by disciplinary discourses and pedagogical approaches. In regards to literature, *representation* was a disciplinary discourse that shaped Jesse, Trevor, Erin, and Elliot's conceptions of antiracist pedagogy. For example, Jesse described engaging students in conversations about representation as an element of antiracist teaching:

> At the level of content, it might be, "How do canons get full? How does this field . . . What did you read in high school? What are the central texts for race? Oh, y'all read *To Kill a Mockingbird*? Let's talk about that, because I read that 30 fucking years ago. And it was old then." So we talk about how the discipline is shaped by racism and what do we do to break that up. I make sure that my content is not, I'm not just looking to fill the spots on the bus, but I am thinking very carefully about representation and difference as crucial things that they see and engage with, and not in just, "Here are five stories of pain." But really careful, complicated, and name how I made those selections.

In regards to composition, Erin, Anthony, and Jesse pointed to writing pedagogy and composition theory itself as aligned with antiracist approaches to teaching. Jesse noted, "I use the language from composition theories often to talk about my pedagogy." He elaborated,

> I think you're constantly thinking about who the students are. So just institutionally, English, and it's really comp more than English, but it's not just

> the pedagogy it's the fact that who you end up serving means that you're going to be paying a lot more attention to some of these things.

Participants with a disciplinary connection to English articulated conceptions of antiracist pedagogy that were informed by specific literature and composition discourses and pedagogies.

Overall, participants' conceptions of antiracist pedagogy were variously in alignment with and/or in opposition to their disciplines, revealing multiple sites of tension as well as divergences in their approaches to antiracist teaching. Similarly, participants' inclinations to announce, or "signal," to students their commitment to antiracist teaching varied. The next section addresses the second theme which straddles the line between content and process: signaling.

Many participants indicated a practice of explicitly naming for students their antiracist approach to teaching. Erin shared, "I don't hide from my students. I have an agenda. I want you to think about this." And David noted,

> The first rule of combating white supremacy is the opposite of *Fight Club*, is talking about white supremacy . . . There was another world historian who said, who used this expression that I've used ever since, she said, "I want the students to know that I am open, but I am not neutral." As in, there's a marketplace of ideas and I am open to hearing, but I am not morally neutral. I am going to actually take a moral stance, I'm going to take a pedagogical stance.

Elliot, however, noted his hesitancy to explicitly name his pedagogy as antiracist:

> I tend not to signal or flag or announce, you know, "I am using an antiracist structure here." Typically in my teaching or just in conversations. Partially

> because antiracism is always situational and it's always naming a practice on the ground.

And Susan grappled with the question of signaling:

> Something I'm trying to figure out [is how] blatant and overt I want to be with it. Do I want to come in and say, "I'm teaching this from an antiracist perspective, here's what we're going to be doing?" Or do I just want to change my behavior in accordance, like de-centering myself, and that sort of thing.

Even while all participants expressed a commitment to antiracism in their pedagogy, their decisions to explicitly name that commitment in the classroom, or even to describe themselves as "antiracist teachers," varied. (This insight will be further elaborated in constellation element three, which addresses uncertainties and tensions in participants' approaches to antiracist pedagogy.)

Participants' conceptions of antiracist pedagogy deeply engaged questions of content (what to teach) and process (how to teach). In varied and sometimes contradictory ways, they described particular practices, approaches, and frameworks in articulating their understanding of antiracist teaching. The first constellation element continues with a third and final section addressing the role of power and authority in shaping white educators' conceptions of antiracist pedagogy.

Power and Authority

A final theme in this elucidation of participants' conceptions of antiracist pedagogy is that of power and authority. In this section, the concepts of power and authority are explored in relation to teacher positionality and subjectivity (which I refer to as "teacherness") as well as in relation to whiteness. To varying degrees, participants

discussed the interlocking power formations of whiteness and teachernees as shaping their conceptions of and approaches to antiracist teaching. For example, Trevor shared, "Every time I give a survey or something that's asking for feedback, I think about how I'm asking for it and what can help alleviate that power dynamic that I chalk up to whiteness." Participants' narratives illustrated various instances of reflexivity related to power, authority, whiteness, and teacherness.

"Looking the Part"

In one illustration of this theme, Molly discussed the notion of "looking the part" as a white woman instructing courses in a teacher preparation program:

> There's a lot that comes with the title that I occupy, and then working within that as this cis, straight, read-as-female body that visually presents to students as what they expect in an ed classroom . . . I take it as a necessary move to immediately disrupt those assumptions . . . partially because of the damage that I know can be done when I don't make myself known as a more complex person. The permissions that can be granted for certain types of violence is about people who is assumed to not be in the room . . . My body carries normativity and so people who might find that comforting need to know right away that my body doesn't match my politics, maybe is a way to say it.

Molly elaborated that one way she experiences her whiteness in the classroom is as a potential permission-giving authority:

> One of the ways I experience my own whiteness in the classroom is . . . I often feel the moments when I could skip over, or wash over or let something not sit, and I think the fact of my whiteness in those moments serves as my reminder of

> how powerful that washing over could be. Like how permission-granting for other white people my moving over or past discomfort or push or stretch could create an environment of permission for other people to do the same in spaces where the stakes might even be higher.

Jesse also framed "looking the part" as a site of power and authority in teaching contexts. In the following narrative, he described how this dynamic shaped his approach to antiracist teaching:

> Part of the privilege of being an older white guy is I look like they expect a professor to look. So people will tell me things and are comfortable with even being aggressive with me in ways that I think may allow for a kind of honest back and forth. So I can build these respective relationships in ways that allow me, I think, to diagnose what's going on a little more quickly. Or to just plain be told, no diagnosis necessary. They will just lay it out.

As illustrated in Molly and Jesse's narratives, participants reflexively interrogated the power- and authority-granting effects of whiteness and teacherness. They understood that white supremacy ideology positioned them as competent, knowledgeable educators worthy of students' respect. Their whiteness made them "expected" in the teacher role; whiteness and teacherness were mutually reinforcing formations that granted them power and authority in the minds of students. Participants' awareness of these dynamics shaped their conceptions of antiracist pedagogy.

Whiteness and Masculinity

A second illustration of the theme of power and authority was the intersection of whiteness and masculinity. Elliot, Anthony, Jesse, Trevor, and David (all of whom identified as men) discussed whiteness and masculinity as intersecting power formations that automatically granted them authority and competence as instructors. Elliot explained how he experienced his whiteness in the classroom:

> It's just as power, as authority. There's so much bullshit there, but yeah, people look at me and take me seriously and listen to me, relative to whatever else they're doing. But in ways that I know aren't extended to people not read as white, not read as cis and so on and so forth. So, yeah, as a certain kind of unquestioned authority that precedes me. It enters the room with me, or maybe just in front of me, I think, especially as I age.

Jesse reflected on the intersection of whiteness and masculinity as a site of power and unquestioned authority in his experience as an instructor: "I mentioned before the privilege [of being a white, male educator]. I don't get attacked on my authority. Ever. If I do, I don't even care. It's almost like a game in the room, it's just not a big deal." Anthony's narrative revealed his thinking about the ways that whiteness, masculinity, and queerness intersected in shaping how students responded to him in the classroom:

> I have said some really stupid, dumb shit things in my life, and I probably do it every day . . . But see, that's the difference. I can be in the classroom and say stupid shit and be like, "Holy fuck, can you believe I just said that?" And the students respond, or they'll call me out . . . I think the stakes might be different if I weren't white, but I also think I'm very obviously queer, and in this context that

> makes it safer for a lot of our students . . . There's maybe that, like, "Okay, he's a queer guy." And another layer to all of this is because I'm a white man, I can get away with this casual approach. I can get away with this dressing [gestures to attire consisting of jeans, sandals, and a t-shirt]. I can get away with saying fuck. I can get away with all kinds of shit because the basic authority when I walk in the room is understood and accepted. If I walked in with a female body dressing the way I do, talking the way I do, perhaps an entirely different dynamic . . . If I were a person of color, again, how would that be read? What works for me works for me in large part because of my privilege, but I think we have to own that. I'm not going to not have it.

Elliot, Jesse, and Anthony's comments illustrate reflexive understanding that white supremacy and its co-constitutive power formation patriarchy are always present in educational contexts. The structural conditions of education always already designate white educators, and white masculine educators in particular, as competent and authoritative. As this section has illustrated, participants' awareness of these dynamics of power and authority shaped their conceptions of antiracist pedagogy.

The reality of teacher authority and positional power already complicates conceptions of critical pedagogy and anti-oppressive educational practices. Considering white educators' efforts toward antiracist teaching adds additional layers of power and authority to the already power-laden classroom context. To varying degrees, participants identified these power dynamics at play in their classroom experiences and accounted for them in their conceptions of antiracist pedagogy. At the same time, participants' thinking took shape from within their positionalities as white educators. Even when white

educators are able to identify how we benefit from and collude with white supremacy, our pedagogical efforts to struggle against it manifest from within the formation of white supremacy and thus are shaped by its very contours. That is to say, "We are inscribed in that which we struggle against" (Lather, 1991, p. 20).

The first constellation element has explored participants' conceptions of antiracist pedagogy. Their narratives demonstrated that meaningful embrace of antiracist teaching requires an understanding that racism is a structural power formation that acts in, on, and through educational contexts. Additionally, conceptualizing antiracist pedagogy entails questioning not just "what" to teach, but "how" to teach. Participants described deep and sometimes conflicting considerations of content and process in articulating their conceptions of antiracist pedagogy. They also reflexively interrogated the ways that whiteness and teacherness intersect to position them as powerful authority figures in educational contexts. The chapter next pivots to a second constellation element.

Constellation Element Two: Antiracist Teaching for Whom?

Having explored participants' conceptualizations of antiracist pedagogy, this constellation element engages an enduring question that was evident across participants' approaches to antiracist pedagogy: "Antiracist teaching for whom?" When asked what they hoped students would learn in the context of their antiracist teaching efforts, many participants' responses were racialized. Interestingly, this racialization took shape in different ways. Some participants explicitly discussed different hopes for students of color than for white students; other participants responded with largely race-neutral language. For example, when I asked Susan what it is that she hoped students learned as a result of her commitment to antiracist teaching, she shared,

> [I hope] that they see themselves as learners, as college students, and that they are fully capable of any kind of learning that they want to do. That they are learners. That's my goal, that growth mindset thing, they are able to do whatever they set their mind to.

Even while Susan previously articulated a structural understanding of racism in education, her articulated hope for student learning was expressed in race-neutral rhetoric that did not account for the asymmetrical impact of structural racism on what and how students might learn through antiracist teaching. Yoon's (2012) conceptualization of whiteness-at-work is helpful in making sense of those responses which did not explicitly account for how antiracist teaching might need to focus on different outcomes for students of different racial groups. Yoon noted, "Whiteness-at-work strategies can perform functions that . . . by intention are anti-racist" (p. 590). Considering Susan's race-neutral articulation of her hopes for student learning through this framework illuminates the importance of engaging the question, "antiracist for whom?" in imagining, designing, and facilitating antiracist pedagogy.

Multiple participants did articulate overtly racialized conceptions of and approaches to antiracist pedagogy. Jesse, for example, noted, "There are ways that I'm doing antiracist work that are not sufficient to the needs of the students of color in the room." Similarly, Elliot explicitly contextualized his antiracist teaching efforts as responding to the lived realities of students of color:

> I've been [a] white dude in front of fairly significant populations of students of color, both at [my current institution] and the last place I was teaching. I work to ensure that I wasn't bringing the kind of violences that are just structural and

> more or less natural to one of my position into their classrooms and into their classroom space. There's a certain kind of intentionality there, which is just an orientation to those students.

Elliot elaborated later in our conversation that his hopes for students' learning related to his efforts at antiracist teaching were also racialized:

> I do want white students, students who benefit from white supremacy, to understand the ways that they benefit, and their complicities with it. Which is, one, not to guilt them for it, but two, also not to allow space for white tears. Because that, too, centers white supremacy . . . I think for students of color and for multiply marginalized students, [my hope for their learning in my courses is] to use antiracism as a sort of toolbox. And hopefully they do take stuff away as tools to help them navigate the very things that they're navigating and that obstructed their life to begin with.

Molly also expressed a racialized understanding of and approach to antiracist pedagogy. She recalled a moment in her teaching experience when the importance of considering the question, "antiracist for whom?" became very apparent:

> I did a really informal check with our [masters students] . . . They were the first to have experienced these new courses all the way through, and so they'd had multiple touch points on critical content and particularly related to race . . . I was asking for some of their feedback, and [a student of color] said something like, "Well yeah I would come to this class and be like, can I see the syllabus and be like, cool, another chance to sit and watch another white person come to consciousness who didn't get it the first time around." And so they were

> experiencing it as a different version of the same conversation and not an expansion, not a shift to another part of intersectional experiences, but just a different part of the class having their moment over and over and over again. That provided such a counter to what people thought they were doing when they built those classes in the first place. And so not what we want. It was a really important message to receive and think about. So then how are we drawing lines so that is not what happens.

Molly, in addition to narrating this moment of reflection and learning, shared a specific classroom example that illustrates her efforts to apply what she had learned. In this story, which describes a process element of her efforts at antiracist teaching, Molly described how she actively considered the question, "antiracist for whom?" in creating learning experiences:

> I had 28 students that semester, 26 students identified as white and two students identified as people of color. It was one of the semesters when a whole bunch of Black men were shot by police. It was right after [a local unarmed Black man was killed by police] . . . things were big in [our city] at this moment. The students [of color] both also identified as Black, one African and one African American. And so their bodies were on display from the moment the class started. I think their stories would be more informative here than my observations of what happened. But what I remember about part of that was we met—I emailed them after the first class and commented, "I'm feeling really conscious of the fact that this is a class of 26 white students, one white instructor, and two students of color, and invite you . . . I'm going to name some things that I think might be helpful if this

> feels big to you, and I invite you to name things." And one of the [students] named—so we read *Between the World and Me* over the first two classes, and she was like, "Yeah, I'm not sitting there for that. Could we meet separately?" So she and I had meetings in [my office] where we talked about the book from her perspective. And it was very important to her that she didn't owe her storying of that text to anybody else . . . And so she knew her white classmates were going to be processing this book as like, that they were going to be going through all of the sorts of things that white people go through when they have to encounter their whiteness.

Like Molly and Elliot, Jesse also articulated a racialized approach to antiracist pedagogy. He expressed specific hopes for students' of color learning, in light of his acknowledgement that they brought to the classroom nuanced understandings and lived experiences of racism:

> I hope in the conversation around racism, that [students of color] are able to see, "Okay, this isn't a space where these things that constantly inflect my life aren't topics for conversation or are going to be set aside for the day because we're talking about something else." That they're part of everyday conversation. And that therefore, their experiences, their assets, their understandings, the way they read, all the things that are informed by racism are crucial parts of all of our learning. What I hope for them is that they're seeing, what are the critical tools that we're developing that give them increased agency to attack and interrogate, or to empower them to do whatever professional paths they're choosing, or the ways they engage in their communities or in their civic lives. It's going to be

> different, their objectives are going to be defined by them, but the tools are still hopefully incredibly helpful, whether they're working with white folks or not.

Anthony, too, expressed explicit racialization in articulating his hopes for students' learning:

> My hope for my students of color has to do with moving in a world where their pain is recognized and acknowledged, where their strengths are recognized and acknowledged, where their languages are recognized and acknowledged, and where they have the capacity towards naming systems of oppression, naming the sources of their pain and struggles, and where they, perhaps with intentionality, can make choices that might on the surface seem counterproductive. I think for people of color sometimes, it's, "Look, I got to survive. I got to eat. If that means playing this bullshit game, then I'm going to play the bullshit game." I would like to give them the framework for allowing themselves to make the choices that they need to make.

Anthony, Jesse, Molly, and Elliot's narratives illustrated clear racialization in their conception of antiracist pedagogy. They articulated an understanding that students of color brought different perspectives and life experiences to the classroom than did white students, and that antiracist learning for students of color would look characteristically different than it would for white students. Constellation element two continues an exploration of the question "antiracist teaching for whom?" by exploring two themes: balancing competing learning needs and conceptions of failure.

One Classroom, Many Learners

In engaging the question "antiracist teaching for whom?," participants described the tension of balancing varying and sometimes competing needs in the classroom. For example, Avery named the tension of working to balance whose learning was prioritized in her antiracist teaching efforts:

> There's a piece about attempting to have people in the room feel like their story is included. I've mentioned before how in a multiracial classroom, one of the things you're always balancing is teaching to the white students and teaching to students of color, and also thinking about other identities that are in play with that. Sometimes, the things that are really revelatory and new for white students are old hat to students of color.

Cameron discussed navigating difficult decisions about how much energy to expend engaging resistant white students in her antiracist teaching efforts. In her courses, which were often evenly split between white students and students of color, Cameron primarily experienced resistance to her antiracist approach from white male students. She described a sort of ambivalence about prioritizing those students' learning:

> My colleagues have said repeatedly, actually, that when I said I struggle with these white male students, they're like, "Those are the students that you could really reach. Don't you think you could really change those students? They've got the farthest to flip." And, I'm like, "Well, but at the cost of who or what? I don't want to spend that much time on them at the expense of the other people in the class who are there, and they're ready to go forward."

Cameron went on to describe her idea of scaffolding courses about race and racism in a similar way that mathematics courses are sequenced:

> I joke, but I'm not joking, that we should have remedial racism classes. Let's say you're taking pre-algebra. If you can't add and multiply that well, it's pretty clear cut, and people could very kindly be like, "Hey, I really think that you are going to be able to do this, but there's some foundational things that you need to know first. And maybe there's this other class that would be a better fit for you right now." And, I would hope that that would be done as like, "It's not that you're stupid, there's just some building blocks, and once you get those, you'll totally be great in this class."

Cameron's narrative illustrates her efforts to navigate the tension of competing learning needs amidst pressure from colleagues to center the learning of resistant white students. Her suggestion to create a remedial racism course indicates an understanding that students are differently prepared and asymmetrically equipped and willing to engage based on their lived experiences with race and racism. Creating a separate learning environment for resistant white students, in particular, would allow her to engage the students who are "there and ready to go forward" with her full attention and energy.

Cameron and Avery each described the tensions of balancing a variety of learning needs in one classroom. While this sort of balancing act is not new or unusual for educators, extending consideration of the dynamic into discourses of antiracist pedagogy is critical. Considering who our learners are and what knowledge and experience they carry with them is critical to any meaningful pedagogy; engaging these questions through a racialized lens as an element of antiracist pedagogical efforts is paramount.

Failure

The question "antiracist teaching for whom?" is further illuminated through exploring a second theme in participants' narratives: conceptualizations of "failure" in regards to antiracist pedagogy. All participants readily embraced failure as part of their efforts at antiracist teaching. David noted, "I'm going to fail as often, if not 1,000 times more, than I succeed. But to not do it feels like I would just shuffle off this mortal coil and go do whatever's in the great beyond. There is a moral compulsion." An exploration of *how* participants conceptualized failure in their efforts at antiracist pedagogy generates meaningful insights in response to the question, "antiracist teaching for whom?"

In sharing experiences they interpreted as failure, participants spoke most commonly about interactions with students of color. For example, Trevor shared the following narrative:

> We were planning on talking about Indigeneity in children's literature, and decolonizing bookshelves. A student had indicated on a feedback form that they were interested in talking about missing and murdered Indigenous women. I just don't know enough about that, but from what I do know, it's important. So I had approached that student, and I asked if they would like to share any resources or materials with me, and we agreed to meet. The student has tribal affiliations, is an American Indian Studies major. We sat down and we started talking about it. I extended an invitation to the student to facilitate that session, or part, if they wanted to, and they agreed. And so the session happened, and it was a lot of emotional labor, for myself, and I can't imagine what it was like for that student. And so in our debriefing afterward, I was checking in with this student to see how

> they felt, and everything they told me [was] like, "You know, it went fine. I'm glad to share," and [they] were expressing gratitude. But I also wasn't sure if that check-in, which I had prompted, was for them, or for me. Are they recognizing that I'm trying to assuage myself of this guilt that I was feeling for having led this student to perform this emotional labor? A question that is very present for me right now is, what is the difference between allowing student voice to be heard [and] leading students to do this work that threatens their well-being? It's an instance where I got out of the way, so I accomplished that task. But it was, depending on the time of day that I'm thinking about it, either in service of raising student voice, or a way that gets me out of doing work that I should have done. And I've not come to any resolution about it, but that is a tender spot for me now, and one that I'm still processing. I guess the question that undergirds all this is, what did folks learn from this? And is that even a reasonable metric for evaluating that decision?

Susan also narrated an example of failure in her antiracist teaching efforts, conceptualized as such through the experience of a Black student. She described a current events critical analysis learning activity in an online course that was intended to generate discussion about racism. On the class discussion board, Susan posted an ad from a clothing company that showed a young Black boy wearing a shirt that read "Coolest monkey in the jungle." In the post, Susan noted that the company claimed to have been unaware of the racist implications of the ad. She asked students to discuss the ad as well as the company's response. Susan recalled,

> Some of the white students who responded were like, "I don't think they meant any harm," and, "It's not good, but it's fine." And a Black student was very upset, and the discussions were getting heated. And so I was like, "Uh oh, I haven't had this online before, I don't know what to do."

When Susan reached out to colleagues in her department (all of whom were white), she was uncomfortable with their advice: "They were like, 'Just shut the discussion down. Just stop it.' I was like, 'That does not feel like what I want to do. Because he's right. The things he was saying were right.'" Unsure of how to address the situation, Susan sought advice from the Chief Diversity Officer at her institution, who was a Black man, as well as from Black colleagues outside of her department. They encouraged Susan to acknowledge the heated discussion among students and historicize the racist discourse and imagery in order to contextualize its harmful impact. Susan noted the difference in her colleagues' responses:

> All my white colleagues responded with empathy to the discomfort of the situation, and all of my Black colleagues with sympathy for the student. I was like, "Oh my god. I had no business posting this. This is not up for discussion. This is hard stuff. I should have thought before I posted something like this. It's not just something that is up for discussion. This is hard stuff for my Black students."

In these narratives, Trevor and Susan conceptualized failure in their antiracist teaching efforts through the experiences of Indigenous and Black students. In hindsight, they recognized ways that their very efforts to practice antiracist pedagogy harmed or may have harmed students of color; they made meaning of those experiences as failure.

Less commonly, participants shared narratives of failure that described interactions with white students. Molly, for example, recounted overhearing a white student's comment on the last day of her teacher education course:

> This teacher candidate, who was about to become an official teacher with a Master's degree, was weaving the story about this kid who slides on their knees down the hallway whenever it's open. And she was using all this [language] like, "He chooses to, he likes to," all these things that imply this desire to ruffle the feathers of the perfect and complete white woman teacher. In that moment listening from far away, I was all hot about it. I was mad, I was sad . . . Sometimes it kills me to know that that person—and not just her specifically, but so many others—are out there. They're believing all these things about children and working with them. And feeding their own sense of what Cheryl Matias would say—a sense of feeding their narcissistic need to feel like they're doing good in the world. 'Cause if that's what you've really been thinking all this time [in my class] and you've been performing the niceties of white antiracist talk in teacher ed, then we have a really big problem.

Molly expressed deep frustration and a sense of failure in recounting this experience. She noted concern not only about the student's comment, but also about her decision not to address the comment after overhearing it. This anecdote illustrates a conceptualization of antiracist teaching failure as imagined through the experience of a white student.

One participant shared a narrative that constructed failure in two separate but related capacities. David recalled an experience he had as a graduate student instructor. His story focused on an interaction with a white student but concluded with reflection on

how his teaching actions may have negatively influenced a Black student in the same course:

> I dressed conservatively [as a graduate student TA]. The reason I'm telling you this is that, at one point, I had a student come up to me at the end of the semester and in the course of the conversation it became very clear to me that he was a white supremacist. Not in the systematic [sense], but in the active participation in a white supremacist group. And that he thought that I was as well. I was horrified because I didn't—for the life of me I couldn't think of what I had said to make him think—I certainly had not used what I would have thought was white supremacist language. The structure of the course was done by a professor that used explicitly anti-white supremacist—like he talked about the genocidal maniac that was Columbus, he talked about the failures of Reconstruction, the imposition of Jim Crow laws, all of those were built into the course. And I said to this student, "What you just described to me, I find morally repugnant. I don't agree with that. What made you think that I would agree with what you just said?" And he said, "Well you were always trying to balance both sides. When that other Black student used to say things and I said something else, you were always trying to be open about a variety of different ideas." And I thought to myself, "Oh [exasperated sigh]. I failed, hugely." I had a student an entire semester, who because I was neutral . . . I can only imagine if I went back to that African American student and they were like, "Yeah, why were you always sticking up for the racist?!" And I didn't go back and ask, but it still haunts me 15 years later.

David's narrative illustrates distinct but related conceptualizations of failure. In one understanding, David failed in that a white student incorrectly interpreted his values and teaching actions as actively upholding white supremacist ideology. In a second understanding, David conceptualized failure through perceived impact on a Black student's learning experience.

In these narratives of failure, the question "antiracist for whom?" is further illuminated. The metrics white educators utilized to identify failure offer significant insight into who and what was being centered in their efforts at antiracist teaching, whether consciously or not. Most often, participants imagined failure through the experiences of students of color. This insight is compelling, particularly given the heavy emphasis in antiracist teaching literature on managing white students' resistance. This insight also represents a site of paradox. If the educational experiences and learning of students of color are not the rubric by which antiracist teaching efforts are evaluated, white supremacy is reified. White students' learning needs and emotional development continue to be centered, even under the auspices of antiracist teaching. At the same time, conceptualizing failure through the experiences of students of color unfairly taxes those students. As white instructors practice antiracist efforts, they invariably make mistakes along the way. In centering their evaluation of success or failure on the experiences of students of color, white educators may very likely be contributing to the burden of emotional labor placed on students of color in educational contexts. Yoon's (2012) notion of whiteness-at-work, with its embrace of paradox, is a useful framework for engaging this conundrum. White educators' conceptualizations of failure tell us a great deal about

their understanding of and approach to antiracist pedagogy, further illuminating and complicating the question, "antiracist teaching for whom?"

Constellation element two has explored the racialization of participants' ideas about and efforts toward antiracist pedagogy. This analysis has demonstrated the necessity that white educators understand and work to account for the fact that students of color and white students enter the classroom with varied racialized knowledge and experiences, and that their learning needs and experiences are distinct. Educators must make complex decisions about prioritization given the various and often contradictory learning needs of students in the context of antiracist teaching. Avery articulated this dynamic well, reflecting, "One of those tensions that exist in antiracist education [is] resisting centering whiteness and thinking about the white students learning in the class versus students of color." White educators who express a commitment to antiracism in their pedagogy must continuously engage critical reflexivity about the limits of the white imaginary, for the white imaginary invariably shapes conceptions of antiracist teaching.

Constellation Element Three: The (Im)possibility of Antiracist Pedagogy for White Educators

Building from preceding analysis, the final constellation element in this chapter explores the (im)possibility of white educators' efforts at antiracist teaching. This section engages tensions and uncertainties expressed by participants, critically considers how whiteness was de/re/centered in participants' antiracist teaching efforts, and conceptualizes paradox as germane to participants' efforts at antiracist pedagogy. In relation, these themes address the overall concept of the (im)possibility of antiracist

pedagogy for white educators in such a way that does not profess simple answers but rather engages complex and, at times, paradoxical questions.

Tensions and Uncertainties

All 10 participants expressed uncertainty about antiracist teaching. They questioned if what they were doing in their courses was indeed antiracism and indicated that they themselves could not name their pedagogy as such. For example, Cameron reflected, "I think I see [my teaching] as potentially antiracist. Honestly, I'm not sure. It's not like I went to some seminar and people were like, 'This is an antiracist thing to do.'" Molly, in reflecting on her own efforts at antiracist teaching, characterized such effort as a constant striving rather than an arrival point. She described perpetually thinking about ways that her teaching could become *more* antiracist, noting, "I think I'm gonna always hesitate to name 'antiracist' as an immovable fact."

Participants engaged concepts such as white guilt, white saviorism, performative antiracism, and white responsibility in exploring the tensions and uncertainties they experienced as white educators working within structurally racist institutions. Challenging the very conception of whether "antiracist educator" is a label he could or would apply to himself, Anthony shared,

> I struggle as a white person because I think antiracism can just be one more shield behind which we can hide. That's why I was even hesitant to respond [to the call for participants]. I'm like, can I call myself an antiracist educator? Do I want to call myself an antiracist educator? Would my students of color call me an antiracist educator? It's very complex, so I don't know . . . I think it can be one more bullshit thing. Well, I've done the antiracist training, check, done. I'm an

> antiracist educator, so therefore I can't be interrogated, right? Particularly when you're coming out of privilege, for me you never get a pass. If you're white, you just never get a pass and that's what you have to live with is that you never get a pass. That's one of the prices for the privilege is always, always being willing to be called out and to listen. Am I an antiracist educator? That's tricky. That's like saying, "Are you a good person?" Fuck that.

Participants consistently hesitated to name themselves antiracist teachers, suggesting that the question of whether or to what degree their teaching was antiracist would best be answered by students of color.

Participants also grappled with varying philosophical approaches to antiracism in higher education, questioning which belonged in their classrooms. For example, Jesse reflected,

> I would say an interesting divide, and this was a student affairs / academic divide as well as a kind of intra-academic divide is, are we training [said with emphasis] students to be antiracist? And I still struggle with that one. My sense is my space needs to be antiracist, but what can I say that I'm trying to do to or with students?

In this comment, Jesse was exploring his observation that co-curricular programs on his campus addressed racial justice through a "training" paradigm, and questioned if/how that paradigm fit in the context of a credit-bearing course. Further elaborating uncertainty about his own approach to antiracist teaching, Jesse shared,

> Can I say that I've moved somebody to be something? But I'm pretty lefty on a bunch of things. It works like climate change. I think every student in a class that's engaged with me on this new interest of storytelling and climate change

> ought to walk away not fucking debating climate change. But they can see what are the implications and how to deal with it. Same thing around race. We're not having a fucking debate about whether there's racism. We're going to talk about the ways that racism gets perpetuated. We're going to talk about how race gets defined and shaped and how it informs and affects all of us. And if we talk about that in terms of race, we're talking about racism. But can I say that I can count on, I'm making every student that walks in the door, wherever they're at, that the goal of learning is that they become antiracist? I'm just not comfortable defining that as an outcome I could measure, or have either the capacity or the chutzpah to say that I'm making happen. So I still struggle with that.

For Susan, a source of uncertainty was knowing whether to emphasize content and/or process in more fully incorporating antiracism into her course:

> That's a good question . . . What is antiracist teaching? I go back and forth. I know a lot of instructors who have been doing this a lot longer [than me] are including topics about antiracism in their class. I'm not sure if that's what I want to do. Do I want to teach them antiracist content in my class? Or do I want to change my teaching style, so that it is antiracist? Or both? I don't know. I don't know how much actual content to give, because my overarching theme in my class is always, "Question everything." But that's not enough. And I'm struggling with where do I put the antiracist content? Do I have everyone do their research on antiracist thinking? . . . So right now I'm figuring out if I do that, or if I just work on having them question everything in my class, including the structure of the class itself.

Another site of tension for multiple participants was performativity. In self-reflexive narrative, they pointed to and problematized actions that were motivated by a desire to be seen and perceived as a white antiracist educator. For example, Erin shared,

> I definitely have that internal struggle of how much of this . . . I'm confident in like, I want to be better for my students. It's not like I question that, but it's almost like if it feels like an easy fix or if it feels like an easy thing, then I get a little suspicious. If I'm putting a [poster] up on my wall, is it optics? Or are there things that maybe look like optics, but really are a way to signal to students? So part of my experiences have been trying to listen to students, read other things, do my own research, do internal self-reflection, so that I can figure out what are the things that I'm being told from students of color, from research by scholars of color, "This is helpful," versus the things that just seem right to me.

Erin expressed suspicion about actions that were purportedly antiracist and felt yet "easy":

> If it feels easy, then why does it feel easy for me to do that? It's not like that's necessarily a bad thing, but does that mean maybe there's a little bit of performative? Or maybe I know someone's going to see that, who's important, and be like, "Oh, Erin's got it." You know?

In this narrative, Erin problematized efforts at antiracist teaching that were motivated by a desire to be perceived as someone who "gets it." Optics and performativity were, for Erin, two elements of antiracist pedagogical efforts that necessitated interrogation and critical-reflexivity.

For Elliot, the critique of performativity extended beyond individual teaching actions and into a broader institutional context:

> From a larger structural position, I have deep ambivalence about how antiracism circulates, institutionally speaking. Sara Ahmed talks about the non-performativity of antiracism in institutional discourse. [My institution] has as part of its vision statement a commitment to antiracism. Like Sara Ahmed says, statements like that are oftentimes not only not doing what they say, but intentionally designed to not do what they say. While also helping white people feel really good about themselves. And so I think . . . even if in the classroom there is material stuff happening, that students are taking stuff away, the way that that also gets institutionalized is very toxic. Deeply problematic.

Elliot and Erin's narratives illustrate how some participants questioned and problematized performative gestures, their own as well as their institution's. As this section has demonstrated, participants experienced a variety of tensions and uncertainties in their efforts at antiracist teaching. They engaged concepts such as white guilt, white saviordism, performativity, and white responsibility in articulating their tensions and uncertainties. The preponderance in their narratives of complex questions and internal struggles, rather than clear and certain answers, points to the impossibility of providing a clear and concise response to the question, "What is antiracist teaching for white educators?"

De/re/centering Whiteness

The notion of centering whiteness as the object under study in order to make explicit and destabilize the often intentionally obscured machinations of white supremacy

is at the core of whiteness studies. Several participants spoke to ways they intentionally centered whiteness, usually their own, as an act of antiracist teaching. Avery, for example, elaborated on her rationale for bringing her whiteness explicitly into classroom discourse:

> Most students have been taught by white female teachers their whole lives . . . I'm hesitating because generalizations are dangerous, but it seems natural and normal, right, because that's the thing about whiteness. So by naming it [my whiteness] and then by talking about racism, colonization, Islamophobia, et cetera, I can put my white identity into more of a critical perspective in the classroom conversation as I'm also inviting students to do the same.

Anthony described a similar technique of drawing attention to his whiteness for pedagogical reasons:

> On day one I start my class like, "Let's look around this classroom. Let's count how many white men there are and why is one of those few white men the person at the front of the room?" . . . That's day one, like "Let's problematize this."

The move of explicitly naming one's whiteness cuts both ways; while white educators can role model the necessary skill of naming whiteness as a structural power formation using their own racialized embodiment as an example, the act of doing so positions whiteness at the center of classroom discourse. Antioppressive and antiracist pedagogues advocate for decentering dominant narratives in education. Refusing to center discourses of white supremacy that exist in disciplinary canons, epistemological and methodological conventions, and long-established grading practices is foundational to critical pedagogy. Even as white educators seek to decenter whiteness in their pedagogical conceptions and

teaching practices, the act of foregrounding whiteness in order to bring it under scrutiny necessarily recenters whiteness. Elliot articulated this dynamic:

> Oftentimes with antiracist teaching, there's a way that that discourse can still center white people. And especially enraged white students. If you think about all of the garbage that came out post-Trump, I mean there's all of these stupid movements on college campuses of, "Oh, well we really need to get back to working class white concerns." And so it's like, let's respond to white supremacy by centering white supremacists. And let's hear from them and let's talk about their feelings, as a way of dealing with white supremacy. And no, that's not the case. Even in a sort of a nominally antiracist framework, that's only going to recenter white supremacy. It can't not recenter white supremacy. And so, there's this notion of being attentive to differences, while also knowing that not all differences are equal. And, yeah, how to do that. And so one is to try and center—I mean if we're talking about students' experiences, try and give them space to allow them to name their experiences. And then use those as points of departure.

Elliot articulated an inherent tension: foregrounding resistant white students in antiracist teaching efforts necessarily centers whiteness, even while antiracist pedagogy calls for the decentering of whiteness. Extending his analysis, Elliot outlined the contradictory effect that striving to destabilize witnesses by foregrounding it ultimately reified it. He described this innate tension as characterizing whiteness studies itself:

> Whiteness studies, as a disciplinary or post-disciplinary formation, is really good at historicizing what historically had been so-called unmarked. But the flip side is that the very formation that is there to denaturalize, destabilize whiteness is also

> re-institutionalizing it. And so it, too, does this recentering work, the very thing that is claiming to decenter, to disrupt. So as part of that, obviously there's a sort of ever-emerging or ever-developing critical consciousness, historical understanding of whiteness, what whiteness is, how it has functioned legally, juridically, culturally, socially, whatever. But also then this sort of relationship, this thinking about how to teach it as that, while also trying not to continue to center it. Which is ambivalent, at best, or contradictory.

Elliot's narrative elucidated the simultaneous decentering and recentering of whiteness in whiteness studies as well as in his efforts to teach about whiteness as an element of antiracist pedagogy. This contradiction was not the only paradox that characterized participants' conceptions of and approaches to antiracist pedagogy. Next, constellation element three extends its exploration of the (im)possibility of antiracist pedagogy for white educators by engaging with a third and final theme: paradox.

Paradox

In addition to discussing if/how they explicitly engaged whiteness as a pedagogical strategy, several participants problematized their motivations and reflexively questioned underlying intentions in their commitment to antiracist pedagogy. Their narratives revealed an enduring tension: white educators' very motivation for and intention in pursuing antiracist pedagogy is shaped by white supremacy ideology. For example, when asked to share a time that she felt successful in her antiracist teaching efforts, Avery responded, "I hesitate sometimes to share validating feedback I've gotten from students of color because I feel sensitive to the way it kind of plays into my own self-image of myself as like, 'I'm a great antiracist educator.'" Avery elaborated,

> I think there's just some very well-earned suspicion of white folks who enter explicitly antiracist spaces with people of color for the ways that we're still kind of wrapped up in white guilt and dynamics of white supremacy that want to get validation and appreciation from people of color.

In this narrative, Avery reflexively identified the problematic nature of her desire to be seen as a "great antiracist educator" and indicated her effort to resist behaviors that contributed to such a self-image. In noting a "well-earned suspicion" of whites professing to do antiracism work, Avery used the pronoun "we" to describe validation-seeking behaviors of whites. Her narrative indicated a multi-layered critical reflexivity: Avery understood the paradox of white motivations for antiracism; acknowledged that she, too, was influenced by the dynamic; and described efforts to resist or disrupt validation-seeking behaviors in her antiracist teaching efforts.

Avery was not the only participant who noted a healthy suspicion of whites' antiracist efforts in educational contexts. Molly named a "trained naiveté" that whites engage in order to "forget" the structural nature of white supremacy, even in the midst of so-called diversity and social justice work in education:

> I just knew my deep discomfort with the system [of education] as I was watching it unfold . . . In the process of my dissertation writing and in my first faculty position, it just became too clear to me, too present to me, that everything that we were doing in the name of diversity and social justice work was forgetting to talk about the structure of white supremacy that made it all possible. And when I say forgetting, I don't actually mean forgetting. So I'll change my word. Whether you want to look at it as trained naiveté, and when I say trained, I mean the way that

> white supremacy works on us throughout our lives to make something look like innocence that's not innocence. Whether we look at it that way, or as an actual choice that white people make on a regular basis to avoid the difficult work of recognizing the racialization process that they've been through, it was evident to me that that was the reason that talking about loving and caring for a diverse group of students didn't take people anywhere.

Molly pointed to the limitations of antiracist teaching as conceptualized by white educators who failed to account for the structural nature white supremacy *and* their participation in it. She described white supremacist ideology as living and working through white educators' consciousness, even when they express a commitment to social justice and diversity in their teaching.

David also described a paradox of whites' efforts at antiracist teaching. He reflected on the danger of white educators who, in attempting to account for their complicity in upholding white supremacy, reify that very structure by positioning themselves as the solution to white supremacy:

> This notion of noblesse oblige. So you're born to power. You deserve it. But you then therefore have an obligation to then do something with it. But if anybody calls you on the fact that maybe it's not your role to do something—well, no, maybe you don't need to be the one—if anybody calls you on the fact that your voice in this conversation is not perhaps the most useful one, then getting upset because you feel like you have the obligation. "I was born to this privilege, I have to ride in on the white horse." So, you know, whites have created white supremacy. It benefits us. We slip back into it whenever we want. And we have

> an obligation, I feel, to correct for that. But we have a limited ability. Because we have a singular perspective. There are times we can do something, and oftentimes the main problem is we don't. But there are times when it's not the lean in moment, it's the lean out moment. Create the structure that provides for equity, and then not feel that simply because you've created the structure, you need to be—even if you're the architect, that doesn't mean you get to furnish the house. Right? So yeah, maybe you have the power to actually build—like in the pedagogical structure, I can build the class, right. But maybe my voice is not . . . I'm the coach on the side. I don't have to be the one that's . . . There are times where I'm like, "I want to deliver content, I want to talk!" Right? But there's times you just got to let others [talk].

David's articulation of whites' "singular perspective" captures a real sticking point in considering the (im)possibility of antiracist teaching for white educators. Because we work from within the contours of the white imaginary, there are certain ways of knowing and being that are beyond our comprehension. Even as white educators who commit with humility to continually and critically examining internalized white superiority and applying structural power analysis to their efforts at antiracist teaching, there are ontological limitations. So too, in my scholarly work of designing and conducting this research, are limits to what I can/will[6] "see" and "understand" because I

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[6] This construction is meant to recognize "ability" and "willingness" as distinct concepts while blurring the boundary that separates them. Marking the white imaginary as a deficit is integral to contextualizing this research; and yet, framing such a deficit as a lack of ability has the effect of protecting the white ego (i.e., "It's not my fault; I'm not choosing to 'not see' or to see through racist logics; it's unconscious bias.") Blurring the line between ability and willingness foregrounds the effects of an epistemology of ignorance (Mills, 1997) rather than the purported intentions of well-meaning whites.

am wholly enmeshed in the white imaginary. While white educators may be able to bump up against and strive to resist or defy the limits of our "singular perspective," such efforts will always be constrained by the limits of the white imaginary.

The narratives from David, Molly, and Avery reflect "white failings," or, perhaps, the limits of white educators' efforts at antiracist teaching. Acknowledging such limits does not have to represent a dead end for white educators committed to antiracism. In fact, an *embrace* of the paradox that white educators are always already limited in our capacity to enact antiracist teaching may be an effective strategy and a site of radical potential for pushing up against and working to destabilize white supremacy even as we collude with it. Binaristic thinking and either/or logics are characteristic of white supremacy culture (Jones & Okun, 2001). Resisting these overly simplistic conceptualizations creates in-between spaces; acknowledging the paradox and staying within it, rather than struggling against it, is one way that some participants spoke about their efforts at antiracist teaching.

Early in this chapter, participants' understanding of structural racism was discussed to illustrate the foundation on which their conceptions of antiracist teaching was built. The following narrative by Elliot was shared, which is revisited here as an example of paradox:

> I don't know that the university, structurally speaking, as it has existed historically and especially as it continues to exist in its neoliberal corporatized model, can be antiracist. I think it is structurally, foundationally racist. And so everything that it produces is racist, structurally speaking, which again, doesn't mean that it doesn't allow for lines of flight and open spaces and other things. But it's to say that when

> it gets reassembled, when it closes shop for the night, it comes back as that racist formation.

While the backdrop of this narrative was a structural understanding of higher education as foundationally racist and therefore only capable of reproducing racism, Elliot alluded to the possibility of "lines of flight and open spaces." These momentary disruptions do not represent an overcoming of structural racism, but rather spaces of resistance and refusal which are still subject to being reclaimed by the power formation of structural racism. Elliot both recognized the enduring and overarching power of structural white supremacy in education *and* suggested that moments of disruption are possible. He embraced the paradox to which he was pointing rather than working to neutralize it.

That was not the only instance of paradox in Elliot's narrative. Naming a site of tension in his personal conceptualization of antiracist teaching, Elliot reflected,

> I always have concerns about what it means for me to be teaching about race and racism to students of color. Like all of the complexities that emerge there. Because I have all kinds of analytic frameworks, but I have never lived my life as a Somali woman, right. And so to be able to hold space for all of those experiences, to perhaps provide some frameworks, but also to really understand that it's not me giving them anything, other than saying, "Hey, here might be some tools to help you work through life, to engage the world in the ways that you're seeking to engage it, in ways that might protect you a little more, from whatever violences you're confronting, that you can use as tools to protect yourself." So, it's that kind of ambivalence where I'm always curious about what

> antiracist teaching looks like for white folks or for me as the white person in front of the classroom.

The ambivalence Elliot described was born of the paradox he identified: even while he has analytical frameworks that may be useful in supporting students' understanding of structural racism, there are real limits to what Elliot, a white man, can provide students of color in terms of antiracist teaching. In responding with ambivalence, Elliot did not overtly resist or work to neutralize this paradox but rather stepped into it.

White educators who are eager to develop an antiracist teaching practice commonly express a desire for so-called best practices. Kumashiro, however, encourages educators to resist "common sense" or routine approaches to anti-oppressive education. Using queer theory to frame his conceptualization of anti-oppressive education, Kumashiro (2009) asserted that "no practice is always anti-oppressive" (p. 3) and called on educators to make room in their thinking for the paradox and tension inherent in striving to practice anti-oppressive teaching. Some participants' thinking aligned with Kumashiro's embrace of paradox, as evidenced in Elliot's narratives above. Another example of this embrace came from Erin, who reflected on her simultaneous desire for and skepticism of clear answers about what antiracist teaching is and how to do it: "On one hand, I know there's not answers and I don't want to get to where there are answers. But then I so want answers." Erin acknowledged and engaged the tension of desiring straightforward answers even while understanding that such answers were not possible nor helpful based on her conceptualization of antiracist teaching.

Anthony's narrative, too, indicated the presence of paradox in his efforts at antiracist pedagogy. Discussing the issue of power and authority in the classroom, Anthony reflected on the necessity of embracing a both/and approach:

> It's a weird thing because I have to acknowledge that I'm the person with the power in the classroom, because I am. I'm giving grades, and so that power dynamic, I cannot deconstruct it. That's why I have to acknowledge that, but at the same time I want to try to distribute it differently, that you're responsible for your own learning. We are responsible for what happens in this classroom. It's not just me. As with most things, it's living in contradiction. We just live in that contradiction. There's a power imbalance, and I'm trying to create power balance. It's both/and.

Avery also described experiencing an embodied contradiction in her antiracist teaching efforts:

> I think every day, in the language that comes out of my mouth or in small interactions in the classroom, I'm just always aware of how I'm constantly screwing up as a white person . . . [and] just worrying that that de-legitimizes my role as an antiracist teacher. But it also just illustrates how no matter how much we work on these things, it's in us.

Rather than suggesting she could subvert internalized white supremacy through self-work and critical consciousness-raising, Avery acknowledged that "it's in us." She elucidated a paradox of white antiracism: even in our best efforts to disrupt white supremacy as it lives in systems (like education), whites' thinking, feeling, and acting is influenced by white supremacy ideology.

In another illustration of paradox, Elliot described his contradictory feelings about using identity as a framework in which to ground course content about race and racism:

> Largely my framework is critical of identity political frameworks. But it's also wanting to understand that we can't not live in identities because of all of these structures. And also to hold the powerful work that identity does do for all of us and does for the students. And so it's to say that, yeah, identity is doing you violence, and it's so necessary. You have been produced as queer, you've been produced as Latino, right. These are social-structural. But it's not to say that you should suddenly smash that, right, because you can't not live that history.

Elliot simultaneously critiqued and embraced identity frameworks in his understanding of antiracist pedagogy. His comment, "Identity is doing you violence, and it's so necessary," was a clear illustration of the ways he embraces paradox in his efforts at antiracist teaching.

In different ways, Anthony, Erin, Avery, and Elliot each articulated an embrace of paradox. Far from looking for or suggesting "best practices" or simple answers, these participants illustrated a capacity to *step into* paradox as a necessary facet of their efforts at antiracist teaching. For Elliot, in particular, paradox was germane to his very conception of antiracist pedagogy. As illustrated in the following narrative, Elliot's embrace of queer theory positioned him to understand paradox as possibility, or an "unthinkable otherwise":

> My teaching as a praxis is queer, feminist, antiracist in its orientation. And so I'd have those three frameworks as the foundations or pillars of my teaching philosophy. All of those in some ways orient to notions of antioppressive

> pedagogy, or trying to do antioppressive work in the context of a classroom. *Which I think is itself, an open question. I don't know if it's actually necessarily possible, but [an] open question*. And certainly I don't know if I do it, but that's generally how I frame what would be called a teaching philosophy . . . My queer identity or modes of identification are pretty central, pretty structural, pretty fundamental to just how I exist in the world. And I think that it's always about relations to norms, and disruptions of those norms are central to my antiracist praxis. *I think one of the things that queer, as a critical concept and as a radical political concept does, is, in its best moments, marks the potential or the space of an otherwise, an unthinkable otherwise*. And so there's a certain kind of utopic space there that I always carry with me no matter how jaded and broken down I get. (emphasis added)

Paradox as a site of "an unthinkable otherwise" may be a much-needed and generative contribution that queer theory can offer white educators striving to practice antiracist pedagogy. The scholarship of Kevin Kumashiro links queer theory and anti-oppressive education conceptually; the insights generated in this analysis link them empirically. Each of the participants who articulated an embrace of paradox in their conceptions of antiracist teaching claimed queer subjectivity in one way or another. As white educators collectively continue to grapple with the (im)possibility of antiracist teaching in structurally racist formal education contexts, it's possible that queer theory and queer white educators can offer generative disruption to dominant discourses and practices.

Constellation element three has explored the (im)possibility of antiracist pedagogy for white educators, pointing to various sites of tension and paradox. Critically considering the limits of the white imaginary is an integral element in this inquiry about white educators' efforts at antiracist teaching. This analysis has demonstrated that white educators can, and perhaps should, resist the urge to seek simple answers or neutralize enduring tensions. Through asking complex questions, acknowledging with humility the limits of the white imaginary, and embracing paradox, white educators may be better equipped to create fleeting disruptions, or moments of rupture, in the foundationally and structurally racist system of higher education.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the first constellation of insights generated from my study. Exploring the conceptualizations, approaches, and struggles of 10 white instructors committed to antiracist pedagogy, the constellation illuminates revelatory patterns and tensions. It also highlights the need for deeper exploration and understanding. Each of the following three chapters outlines a constellation of insights generated from the second phase of my study, a critical ethnographic case study. My collaborator in the case study was Erin, one of the white instructors whom I interviewed in phase one. Our work together focused on Erin's antiracist pedagogical efforts in her first-year writing course, in which I was a participant-observer for one semester. The depth of analysis which informed the following three chapters adds complexity, nuance, and specificity to the insights conveyed thus far. Rich data gathered during the extended case study illustrate a multiplicity of factors and dynamics that shaped the instructor's efforts at antiracist pedagogy and students' experience of those efforts. Chapters Five, Six, and Seven further

explore the (im)possibility of antiracist pedagogy for white educators through considering the effects of the classroom environment, the instructor's positionality and approach, and students' positionalities and experiences.

CHAPTER FIVE: DEEP DIVE: CONTEXTUALIZING AND TRACING ONE WHITE INSTRUCTOR'S APPROACH TO ANTIRACIST PEDAGOGY

The second chapter of analysis pivots away from a broad exploration of white educators' conceptualizations of and efforts at antiracist teaching toward a narrow and deep consideration of one instructor's experience. Ethnographic methods were utilized to gather data in this case study of a single postsecondary course designed and taught by Erin, one of the instructors who participated in an interview during the first phase of data collection. This chapter contextualizes and traces[7] Erin's understanding of and approach to antiracist pedagogy. It begins with an introduction of Erin as my collaborator in the ethnographic case study. I present a portrait of Erin to capture her thinking and disposition regarding teaching generally and antiracist pedagogy specifically prior to our ethnographic work together. All quotations contained in the portrait come from Erin's interview on April 3, 2019, as a participant in the first phase of data collection. Following the portrait, this chapter traces Erin's thinking (conceptions, motivation, struggles) and doing (classroom teaching actions, as well as efforts extended beyond her classroom) in relation to her expressed commitment to antiracist pedagogy. The tracing was developed by analyzing multiple ethnographic data sources including interviews, participant-observation, ongoing email exchange with Erin, and documents related to her course. (Refer to Chapter Three for a full description of data collection methods for the ethnographic case study phase of this research.) Following the contextualization and tracing offered in this chapter, the next chapter will explore three core themes that

[7] In my research, tracing names an analytical process utilized to bring shape to the contours of a phenomenon (in this case, antiracist pedagogy).

characterize and complicate Erin's approach to antiracist pedagogy. After that, a final chapter of analysis will pivot to exploring how students in Erin's course experienced her approach to antiracist teaching.

Portrait

Erin's office is tucked away in a maze of narrow corridors in an old, brick building on the edge of the quad. She is an associate professor in the English department at Oakdale University, a teaching-focused institution located in Midwest State. Erin appreciates the small school feel of Oakdale. It was during her own undergrad experience studying English at a small college that she became interested in teaching. Immersed in her love of literature and realizing that she could teach college students rather than children, she thought, "Of course I want to do [this] my whole life!" One of Erin's English professors introduced her to critical race theory and postcolonial theory in a course on Black Transatlantic women writers, which has continued to shape Erin's scholarly interests and paradigmatic worldview.

Not all of Erin's experiences at her alma mater were positive. Her junior year, Erin came out as queer. She saw a different side of the conservative evangelical Christian college, which had a student code of conduct that explicitly forbade homosexuality. Erin's struggle as a queer student at the college influences her approach to teaching. "It was not a good experience . . . the way in which I got my education ended up being damaging to me," Erin acknowledges in a matter-of-fact yet solemn tone. Thinking aloud, she wonders about "what could have been if the conditions had been different and I felt like I could have brought my whole self to the classroom and engage in that way." Illustrating the impact of her undergrad experience on her teaching philosophy, Erin asks

herself, “How do I be the kind of teacher and support students in the way that I was not supported?”

Erin’s experience of marginalization as an undergrad deeply informs her teaching philosophy, which has evolved with time and experience since completion of her PhD in Literary Studies. She teaches both writing and literature courses at Oakdale, noting with a laugh that she has “a foot in both camps” of the composition rhetoric / literature divide in English. In addition to instructional experience, Erin has worked in collegiate writing centers. She expresses a particular emphasis on helping students find or strengthen their voice through writing, and fostering confidence and a sense of agency that positions writing as a tool for achieving their goals. For Erin, a critical component of this approach to teaching writing is accounting for and disrupting the power structures—white supremacy, patriarchy, and colonialism—that shape writing conventions and standards and determine the criteria for “good” writing.

At the outset of this project, Erin was finishing her third year of teaching at Oakdale University. She had just compiled materials for her third year review and was reflecting on how her teaching philosophy had evolved since she applied for the faculty position at Oakdale. “It’s in flux,” Erin replied with a laugh when asked to describe her teaching philosophy. Upon starting as an Oakdale faculty member, Erin focused her teaching on “disrupting expectations [and] revealing underlying paradigms” through literature, with an emphasis on “diverse texts” and “including voices.” Erin articulates that her initial teaching philosophy was to “bring [diverse] voices to the table and see what happens” with the hope that students would come to understand things they were not familiar with. Her philosophy has evolved in her three years at Oakdale. She no

longer understands "representation" as the sole or even primary focus of her approach, a shift which can be characterized as moving from thinking about "what" to teach toward focusing on "how" to teach. At the start of this project, she was much more interested in questions of *how* learning that is liberatory and encourages student agency might occur. She elaborated, "[Even if] you have all the voices at the table, there still needs to be attention to, 'But who is still actually speaking and whose space is that table?'"

Erin's teaching philosophy is informed by Freirean notions of liberatory pedagogy and bell hooks' conceptualization of education as the practice of freedom. She brings to her teaching an explicit commitment to antiracism. Foundational to Erin's conception of antiracist pedagogy at the start of our work together was an understanding of structural racism and the ability to articulate how it operates within education. She noted, "Higher education is built on white supremacist systems and assumptions." Her intellectual interest in antiracism was sparked as an undergrad when she learned about critical race theory and postcolonial theory in a literature course. This theoretical understanding became more embodied and self-reflexive following a highly-charged incident at Oakdale regarding a white professor's utterance of a racial epithet in the classroom. Erin remembers the experience as a turning point in her thinking about white supremacy in higher education and her role in disrupting it. She attributes her deepened awareness and sense of urgency to students' of color organizing and advocacy following the incident. Erin began to question what she had previously understood as sufficient efforts toward antiracism in her teaching, and sensed that other white faculty were doing the same. Narrating her thinking in response to the incident and students' demands that Oakdale address institutional racism, Erin reflected, "What do we do now? What does it mean

now, for us? From white faculty, and I felt this too, there's like, 'Oh, [this is] what we thought we were doing.' . . . [But now] this means that we have to challenge ourselves. And we should've been doing it all along."

Self-reflexivity, humility, and a desire for ongoing growth characterize the ways that Erin speaks about her commitment to antiracist teaching. She readily reflects on previous perspectives and practices that she recognizes now weren't sufficient. Erin shared, "If you had asked me even last year, 'Do you have an antiracist pedagogy?' I probably would have been like, 'Yeah.'" But she recognizes that her previous approach did not adequately challenge underlying structures of white supremacy in education. Retrospectively articulating an earlier teaching philosophy, Erin reflects, "I want you to understand this Other [through literature] . . . but I wasn't always framing it as . . . not to challenge you, but to enrich you." Erin identifies how her former "cultural tourism" approach centered the learning of white students and problematizes her previous assumptions about the educational needs of students of color: "I didn't even realize I was doing this division, but when I thought about my students of color—and a lot of what I was thinking about I got from different narratives about teaching—I think there was a piece of like, affirming you belong here. Like, 'Oh, look, here are texts that are about your experience, though I don't know what your experience is, but I'm going to just assume.'"

Erin notes that she still has a lot to learn and unlearn and is focused on identifying in her teaching philosophy "the deeper assumptions and deeper things that I need to root out and examine." Central to this effort is skepticism about her own ideas and motives related to antiracist teaching. As she reads and listens and self-reflects to deepen her

understanding of racism and white supremacy, Erin is working to distinguish between "the things that are actually coming . . . from students of color [and] from research by scholars of color . . . versus the things that just seem to me like, 'Oh this will help, this will make it better.'" She problematizes her desire and motivation for pursuing antiracist teaching. Thinking aloud, Erin reflects, "One of the things I struggle with is not wanting to be about optics. Not wanting to be about, 'Oh look, I'm one of the good ones.'" In articulating this tension, Erin gestures to a framed poster on her office wall which proclaims, "Decolonize Your Syllabus." She both affirms her commitment to explicitly and symbolically embracing the sentiment *and* questions the role optics play in her decision to display the poster.

Erin's thinking on antiracist pedagogy is evolving. She describes her commitment to antiracist teaching as taking shape through three avenues in the classroom: "policies, assessment, and curriculum." The shift away from focusing on "representation" in content toward questioning and challenging the operation of white supremacy in all elements of formal education mirrors Erin's deepening analysis of structural racism. Additionally, Erin insists that antiracism extend beyond her individual classroom into the broader institutional context. She engages the concept of "risk" in thinking aloud about her role in challenging institutional racism as a white, female, pre-tenure faculty member at Oakdale. Erin problematizes a flat notion of risk that does not account for the differential power and protection that white faculty and faculty of color experience in higher education. When deciding how to respond to enactments of institutional racism at Oakdale, Erin is compelled to move toward risk and avoid actions that feel easy. She describes her reflective process when considering an action: "Am I going like this to it?

[makes a nervous, unsure face] Then maybe that is the thing [to do]. And if it feels easy, then why does it feel easy for me to do that? . . . Does that mean maybe there's a little bit of performative?"

Erin's passion for teaching and learning is palpable. She shares stories about poignant moments from past classes with great detail, tracing the contours of her own learning with and from students. Her sense-making takes shape in reflection and question-posing and story-telling. She longs deeply that students feel seen and validated in her courses, and that they develop a sense of agency and confidence in themselves as scholars. With humility, compassion, and desire for justice, she seeks to foster liberatory learning by disrupting structural oppression in higher education.

Constellation Element One: Antiracist Teaching by Whom?

Meaningful analysis of any educator's pedagogical thinking and doing necessitates consideration of their positionality. Building on the portrait above, this constellation element elaborates the standpoints and subjectivities that contextualized Erin's antiracist teaching commitments and efforts. First, Erin's grounding in critical pedagogy informed by queer and feminist standpoints will be outlined. Following that, this section will address Erin's antiracist commitment in light of her white subjectivity.

Pedagogical and Theoretical Underpinnings

Evident in both Erin's narrative about her teaching philosophy and in her teaching actions was the influence of critical pedagogy. In our first recorded conversation during the initial phase of data collection (April 3, 2019), Erin referenced the work of Paulo Freire with detail and employed the Freirean concept of education as liberatory in conveying her teaching philosophy. Throughout the ethnographic case study in phase two

of data collection, Erin revisited concepts central to critical pedagogy in our ongoing recorded conversations, including: 1) critique of structural oppression; 2) understanding that formalized education is embedded within interlocking structures of oppression; 3) commitment to cultivating critical consciousness among students; 4) valuing the knowledge and experiences students bring into the classroom; 5) acknowledging and working to subvert the teacher/student power dynamic built into formalized education; and 6) centering liberatory praxis in her pedagogical aims. She did not position her teaching practice as exemplifying these elements of critical pedagogy, but rather continually referred to them as goals she was striving toward. On many occasions in our conversations, Erin discussed internal struggles or points of tension related to her efforts at implementing critical pedagogy. In this way, Erin indicated her commitment to moving toward these pedagogical ideals without conceptualizing them as arrival points she would some day master. Beyond talking about critical pedagogy as foundational to her teaching, Erin designed and facilitated the writing course in ways that demonstrated the influence of critical pedagogy. An excerpt of her course description calls on multiple critical pedagogical concepts:

> Writing has the power to change you, and you have the power to change the world with your writing. In this class, you will read, think, and write critically about yourself as a responsible citizen who can use your voice to make things happen. Our readings will address social inequities related to race, gender, sexuality, the environment, and higher education, but you will have the freedom to write about any social justice issues you choose and opportunities to write for real-world audiences. (course syllabus, Fall 2019)

One of the course learning outcomes indicated that students would "write confidently and effectively in **[their] own voice**, both learning and critiquing normative models of 'good writing' (including argumentation, organization, and conventions of writing) while challenging white language supremacy" (course syllabus, Fall 2019, emphasis in original). A second learning outcome articulated that students would:

> reflect on the power of voice and **understand the sociopolitical factors that uplift some voices and silence others**; in the process, I hope you will come to see yourself as a citizen who has both the responsibility and capability to use **individual and collective** writing to **make things happen** in the world. (course syllabus, Fall 2019, emphases in original)

Content Erin utilized in the course also demonstrated the influence of critical pedagogy in her teaching; students read an essay from bell hooks' *Teaching to Transgress* in week two of the course and a selection from Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in week three.

Queer and feminist theory also informed Erin's teaching. As noted in the portrait above, Erin's commitment to antiracist pedagogy was motivated in part by the negative experiences she had coming out as a queer woman during her undergraduate studies at a conservative Evangelical college. Her queer subjectivity and experiences of homophobia helped foster her initial understanding that power operates structurally and instilled in her an embodied understanding of the effects of feeling marginalized in educational contexts. In our first interview, Erin described how she initially developed an analysis of structural oppression: "I came to that through this queer lens, that kind of identity perspective . . . and I thought I recognized how something similar was happening with race, that there's these inequalities" (April 3, 2019). Without conflating structural racism and structural

homophobia, Erin indicated that her queer subjectivity motivated her toward antiracist teaching in part because she wanted students to feel fully humanized in ways that she did not (April 3, 2019). An embrace of queer theory was evident in various teaching actions Erin employed. She demonstrated an understanding of transgender and nonbinary subjectivities in her course policies, noting,

> I will gladly honor your request to address you by your correct name and/or pronouns, no matter what my records say. I will give you the opportunity on the first day of class to share those with me privately (on an information sheet I will have you fill out) and share them with the class if you wish to do so. (course syllabus, Fall 2019)

Erin named her queer identity during the first class session as part of an introduction exercise (fieldnotes, September 5, 2019) and referred multiple times during the semester to her queerness. She included readings that addressed sexuality and gender identity as critical elements of an intersectional understanding of structural oppression, including Audre Lorde's (1984/2007) well-known essay "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference" and an essay by Andrea Jenkins entitled "The Price We Pay" which addressed the intersections of white supremacy, misogyny, homophobia, and transphobia.

Feminist theory also informed Erin's teaching philosophy. In our ongoing recorded conversations, she referenced the work of various feminist and womanist scholars including Sara Ahmed, bell hooks, and Audre Lorde. Her selection of course content demonstrated an effort to consistently center the work of women scholars: the two required texts for the course were both composed by women and multiple assigned

readings or videos engaged explicitly with gender as a site of power. Erin practiced feminist-informed teaching techniques throughout the course. Students sat in a circle, which Erin asked me to join as a participant/observer in the classroom environment. Erin regularly joined the circle when the class engaged in large group discussion. She utilized discussion-based learning in nearly every class session, invited students to share ideas and experiences from their lived realities, and demonstrated consistent efforts at active listening and validating students' contributions.

As this section has illustrated, critical pedagogy, queer theory, and feminist theory were foundational to Erin's teaching philosophy. Identifying the theoretical underpinnings of her pedagogy works to contextualize Erin's approach to antiracist teaching and elaborate the first constellation element, which explores the question, "antiracist teaching by whom?" Next, this constellation element will address Erin's antiracist commitment as contextualized by her white subjectivity.

Antiracist Commitment and White Subjectivity

The positionality and subjectivities of educators foundationally shape how they conceptualize and practice pedagogies. This research focuses specifically on antiracist pedagogy as imagined and enacted by white educators with the assumption that white racial subjectivity significantly impacts an educator's understanding of, motivation for, and practice of antiracist teaching. Erin's white subjectivity contextualizes her commitment to and efforts at antiracist teaching; inadequate consideration of the relationship between racial subjectivity and antiracist pedagogy perpetuates the erroneous notion that antiracist teaching is an objective practice that can be utilized identically by all educators in all contexts. Rather, Erin's efforts at antiracist teaching are foundationally

influenced by the ways she conceptualizes her relationship to whiteness and navigates her relationship to white supremacy. In particular, there are three dispositional and behavioral characteristics related to whiteness that were significant in Erin's commitment to antiracist pedagogy: white humility, white reflexivity, and white responsibility-taking.

White Humility

Disrupting typical power relations of white supremacy and teacherness, Erin repeatedly positioned herself as "not expert." As a teaching practice, this behavior was particularly pronounced in relation to issues of race and racism. In one example of this behavior, Erin made the following statement about Afrofuturism as she was introducing the genre in class: "For someone who is white like me, [Afrofuturism] may seem new but it is not" (fieldnotes, October 8, 2019). Erin went on to elaborate that Black authors have been writing this genre for many years and showed a video of Nigerian-American author Nnedi Okorafor, whose novel *Binti* the students would shortly read, discuss her understanding and embrace of Afrofuturism. Erin did not re-state, interpret, appropriate, or otherwise qualify Okorafor's knowledge after showing the video. In this teaching sequence, Erin acknowledged the limiting influence of whiteness in her understanding of Afrofuturism rather than practicing white ontological expansiveness. According to Sullivan (2006), white ontological expansiveness describes the tendency for white people to "act and think as if all spaces—whether geographical, psychical, linguistic, economic, spiritual, bodily, or otherwise—are or should be available for them to move in and out of as they wish" (p. 10).

A second manifestation of humility evident in Erin's disposition was low defensiveness to receiving critical feedback regarding her efforts at antiracist teaching.

Throughout the class, Erin repeatedly invited students to correct or challenge her. In the following example from the first day of class, Erin was introducing the course objectives and named her commitment to antiracist teaching. She put up a slide titled "What is antiracist pedagogy?" and discussed what that meant to her, naming clearly that she understood antiracism as an action. Erin went on to name her whiteness in relation to this commitment, indicating that she was "gonna screw up" and inviting students to "please, please, please correct" her when she did. Erin said, "I'm doing this [antiracist pedagogy], but I'm not right all the time. I'm white so that's just not gonna happen" (fieldnotes, September 5, 2019).

A third illustration of humility was Erin's refusal of white (teacher) saviorism. Erin did not imagine students of color through a deficit lens and in need of rescue by a white, kind, caring educator. Rather, she understood as her primary role assisting all students, and especially those most impacted by structural racism, to

> become more interested in how **writing can enable** you to express your ideas, values, and arguments and can help you formulate new ideas and knowledge, thus gaining confidence and hopefully a little bit of passion for the role that writing can play in your life. (course syllabus, Fall 2019, emphasis in original)

Erin persistently framed writing as a tool for creating change and evoked the concept of "agency" in articulating her desire for students' learning in the course. She sought to make clear the ways that white supremacy shapes widely-embraced literacy practices and writing conventions, and to dispel the notion that there are "good" writers and "bad" writers. Far from understanding herself as a white (teacher) savior, Erin believed in and affirmed the strength and knowledge students of color already possessed and exhibited.

Further evidence of Erin's refusal of white (teacher) saviorism in her approach to antiracist pedagogy was illustrated in one of our final recorded conversations. We met immediately after the final class session, and I asked Erin the same question I had posed during our conversation shortly before the course began: What tensions or uncertainties are you experiencing about your efforts at antiracist teaching? Erin's response demonstrated her ability to both recognize and problematize white savior ideology in her own thinking. She noted, "I am feeling in me that desire to want to have evidence that every single student was like, 'Thank you, Erin, for teaching this way. It was so affirming of my identity [sarcasm].' [laughter] Knowing that's about me" (interview, December 12, 2019). As this and previous examples illustrate, Erin worked to refuse the ego-inflating, self-aggrandizing, so-called benevolent racism characteristic of white (teacher) saviorism.

White Reflexivity

The second behavioral and dispositional characteristic related to whiteness that significantly informed Erin's commitment to antiracist pedagogy is white reflexivity. Over the eleven-month period when I engaged with Erin through interviews, classroom observations, email exchanges, and informal conversation following class sessions, Erin demonstrated a consistent habit of critical reflection and self-awareness related to her white subjectivity. In our first interview during phase one of the study, Erin articulated a clear understanding that white supremacy is structural and that she is positioned to access and leverage power and privilege because of her whiteness (April 3, 2019). Beyond understanding and naming this dynamic, Erin engaged in ongoing interrogation of her thoughts and behaviors through the lens of structural racism. In our conversations, she articulated internal struggles related to race and whiteness and processed specific

teaching moments and student interactions, retrospectively interrogating her thinking and her behavior through a lens of racialized power dynamics. In the following illustration of this behavior, Erin narrated a previous semester classroom experience and shared her thinking both during and after the class session. Her Women and Fiction course had read Louise Erdrich's novel *The Roundhouse*, which includes a Native woman's experience of sexual assault as told by the woman's son. The class was discussing Erdrich's decision to have the son narrate the story. Erin elaborated:

> I was like, "Okay, if we're talking about him trying to understand and come to terms with her story and figure out how to interpret what happened to her, how to read her, and we're saying that his identity matters in his ability to understand and to read and to respond to what happened to her, then as readers, how does our identity, how does what we bring as readers to a text also inform that?" And so because that specific part [of the book] was about gender, that's where we started . . . then we started talking about how . . . there's [a] significantly higher percentage of Native American women [who] have experienced sexual violence, have experienced rape, and the book goes into that. We were talking about that too, like, "Okay, where does race come in, and identity and culture?" Then I tried to do the same thing and say, "So then how does that matter?" . . . some of them are students of color, but then it's a book about Native Americans, and so there are these interesting things that are happening and I'm trying to figure out how do I both challenge my white students to think about their whiteness as something that influences their reading while also trying to not to say, "As readers, we [said with emphasis] don't understand this." Because that's not true for all my students.

> And so I'm doing this verbal dance and I'm trying to articulate and I'm trying to name that as much as possible, to say, "This is hard for me to do." I'm trying to name that . . . and in the end [of class] I was [thinking], "Yeah, that was good. At least we kind of were trying to get there." And I got in my car and I was driving home at night and I was just like, "My students of color weren't talking . . . damnit." (April 3, 2019)

Erin articulated multiple layers of reflexive practice in narrating this experience: during her facilitation of class discussion; after class had ended as she questioned her initial satisfaction with how the discussion went; and months later when she relayed this story to me as an example of struggle in her efforts at antiracist teaching. In addition to practicing self-reflexivity about her teaching actions, Erin on multiple occasions used the practice to trouble her very motivation for pursuing antiracism. She pointed to the queer theory concept of performativity to question if and how her actions were motivated by optics, or the desire to be seen as a "good white" and receive accolades from people of color for her antiracist commitment. In so doing, Erin referenced Ahmed's (2004) declaration of the non-performativity of antiracism. Rather than concluding that her efforts at antiracist action were or were not performative, in her reflexive practice Erin engaged a both/and framework to acknowledge that performativity was very likely always an influence on some level in her thinking and doing *while* consistently working to identify and disrupt the performative impulse.

White Responsibility-Taking

The third behavioral and dispositional characteristic related to whiteness that informed Erin's commitment to antiracist pedagogy is white responsibility-taking. In her

continued pursuit to deepen her understanding of white supremacy, Erin resisted getting stuck in shame and guilt traps even while acknowledging ways that she had enacted and continued to enact racism (interview, September 26, 2019). She expected that her efforts to practice antiracist pedagogy would be uncomfortable, noting her skepticism of feel-good tactics: "If it feels like an easy fix or if it feels like an easy thing, then I get a little suspicious" (interview, April 3, 2019). Erin assumed that she would make mistakes in her efforts at antiracist teaching and invited students to correct and disagree with her (fieldnotes, September 5, 2019). Importantly, Erin also acknowledged and worked to correct missteps.

Another manifestation of white responsibility-taking can be seen in the ways that Erin's commitment to antiracism extended beyond her classes and into the larger institution. As a pre-tenure associate professor, she assumed some degree of risk in taking actions such as: challenging departmental practices for evaluating "good writing" as part of placing incoming students in various levels of writing courses; speaking up at faculty meetings to challenge institutional racism; and co-writing an open letter in the campus newspaper refuting the claim that a professor's use of a racial epithet in class was protected by academic freedom. Notably, Erin understood that the risk she assumed as a pre-tenure queer woman faculty member was mediated by her whiteness. White responsibility-taking asks white people, "What are you willing to put on the line to fight for racial justice?" Rather than focusing on her marginalized subjectivities and experiences of oppression as a reason for avoiding risk, Erin understood risk-taking as an element of her commitment to antiracist pedagogy within and beyond the realm of her courses.

The first constellation element of Chapter Five has illuminated the centrality of the question, "antiracist teaching by whom?" Careful consideration of Erin's philosophical foundations and subjectivities necessarily contextualizes her antiracist teaching efforts. Erin's teaching was informed by critical pedagogy, queer theory, and feminism, and her commitment to antiracism was shaped by her white subjectivity. Next, constellation element two will trace the shape of antiracist pedagogy as it was imagined and enacted by Erin during this ethnographic case study. In my research, tracing names an analytical process utilized to bring shape to the contours of a phenomenon (in this case, antiracist teaching).

Constellation Element Two: Tracing An Antiracist Pedagogy

Continuing the chapter's consideration of one educator's antiracist pedagogical efforts, this section traces Erin's conceptualizations and enactments of antiracist teaching. The tracing is based on multiple sources of ethnographic data: participant-observation in the course, including reading and watching assigned course materials and participating in class activities and discussions; ongoing formal (recorded) conversations with Erin; ongoing informal (unrecorded) conversations with Erin after class; ongoing email exchanges with Erin; and review of various relevant documents. My analysis indicates that Erin *conceptualized antiracist pedagogy expansively, integrated antiracist pedagogy broadly, and enacted antiracist pedagogy consistently*. This tracing fleshes out that claim by detailing three elements of Erin's antiracist pedagogical efforts: content (the "what"); classroom pedagogy (the "how"); and institutional efforts (beyond-classroom enactments). In offering this tracing, I am not attempting to share a comprehensive depiction of Erin's antiracist teaching efforts; there were many conceptualizations and

teaching behaviors revealed through my analysis which are not addressed here. Neither am I suggesting that Erin's thinking and doing related to antiracist pedagogy is "the correct" approach; as conveyed in the previous chapter, white educators' efforts at antiracist teaching are rife with paradox. Gestures toward so-called best practices are reductionist and fail to account for context. Tracing Erin's approach to antiracist pedagogy is not intended to assert that antiracist teaching can be defined as one practice or another; rather, offering this tracing is intended to adequately describe and contextualize one educator's approach.

Content: The "What"

The summer following our initial interview in phase one of data collection, Erin redesigned her writing course with an emphasis on antiracist pedagogy. As part of that effort, she recognized the necessity of establishing a foundation in the first few weeks of the course which focused on cultivating or strengthening students' critical consciousness. In particular, early course content addressed the ways that structural oppression operates in society broadly, and more specifically the ways it shapes literacy practices in the United States. For example, on the first day of class Erin showed a video of Dr. Jamila Lyiscott performing the spoken word piece "3 Ways to Speak English" (fieldnotes, September 5, 2019). In the piece, Lyiscott upended the notion that so-called non-standard forms of English are inferior and framed her ability to adeptly codeswitch among three Englishes as an asset and strategy for resisting structural racism. Additionally, three of the first readings Erin assigned to students explored how so-called standard practices of English are manifestations of structural racism that harm communities of color through thinly veiled white supremacy. Those assigned readings included bell hooks' essay

"Teaching New Worlds/New Words," Amy Tan's essay "Mother Tongue," and Vershawn Ashanti Young's essay, "Should Writers Use They Own English?" Erin assigned reading early in the course that spoke to structural oppression more broadly, such as work by Paulo Freire and Audre Lorde. In the second half of the term, students watched the documentary *Jim Crow of the North*, which overviewed the history of racial covenants in real estate transactions. Erin's selection of course content that depicted the structural nature of racism intended to communicate to students the importance of questions of power, race, and racism, both specific to the practice of writing and beyond that realm.

In addition to creating a foundation that emphasized the structural nature of racism and its influence on literacy practices, Erin's choices about content—the "what" to teach—centered work by scholars of color. While many educators seek to "diversify" their course content by adding a few token readings by scholars of color, Erin's selection of course content went beyond tokenism and overtly challenged the oft unquestioned centrality of white knowledge in most academic disciplines. The majority (15 of 18) of assigned books, chapters, essays, and videos in Erin's syllabus were works by scholars of color. The way that Erin shared work by scholars of color was also noteworthy; she positioned the scholars' knowledge as valid and important by letting it stand on its own, and she did not appropriate it. Erin did not re-interpret or otherwise qualify content by scholars of color in ways that (re)centered the white gaze. For example, Erin did not make statements like, "What Lorde is trying to say here is . . ." Nor did Erin appropriate the knowledge of scholars of color by presenting their work as if the ideas were her own or as if she deserved credit for "discovering" the work. On the contrary, Erin pointed out

her *lack* of knowledge comparative to referenced works by scholars of color. For example, after students viewed the spoken word piece "3 Ways to Speak English," Erin stated that she does not speak two of the three languages Lyiscott mentions (fieldnotes, September 5, 2019).

A consideration of course content includes not only texts, but also assignments that guide students' deeper engagement with those materials. Language from Erin's course syllabus demonstrates the iteration between texts and assignments, as well as provides an overview of the assignment structure in the writing course:

> The first few weeks of the course will be devoted to the idea of "undoing the silence." During this time, you will read essays and watch videos that engage with writing, language, power, privilege, and race; you will also do a lot of freewriting. After that, you will complete five different writing assignments: a literacy narrative, cultural analysis blog, collaborative editorial (written in a group), community writing project, and grant proposal. Each of these assignments will help you develop a different "tool for social change writing." . . . As you complete these papers, you will read and respond to writing, both fiction and nonfiction, on specific social justice issues (especially race, gender, sexuality, the environment, and higher education). (course syllabus, Fall 2019)

In addition to these papers, students were assigned 14 Reading Journals (reflective writing prompts responding to assigned texts) and daily in-class activities or writing reflections. They were also expected to participate in five peer workshops throughout the semester and provide feedback on two classmates' drafts in each workshop. The culminating assignment was a Final Portfolio, which included revised versions of three

out of the five writing assignments (selected by the student), a writer's statement, and a written reflection on their grade in the course (Erin's approach to grading will be elaborated in a subsequent section of constellation element two).

The structure, format, and focus of assignments in Erin's class extended the emphasis on interrogating structural oppression that was evident in the texts she selected. Erin consistently invited students to write about issues of social justice, identity, and/or power in their five main writing assignments, but did not require them to do so. For example, while providing verbal feedback to the whole class about their drafts of the first assigned essay, Erin reminded students, "You can write about whatever you want, I'm not giving you a grade [based on what you say]," and asked students "What do you want to say?" She invited them to think about "big ideas" and displayed a slide that listed a number of themes she had noticed across students' draft essays: "culture, privilege, voice, education, family, history, race, gender, immigration, power, communication." Erin invited students to dive deeper into these themes, or not, depending on what it was they wanted their writing to do (fieldnotes, October 8, 2019). This teaching action early in the term illustrates the extension of Erin's focus on structural oppression in selecting texts into her approach in designing assignments. In one of our final conversations reflecting back on the semester, I asked Erin how often students' writing addressed race, racism, or other identity- or power-related issues, given that they were invited but not expected to write about such topics. Erin indicated that students in this class wrote about such topics more than in any previous section of the writing course she had instructed (interview, December 19, 2019). Analyzing the content decisions (both selected texts and assignments) Erin made in redesigning her writing course with an antiracist pedagogical

imperative helps bring into focus her conceptualization and enactment of antiracist teaching.

Pedagogy: The "How"

As explored in Chapter Four, white educators committed to antiracism grapple just as much (if not more) with "how" questions of antiracist teaching (i.e., pedagogical processes) than "what" questions (i.e., content). These categories, of course, are not mutually exclusive but rather contingent; distinguishing them in the analysis chapters of this dissertation is a useful but imperfect organizational tool. Constellation element two further traces Erin's antiracist teaching efforts by exploring specific pedagogical moves she made in (re)designing and instructing her writing course. The first three pedagogical interventions Erin employed relate to her discipline (English broadly, composition specifically) and the course topic (writing instruction); the final pedagogical intervention connects more generally to course instruction.

Disrupting Disciplinary Conventions

Persistently across participant-observations of 19 class sessions, Erin challenged disciplinary conventions and so-called standards of English and composition. On the first day of class, students viewed the spoken word performance by Dr. Jamila Lyiscott mentioned above, "3 Ways to Speak English." Following the video, Erin facilitated a freewrite activity and subsequent group discussion focused on three questions: How were your ideas about English challenged in the video?; What is "good" writing?; and Who determines that? In group discussion, the two white students in the course each shared examples that reinforced the notion that quality of writing is determined by an outside authority figure (i.e., journalism, reading comprehension) while multiple students of color

challenged the dominant notion that "good" writing is determined by a reader or grader (fieldnotes, September 5, 2019). From the very first class session, Erin articulated the influence of structural racism on the discipline of English. She introduced the concept *white language supremacy* in framing her commitment to teaching writing through an antiracist lens (fieldnotes, September 5, 2019). Erin's approach to antiracist pedagogy in writing instruction was significantly shaped by the scholarship of Asa B. Inoue (2019), who asserted the necessity of "dismantle[ing] White language supremacy in society and schools . . . [and] build[ing] equity and inclusion in writing classrooms while also engaging students with the politics of language" (p. 4). Erin not only foregrounded Inoue's scholarship in classroom discussion; on the first page of the syllabus immediately below the course meeting time and location, Erin included the following quotation from Inoue:

> Do standards in English writing classrooms kill people? Hmm. Maybe a better question is this: In a world of police brutality against Black and Brown people in the US, of border walls and regressive and harmful immigration policies, of increasing violence against Muslims, of women losing their rights to the control their own bodies, of overt White supremacy, of mass shootings in schools, of blatant refusals to be compassionate to the hundreds of thousands of refugees around the world, where do we really think this violence, discord, and killing starts? [. . .] All of these decisions are made by judging others by our own standards, and inevitably finding others wanting, deficient. (course syllabus, Fall 2019)

In more than one way, Erin explicitly indicated the role of structural oppression in shaping disciplinary standards of English and composition from the very beginning of the course.

The following pedagogical move offers another illustration of Erin's practice of challenging disciplinary conventions. In introducing and framing the novel *Binti,* Erin spoke about the genre literary/cultural analysis. She referenced the primary text for the course, *Undoing the Silence*, in which author Lois Dunlop discussed the value of storytelling as a tool for writers in developing and organizing ideas. Erin called into question the dominant notion that analytical, argumentative, and research writing ought not to include story or "I" statements. In so doing, Erin was working to stretch and disrupt the dominant framework of knowledge by validating storytelling as a way of knowing. She spoke particularly about the notion of bias and asserted to the students that all writing is biased in that it is shaped by the author's ways of thinking and communicating (fieldnotes, October 8, 2019). As students prepared to read the first and only work of fiction assigned in the course, one authored by a Nigerian-American woman and in the genre of Afrofuturism, Erin's approach to framing the text endeavored to disrupt the dominance of white epistemologies.

A third example illustrates Erin's pedagogical deconstruction of disciplinary standards. When addressing so-called standard practices of composition, she often introduced some form of power analysis to encourage students to consider whose ideas of "standard" those practices reflected. Erin alluded to power dynamics related to patriarchy, colonialism, and white supremacy in troubling standard practices of composition. One such illustration was her repeated assertion that the "five paragraph

essay" was just one of many approaches to effective writing rather than *the* single correct approach for building and conveying an argument. A more detailed illustration is seen in Erin's class discussions of "audience," a core composition concept. Erin named the scenario wherein the audience for a piece of writing is solely a course instructor (i.e., nearly all graded writing assignments). In so doing, she explicitly mentioned race and whiteness as relevant to considering audience. Erin noted that race is often a source of power imbalance when teachers are the sole audience for students' writing and alluded to the over-representation of white instructors in higher education. She used herself as an example of the racialized power dynamic and suggested that the "artificiality" of teacher-as-audience can emphasize the effects of white language supremacy. Highlighting the structural nature of this particular power dynamic related to audience, Erin asked students, "What values are embedded?" (fieldnotes, October 22, 2019).

A final pedagogical illustration of Erin's utilization of antiracism as a lens through which to understand and critique disciplinary standards is seen in her facilitation of a rhetorical analysis exercise. Students had been assigned three texts for that class session, each of which challenged dominant language conventions. Most relevant to this research was the essay "Should Writers Use They Own English?" by Vershawn Ashanti Young, which critiqued the racialized conventions of standard English, defined the rhetorical practice of code meshing, and asserted the sophistication of this practice. Young (2011) noted, "Code meshing use the way people already speak and write and help them be more rhetorically effective . . . This mean too that good writin gone look and sound a bit different than some may now expect" (p. 71). Facilitating class discussion about the assigned texts, Erin had students work in small groups to synthesize themes

from the assigned readings. In framing the discussion, she named the commonality of critique of language practices rooted in racist and sexist beliefs. Erin noted, "What's considered appropriate or aggressive [in writing and speaking] is so intertwined with race, gender, and other things" (fieldnotes, September 17, 2019). Utilizing rhetorical analysis (a disciplinary tool) to identify and challenge the influence of structural oppression on that very discipline further illustrates Erin's pattern of disrupting disciplinary conventions as a pedagogical element of her commitment to antiracist teaching.

Framing Antiracist Pedagogy Through Writing and Literacy Practices

A second pedagogical move Erin made in her effort at antiracist teaching was to frame writing as a tool for social change and a site of agency against the backdrop of structural oppression and, more specifically, structural racism. Erin integrated antiracist pedagogy broadly in her course by framing it through writing and literacy practices. In other words, antiracism was not an added concept or unit of content but rather a lens through which Erin conceptualized, practiced, and taught writing. For example, one of the course learning outcomes articulated that, during the course, students would "write confidently and effectively **in [their] own voice**, both learning and critiquing normative models of 'good writing' (including argumentation, organization, and conventions of writing) while challenging white language supremacy" (course syllabus, Fall 2019, emphasis in original). A second learning outcome indicated that students in the course would

> reflect on the power of voice and **understand the sociopolitical factors that uplift some voices and silence others**; in the process, I hope you will come to see

> yourself as a citizen who has both the responsibility and capability to use **individual and collective** writing to **make things happen** in the world. (course syllabus, Fall 2019, emphasis in original)

The concept of "voice" has been necessarily problematized in critical research. Erin's invocation of the concept was informed and contextualized by her understanding of structural oppression, which is how she framed the concept of "voice" for students as well. Rather than starting with the assertion that everyone has a voice, Erin positioned "voice" in relationship to power by asking students to consider which voices are heard and which voices are silenced by standards of English and composition. The primary course text, *Undoing the Silence* by Louise Dunlap, was built on the assertion that many writers are silenced not for lack of ideas, creativity, or capability but as a result of narrow and problematic conceptions of "good writing." Dunlap (2007) offered writers "tools to undo silencing," noting,

> These are not the same tools you learned in school, where writing is usually taught through models of good and bad imposed by someone in authority, like a teacher, supervisor or editor who supposedly knows the right way to say what you think. In fact, the authoritarian approach is a major factor in our silencing. The more we rely on how the experts tell us to do it, the more deeply we bury our own voices. (p. 8)

Erin encouraged students to explore and express the ways they felt silenced, misunderstood, and constrained in previous writing experiences, and many students chose to do so. For example, during a class discussion early in the term Jada shared her experience of preparing for and taking the AP English exam in high school. She

explained that the exam required students to write an analytical essay and noted that the essays would be "graded by an old white guy. He's not gonna understand my viewpoint as an African American woman" (fieldnotes, September 26, 2019). In the same class session, Erin facilitated an activity that prompted students to reflect upon and write down messages they had heard and internalized that caused them to question their competence as writers or that got in the way of their writing process. After sharing some of her own "silencing voices," Erin invited students to write their "silencing voices" on the board. Many students' responses named race and other power-related formations (fieldnotes, September 26, 2019).

Building from a foundation that named structural racism and other forms of structural oppression as contributing to the silencing of writers, Erin worked throughout the term to re-frame writing for students as a site of agency and a tool for creating change according to what was important to them and their communities. Across elements of the course, including selection of content, design of assignments and class activities, and facilitation of class discussion, Erin labored to reinforce this message. The first writing assignment of the course serves to illustrate. The first piece of writing Erin had students turn in was the literacy narrative. An excerpt of the assignment overview describes the goal of this essay:

> Think critically about the role literacy has played in your own life. Often, our ideas and experiences with literacy are strongly tied to our culture and identity. What ideas about reading, writing, and/or speaking were present as you were growing up? Did you have a positive or negative relationship with them? Why? (literacy narrative assignment overview, 2019)

With permission, Erin used two example essays from former students to help frame the assignment. One of the examples explicitly addressed social issues and systems of power; the essay utilized Black vernacular and was written as a spoken word piece that named race, Blackness, and racism as central elements of the development of that student's literacy practices. Erin pointed out the author's choice to engage race and racism in constructing her narrative and invited the class to explore identity- or power-related elements of their own literacy experiences while noting that was not a requirement of the assignment (fieldnotes, October 1, 2019). Importantly, Erin invited and encouraged students to engage issues of race, identity, and power in their writing for the course but did so cautiously; on multiple occasions during our ongoing recorded conversations, Erin articulated a deep concern about leading students of color, in particular, to feel like they *had to* disclose or share racialized experiences. She framed educators' expectation that students of color talk about race and racism in the classroom as an unjust "tax" or "burden." Rather than expecting these types of contributions from students of color, Erin sought to create opportunities for students to engage these topics if and how they desired without feeling obligated to do so (interview, October 17, 2019).

A final illustration of Erin's framing antiracist pedagogy through writing and literacy practices can be seen in how she chose to end the course. In the final 15 minutes of the last class session, Erin shared the following passage from James Baldwin's (1963) essay "A Talk to Teachers":

> The purpose of education, finally, is to create in a person the ability to look at the world for [themselves], to make [their] own decisions [. . .] To ask questions of the universe, and then learn to live with those questions, is the way [they] achieve

> [their] own identity. But no society is really anxious to have that kind of person around. What societies really, ideally, want is a citizenry which will simply obey the rules of society. If a society succeeds in this, that society is about to perish. The obligation of anyone who thinks of [themselves] as responsible is to examine society and try to change it and to fight it—at no matter what risk. This is the only hope society has. This is the only way societies change.

Erin noted, "Education itself is complicated and the expectations aren't always what they should be" (fieldnotes, December 12, 2019). She went on to re-articulate her primary hope in teaching the course: that students saw themselves as writers and thought of writing as one tool by which to create change and make things happen with and for their communities. In closing class this way, Erin reinforced her ongoing message about the influence of structural oppression on educational standards and strove to help students (re)frame writing as a site of agency.

Policy: Labor-Based Grading

A third pedagogical intervention Erin utilized in her efforts at antiracist teaching is policy-based. During the semester when I was a participant-observer in her writing course, Erin implemented labor-based grading for the first time in her teaching career. This section will first describe labor-based grading and then discuss the ways that Erin utilized this approach to evaluation as a pedagogical element of her commitment to antiracist teaching.

Professor of rhetoric and composition Asa B. Inoue's research is in antiracist writing assessment, and his recent book aimed to "change the rules of the grading game in writing classrooms" (2019, p. 4). Inoue advocated for a grading contract that

"calculates final course grades purely by the labor students complete, not by any judgments of the quality of their writing," (p. 4) noting, "While the qualities of student writing is still at the center of the classroom and feedback, it has no bearing on the course grade" (p. 4). Inoue asserted, "Grading, because it requires a single, dominant standard, is a racist and White supremacist practice. There is no way around it" (p. 5). Inoue defined white supremacy as a structural power formation even though "many of us cannot see it as such in our classrooms, in our disciplines, in our ways of reading and valuing student texts" (p. 8). He pointed to the harmful influence of white habitus in the academic practice of evaluation:

> Holding one standard in our grading practices reinforces White supremacy since all such standards have historically come from one racial formation on the globe. We cannot see clearly how our own grading practices are linked to historically White supremacist ideology and practices, laws and customs, all of which have been maintained and policed primarily by White racial formations and those who embody a White racial habitus in our society, schools, and disciplines of study. (p. 8)

Since grading and assessment practices exist within racialized and racist structures, asserted Inoue, they inevitably uphold racist dominant standards. Separating judgment of writing quality from grade calculation works to subvert White supremacist standards embedded in grading practices. Students do receive feedback on the effectiveness of their writing, however their grade is based on completion of the labor entailed in the assignment. Based on his research and experience teaching writing, Inoue asserted that "a grading contract based only on labor is better for all students and undermines the racist

and White supremacist grading systems we all live with at all levels of education" (p. 3). He went on to note: "It turns out that engaging with diverse ways of languaging and judging in the right kinds of assessment ecologies offers flexible and critical rhetorical training that can prepare students for a wide variety of communication situations" (p. 4).

Erin's pedagogical thinking and doing were deeply informed by Inoue's research on antiracist writing assessment. She talked about labor-based grading in our very first interview during phase one of this study (when I spoke with 10 postsecondary instructors to explore their conceptions of antiracist teaching). At that time, Erin was not utilizing labor-based grading but expressed great enthusiasm for the philosophy and practice; she shared her desire to implement labor-based grading as an element of her antiracist pedagogical efforts in upcoming writing courses (interview, April 3, 2019). During the summer following our first interview, she immersed herself in Inoue's writing and other scholars' research about the practice of labor-based grading. With the support of a course development grant, Erin redesigned her writing course to align with labor-based grading philosophy and practice (interview, August 22, 2019). In her own words, Erin described the approach to grading this way during our pre-semester conversation:

> The idea behind it is, basically, the way that Inoue talks about it is, it's completely divorcing feedback from evaluation. I've never thought about those two things as different before. So the feedback might look the same, right, I might still be saying the same kinds of things—maybe. Now I'm even questioning that. But the feedback in the past has always been a justification for the grade. Here's a B, and now the feedback is basically here is why you got a B. By divorcing those things, if everything is labor-based, it's completely transparent. So a student, they did it

> or they didn't do it. They met the basic requirements that are completely objective, or they didn't. There's no subjectivity in that, I'm not making that determination. I'm not judging. The grade has nothing to do with what I think of their writing, basically, even though I'm giving them feedback on their writing. (interview, August 22, 2019)

Because labor-based grading was a key pedagogical element of Erin's effort to practice antiracist teaching, further elaboration of what the grading system entailed in her course is important. This syllabus statement helped students understand how labor-based grading would be actualized in the writing course:

> While any grading system is technically a kind of contract, this system usually relies on more "objective" standards and expectations: as long as a student completes specific requirements and expectations, they will receive the grade specified in the contract. "Labor-based" grading contracts are similar, but focus exclusively on the amount of "labor" (work, time, energy) that you put into a class. In other words, none of your grade is based on the "quality" of your work—the only thing that matters is that you do the work. This means no tests and no papers that I return to you with a letter grade (though I will still give you feedback). If you complete an assignment (meet specific, clear, objective expectations), you receive credit for it. How many assignments you complete determines your final grade in the course. (course syllabus, Fall 2019)

The focus on completion of assignments made transparent for students how they could earn their desired grade in the course. The grading contract included a grid that laid out

precisely how students' labor determined what grade they earned. Erin's syllabus explained how this worked:

> Each course requirement is accounted for in the grading contract. The grid below shows you how many of those requirements you need to complete in order to receive each grade. The "default" grade in this class is a "B." A "B" grade is the most common grade that I give in this class; it communicates to me (and to others) that you have achieved the learning goals. A "C-" grade is required to pass the course (this is university policy), and is a perfectly acceptable grade if that is your only goal. An "A" grade communicates more and different kinds of labor that exceed my expectations for you in this class. You are under no obligation to work toward an "A" grade unless you genuinely want to. (course syllabus, Fall 2019)

Each student tracked their labor (i.e., completion of course requirements) in a labor log. Created by Erin, the labor log was a google doc shared just between Erin and each student. Throughout the term, students were responsible for updating their labor logs to indicate what work they had and had not completed. Erin described for students the purpose of this tool: "The labor log gives both of us a way to quickly see your 'grade' in the course and keep track of any assignments that you still need to complete" (course syllabus, Fall 2019).

Erin framed labor-based grading thoughtfully and transparently with students, emphasizing early and often her rationale for adopting the policy and centering the concept of "agency" in describing it. For example, Erin's syllabus included extensive information (10 pages) about the grading system and how it would be utilized in the

course. Her description of labor-based grading and rationale for using it were clear and straightforward in her syllabus:

> What is labor?
> Labor is the time, effort, and energy you spend on reading, writing, speaking, and other required course activities.
>
> What is labor-based grading?
> Your grade reflects whether or not you completed the required labor. None of your grade is based on the "quality" of your work.
>
> Why labor-based grading?
> Writing improves by the practice of writing.
> Conventional evaluative grading reinforces white language supremacy.
> Labor-based grading is more equitable.
>
> How does labor-based grading work?
> Complete a minimum number of each type of course requirement to get a specific grade. The default grade is a "B." Earn a higher grade by completing optional assignments. (course syllabus, Fall 2019)

Her syllabus provided an extensive explanation of her rationale for implementing labor-based grading in the course. The following excerpts provide insight into the approach Erin took in enacting this grading policy as an element of her antiracist pedagogical practice :

> First of all, I want to make it clear that I don't think this method of grading is something that would work in *any* class (though I could be wrong). My belief is that this method is particularly useful for a *writing* course. For one thing, research has shown that most people improve their writing simply by writing. And writing some more. And revising that writing. And then writing even more. Since becoming a strong writer is a matter of putting time and effort into multiple drafts, then letter grades don't really mean much . . . My second reason for using labor-

> based grading is connected to . . . privilege, especially as it relates to race, culture, and language . . . Letter grades are usually understood as an indication of the quality of the writing—how "good" it is. But who determines what "good" writing looks like? In the context of higher education in particular, "good" writing is often code for "Standard English," which is basically the way that middle-class white people write . . . Labor-based grading will, I hope, give you the freedom to explore and strengthen the way that *you* want to communicate. It will encourage you to take risks—why not, when you won't be punished for "failure"? It will allow you to ignore anxieties about whether you are supposed to use a comma or a semicolon, and focus more on what phrase is more effective. It will, I believe, allow you more agency and choice with what to do with your "labor power." My experience has been that if students have agency to choose, they care more. They focus more on their writing process, become more confident writers, learn more about writing, and are better prepared to apply what they've learned to future classes. I hope that labor-based grading opens up a way for you to find and exercise this power. (course syllabus, Fall 2019, emphasis in original)

Erin introduced the grading policy in the first two class sessions and asked students to read the grading portion of the syllabus closely (fieldnotes, September 5 & 10, 2019). In week three of the course, she assigned a reading from Inoue's book on labor-based grading and facilitated a class discussion about equity and grading. She highlighted Inoue's framing concept of co-creating with students a "grading contract" (which was described extensively in the course syllabus) and positioned students as agents by inviting them to suggest amendments to the contract she had proposed. In that discussion, Erin

drew a connection between antiracist approaches to grading and Audre Lorde's well-known quote, "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house," which appeared in one of the assigned readings for that class session. Illustrating an application of Lorde's assertion, Erin said to the class, "I could say, 'I understand the system [of grading] is racist.' And then teach you how to succeed within that system" (fieldnotes, September 19, 2019). She stated her hope that labor-based grading would be a tool to help disrupt rather than perpetuate dominant frameworks for grading writing. Next, she transitioned to a discussion of the terms of the grading contract. In framing the conversation, Erin invited students to share their feedback on the grading contract and used the word "negotiate," indicating a sense of flexibility and openness to incorporating students' feedback. She stated that students' input and influence on how they were graded was an important element of labor-based grading (fieldnotes, September 19, 2019).

Alongside expressing enthusiasm about implementing labor-based grading for the first time, Erin articulated uncertainty when we spoke just before the start of the Fall term. She had received skeptical feedback from colleagues concerned about so-called slipping standards. More poignantly, Erin wondered how students would experience the approach to evaluation. Erin reflected on questions of power related to her teacher position and the influence of her whiteness as she prepared to implement this grading system as part of her efforts at antiracist pedagogy:

> I'm still aware that I have not—not that I ever will—but that I'm still identifying and figuring out how whiteness works within myself and especially within my teaching. And so despite all the work I've tried to do to make these changes in the class, I'm not always gonna really be aware of necessarily where those things are

> still gonna be there, and to what extent maybe some of the things have to be there? And how we're gonna feel about that, how I'm gonna feel about that. There is still a grade, right, that I'm still giving. Even as I give feedback on writing, even if I'm not grading you on that feedback, I'm still giving you feedback. (interview, August 22, 2019).

Notably, Erin did not conceptualize labor-based grading as "the answer"—a singular, correct approach to grading within an antiracist pedagogical paradigm. Erin articulated that whiteness would continue to shape her feedback on students' writing, even if that feedback had no direct bearing on their grade. She also articulated uncertainty and concern about the approach, noting that its emphasis on labor rewarded students with more time and certain advantages. Erin described how class identity (if/how much a student had to work during college), race identity (the likelihood of having access to quality education prior to attending college), and literacy practices (one's relationship to and comfort with standard English) might influence the amount of time a student could dedicate to coursework and the amount of labor they could complete in a given time period. She said, "By putting more of an emphasis on how long it takes, it can actually highlight and make more visible, 'Oh wait, you actually maybe don't have enough time to do this'" (August 22, 2019). Without denying the tension that labor-based grading might still, in its very effort to provide an antiracist approach to evaluating writing, perpetuate structural inequalities, Erin embraced Inoue's vision as an element of her pedagogy.

Throughout the term, Erin and I discussed how she was feeling about implementing labor-based grading for the first time. She continued to exhibit enthusiasm

for the approach, even as she experienced logistical challenges with implementation and navigated tensions inherent to the framework. What remained steady was her belief that the policy positioned students as *agents* capable of making decisions about what grade they wanted to earn, how much labor they wanted to put forth, and exactly what amounts and forms of labor they would need to complete to earn that grade. It was Erin's hope that labor-based grading would also help undo some of the silencing they had experienced as writers by assuring them that their grade was not dependent on the content or form of their writing but purely on the labor having been completed. (Chapter Seven will explore students' experiences of labor-based grading, shedding light on the degree to which Erin's hopes were realized.)

Erin's initial implementation of labor-based grading during the semester we worked together was one pedagogical element of her approach to antiracist teaching. When we first spoke in April 2019 during the first phase of data collection, she was excited about the possibility of using this approach to grading writing. At the culmination of phase two of data collection (the critical ethnographic case study), she had implemented the policy and begun to articulate and demonstrate how the philosophy of labor-based grading informed other teaching decisions. While acknowledging there were tweaks to be made, she seemed to have gained confidence in the approach and conceptualized it as one of many practices that collectively constituted her approach to antiracist teaching (interview, December 19, 2019).

Classroom Facilitation

A fourth pedagogical element of Erin's antiracist teaching efforts is classroom facilitation. This section discusses three characteristics of Erin's approach and demeanor

during class sessions: explicitness, low exertion of control, and disruption of the teacher/student power dynamic. The insights offered in this section emerged primarily from analysis of fieldnotes taken during participant-observations of class sessions, with supporting evidence from analysis of our recorded conversations.

Explicitness. Chapter Four explored the varying degrees to which white educators announced or signaled to students their commitment to antiracist teaching. Erin was one of the participants who indicated a practice of explicitly naming antiracism. Speaking during the first phase of data collection about her approach to antiracist teaching, she indicated “I don’t hide from my students. I have an agenda" (interview, April 3, 2019). Erin echoed the same phrase the first day of class during phase two of data collection, the critical ethnographic case study of her writing course at Oakdale University. As she introduced the course to students, Erin put up a slide titled “What is antiracist pedagogy?” and shared with the class what this means to her, naming clearly that she understood antiracism as an action. Erin stated, “I have an agenda,” and noted that she was not coming to this class neutral on issues of race (fieldnotes, September 5, 2019). Throughout the term, Erin repeatedly and transparently articulated and/or demonstrated a commitment to antiracism; fieldnotes from 19 class sessions include 30 instances of her explicitly addressing race, racism, and/or white supremacy while facilitating class (fieldnotes, September 5 – December 12, 2019).

Early in the course, Erin facilitated a class activity about social identity that explicitly brought race and numerous intersecting identities into conversation. She posted signs across the classroom, each with a single category of social identity: race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, ability, class, age, religion, sexuality, language, and citizenship.

Erin read aloud five statements about identity and one's relationship to writing, and invited each of us to place a colored sticky note near the identity that best answered that prompt. Erin facilitated this reflective activity such that it explicitly addressed the relationship between social identity and messaging about "good" writing while allowing flexibility for students to participate if and how they wished. Importantly, Erin participated alongside students and invited me to do the same (fieldnotes, September 12, 2019). The exercise created an opportunity for students to reflect individually and notice patterns in their classroom community about relationships between social identity, power, and writing.

A second way that Erin explicitly engaged the topics of identity and power in facilitating the course was through class discussion on assigned readings. The following scenario from class is an illustration of this practice. Erin was facilitating discussion about the essay "Disparate Impacts" by Taiyon J. Coleman, in which the author outlined her experiences with racism as a Black female graduate student at a predominantly white institution. A student in class brought up the part of the essay where Coleman narrated how white professors in her MFA program critiqued the ways she wrote about race and encouraged her to focus on other themes if she wanted to get published. Erin validated what the student shared as a poignant element of the essay and named whiteness explicitly: "In a white supremacist society, if you are white you can do that," Erin stated, referring to writing about race and racism. She elaborated on the question of who does and does not get marked as "a problem" for choosing to address race in their writing (fieldnotes, October 1, 2019).

Low Exertion of Control. A second noteworthy characteristic of Erin's facilitation of the course was low exertion of control and disciplinary oversight of students' behavior. Erin made clear at the start of the term her expectations for students' preparation for and engagement during class; she did not, however, engage in so-called classroom management behaviors such as chastising students publicly for tardiness or shutting down side conversations. When students did arrive late, which occurred increasingly often for some students as the course progressed, Erin greeted them kindly. Neither did Erin chastise students for using electronic devices like tablets and phones during class. When asked about these class facilitation decisions, Erin explained that she trusted students were doing their best to come to class prepared and be engaged even amidst the many challenges they were likely navigating in the first semester of their first year of college. She also noted the influence of whiteness on her notions about and perceptions of student engagement, speaking specifically to large group conversations and how cultural practices shape modes of participation (interview, October 17, 2019).

In addition to refraining from disciplinary control and correction, Erin also did not position herself as a conversational gatekeeper during classroom discussion. Her typical approach to facilitating discussion was to help students warm up by freewriting and/or talking with one other person about a specific prompt before transitioning to a large group discussion format. For group discussion, she typically joined students by sitting at the large seminar-style table. In facilitating discussion, Erin invited students to share and encouraged them to respond directly to one another. She did not exert control over the flow of the discussion by interjecting her own commentary after each student's response. An illustration of this practice is seen in Erin's facilitation decisions as a dialogue

emerged in response to the assigned essay “Mother Tongue” by Amy Tan. The essay outlined the author’s experience navigating oppression her immigrant family experienced as a result of their language use. Jada, a Black woman student, posed a question directly to her classmates, asking them what they thought of the Tan essay. Jada’s question sparked a discussion that unfolded over 15 minutes and included eight students, all of whom were students of color and many of whom had not yet spoken during the class session. Four students indicated that they related to Tan’s narrative of translating for her mother and being asked to speak on the phone for her, some sharing personal experiences of having done something similar for family members. Jada eventually spoke up again, stating that she could not relate as personally to this essay because her own experience with language was different. She shared that she was known by her classmates in high school as the “Black girl who talks white” and described feeling frustrated about not “fitting in” in various spaces because her Black friends suggested she was too white. Reggie, a Black man in the class, responded directly to Jada’s narrative, sharing that peers had told him, “You are the whitest Black person I know.” Reggie discussed feeling mad when such comments were directed at him because they implied that sounding educated is antithetical to sounding Black. During the discussion, which ultimately ended because class time was up, many students chose to share with vulnerability and they all seemed to be listening to one another with curiosity and empathy. Erin was silent the entire time, nodding and affirming without commenting (fieldnotes, September 12, 2019). This scenario was one of many such instances when Erin refrained from controlling or gatekeeping discussion, a noteworthy characteristic of her approach to classroom facilitation. Her consistent practice in this regard worked to disrupt the power and

authority automatically attached to whiteness and teacherness, and positioned the knowledge of students of color as valid in its own regard.

Disruption of Typical Teacher-Student Power Dynamic. A third noteworthy characteristic of Erin's approach to classroom facilitation was her effort to humanize herself and disrupt the typical teacher-student power dynamic that positions teachers as objective, rational, and unfeeling experts whose purpose is to impart knowledge to students. Two primary practices illustrated this effort: disclosure and humility. Without centering herself and her narrative as primary, Erin disclosed details from her life and her experiences in ways that painted her as a full human with struggles and flaws and values and hopes. She often did so in ways that contributed to her goal of fostering or strengthening students' understanding of structural oppression, as is illustrated in the following instance from class. Erin was facilitating discussion about the Afrofuturist novel *Binti*, which she had selected as course content because it addressed the role of structural oppression in shaping higher education in a fantasy space world. Erin talked about her experience as a queer college student to exemplify her own realization about the systems of power that operate on and in higher education in the United States. Erin stated, "This hits me personally," in reference to the theme of higher education and power, and went on to share that she attended a Christian conservative college "where I couldn't be out." After elaborating on how that felt to her at that time in her life, Erin drew a distinction between her experience of oppression based on sexuality and Binti's (the protagonist of the novel) experience of oppression based on race. Erin stated, "These are not the same [and] are not visible in the same way." She concluded by stating that she was thinking about ways to resist perpetuating cycles of violence in higher education

(fieldnotes, October 15, 2019). In this pedagogical move, Erin disclosed her experience of marginalization in higher education while being careful to not equate racism and homophobia.

A second scenario depicts two oppositional choices related to disclosure and illustrates a critical moment in relation to Erin's efforts at antiracist pedagogy. As such, it will be described in detail. During an in-class activity to prepare students for their next writing assignment, Erin exemplified persuasive writing by having students read a recent op-ed published in the campus newspaper. The student author, a woman of color, critiqued Oakdale's efforts to respond to structural racism as inadequate and, at times, harmful to students of color, and Black and Indigenous students in particular. Briefly referencing a highly-charged incident from the previous academic year, the author asked, "Reflecting on the use of the n-word by an Oakdale professor last year begs the question: did Oakdale put the safety and academic well-being of their students first?" (Oakdale newspaper). After giving students time to read the editorial and speak with classmates in small groups, Erin opened large group discussion. Immediately, a student asked about the editorial's reference to a professor's in-class use of the use of the n-word. (As the class was composed entirely of first-year students, none of them were at Oakdale when the incident occurred the previous academic year). What unfolded next was poignant. The classroom was virtually silent and students' attention was focused on Erin as she responded to the question. It was evident that students were highly interested and deeply engaged.

Erin's voice shook a bit as she explained the incident in a relatively chronological manner, relaying to students the events of what happened. At one point she noted, almost

as if talking to herself out loud, “I’m trying to be objective, but I’m not objective about this.” She spent about five minutes narrating the incident, starting with explaining the context: A class was reading an essay by a prominent Black author whose writing critiqued structural racism and white supremacy in the United States. While reading aloud a passage from the essay, a student said the n-word. Other students reacted strongly, and the professor, who was white, asked the class about the appropriateness of using that word. In so doing, he also said the word itself. Students had an even stronger reaction to the professor’s re-stating the word. News of the incident spread quickly across Oakdale’s relatively small campus. Students organized in response and asked the professor to apologize. He would not. (fieldnotes, October 22, 2019)

Erin seemed to choose her words carefully and with great intention in describing the incident. In jottings, I recorded that she “spoke with gravity” (fieldnotes, October 22, 2019). Based on my observation and meaning-making, I had the sense that Erin was experiencing a lot of emotion as she spoke. A practice of disclosure is evident in at least two forms. First, Erin’s decision to have students read that particular example of editorial writing was intentional. As a faculty advisor for the campus paper, Erin worked closely with the student who authored the op-ed and understood that part of her aim in writing the piece was to educate new students about not-so-distant campus history (interview, November 7, 2019). Erin’s assigning the op-ed can be understood as disclosure of a recent and high-profile manifestation of institutional racism at Oakdale.

Erin and I had discussed this contentious incident multiple times before this class session, so I had additional insight into her thinking and feeling about it as I observed that day. I also had more information about the incident’s aftermath than she shared in class,

including the intense disagreement among faculty as to whether the professor's behavior was acceptable according to standards of academic freedom. Debate about the incident and Oakdale's handling of it reached national platforms (interview, April 3, 2019). With this additional context, Erin's action of naming in class her non-objectivity about the contentious incident can also be understood as disclosure. As Erin was a pre-tenure faculty member at Oakdale, it is also an illustration of risk-taking in her approach to antiracist teaching.

In addition to disclosure, Erin's practice of humility also illustrates her efforts to disrupt the typical power dynamic that positions teachers as objective, rational, and unfeeling experts whose purpose is to impart knowledge to students. Humility was addressed earlier in this chapter (see constellation element one) as an aspect of Erin's white subjectivity and commitment to antiracism. Here, her practice of humility as an element of classroom facilitation will be illustrated by describing two examples from class.

In facilitating the course, Erin consistently positioned herself as a learner. This pattern was especially apparent when the class discussed topics related to race and racism. From the very first class session, Erin acknowledged that she was both committed to antiracism and by no means an expert on race and racism. Naming that she would make mistakes, Erin invited students to challenge and correct her (fieldnotes, September 5, 2019). On multiple occasions, Erin drew attention to the limits of her own racial literacy. One such instance occurred when Erin responded to a comment from Maya, a Latina student, during class discussion about the novel *Binti*. Maya made a connection between the way *Binti* addressed colonialism in education and the fact that the previous

day had been Indigenous People's Day. She elaborated briefly on the tension of "celebrating" Columbus Day. Erin affirmed and responded to Maya's statement by noting that many people fail to acknowledge that colonization is still relevant in education, even while Oakdale University sits on Indigenous land that is not controlled by the people from whom it was taken. Erin said, "Something we don't often talk about—well, I [said with emphasis] don't often talk about—is colonization as an ongoing form of oppression" (fieldnotes, October 15, 2019). Notably, Erin adjusted the subject of her statement from "we" to "I." This action can be understood as an effort to vocalize her personal collusion with settler colonialism and open space for students in the class to not identify as the "we" who fail to understand the ongoing effects of colonialism in education. The teaching action demonstrates a practice of humility in two ways. First, Erin self-corrected her initial statement in real time as she realized the problematic nature of using "we" in this way. Second, she highlighted her own shortcoming and collusion without excusing it through diffusion. The shift in Erin's using "we" to using "I" is an indication of responsibility-taking and an illustration of her practice of humility.

A second example of humility in Erin's approach to facilitating class can be seen in the critical moment of the course described above. As previously described, Erin named a recent, contentious manifestation of institutional racism at Oakdale and disclosed her non-objectivity about the incident. What is equally important to consider is what Erin did *not* disclose to students during that critical course moment. Because Erin and I had discussed the n-word incident multiple times in interviews preceding that class session, I knew that she had co-written with two Oakdale faculty members an open letter for the campus newspaper regarding the incident. Responding to a previous open letter

from a senior Oakdale faculty member, Erin and her collaborators refuted his assertion that the speech in question was protected by academic freedom. They wrote, "We refute these claims by asserting that academic freedom in defense of language that harms students turns the very principle that makes true learning possible into a mechanism for enforcing institutional racism." The authors went on to say, "While we hold the entire community accountable to the tasks ahead, we, as faculty, hold ourselves accountable to the call from students to address the failures and gaps that are present within Oakdale's institutional structure" (Oakdale newspaper).

Erin did not disclose to students that she had co-authored the open letter when she described the incident and its aftermath in class. Curious about this decision, I asked her in a subsequent conversation why she did not mention the open letter or other actions she had taken to stand up to structural racism at Oakdale since the incident had occurred. Erin indicated that she wanted to relay the events and state her non-objectivity without uplifting her own response (interview, November 7, 2019). Her non-disclosure, in this instance, can be understood as a decentering of herself and her actions. Considered alongside previous reflections on her concern about performativity and white saviorism influencing her approach to antiracist teaching (interview, April 3 and December 12, 2019), this non-disclosure can be understood as a disruption of those particular ideological and behavioral patterns which often shape white educators' efforts at antiracist pedagogy.

Erin's practices of humility and disclosure in classroom facilitation demonstrate her ongoing effort to disrupt the typical teacher-student power dynamic and humanize herself as a learner alongside students. These efforts at disruption, along with Erin's low

exertion of control and explicit approach to discussing race and racism, are noteworthy characteristics of her approach to classroom facilitation. Having traced first the "what" (i.e., content) and then the "how" (i.e., pedagogy) elements of Erin's approach to antiracist teaching, this constellation element pivots a final time toward considering ways that her approach to antiracist pedagogy extended beyond the classroom.

Institutional Efforts: Antiracism, Too, Must be Structural

The design of this study about white educators' conceptualizations of and efforts toward antiracist pedagogy focused narrowly on the classroom environment. I entered phase two of data collection, the ethnographic case study, intent on deeply exploring the happenings *in a particular course* to better understand antiracist pedagogy as it was imagined and enacted from a white instructor's perspective. Fairly quickly, however, I noticed that Erin's approach to antiracist pedagogy extended beyond her individual classroom and into various institutional contexts. My initial reaction was to remain narrowly focused on the classroom environment, and I directed my questions for Erin during our ongoing conversations toward that context. At the same time, I held a deep commitment to reciprocity in-line with my chosen methodological approach of critical collaborative ethnography. I was compelled to be in conversation with Erin regarding the topics that most interested her, even when they did not appear to align with my research questions. We spent a significant amount of time talking and corresponding in writing about her involvement in departmental, collegial, and institutional dynamics at Oakdale. Even while I listened and engaged in these exchanges thoughtfully and generatively, I continued to understand them as outside the scope of my research questions. My thinking was turned upside down as I moved into analyzing the ethnographic case study data. I

relistened successively to the 12 recorded conversations between Erin and I (spanning April 2019 to February 2020) to get a sense of the arc of our relationship and our discourse. I was struck by the number of times and the depth with which Erin discussed her efforts at disrupting structural racism *outside* of her classroom; I realized that Erin's conceptualization of and approach to antiracism necessarily included institutional efforts and risk-taking. She consistently demonstrated her belief that, since racism is structural, antiracism must be structural; it cannot stop at individual instructors' classrooms and syllabi. The final section of constellation element two further traces Erin's approach to antiracist pedagogy by describing her beyond-the-classroom efforts to disrupt structural racism at Oakdale. The tracing is based on analysis of our recorded conversations and written exchanges.

Erin shared her belief that antiracist pedagogy extends beyond the classroom in our very first conversation during phase one of data collection. Having articulated an understanding that higher education is founded on and upholds structural racism and white supremacy, Erin reflected on her racialized positionality within such a context: "How is my whiteness working with the politics of the institution?" (April 3. 2019). She went on to discuss risk-taking as an element of her work to disrupt institutional racism at Oakdale, naming both her precarity as pre-tenure faculty and her protection as white faculty, relative to faculty of color. Despite advice she commonly received from colleagues to avoid taking risks until receiving tenure, Erin expressed a proclivity toward risk-taking as part of her commitment to antiracism: "I want to . . . when it comes to the institutional work, how do I go towards [said with emphasis] the risk?" (interview, April 3, 2019). She problematized actions that felt easy or comfortable for her as a white

faculty, asking rhetorically, “If it’s easy, why does it feel easy?” and noting, “Am I going like this [cringes] to it? Then maybe that is the thing” (April 3, 2019). Like her approach to antiracist pedagogy in the classroom, Erin’s institutional actions were conceptualized expansively, integrated broadly, and enacted consistently. The following tracing elucidates three aspects of Erin’s institutional-level interventions and describes how she was processing and making-meaning of those experiences in our ongoing dialogue.

Institutional Curriculum Development Work

The summer preceding the ethnographic case study, in addition to redesigning her writing course, Erin developed proposed adjustments to Oakdale’s general education requirements. As faculty in the English department and a writing instructor, she was significantly involved with Oakdale’s writing across the curriculum initiative. Working within this sphere of influence, Erin endeavored to integrate antiracism into Oakdale’s approach to developing and evaluating students’ writing proficiency. She compiled an annotated bibliography on antiracist approaches to teaching and evaluating writing in postsecondary contexts. Based on the literature, she and colleagues on the writing across the curriculum committee proposed changes to writing-related general education requirements. After the proposal was submitted, the committee’s recommendations were amended by Oakdale’s general education director. Erin shared her disappointment and frustration: “That feels really shitty, right, to just be like, ‘Here’s a structural change that would . . .’ It's a policy thing. Like, ‘This is my recommendation.’ And then it’s not taken” (interview, November 14, 2019). Even while Erin expressed frustration about the general education director’s changes to the proposal, she remained committed to following up on why that decision was made and pushing for the committee’s original

proposed curricular changes (interview, November 14, 2019). Erin's actions in this regard illustrate commitment and continued effort toward creating institutional change as an element of antiracist pedagogy.

Naming and Disrupting Structural Racism

In addition to pushing for curriculum reform, Erin demonstrated multiple strategies of publicly speaking out against structural racism at Oakdale. In these actions, her intended audiences were faculty, students, and/or administrators across the university. A first illustration is seen in Erin's public refutation of a colleague's defense of an Oakdale professor's use of the n-word in class under the auspices of academic freedom. As already discussed, Erin co-authored an open letter that was published in the campus newspaper and explicitly refuted a previously published open letter by a senior faculty member. Important to contextualizing Erin's action in that scenario is noting her institutional relationship to the author of the first open letter; he was not only a tenured and senior faculty member, he was also the chair of her department (interview, November 14, 2019). Understanding the layers of positional power that contextualized Erin's decision to publicly speak out against institutional racism illustrates an enactment of her espoused commitment to risk-taking. The co-authors' decision to write an open letter in the campus paper evidences their intention that students, faculty, and administrators at Oakdale would see and engage with their argument.

A second example of Erin working to name and disrupt structural racism is seen in public remarks she made during a faculty meeting. At Oakdale, each monthly faculty meeting began with a brief address from an invited faculty member. Just before the start of the academic year, Erin shared with me that she had been invited to give the address at

one of the Fall term faculty meetings. Erin noted that she intended to use the platform to name and critique structural racism in higher education broadly, and at Oakdale specifically (interview, August 22, 2019). When she expressed feeling excited and anxious about the opportunity, I offered to listen and/or be a thought partner as she developed her remarks if that would be useful for her. Erin took me up on the offer. Through email exchanges and informal (unrecorded) conversations after class, we discussed her evolving thinking about the address. When asked, I provided feedback on her drafted speech. We spent an hour of our first recorded conversation following the faculty meeting processing her experience of sharing the remarks. Erin's feeling that the platform was an important opportunity to challenge structural racism at Oakdale was evident in the amount of time she dedicated to preparing for and talking about the address. In one of many emails we exchanged about the address, Erin wrote to me,

> You can hold off on giving me comments on this [draft]—I've been emailing with a couple other people, and am now thinking of going in a completely different direction. We've been talking about questions of vulnerability and risk and reciprocity, and what kind of work sharing this piece would or wouldn't do in this particular context . . . which is bringing up new things around whiteness as well for me. I'd love to share more of that with you later (perhaps it's not connected directly to my classroom, but this feels very much like an example of what I talked to you about around this work being not just about classroom content and policy, but larger institutional work as well). (email, October 12, 2019)

Even while she understood the address as an important enactment of her commitment to antiracist teaching, Erin struggled with the performative nature of the opportunity. In one

email to her about the address, I shared a quote from Ahmed's (2004) declaration of the non-performativity of antiracism. Erin replied, "That quote from Ahmed really clarified my thinking about all of this—how to try to do something that *can't* be performative in a space that *must* be performative?" (email, October 14, 2019, emphasis in original). In subsequent conversation, Erin shared her realization that the faculty meeting address was itself a performative gesture and thus recognized the limitations of the opportunity. She both acknowledged the limited nature of what her address could do and remained committed to leveraging the platform to speak up rather than resigning in futility.

Ultimately, Erin used the faculty meeting address to levy a critique of racism in higher education and at Oakdale, specifically; in doing so, she both acknowledged and troubled her own efforts at antiracist pedagogy. Erin used the Afrofuturist novel *Binti* (a text assigned in her writing course) to frame her remarks, describing a scene from the story that illustrated the role university faculty play in upholding oppressive institutional power dynamics. In so doing, she implicated herself, a white faculty member, in perpetuating structural racism *while* problematizing her own confessional speech act:

> It's hard for me to draw conclusions from this scene in the novel that won't just echo familiar lines about racism in higher education. I could tell you that as a white person, I see myself in the actions of those professors in *Binti*. I see how my own racism keeps me from recognizing moments when in trying to lift up my students of color, I'm really letting them down. But as I was preparing to share this [address], I realized that saying that would simply be a performance. And the problem, as Sara Ahmed argues, is that "anti-racism is not performative." She says: "declaring whiteness, or even 'admitting' to one's own racism, when the

> declaration is assumed to be 'evidence' of an anti-racist commitment, does not do what it says." So if that's my conclusion, then all I'm doing is performing the role of the "good white teacher." (faculty meeting address, Fall 2019)

Erin went on to describe her commitment to antiracist pedagogy from a place of humility and transparency. She maintained the critique of performative gestures toward antiracism by refusing to frame her antiracist pedagogical practice as "the" or even "a" solution:

> I could also conclude by talking about what I think antiracist pedagogy actually looks like. But while that's a question that I would happily talk about over coffee with anyone who is interested, I also know that my best learning around that question has happened in conversation and community with others. I don't want to even try to perform the role of expert when I've found this work to be so nuanced, humbling, immersive, challenging . . . just when I think I've figured something out, I discover another bias within myself that I have yet to interrogate. This work is hard; there is so much to learn and to unlearn. (faculty meeting address, Fall 2019)

Refusing to offer a clean or clear conclusion to the problem of structural racism in higher education, Erin pointed to the stakes by calling on *Binti* yet again:

> In the end I realized that actually, nothing I can say here would *not* be a performance. And since there's no power in any performative claims to antiracism, I felt a little stuck . . . So I thought that instead of resolving *Binti*'s message into a nice neat package, I'd end by calling attention to the urgency of Binti's claim that the faculty's "chaotic method of madness would decide whether

> [she] would live or die." (faculty meeting address, Fall 2019, emphasis in original)

Rather than shying away from the fact that her address could not not be performative, Erin named it. She articulated the tension and her own struggle to navigate it. As was discussed in the previous chapter, Erin chose to embrace paradox rather than neutralize it.

Erin's conception of and commitment to antiracist pedagogy extended well beyond the literal and metaphorical walls of her classroom. As illustrated in these two examples, she expressed and demonstrated a commitment to disrupting institutional manifestations of structural racism. Erin understood risk-taking to be a necessary element of her efforts and used public platforms to reach multiple audiences in the Oakdale ecosystem. Notably, Erin valued collaboration in these efforts, had a practice of working with colleagues who were similarly committed to challenging racism at Oakdale, and was willing to embrace paradox.

Departmental and Collegial

The final aspect of Erin's institutional intervention this tracing will address is action taken within her department. Erin spoke with me at length about departmental practices, policies, and dynamics as well as specific collegial relationships in connection to her commitment to antiracist pedagogy. Throughout these conversations, Erin discussed using various strategies to challenge the status quo while being mindful of her positionality as a pre-tenure faculty member. For instance, Erin told departmental colleagues about redesigning her writing course to have an explicit antiracist lens and discussed her utilization of labor-based grading. She was often met with a lack of interest

or understanding and sometimes with blatant skepticism, yet she felt compelled to encourage other instructors of the first-year writing course to consider similar changes.

A perennial issue in the English department was concern over lack of resources to deliver high quality instruction across dozens of sections of the writing course. The writing course Erin taught was required of all Oakdale students in their first year, and the labor required to teach the course was significant. The department felt stretched thin by the demands of this course, just one of many in their offerings. Within this context, some members of the department became frustrated when Oakdale administrators asked faculty to think more structurally about equity in student instruction and success. Erin shared that one colleague responded, "We don't have the power to do the things you're asking us to do" (interview, November 14, 2019). Erin shared in her colleagues' frustration, noting her thwarted efforts at structural change through proposed changes to general education requirements (detailed above). At the same time, Erin's understanding of the dynamic was more nuanced than that of her colleagues and she challenged them to re-frame their frustration. Describing the scenario with her departmental colleagues, Erin said,

> I'm there. I feel that very much on one level . . . When we do have these suggestions for ways to make changes, we're told no. So why are you then telling us that we need to think structurally? But most of my email [in response to colleagues' concerns] was basically like, 'Come on you guys, there's so much more we can be doing.' (interview, November 14, 2019)

Erin went on to detail multiple opportunities for change within the English department that would not require additional funds nor approval from the institution. She made the important point that faculty can leverage power in ways that students cannot,

and implored her colleagues to consider where and how they *do* have power to make change. In our conversation, Erin reflected on the evolution in her own thinking over the previous year:

> I never thought of myself as someone with power in the system. I always did feel like I was vulnerable. I [felt like] I had to be very careful, and, "Oh, if you want to get tenure, you have to do this and this and that." And what's interesting to me is—and maybe it's just because I took a risk last year and then it was fine, because whiteness, right—but I do kind of feel like, "Wait a second, I have power." And then I'm like [to colleagues], "Why don't you think you have power? You have power." (interview, November 14, 2019)

Erin's reflection demonstrates her understanding that antiracist pedagogy necessarily includes institutional action and illustrates her practice of challenging departmental colleagues to resist structural racism.

This section of constellation element two outlined Erin's belief that antiracist pedagogy extends beyond the classroom environment into institutional contexts and traced three aspects of her institutional interventions. While I initially understood these threads of our work together as unrelated to my research questions about antiracist teaching, Erin helped me to recognize the interconnectedness of instructors' classroom-bound efforts at antiracist pedagogy and their institutional efforts. As she suggested, since racism is structural, so too must be antiracism. A final reflective quote from Erin, shared during one of our recorded conversations, summarily concludes this section:

> What goes on in my classroom is just not the only thing, both for the students and for my role. I'm just noticing myself get a lot more frustrated when I hear from

> other faculty, "My [said with emphasis] classroom matters, my [said with emphasis] department matters." [sigh] I think a lot of this is just helping me to think more holistically, and big picture, and thinking about my place in all of it. I'm getting more impatient with that myopic stuff. (interview, November 14, 2019)

Conclusion

This chapter contextualized and traced Erin's understanding of and approach to antiracist pedagogy. Considering an educator's subjectivities and positionality are critical to meaningfully exploring their pedagogy, and this is especially true in relation to racialization and efforts at antiracist teaching. In order to meaningfully contextualize Erin's approach to antiracist pedagogy, it was necessary to start with the question, "antiracist teaching by whom?" Constellation element one explored this question, illustrating Erin's grounding in critical pedagogy and queer and feminist theory as well as the ways her antiracist commitment was informed by her white subjectivity. Constellation element two used a tracing to render a broad interpretation of the aspects of Erin's thinking and doing that constituted antiracist pedagogy. The tracing demonstrated that Erin conceptualized antiracist pedagogy expansively, integrated antiracist pedagogy broadly, and enacted antiracist pedagogy consistently. She did so through course content, pedagogical practices, and institutional actions. Building from the contextualizing and tracing completed in this chapter, the next chapter extends and deepens analysis through engaging three core themes that characterized and complicated Erin's approach to antiracist pedagogy.

CHAPTER SIX: TENSIONS, ADJUSTMENTS, AND ENDURING QUESTIONS: FURTHER EXPLORING ONE WHITE INSTRUCTOR'S EFFORTS AT ANTIRACIST PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICE

Building from the contextualization and tracing offered in the previous chapter, this chapter engages three constellation elements developed through analysis of data collected during the ethnographic case study (phase two). While additional analysis could have been elucidated, I have selected that which, in my estimation, offers compelling and nuanced insight in critically considering the (im)possibility of white educators' efforts at antiracist pedagogy. Case study methodology is not designed to produce generalizable results; in this chapter, I am not suggesting that the exact dynamics explored are present in the classroom experiences of all white educators committed to antiracist pedagogy. Nor am I suggesting that any elements of the chapter represent so-called best practices or, on the contrary, bad practices, of antiracist teaching by white instructors. Rather, the constellation elements have been elucidated in such a way to illustrate enduring questions about the (im)possibility of white educators' efforts at antiracist pedagogy.

Constellation Element One: Whiteness-At-Work

As demonstrated in Chapter Five, Erin expressed a deep commitment to antiracism in her teaching and thought critically about her subjectivities as a white educator. A tracing of her approach to antiracist pedagogy illustrated that she conceptualized it expansively, integrated it broadly, and enacted it consistently through course content, pedagogical practices, and institutional action. Even so, racialized power dynamics were present, noticeable, and operating despite Erin's antiracist pedagogical

efforts. Yoon's (2012) concept "whiteness-at-work" is a powerful analytical frame for making meaning of specific racialized power dynamics I observed in elements of Erin's thinking and doing. First, constellation element one will further introduce the concept whiteness-at-work and describe its applicability to the analytical task at hand. After that, specific interactions and dynamics from the course will be analyzed as instances of whiteness-at-work.

Further Defining Whiteness-At-Work

Recall from Chapter One that whiteness-at-work refers to "discursive strategies that create paradoxes among teachers' beliefs, intentions, and actions" (Yoon, 2012, p. 587). Grounded in discourse theory, Yoon's framework builds from an understanding that whiteness is (re)constructed in everyday discourse and action that occurs within a structurally racist society. Discursive paradoxes are "voiced" through strategies of whiteness-at-work, "signaling the unfolding and perhaps fleeting moment of construction—even though whiteness also exists in the context prior to any single interaction" (p. 590). Yoon's research illustrated how educators at a public elementary school in the United States who were focused on educational equity (re)constructed whiteness in their conversations with one another and with students. Through this analytical frame, Yoon pointed to the ways that even well-meaning educators perpetuated racialized power formations in their thinking and doing: "Whiteness-at-work strategies can perform functions that, on first appearance, in reasoning, or by intention are anti-racist" (p. 590).

Like Yoon's work, my ethnographic research took place in a school context and focused on the thinking and doing of a classroom educator. In collecting data through

multiple and varied methods (e.g., participant-observation, ongoing formal (recorded) conversation, ongoing informal conversation, document review including email correspondence), I was well-positioned to develop holistic insight into Erin's thinking and doing in the classroom and beyond. The relationship between Erin and I was a third space in which we processed thoughts about whiteness and antiracist pedagogy, as well as specific experiences from the course. In this way, we engaged in a collaborative discourse practice that illustrated, elaborated, and shaped Erin's thinking and doing in the classroom. Yoon explained why whiteness-at-work offers an important methodological tool in furthering the critical study of whiteness in social settings such as schools:

> Whiteness is a social and iterative process; yet almost none of these studies [on constructions of whiteness in U.S. discourse structures] have examined how the discourse of pairs or groups of individuals constructs or challenges whiteness in the context of naturally occurring social settings, work, and interaction. Analyzing discourse affords *recognition of social structure and individual action, teacher and student, and intention and action*. Understanding not only the nature of whiteness but also how and why it achieves the multi-faceted ideological work that it does requires observing and analyzing interactions to be able to see, and dismantle, whiteness-at-work. (p. 591, emphasis added)

Interestingly, I was not familiar with Yoon's framework at the onset of my study. My colleague Dr. Naomi Nishi, who also studies whiteness and structural racism in postsecondary education, introduced me to whiteness-at-work when we collaborated on a project. The concept came to life in front of my eyes during my fifth participant-observation of Erin's course. My jottings taken during class that day include "W@W!!!"

in the margin next to my shorthand notes about a specific spoken interaction between Erin and a student. Analytically, something clicked for me in that moment. Yoon's framework so accurately described and explained what I was thinking and feeling as I observed the interaction. "W@W" showed up 10 more times in my fieldnotes and felt like such a powerful tool for naming a particular dynamic that I shared it with Erin during one of our debriefing conversations. As our work together continued, Erin herself began using the framework to make meaning of interactions she had with students and colleagues. For instance, Erin reflected on how she noticed whiteness working in the way that one of the white students in the class spoke to her:

> The thing that Andrew did of like, when he was talking to you, he's only [said with emphasis] talking to you. Every time he talked, it felt like it was creating this little white bubble. Like we are all of a sudden in this little bubble . . . He would reference, very kind of like exclusionary, cultural references [and] he would just assume that I would know something. (interview, December 19, 2019)

Erin's adapting the whiteness-at-work framework as a tool for reflecting on her classroom experience was not the only shift in her antiracist pedagogical practice that occurred during our work together. Later in the chapter, constellation element two will further elaborate how Erin's thinking and doing changed during the ethnographic case study. Having described whiteness-at-work and established its appropriateness as an analytical frame for the ethnographic case study component of my research, I will next apply the frame in analyzing three specific dynamics and interactions from the course.

Illustrations of Whiteness-At-Work

As previously elaborated, Erin expressed a commitment to antiracism in her teaching. At the same time, she exhibited "contradictions and paradox in actions or speech" (Yoon, 2012, p. 596) in her antiracist pedagogical efforts. These moments illustrate the ways that whiteness was always already operating on and in her thinking and doing. As Yoon noted, "Whiteness-at-work can be difficult to pinpoint because it is often a normative, unspoken assumption of how things are" (Yoon, 2012, p. 607). An advantage of my liminal yet immersed positionality in the classroom environment (i.e., not-teacher and not-student; able to fully observe and participate alongside students in a non-evaluative capacity) was that I could interpret and analyze complex dynamics in real time. My full attention and thinking were dedicated to noticing and analyzing what was happening around me. The interactions and dynamics I am making sense of as whiteness-at-work represent moments of rupture; times when, as an observer, I sensed misalignment between Erin's conceptual commitment to antiracist pedagogy and her thinking and doing as the course instructor. The three following illustrations of whiteness-at-work stood out to me as such because they were moments when I sensed that Erin's efforts at antiracist pedagogy were having the opposite effect of what she intended.

Erin and Andrew and Marx

The "aha" moment alluded to above, when my understanding of whiteness-at-work switched from theoretical to lived and embodied, happened early in the term. Part of the fifth class session was dedicated to further discussion of labor-based grading, including the opportunity for students to negotiate the terms of the grading contact. Scaffolding that conversation, Erin first asked students to reflect upon and discuss the

concept of equitable grading. She presented slides with questions such as, “What are grades for?” and, “What do they measure?” One slide included the concept “use value vs. exchange value.” Erin noted this was part of Marxist theory and asked if anyone was familiar with it.

Andrew, the only white man in the course, spoke up quickly and with excitement: “We studied Marx in high school!” Erin responded enthusiastically, inviting Andrew to share his understanding of the concept. Andrew responded that he was not quite confident to articulate that specific idea, and Erin briefly described the concept and its connection to grading. The moment was fleeting, but energy in the classroom was poignant. It felt like Erin and Andrew were engaging in their own excited exchange, talking directly with one another as if nobody else was in the room. It was at once a moment of connection between them (shared excitement and common interest in a specific idea) and, in my interpretation, a moment of disconnection from the 17 other students in the course. Notably, after Andrew indicated he was not confident to explain the concept, Jada, a Black woman, said quietly, “We studied Marx in high school, too.” I was sitting next to Jada and heard her comment but doubt that many others in the classroom did. I noted that it was unusual for Jada to voice a comment quietly and under her breath, given that she typically asserted her ideas and questions with confidence (fieldnotes, September 19, 2019).

The thought that popped into my mind immediately as I watched this interaction unfold was, “*This* is whiteness-at-work.” The racialized element of the moment was obvious to me. Erin (embodying whiteness and teacherness) and Andrew (the only white man in the classroom) excitedly connected over theory created by a white man. Aside

from one white woman student and me, everyone else in the classroom was a student of color. Whether it was because they were uninterested in Marx or not confident in sharing or simply unengaged, no other students offered comments in the group discussion. The out-of-character nature in which Jada responded suggested to me that there was something about the dynamic that prevented her from speaking up even while she had something to say.

Erin and Andrew's excited exchange about Marx was brief yet palpable. Whiteness operated in and on the moment; it was visible and felt even amidst a larger discussion on equitable grading and the influence of white language supremacy on standards of writing and, therefore, the grading of writing. Based on my ethical values as a researcher committed to antiracism and given the methodological demands of critical collaborative ethnography, I did share with Erin my observation and analysis of the interaction. This included sharing what I heard Jada say quietly in response. The second constellation element of this chapter, which explores shifts in Erin's thinking and doing over the course of our work together, will address Erin's reaction to my feedback about this exchange and subsequent changes I observed in her speech and actions.

De-Racing Students' Comments

A second illustration of whiteness-at-work occurred while Erin facilitated a synthesizing activity designed to help students identify themes across four assigned readings. The readings, which were essays and chapter excerpts by Audre Lorde, bell hooks, Paulo Freire, and Asa B. Inoue, each addressed structural oppression. All but the Freire excerpt engaged the concepts of race and racism explicitly. After having students work in small groups to identify themes from one specific reading and then connect with

a classmate from a different small group to compare themes across two readings, Erin transitioned to large group discussion. Standing at the whiteboard, she invited students to share what came up in their conversations. As multiple students offered their insights about the readings, Erin captured their thoughts on the whiteboard using words and phrases. Jada, a Black woman, was one of the first students to speak up. She shared that she thought Lorde was talking "specifically to people of color" as her audience and that multiple of the assigned readings spoke to the ways that "Black people are oppressed in education" (fieldnotes, September 19, 2019). While Jada spoke Erin listened and nodded as she jotted words and phrases on the whiteboard. Erin wrote the word "audience" and underneath that listed "oppressed/oppressors," "minorities," and "systems." Racialized language was absent in Erin's summary of Jada's comments, even though Jada spoke specifically about people of color and anti-Black oppression in education. Jada had explicitly named race and racism in multiple ways, yet Erin captured her ideas using deracialized terms. As the activity continued, more students contributed their ideas while Erin took notes on the board. Kathy, a Hmong woman, discussed "white standards" in education, and Darius, a Black man, named the impact of "white standard English" discussed in the Inoue reading (fieldnotes, September 19, 2019). Erin's writing on the board to capture Kathy and Darius' comments was "flawed education systems."

It is notable that three students, all students of color, explicitly named race and/or racism in synthesizing assigned readings that also engaged race and racism, and Erin captured their responses on the board utilizing race-neutral language (i.e., oppressed/oppressors, systems, minorities). I noted the observation in fieldnote jottings and wondered to myself if Erin was aware of this action, or if her eliding occurred sub- or

unconsciously in processing students' comments and representing them on the board. Regardless of the degree of consciousness with which Erin acted, I understood her action as a silencing. I wondered how Jada, Kathy, and Darius felt about Erin's interpretation and representation of their thoughts. I was also puzzled that Erin did not engage the concept of white language supremacy, in particular, as it came right out of the Inoue reading and was directly connected to the insights offered by Jada, Kathy, and Darius (fieldnotes, September 19, 2019).

The silencing which occurred in Erin's facilitation of class discussion is an illustration of whiteness-at-work. In her research, Yoon found that "whiteness-at-work functioned as a constraining influence *even in the midst of* conversations [among white educators] about cultural competence" (p. 608, emphasis added). In a similar effect, whiteness was at work in Erin's eliding explicitly racialized and power-conscious student commentary offered in the midst of a class discussion *she invited and facilitated* about structural racism in education. Applying Yoon's framework is a powerful analytical tool for identifying the moments when, paradoxically, white educators perpetuate the very racialized power structures we are striving to interrupt with and through antiracist pedagogy. As Yoon noted in summarizing the findings in her research, "whiteness-at-work maintained silences in conversations that were ironically intended to discuss race talk" (p. 608).

Racialized Interpretations of Student Participation

A third illustration of whiteness-at-work can be seen in Erin's initial meaning making of a particular student dynamic. Unlike the previous two illustrations, this was not a discrete interaction or a particular action in class but rather a thread of discussion

between Erin and I about our respective interpretations of an ongoing classroom dynamic. I had a practice of inviting Erin to process her thoughts, feelings, and tensions during our check-in conversations. On this occasion, Erin noted her observation that the same couple of voices tended to dominate class discussion and expressed her desire for more students to share. When I asked her what patterns she was noticing regarding student airtime, Erin shared her concern about a particular student's pattern of engagement in the course:

> I mean [in class] today, Jada—I think I might talk to her a little bit . . . just because . . . I think she's wonderful and, yes, absolutely one of those critically conscious students. And I also see the automatic like, "I'm going to respond to every question" kind of thing. So I think specifically, that might be a conversation I want to have and that I'd want to think about, "How do I frame that?" Because I've done that before. I'll just kind of be like, "Hey, it's so great that you are . . ." you know. "You have these amazing . . ." I try to find ways of doing that. (interview, September 26, 2019)

Additional context is necessary to understand why Erin's meaning making of Jada's behavior in class is an illustration of whiteness-at-work. Jada, a Black woman, was a vocal and engaged student who shared thoughtfully and confidently. She often offered responses to all or most of the questions Erin posed in class discussion. And, importantly, her pattern of sharing was contextualized by another student's mode of engaging. Andrew, the only white man in the course, also spoke up often and confidently. He, too, offered thoughtful comments that reflected a degree of critical consciousness about structural oppression. From my perspective as a participant-observer, a particular

dynamic between Jada and Andrew had emerged and was influencing class discussion in such a way that other students were less likely to speak up. This fieldnote excerpt describes my interpretation and analysis of the dynamic:

> Andrew seems to be understanding himself and seems to be perceived by classmates (and Erin?) as a "knower" or "authority" in the classroom. Jada seems eager to share ideas and to be seen as a "knower" as well. The pattern I'm noticing that leads me to this analysis is how Andrew is quite often the first to reply to a question posed by Erin, followed immediately by Jada who does not dispute his answer but offers a different take and/or more complicated analysis. Andrew and Jada both direct their talk at Erin when speaking, based on eye contact. I get the feeling both are interested in being competent, engaged students; knowers who are respected by their peers and noticed by their teacher . . . I see them both performing "good student" in unique ways, while also seeming to genuinely be engaged and care to a certain degree about the material. I am intrigued and slightly alarmed by how much airtime Andrew takes up in the classroom ecosystem particularly considering he is the only white man in a room of 20 people. He does not strike me as resistant; in fact, he seems to be quite conscious and manages fairly well (considering his age and access to power a la identity formations) at not talking over or interrupting others. He has on occasion invited others into discussion and encouraged dissent after sharing his ideas. My read is that Erin's engagement with Andrew is familiar and comfortable, a function of white habitus. When Jada offers ideas and insights that are, perhaps,

> more profound or thoughtful than Andrew's, it is possible that Erin cannot/does not recognize them as such. (fieldnotes, September 26, 2019)

With this emergent analysis on my mind, I was struck when Erin expressed to me her concern about Jada's pattern of participation but did not mention Andrew's. Importantly, my liminal positionality in the classroom environment (i.e., not-student, not-teacher) and ability to focus all of my attention on observing multiple and complex dynamics (without any responsibility for performing teacher or student) afforded me additional information and insight. Following Erin's articulation of her concern about Jada's pattern of speaking up in class, I cautiously offered my (different) interpretation. As noted previously, offering to share honestly about what I observed and how I was making meaning of it was important to me ethically, given my commitments to antiracism and in line with my methodological approach. Erin eagerly expressed her desire to hear my read on the dynamic. To illustrate the discourse between Erin and I during this conversation, the data are presented in transcript form:

> finn: It's interesting to get insight into how you're understanding Jada showing up in the class. 'Cause I think I have a really different take—
>
> Erin: Interesting.
>
> finn: —on what I see Jada doing. Like, I'm not, and I don't need to share this, but—
>
> Erin: No, can you please tell me? I want to know. This is really helpful.
>
> finn: Okay. I'd be curious to hear if you're like, "No, I think you're way off."
>
> Erin: Okay.
>
> finn: 'Cause I'm, you know, I could be. But what I see is Andrew kind of emerging as what I'm calling in my own meaning-making the "voice of authority" in the class. Because he does seem to get along well with other

students, from what I can tell. Students of color and the one other white student, based on my assumptions. And he does know a lot.

Erin: Yeah.

finn: Like you said, he knows the right words, he has a critical viewpoint. And so oftentimes I notice when you pose an open-ended question, Andrew will be the first to respond. And just in my sort of, the ways that I'm tracking, then right after Andrew responds, Jada will respond.

Erin: Ohhhh, yeah.

finn: And I wonder if Jada also—I think Jada has a deep desire to be seen as a knower.

Erin: Yes.

finn: To be seen by you [said with emphasis] as a knower.

Erin: Yeah, yeah

finn: She often also directs her responses to you specifically. And so sometimes I wonder if she feels like—especially when Andrew's just said something brilliant—that she wants to show like, "I'm also engaged with this. I also have something to say about this."

Erin: Yeah, yeah.

finn: And so not to sort of dissuade you from talking to Jada. And I guess the question I might reflect back to you as an observer—

Erin: [interrupts] Why was she the one that I was seeing as—yeah. Oh my—I'm so—thank you so much.

finn: Yeah.

Erin: Yeah, yeah. [pause] That's really . . . [sighing sound] Okay. That's really helpful.

(interview, September 26, 2019)

Unlike the previous two illustrations, in which whiteness-at-work was evident in Erin's classroom teaching actions, this illustration reveals the workings of whiteness in her interpretation and meaning making of Jada's classroom engagement. Erin initially

perceived Jada's participation as "too much," as a problem in need of correcting. Even while she acknowledged that Jada was "absolutely one of those critically conscious students," Erin felt compelled to encourage Jada to speak up less often. Andrew's participation, on the other hand, did not register for Erin as problematic even though it mirrored, in many ways, Jada's pattern. Race and gender dynamics cannot be ignored in drawing this comparison. Whiteness was at work in shaping Erin's differing perception of a given behavior enacted by a white man and a Black woman. Anti-Black racism in education positions Black students as problems; disruptors in the learning environment, not contributors. Whiteness was indeed at work in Erin's initial read of the dynamic, and contributed to her perception that Jada ought to take up less airtime in class.

Whiteness-at-work is a powerful frame for analyzing teaching behaviors and situated discourses through an antiracist lens. As a frame, it reveals "how whiteness is put into motion in a given moment among two or more people [and it] capture[s] the nature of whiteness as a process that can be found in daily interactions" (Yoon, 2012, p. 608). As with any analytical tool, its utility and implementation are influenced by the subjectivities of the analyst. At the same time that Erin's antiracist teaching efforts are impacted by whiteness-at-work, so too is my analysis of her efforts. It is necessary to name the limiting effect of my white imaginary in noticing, interpreting, and analyzing racialized dynamics. Yoon asserted that working to make whiteness more visible by focusing on "the paradoxical nature of whiteness strategies in discourse, specifically through contradictions between intentions and action" (p. 607) is a necessary and powerful approach to disrupting structural racism in education. Her frame is particularly useful in analyzing the thinking and doing of white educators who express a commitment

to antiracist pedagogy, for "Whiteness processes can be enacted with consequences for students and teachers even with the best of intentions and with varying levels of cultural competence and intellectual understanding of racism and whiteness" (Yoon, 2012, p. 607).

Constellation Element Two: Shifts in Erin's Thinking and Doing

The second constellation element explores the evolution of Erin's conceptions and teaching actions (i.e., her thinking and doing) over the course of our work together. It is not an exhaustive portrayal of the changes I observed, but rather a focused representation building from the previous section. I will re-visit the three illustrations of whiteness-at-work elucidated in constellation element one, describing Erin's responses to my observations and initial analysis as well as the subsequent adjustments I noticed in her thinking and doing. Following that, two examples of broad shifts in her approach to antiracist pedagogy will be detailed. Prior to describing shifts I heard and observed in Erin's approach to antiracist pedagogy, it is necessary to describe the evolution of our relationship with one another in the context of this research.

Evolving Relationship Dynamic and Discourse

In line with critical collaborative ethnography, I worked to center mutuality in building and deepening a relationship with Erin (whom I conceptualize and refer to not as a "participant" but as a "collaborator"). As an integral element of my methodological commitments and values-based research practice, I strove to continuously and self-reflexively consider my positionality as I negotiated the spaces and conversations Erin and I shared. The dynamic between us shifted markedly from our first interview (April 3, 2019) during phase one of the study to our final interview (February 13, 2020) the term

following my semester-long ethnographic case study in her course (phase two). (Refer to Chapter Three for an elaborated discussion of the methods employed in phase two).

One noticeable shift from April 2019 to February 2020 was the nature of our discourse during interviews. Initially, Erin demonstrated behaviors that might suggest seeking validation or approval, such as ending sentences in a tone denoting a question. She seemed often to be searching for the "right" words, even while intellectually critiquing optics and performativity. As time progressed, our conversations shifted toward mutuality. Transcripts demonstrated a move away from question/answer conversational flow toward a more organic style. I disclosed more of my ideas and experiences, and asked Erin more pointed questions about what I was observing in class.

A notable turning point in the evolution of our discourse was the first time I offered Erin constructive feedback based on my observation and initial analysis of her efforts at antiracist pedagogy. (This was the conversation in which I offered a different read on Jada's pattern of engagement in the course, discussed at length in the previous section of this chapter). During and after sharing my perspective, I felt nervous that I had upset Erin and possibly damaged our relationship. Quite the opposite dynamic occurred. Erin heard what I had offered, reflected on it, and made adjustments in her teaching actions (her reactions and adjustments related to my shared feedback will be elaborated below). At the very beginning of our subsequent interview, Erin expressed gratitude for my sharing in our previous conversation and described the reflection and changes in her teaching actions it had evoked. She asked that I continue to share feedback like that, and in particular was curious if I had noticed any changes in her teaching actions since our

previous conversation (interview, October 3, 2019). The longer we spoke that day, the more I sensed a shared ease and comfort in engaging in give-and-take conversation.

The shift in our rhetorical style marked a pivot in our relational dynamic and had implications for the possibilities of our work together. I began calling our ongoing discussions "recorded conversations," as the word "interview," which evokes a fairly unidirectional flow of ideas, no longer felt an accurate depiction. As we moved deeper into our work together, we established strong rapport and organically created the collaborative and conversational connection I had imagined when first dreaming of the ethnographic component of the study. We conversed with increased ease and flow, and our conversations were punctuated with more levity and laughter. I perceived Erin to be concerned little, if at all, with trying to "get it right" in choosing her words. Our evolving dynamic diverged from and disrupted dominant, strictly-bounded, power-laden conceptions of researcher/researched. Such a departure felt, to me, destabilizing at times yet also rich and generative and reciprocal.

Evidence of the shift in our relational dynamic and discourse can also be seen in the increased frequency and expanded modalities of our communication. About one month into the term, Erin and I began communicating more frequently and more informally. In the first few weeks of the course, we greeted one another before and after class sessions but did not communicate extensively outside of our scheduled, formal (recorded) conversations. Toward the end of September, we developed a pattern of chatting casually after most class sessions. These unrecorded conversations began once students had left the classroom as we worked together to reset the tables and chairs, and they often continued as we walked together from the classroom to Erin's office. Most

often these conversations felt like an extension of class, a sort of mini check-in about something that occurred. Occasionally, we discussed events or dynamics outside of the course such as Erin's upcoming faculty meeting address. One day, I shared anxiety I was experiencing about an upcoming paper presentation at a national conference and Erin offered helpful perspective and advice (fieldnotes, October 22, 2019). These casual, consistent conversations contributed to the evolution of our relationship toward more natural and reciprocal engagement.

In early October, Erin and I began conversing over email in ways much more substantial than our previous logistical messages. I had not anticipated written exchange as an element of our collaboration or my data collection, yet email communication emerged organically as an additional medium of informal discussion. Erin initiated our email conversations, typically writing to me to process her thinking and/or request feedback on a particular topic (e.g., her address at the faculty meeting, a struggle she was experiencing with labor-based grading). Erin expressed that writing was her preferred mode of reflecting and synthesizing. I perceived her messages and requests for feedback to be an element of her ongoing effort to interrogate her thinking and doing related to antiracist pedagogy.

The increased frequency with which we conversed, expanded modalities by which we conversed, and evolved topics about which we conversed illustrate a shift in our relational dynamic and a deepening of our shared discourse. As the dynamic between us became increasingly collaborative, Erin seemed to be more comfortable asking me questions and bouncing ideas off of me. As we talked and connected more organically and outside of "official" data collection modes, I was able to get a stronger sense of what

she was struggling with, where she was feeling stuck, and what kinds of adjustments she was making in her teaching related to our conversations. The next two sections of this constellation element will explore changes I observed in Erin's antiracist pedagogical thinking and doing over the course of our work together. The next section of constellation element two will outline Erin's response and adjustments regarding the three illustrations of whiteness-at-work discussed above, while the final section will explore broader shifts in Erin's approach to antiracist pedagogy.

Shifts in Erin's Thinking and Doing: Responding to Whiteness-At-Work

The first constellation element of this chapter described three instances of whiteness-at-work in the course. I shared my observation and analysis of these dynamics with Erin during our ongoing recorded conversations. In all three examples, her response to my feedback and the subsequent changes I observed in her teaching actions illustrate shifts in her thinking and doing. This section explores Erin's responses and adjustments to each instance of whiteness-at-work described earlier in the chapter.

Andrew and the "White Bubble"

When I shared with Erin my interpretation that something felt "funny" about her in-class exchange with Andrew regarding Marxist theory, I utilized Yoon's (2012) whiteness-at-work framework:

> finn: There have been moments, multiple moments, where I see . . . I learned this framework recently called whiteness-at-work. [It's] when we see like, literally in front of us, whiteness operating. There was a moment in class, I think it was last week, where I was like, "Whiteness-at-work!" You were bringing up [a] Marxist concept when you were talking about labor-based grading and you asked them if they're familiar with Marx or Marxism.
>
> Erin: Oh, yeah.

finn: And Andrew seemed to be the only student who initially had anything to say. From an instructional perspective, I'm sure it was exciting that someone else was like, "Oh yeah, Marx!" And there was this exchange between the two of you.

Erin: Oooooo, yeah.

finn: Which to me, seemed like, okay, there's this connection right now of instructor, right, white instructor, like power authority person and then white student—

Erin: Oh, yeah [whispered]

finn: —who seems to be the only person who knows what the heck is [laughter] going on right now, or [said with emphasis] is speaking up about it. And you probably didn't hear this, there's a lot going on in the classroom, but right after Andrew shared . . . Jada, pretty quietly, which is out of character for her to say something kind of under her breath, said something to the effect of, "Well we also studied Marxism in my class."

Erin: Ooooooohhhh.
(interview, September 26, 2019)

This was the first instance that I offered Erin constructive feedback based on my observation and initial analysis of dynamics in the course. Erin's immediate response to hearing my take on the exchange with Andrew was not to defend or explain her actions, which is so often the case when white people receive constructive feedback that points to our racialized or racist impact. Rather, Erin seemed to thoughtfully take in the information. Though she did not verbalize a response to the whiteness-at-work framework in that conversation, Erin thanked me in our next recorded conversation for having shared my observation and feedback (interview, October 3, 2019). Additionally, I noticed an immediate shift in her approach to engaging Andrew in class.

In the next class session following our September 26 conversation, Erin initiated a group discussion about an assigned essay that dealt explicitly with themes of race and racism in higher education. Jada responded first and Andrew spoke up next, not building

on Jada's comment but offering an unrelated idea. After he finished, Erin did a sort of pivot by asking the class, "What do the rest of you think?" I interpreted this move as a way of acknowledging Andrew's comment without re-iterating or re-centering his voice by inviting others' voices and perspectives. Jada spoke up again, but dialogue was a bit stifled; there were extended silences and mostly just Andrew and Jada's voices were contributing. After a marked silence, Andrew posed a question/comment to the class; he asked if others had thoughts that they were hesitant to share out loud because "this [race and racism] can be a hard topic to talk about." He elaborated that he did not have a problem talking about "it" (race and racism) and shared that his high school class had discussed "it" and that was in a predominantly white classroom. When Andrew finished speaking, Erin asked him directly, "What are you asking?" Andrew restated his invitation for people to share their thoughts and indicated that he had a question. As he was about to state his question, Erin interjected and reframed the classroom discussion, effectively redirecting the conversation in such a way that Andrew's question was not articulated or acknowledged. The framing "shut down" or "silenced" feels too harsh to capture what Erin did following Andrew's comment and indication of having a question, though her action was a clear and firm redirect that effectively de-centered Andrew's commentary and curiosity. Following Erin's redirect, Jada spoke up first. She shared how she related to the essay personally, relaying an experience of having been told by a white male teacher that her opinion did not belong in a particular piece of writing. (fieldnotes, October 1, 2019)

I noticed that Erin's engagement with Andrew in this class discussion was characteristically different than in the past. In particular, her response to his comment and

interruption of his indicated question stood out to me. In our next recorded conversation, Erin brought this exchange up right away:

> The moment that I've been replaying in my head over and over was when Andrew asked the question basically . . . I mean he obviously didn't put it this way, but basically I think he was kind of saying, "You are all students of color, why don't you want to talk about race?" (interview, October 3, 2019)

I shared that the same moment had stood out to me, and asked Erin to talk about her experience of Andrew's comment/question and how she chose to respond to him. Erin replied, "Well, yeah, I cut him off" (interview, October 3, 2019). She went on to explain that she was not comfortable with the insinuation in his comment that students of color in the class were hesitant to talk about race and racism because it was difficult. Erin did not want to let that comment go unaddressed and decided to interject as Andrew was about to pose his question:

> I got really nervous in that moment of like, if he takes it somewhere else, which is very possible, and we don't get back to that or we don't revisit that [comment], that's going to be a problem. I was worried a little bit that it was going to set him up as the discussion leader on race. And I've seen him doing that in small groups too, kind of taking on that discussion leader role. Part of it was, I was nervous about being complicit and handing him that power in that moment. (interview, October 3, 2019)

Erin's reflective narrative of her thinking and doing in the exchange with Andrew illustrates an awareness of how whiteness was operating in and on the moment. Her interjection preventing Andrew from stating his question was noteworthy because Erin

demonstrated a consistent practice throughout the course of not interrupting or cutting off students when she facilitated class discussion.

In our conversation, Erin expressed doubt about her decision to "cut him off" and wondered if she should have circled back to Andrew's unstated question later in class (interview, October 3, 2019). I could relate to her self-doubt, having myself experienced a similar teaching dynamic with white male students and questioning after-the-fact my approach to handling it. While I could empathize, I also understood Erin's self-doubt as whiteness-at-work. I offered a different read: "We all heard Andrew say, 'I have a question,' and there was a clear pivot away from that. Which is certainly a de-centering of Andrew's interests" (interview, October 3, 2019). I went on to share my teaching experience of openly asking two white men who were dominating class discussion to step back so that others could contribute. After conveying to Erin my immediate concern that I had inappropriately "silenced" the white men, I shared a shift in my thinking over time: "But I wonder, how many times do I do that subconsciously to students of color and don't think of it as a 'shutting down?' I think of it as 'getting back on topic.'" Erin replied, "Yeah, that's a good point" (interview, October 3, 2019). This exchange contextualizes shifts in Erin's mode of interacting with Andrew as well as her meaning-making of those experiences.

Even while she initially expressed doubt about her decision, Erin's engagement with Andrew in this classroom exchange was markedly different from her dynamic with him during the conversation about Marx just a week prior. As the semester wore on, I noticed continued changes in the ways Erin talked about Andrew during our recorded conversations. For example, she seemed to be employing the whiteness-at-work frame to

describe a particular before-class interaction between herself, Andrew, and Raquel, a woman of color in the course. Erin described that the three of them arrived to the classroom early and had started a conversation about the price of textbooks:

> I was asking both of them questions, Andrew was just doing that thing where he was talking so intensely directly to me [said with emphasis], as if Raquel wasn't even there. I just saw the eye contact and things—she just kind of went on her phone, as if like, "I'm not in this conversation anymore." . . . I felt bad, because if someone is doing that—their body is oriented towards you, they're making that intense eye contact—I naturally respond to that. I'm going to do the same thing, my body is naturally gonna give that orientation back. And so I was noticing how I was responding to that. It wasn't an important conversation, we were just chatting. But I was like, "How do I re-engage Raquel to acknowledge that that's happening?" (interview, November 14, 2019)

Erin observed in the moment the operation of whiteness in everyday conversation, and understood the significance of the moment despite its being a casual conversation. In processing with me, she acknowledged and problematized what might be her automatic response: to mirror Andrew's level of intensity and nonverbal communication behaviors. Understanding the impact doing so would have on Raquel, Erin noted the importance of intervening, so to speak, to change the dynamic of the conversation.

At the end of the semester, Erin reflected about moments in the course when she was acutely aware of whiteness. She named that whenever she was talking with Andrew, whiteness felt very salient. I asked her a follow-up question, and her response illustrated a shift in her thinking about Andrew from the start of the term to the end:

finn: When you were talking with Andrew, what were some of the ways that you were noticing or feeling your whiteness?

Erin: I always felt like I was like managing his [whiteness] a little bit.

finn: Okay. [laughter]

Erin: I felt like I was managing his . . . or trying to manage his [whiteness] a little. [laughter] Like keep it within a certain [laughter] boundary, I don't know. Just trying not to let it leak out. [laughter] (interview, December 19, 2019)

This moment in our conversation was both humorous and poignant; we each knew Andrew quite well by this point and could understand the dynamic Erin was describing. She went on to articulate whiteness-at-work in her own words based on her overall experience with Andrew in the course:

> What we were talking about with Andrew, the thing that he did of like, when he was talking to you, he's only talking to you. Every time he talked, it felt like it was just creating this little white bubble. Like we are all of a sudden in this little bubble . . . I think it's probably just the way he talks to everyone. But within that context, it always kind of felt like . . . just like, I think, questions about silence, and the things that he was talking about and the things he would reference, that were very kind of like exclusionary. (interview, December 19, 2019)

Erin especially felt her own whiteness in the classroom when Andrew would engage her in the "white bubble" way. Her description of her discomfort in these moments marks a shift in her thinking over the course of the term. There was also a shift in Erin's approach to engaging Andrew in class, as described above. The shifts I observed in Erin's thinking and doing related to Andrew occurred after I first used whiteness-at-work to frame and share my initial analysis of what I was observing in the course. Next, I will continue an

analysis of changes in Erin's approach to antiracist pedagogy by describing her response to the second illustration of whiteness-at-work offered previously in this chapter.

Capturing Students' Comments

As described in constellation element one, Erin used race-neutral language to capture explicitly racialized comments from students of color. When I shared with Erin my observation that she had de-raced students' comments when writing them on the board, her immediate response was an acknowledgement of her behavior and reflection on her own limits as a white educator:

> That's just straight up unconscious racism right there. I'll say that. Yeah, for sure. For sure. [pause] When I'm [writing] on the board, I'm thinking, "How do I summarize?" That's what's in my head. Like, what's the summary, right? And so sometimes those complex ideas that are using that explicit language isn't gonna . . . because my own assumptions or ideas about, "How do I summarize?" [are] going to cut that out. I'm going to think, "What's the bigger picture? What's the core concept?" And because of the way I'm used to thinking about race and the way I'm used to engaging with that explicitly racialized language in that moment, that's going to be a . . . it's not going to make the cut. (interview, September 26, 2019)

Shortly after sharing this reflection, Erin thought aloud about receiving my feedback and contemplated what she might do differently in the future:

> That's fascinating, that's so great [to know]. I would never have . . . yeah. And now I'm thinking I really do need to be more conscious about time, because I think I'm not necessarily giving myself enough flexibility to feel like I can pick

> up on those things. What I'm thinking as you're saying this is maybe what I could do is, the first round [of discussion] is, okay, write explicit—like only the words students are saying on the board and then write a synthesis after. So instead of, "Great, here's now all these words, let's go on to something else," there could still be, "Okay look, this is . . ." Go back [to the written words]. "This is what we call structural oppression." (interview, September 26, 2019)

Immediately upon hearing my observation, Erin acknowledged the influence of internalized racism on her teaching behavior and pointed to the limits of her capacity to understand and engage with explicitly racialized ideas in-the-moment. These elements of her response illustrate white responsibility-taking and white humility. Shortly thereafter, Erin moved into imagining how she might adjust her current teaching behavior to counteract unconscious racism. This element of her response demonstrates Erin's refusal to become overwhelmed by or stuck in white guilt, but rather to focus on how to prevent future harm.

While these shifts were conceptual in nature, they were followed by observed adjustments in Erin's teaching actions. In the very next class session, I noted that Erin verbally re-iterated students' ideas more readily and captured themes on the board using their exact words (fieldnotes, October 1, 2019). As the course progressed, this shift persisted; I did not observe another instance of Erin de-racing students' comments for the remainder of the semester. Rather, I observed Erin repeating words or phrases verbatim and asking follow-up questions when students shared explicitly racialized comments that invited them to expand or elaborate. The adjusted pattern was particularly evident in Erin's classroom interactions with Jada. Next, shifts in Erin's thinking and doing will be

further elaborated by describing her response to the third illustration of whiteness-at-work: Erin's racialized perceptions of student engagement.

Interrupting Internalized Racism: A Reimagination of Jada's Mode of Participation

In constellation element one, I described Erin's initial impression that Jada, a Black woman student, was dominating class discussion. I analyzed her perception of Jada's participation using the frame whiteness-at-work, and described the conversation with Erin in which I shared my interpretation of the dynamic. Erin's subsequent response to my observation and analysis demonstrates shifts in her thinking and doing. Changes in her thinking were evident in our next recorded conversation, which Erin started off with this reflection:

> It was really useful to realize that what was unconsciously in my head at the moment was, "There's these two students that are talking a lot and kind of taking up a little bit more space." And it was the student of color that I was thinking I needed to do something about. So that was like, "Okay" [disappointed sigh]. So thanks. It was good [to hear your perspective]. That was really good. (interview, October 3, 2019)

Erin acknowledged the problematic and racialized nature of her thinking. She expressed gratitude for receiving the feedback and went on to share the following narrative about a conversation she and Jada had in the time between our previous recorded conversation, in which I shared the feedback, and the current conversation:

> [After class] on Tuesday, Jada stayed back a little bit and so I was chatting with her. I did this thing that felt a little manipulative still, in a way . . . I basically was thanking her, telling her specifically things she had shared that I really

> appreciated and that have been really meaningful. Because we kind of got into a conversation about it, I was like, "I've been trying to think about ways to try to help everyone feel more comfortable sharing the kinds of things you are, because I see them bringing so much to the class." And I said, "Do you have ideas?" . . . I was trying to ask her, "From your perspective as a student in the class, do you have thoughts or suggestions on ways to bring everyone into this?" And she was like, "Oh! I was TA in chemistry and these are the kinds of things we did." It was cool because she was identifying in the teacher perspective and suggested using a ball, the talking stick kind of idea. And she pointed out, she said, "The time that we went around and wrote stuff on the board first, and then came back, a lot more people participated." And I was like, "That's a good point." And it was true. She had noticed more people were talking when there was an activity ahead of time. And I said, "You're right. Today I just, I started you all cold." . . . It seemed really good because she was giving me useful suggestions and observations that now I feel like I'm implementing those things more. My hope is that it doesn't feel like a critique or silencing, but rather a, "I want your voice and everyone else's too, because that's so thoughtful." Which feels very different than what was in my head last week. (interview, October 3, 2019)

In this narrative, multiple elements are indicative of shifts in Erin's thinking about Jada. Erin's approach to the conversation was not framed as corrective intervention but rather collaborative problem-solving. She positioned Jada as a knower in two ways: as a contributor of powerful insights in the course, and as a thought-partner in imagining ways to foster student participation in course discussions. Erin maintained a power analysis of

the conversation even while she expressed appreciation that it unfolded the way it did. She started the narrative by reflecting that what she did "felt a little manipulative still" (interview, October 3, 2019) before going on to relay the conversation with Jada. In doing so, Erin demonstrated an ability to embrace the paradox that her effort to interrupt her initial racist interpretation of the dynamic may still have been, on some level, manipulative.

Erin shared further reflection during our recorded conversation, connecting her actions during the conversation with Jada to receiving feedback from me in our previous recorded conversation. She also articulated a retrospective critique of her initial concern about Jada's mode of engagement and her inclination to address that concern with Jada:

> Thank you [for sharing your perspective on the situation with Jada] because I would not have done it that way if we hadn't talked. At all. [pause] What I was thinking about after we talked was, "Yes, that is the point. I do [said with emphasis] really value what she's doing. I do [said with emphasis] want that. That's the whole point, is that I want that kind of reaction and engagement from students." And so, in reframing that for myself . . . it's not about asking her to be quiet. That's the exact opposite of what I want to be doing. (interview, October 3, 2019)

This reflexive narrative demonstrated shifts in Erin's understanding of and reaction to Jada's pattern of participation in class, as well as a significant shift from her initial intention in talking with Jada.

Along with these demonstrated changes in Erin's thinking were observed adjustments in her doing. Jada's pattern of responding to nearly every discussion question

continued, though Erin's response shifted. Previously in the course, on the third or fourth time Jada shared in a discussion Erin would respond by pivoting away from her comment and inviting others to share. She would often say, "What do others think?" or something along those lines in an effort to invite more voices into discussion. In the first class session after I shared feedback with Erin, she took a different approach. The students were discussing an assigned essay in small groups; when Erin transitioned to large group discussion, Jada was the first to speak. Erin listened to Jada's comment, validated what Jada had shared, and reiterated the importance of the point Jada had made. Jada shared again immediately, addressing the essay's focus on race identity and racism and invoking her identity as an African American woman. She shared that she related to the essay personally, relaying an experience of having been told by a white male teacher that her opinion did not belong in a particular piece of writing. Erin again listened and validated Jada's sharing, then captured themes from Jada's story on the board and linked the themes to the assigned essay. Erin uplifted Jada's insight about race and racism in education as a frame for discussing the essay, and then invited other students to share their thoughts about that topic (fieldnotes, October 1, 2019).

This specific interaction occurred in the first class session after I shared an alternative read from Erin's initial interpretation of Jada's participation. I recorded in that day's fieldnotes an observed shift in how Erin engaged with Jada in relation to how she engaged with Andrew. As had been typical, Jada and Andrew spoke up most often in class that day and went back and forth offering comments. When Jada shared, Erin consistently reiterated her ideas and captured her themes using Jada's own words; when Andrew shared, Erin was more inclined to pivot away from his idea or question and

redirect the discussion by inviting others ideas. This was a noticeable shift from Erin's previous approach to facilitating discussion (fieldnotes, October 1, 2019).

As the term progressed, Erin continued to reiterate Jada's ideas and points more readily and capture Jada's comments using her own words. I understood her teaching actions as an effort to position Jada as a knower. Separate but related, Erin also adjusted her facilitation practices in a way that seemed to deemphasize Andrew's authority and knowledge. For example, while discussing the Afrofuturist novel *Binti* by Nnedi Okorafor, Erin asked students why they thought the author had invoked the history of colonialism in Africa in framing the story. When Jada shared that it reminded her of the book *Things Fall Apart*, Andrew responded immediately with an assertive and loud "Yes!" Ignoring Andrew's interjection, Erin turned her body toward Jada and asked, "How so?" (fieldnotes, October 15, 2019). I understood Erin's teaching move as intended to validate Jada's comment and invite her to elaborate without legitimizing Andrew's response. In my analysis, Erin's action recentered Jada as a contributor and knower without redirecting the conversation away from Jada toward Andrew. These examples of adjustments in Erin's doing in the classroom complement the already articulated shifts in her thinking about Jada's modes and patterns of engagement.

The first constellation element of this chapter illustrated instances of whiteness-at-work in the course, and the second constellation element has thus far addressed Erin's responses and adjustments related to those instances. Yoon (2012) asserted the importance of both recognizing and interrupting whiteness-at-work in educational contexts:

> For scholars and educators, understanding whiteness-at-work is only the first step in the process of deconstruction and decentering of whiteness; it is the step of self-consciously seeing and naming social dynamics. Recognizing whiteness-at-work can become a tool for educators to interrupt taken-for-granted ideologies and actions and redirect discourse toward socially just aims to support educational opportunities for their students. (p. 609)

Extending the analysis offered in the first constellation element of the chapter, this section has thus far described shifts in Erin's thinking and doing by revisiting three specific illustrations of whiteness-at-work in her course. Next, the second constellation element pivots to exploring broad changes in Erin's approach to antiracist pedagogy during the course of our work together.

Broad Shifts in Erin's Approach to Antiracist Pedagogy

My interest in exploring how and why white educators' conceptions of and approaches to antiracist pedagogy change over time was a central consideration in designing this research. The multiphase approach to data collection made it possible to follow one white educator for nearly a full calendar year. Starting from an initial conversation that broadly explored their commitment to antiracist teaching (phase one of data collection), I could accompany them through a semester-long process of implementing their commitments and practice collaborative reflection about those efforts informed by students' experiences of the course (phase two). Working with Erin in this time-extended capacity, I was able to identify broad shifts in her approach to antiracist pedagogy. Continuing constellation element two's exploration of changes in Erin's thinking and doing, this section addresses two overarching shifts from the beginning of

our work together in April 2019 to its culmination in February 2020. The first shift I will address was in Erin's conceptualization of and motivation for antiracist pedagogy, and the second was in her way of conceptualizing students' race and intersecting identities.

Motivation for and Conceptualization of Antiracist Pedagogy

Erin's motivation for and conceptualization of and antiracist pedagogy at the outset of our work together was described extensively in Chapter Five. The evolution in Erin's thinking and feeling about antiracist pedagogy is most evident in comparing our initial conversations (April and August, 2019) to our culminating conversations (January and February, 2020). In those two final conversations, we debriefed the course, processed themes from students' experience of the course, and thought together about the next iteration of the course (for the Spring 2020 term).

Erin's articulation of her motivation shifted quite markedly over time. In our conversation immediately preceding the start of the Fall term (August 22, 2019), I asked Erin what she hoped to learn in the process of teaching her writing course through an antiracist lens. Erin communicated her motivation, at least in part, as a desire to "stay relevant" as a writing instructor. She referred to the changing racial demographics of college students (especially at Oakdale) and noted her need to embrace a curriculum and teaching methodology that spoke to these students:

> I'm probably going to be teaching writing for a while . . . this is probably what I'll be doing my whole life. So part of it is—there's this interesting mix of self-preservation. And again, whiteness; demographics of higher ed are shifting, demographics of the country are shifting. Just as a human being, what do I want my role to be? And especially as an educator, that's a huge responsibility. One of

> the reasons I'm excited about [antiracist pedagogy] is that it does feel, for me at least, like the beginning of figuring out, okay, if this is something that I'm going to be doing 10, 20 years from now, thinking about what the world could be 10, 20 years from now . . . I gotta figure out what I'm doing and why I'm doing it and what impact it's having on these students . . . On the really, really, really big picture level, there's definitely a vocational, I guess, thing here. If I'm going to keep doing this, then I hope that this class can be a way to start learning from students and figuring out, how do I understand where they are better and what they need better so that I can develop my pedagogy in response to those needs? And it's the consciousness-raising in them, but also in a selfish way it's realizing I need more, too, in order to do that better. (interview, August 22, 2019)

Erin's naming self-interest as part of her motivation, while perhaps refreshingly honest, indicated interest convergence in her pursuit of antiracist pedagogy. This dynamic aligns with Haynes' (2017) research on the role of interest convergence in shaping the behavior of white faculty regarding the pursuit of educational equity.

Erin's use of the word "vocation" struck me during our August conversation, and I returned to this idea during one of our culminating conversations:

> finn: [In August] you used the word "vocation" . . . [and] you talked about wanting to—these are my words, my interpretation—to stay relevant.
>
> Erin: Yeah, yeah.
>
> finn: And that you worried that if you didn't continually think about who was in the classroom, what they were bringing, who you were, what you're bringing, and try to continually stretch the way that you think about teaching, and knowledge, and writing, that you would be irrelevant.
>
> Erin: Yeah, yeah.

> finn: So it's curious to hear you kind of come back to that, in a different way.
>
> Erin: And be like, "I'm not relevant." [laughter]
>
> finn: [laughter]
> (interview, December 19, 2019)

Erin's comment about being "not relevant," which was made in jest as a means of poking fun at herself, marks a departure from her earlier motivation to "stay relevant" as a white educator of increasingly racially diverse college students.

Shifts were evident, too, in Erin's conceptualization of antiracist teaching. One illustration is her expectations for student learning. Initially, Erin spoke quite a lot of her desire to foster students' critical consciousness and emphasized the importance of class content in working toward that goal (interview, April 3, 2019). At the culmination of our work together (after she had redesigned and taught her writing seminar through an antiracist lens), Erin's expectations for students' learning had adjusted slightly. She was less focused on hoping students would articulate a theoretical understanding of structural racism. Rather, Erin's primary hope was that students felt more confident and empowered to express themselves through writing despite racialized and racist writing conventions and standards:

> It's not like [students are] saying, "I learned how to fight white language supremacy." . . . I'm not expecting them to say, "I learned an antiracist way of thinking about my writing." So when they say the "no judgment" thing . . . to what extent they're explicitly thinking about it as race or not race, is one thing, but . . . I know where my goals were coming from in doing that. And if that's what they're getting, then that feels great. (interview, December 19, 2019)

Erin was less concerned that students express a conceptual understanding of structural racism or name their writing practice as informed by antiracism; her focus was on the practice itself and students' feeling of being unsilenced in their thinking and writing.

A second shift in Erin's conceptualization of antiracist pedagogy included a decentering of her teaching and her class as *the* (or even *a*) central factor in students' development of critical consciousness. While she never expressed an understanding of herself as an "expert" on race and antiracism or framed her work as white saviorism, Erin did (early on) emphasize heavily her hope that students become critically conscious in her course. At the end of our work together, she had shifted toward thinking of her antiracist pedagogical efforts as (aspirationally) complementary to other structural interventions. She understood her course as one of many possible factors that might influence students' awareness of structural racism and questioned the influence of whiteness on her ideas of what "critically conscious" ought to look like for students: "As the semester went on, as I was lesson planning or thinking about how to frame things, I started really thinking about, 'How do I frame this for students of color?'" (interview, December 19, 2019). Erin went on to describe her efforts in response to this question. She attempted to "devalue my own knowledge, devalue white knowledge" and remind students that "[you] have knowledge that I don't" (interview, December 19, 2019). Erin named her intention to position students of color as knowers and account for the power she held through whiteness and teacherness without suggesting that she could diminish that power.

Some aspects of Erin's broad approach to antiracist pedagogy did not change, but her ways of taking them up shifted. For example, throughout our work together Erin

demonstrated a practice of asking difficult and important questions about her positionality and her teaching. This reflexivity was a characteristic element of her understanding of antiracist pedagogy. The practice itself did not change, but the questions with which she grappled did. At the culmination of our collaboration, Erin was "stuck" in different tensions and paradoxes than she had been at the outset of the project. When we first spoke, Erin articulated resistance to simplified, "best practices" approaches to antiracist pedagogy *and* expressed a desire to feel like she was doing antiracist teaching "correctly": "On one hand, I know there's not answers and I don't want to get to where there are answers. But then I so want answers" (interview, April 3, 2019). Erin also reflected on her motivation for pursuing antiracist teaching and puzzled through questions of white performative antiracism:

> I want to be better for my students. It's not like I question that. But if it feels like an easy fix or if it feels like an easy thing, then I get a little suspicious. If I'm putting a thing up on my wall, is it optics? Or are there things that maybe look like optics but really are a way to signal to students. I don't want to be like, "I'm safe. I'm good. You don't have to worry." That's not it either. But, yeah, how do you do that? (interview, April 3, 2019)

In a culminating conversation, Erin grappled with the question of performativity in a different sense. She reflected on what it would mean for her to continue embracing antiracist pedagogy over many years, problematizing her own efforts if they were to become routinized:

> Maybe that's a good way of putting it, is like, I can see it becoming performative. If it's just like, "This is my spiel, these are the slides that I use every year, this is

> the way I frame it." That feels very genuine and well thought out now, but if it just becomes a habit, then that would maybe make it more performative. (interview, December 19, 2019)

Erin's practice of critical reflexivity persisted, yet the questions and tensions she engaged shifted in response to her teaching experiences. Notably, Erin continued to embrace paradox rather than seek simple answers or describe certainty in her approach and its effects.

A second aspect of Erin's approach that did not shift during our work together was her enthusiasm for and embrace of labor-based grading. When we initially spoke in April 2019, she excitedly told me about this antiracist approach to evaluating writing and seemed hopeful to utilize it some time in the future. When we spoke in August 2019 preceding the start of the Fall term, Erin discussed having spent the summer reading about it and redesigning her writing course in order to integrate it. She expressed excitement as well as nervousness to be implementing labor-based grading for the first time. Her anxiety was rooted primarily in two concerns: 1) the logistical challenges and various unknowns of employing an entirely new (to her and, likely, to students) way of grading; and 2) the perceptions of faculty colleagues, a number of whom had already expressed concern and disapproval of her embrace of labor-based grading.

By the end of the term, Erin was much less consumed with anxiety; she acknowledged there were tweaks to be made yet expressed confidence in continuing to use labor-based grading. Erin did not express concern about colleagues' perceptions or disapproval of her pedagogical choice, even as she drew closer to going up for tenure. Based on what she saw in students' writing during the course and heard in students'

feedback about the course, Erin felt confident that labor-based grading was moving her toward her goals of supporting students to write confidently and effectively in their own voice and interrupting white language supremacy in writing instruction. (The next chapter will address students' experiences of the course, including their perceptions of labor-based grading). In our culminating conversations, Erin articulated how the philosophy of labor-based grading informed and related to other teaching decisions that characterized her approach to antiracist pedagogy; in other words, she was thinking about labor-based grading as one element in a constellation of practices that informed her teaching philosophy and efforts at antiracist pedagogy. Erin's thinking about labor-based grading shifted away from a granular approach characterized by anxiety toward an integrated understanding and sense of confidence.

Elements of Erin's motivation for and conceptualization of antiracist pedagogy shifted from our first conversations to our final conversations. The ethnographic, longitudinal approach to data collection in phase two made it possible for me to notice such changes in Erin's thinking and discourse over the span of our collaboration. Important too, in my ability to notice shifts, was the collaborative and relational dynamic that Erin and I fostered together. Within this dynamic, Erin and I both processed our thinking, feeling, and doing as white educators who were committed to antiracist teaching. Toward the end of our collaboration, Erin shared a reflection and realization that demonstrated rather profound shifts in her thinking about antiracist pedagogy.

Complicated and De-Essentialized Notions of Race and Racialization

A second broad shift in Erin's approach to antiracist pedagogy was her conceptualization of students' racial identities and racialized experiences. In a

conversation midway through the term, Erin described how teaching this course was challenging her previous thinking about student racial identity, and how that shift informed her approach to antiracist teaching:

> I think a really big thing for me has been, with this group of students, with getting to know them better, with the fact that there's only two white students . . . it's not like this is a new idea, it's not like it's not something I've seen before, but I've really never experienced, in a class, understanding . . . this sounds so trite, but understanding diversity. You know? Like what that actually means and how much I have collapsed categories in the past when I've thought about teaching. (November 14, 2019)

Erin reflected on the (in)visibility of race and racialized experiences like immigration:

> This question of visibility too . . . even though I know I'm always making assumptions, I get enough information just from the visual to make some assumptions about the identities of my students . . . But I don't always see immigration status, or are you first or second generation. (interview, November 14, 2019)

These realizations about race identity and racialized experiences had implications for Erin's approach to antiracist pedagogy:

> I've thought about what kinds of pedagogies would be best with students [and] just ideally realizing I should be teaching 18 different classes, in a sense . . . I'm not going to be able to get it perfect, I'm not going to ever have all the information I need, but . . . there's just all of these elements that even as I've been so focused on antiracism, antiracism, antiracism, that that has been not as

> intersectional as it needed to be . . . I said at the beginning of class, "It's really important to me that—I'm saying antiracism, but that it's intersectional." And I just don't think I'm doing it as well as I need to. (interview, November 14, 2019)

Erin had recognized and problematized her tendency to collapse and essentialize race categories. Multiple students of color in the course shared immigrant and refugee narratives during class discussion and in their writing assignments, which contributed to Erin's realization about the complexity of racial identity and racialized experiences. As part of this shift in her thinking, Erin grappled with the tension between centering race/racism or engaging an analytic of intersectionality in framing her efforts at antiracist pedagogy. She recognized that she had voiced a commitment to intersectional antiracism without adequately realizing that intention.

When we were discussing the course as a whole after the term had ended, I asked Erin if she had any big take-aways from the semester. Her immediate response was, "The collapsing of race thing, and how much that was brought to my awareness" (interview, December 19, 2019). Arguably, Erin's realization of her tendency to essentialize racial identity and what effect that had on her approach to antiracist teaching was related to the racial demographics of the course. The fact that 16 of the 18 students in the class were people of color undoubtedly influenced Erin's approach to and experience of antiracist teaching. The final constellation element in this chapter explores the ways that the racial demographics of the course were significant in shaping Erin's approach to and experiences of antiracist teaching; it does so by engaging the question, "antiracist teaching for whom?"

Constellation Element Three: Antiracist Teaching for Whom?

Having explored whiteness-at-work in the course (constellation element one) and shifts in Erin's thinking and doing (constellation element two), this chapter pivots a final time to consider Erin's approach to antiracist pedagogy *as contextualized by* the demographic make-up of the course. Addressing the question, "antiracist teaching for whom?" in constellation element three of this chapter echoes the same theme explored in Chapter Four. First I will describe the class composition, and then I will discuss the influence of the class composition on Erin's approach to antiracist pedagogy. Finally, the third constellation element will culminate with an exploration of tensions and uncertainties Erin experienced in her efforts at antiracist teaching that related to the demographic composition of the class.

Describing the Class

As has been previously stated, the writing course was predominantly students of color. Sixteen of the eighteen students in the class were people of color, and two of the students were white. The students of color reflected various racial and ethnic identities. I do not know how all 16 of them named their race and/or ethnicity, but many of them shared how they identify during class discussion or in one-on-one conversation with me. The class included Hmong, Somali, Latinx, Asian American, and African American students of color. Many of them were multilingual learners, and some of them described immigrant and refugee narratives. Because anti-Black racism is rampant in higher education and it is common for there to be just one or two, if any, Black students in a course, it is important context to name that 5 of the 16 students of color were African American and three were Somali.

All of the students were in their first year and first semester at Oakdale. Many of them lived on campus in residence halls, though some of the students lived locally with their families and commuted to campus. Most of the students were from Midwest State (where Oakdale is located), though a few were from neighboring states and some were born outside of the United States. For all students, the writing course was a requirement for graduation.

The students demonstrated varying levels of critical consciousness. By this, I mean that students' comments in class and/or to me directly indicated varying degrees of conceptualizing racism structurally and reflecting on their relationship to it. Importantly, I did not have one-on-one conversations with every student and some of them did not speak up often in class; my impressions are limited for the students whom I did not get to know well.

Generally, students in the course expressed valuing "diversity" and many articulated an embrace of "social justice." Overall, there was very low resistance from students to Erin's explicitly expressed commitment to social justice and antiracism. The two white students, in particular, did not express resistance in their classroom comments or in their individual conversations with me. (This, of course, does not mean that they did not feel resistant.) Many times during the course, students engaged in discussions about race and racism. A number of students of color shared readily in these conversations, and one of the white students spoke up quite often about race and racism as well. Of the students of color who did not share often during class discussion about race and racism, some talked with me one-on-one about these topics; similarly, the other white student who was not very active in class discussion shared with me on multiple occasions about

her personal experiences with race and racism. The class sessions were very low conflict; in other words, there was virtually no expression of disagreement between the students on issues of race and racism and very few moments in the course that felt tense. Students seemed to listen to one another's ideas and experiences and did not overtly argue with one another or with Erin, in my observation and interpretation.

Influence of Class Demographics

Ethnographic case study research makes possible a deep exploration of how context and environment impact the phenomenon of interest. Teaching and learning are interrelated and co-constituted processes. Arguably, the compositional diversity as reflected in the racial and ethnic identities of the students impacts if/how conversations about race, racism, and antiracism occur in a course; this is true regardless of the instructor's pedagogical commitments and efforts. Very often, white students' learning is centered (consciously or otherwise) in white educators' conceptualizations of and efforts toward antiracist teaching. Evidence of this pattern can be seen in the amount of literature and research about antiracism in education that addresses white identity development, white "allyship" development, white resistance, and/or white students' emotions (e.g., Broido, 2000; Casey, 2017; Edwards, 2006; Evans-Winters & Hines, 2020; Flynn, 2018; Helms, 1997; Reason & Evans, 2007; Robbins & Jones, 2016; Schick, 2000; Tanner, 2017; Todd et al., 2010; Zembylas, 2019).When the vast majority of students in a course are people of color, the racialized dynamic of the learning environment is characteristically different than in predominantly white classrooms or in classrooms that are evenly split between white students and students of color.

Erin's efforts at antiracist pedagogy cannot be understood as separate from classroom dynamics and students' learning experiences. In Erin's course, I observed two specific dynamics that I understand as related to the racial and ethnic demographics of the students: 1) students of color talked about and built connections related to their lived racialized experiences, including experiences of racism and white supremacy; and 2) students of color initiated discussion about racism and power. It is important to note that I do not suggest Erin solely manifested these dynamics as an element of her approach to antiracist teaching, in the same way that she did not determine the racial composition of the course. Rather, I assert that the dynamics impacted Erin's efforts at antiracist teaching and the students' experiences of those efforts.

Students of Color Shared and Related Across Racialized Experiences

In class discussions as well as one-on-one and small group conversations, students of color regularly shared narratives about their racialized experiences. A few examples are offered to illustrate this pattern, which was consistent throughout the term. Early in the course, during class discussion about the essay "Mother Tongue" by Amy Tan, seven Latinx, Asian American, and Somali students discussed their experiences of translating for family members (fieldnotes, September 12, 2019). During the first writing workshop (a peer review exercise in which students shared their writing and offered one another feedback), I was in a group with Maya, a Latinx woman, and Yasir, a Somali man. Both students' essays, which they read aloud, addressed racialized experiences. Maya wrote about growing up bilingual and the tensions and pressures she encountered in school and with her family. Yasir wrote about moving to the United States and learning English in grade school; he discussed feeling simultaneously silenced and special in his first U.S.

classroom (fieldnotes, October 3, 2019). Midway through the semester the class was discussing the essay "People Like Us" by David Lawrence Grant, which addressed the author's experiences of racism in the Midwest. Aadam, a Somali man who rarely spoke up in class discussion, shared a story about his high school soccer team which was comprised entirely of Muslim players. At the start of a game they had traveled to play in a suburban town, a member of the opposing team stated loudly that all people were welcome except Muslims. Aadam shared how upset this made him and his teammates, noting that the young man was not allowed to play in the game (fieldnotes, November 7, 2019). In a final illustration of this dynamic, the class was discussing a video about socio-economic class and higher education, and multiple women of color commented on ways they personally related to the topic. Lee, an African American woman, shared a connection she made between the video and a recent local news story about students having their hot lunch thrown away due to debt. Lee shared that, as a kid, she did not realize school lunch cost money until a bill came in the mail for her mom. Sua, a Hmong woman, responded with a story about her family's experience with poverty and her frustration with the cost of college. Maya extended the discussion by introducing the idea of a glass ceiling that limited racially marginalized groups from ever rising above certain levels of economic success even with college degrees (fieldnotes, November 19, 2019).

These examples illustrate a broader pattern of students of color sharing and relating across racialized experiences, a dynamic which influenced Erin's efforts at antiracist teaching and students' experiences of the course (this will be further explored in Chapter Seven). Without valorizing Erin's approach as *the reason* this dynamic existed, it is important to elaborate the dynamic and how it contextualized Erin's efforts

at antiracist pedagogy. As is evident in the final illustration offered, students of color not only shared and related across race but also initiated conversations about racism and power.

Students of Color Initiated Discussion About Racism and Power

With regularity, students of color in the course shared comments and started conversations about racism and racialized power. This pattern is evident in a number of the classroom exchanges I have already described: many of the previously described comments from Jada initiated discussion about racism and racialized power, as well as those from Maya, Aadam, Kathy, Yasir, and Darius. Here, I will offer a few additional examples to illustrate the broader pattern of this classroom dynamic. Early in the course, Erin facilitated a class activity related to the core text of the course, *Undoing the Silence* by Louise Dunlap. She asked students to freewrite about the messages they had heard and internalized over time about their writing: "What are some of the things that keep you silent?" Students were invited to write about the "silencing voices" they experienced on the board; many of the written comments addressed racialized power. The class discussion that unfolded in response to the written comments addressed how race and racism contribute to silencing that writers of color experience (fieldnotes, September 26, 2019).

In a second example, the class was discussing the Afrofuturist novel *Binti* by Nnedi Okorafor, which explored themes of colonization, racism, and assimilation in the context of higher education. Students were commenting on how much they enjoyed the novel, and many students of color shared that they found Binti's experience very relatable. (Binti was Himba, a marginalized human ethnic group; her invitation to attend

Oozma Uni, a prestigious intergalactic university, made her the first Himba to do so.) Aadam, a Somali man, recalled the scene when a Khoush student (the dominant human ethnic group) commented on and touched Binti's hair, sharing that his sister had the same thing happen to her. Lee, an African American woman, extended Aadam's point in sharing her experiences of receiving racist comments about her hair and having others touch her hair without asking. Later in the discussion about *Binti*, Yasir, a Somali man, spoke about the racialized power of authority figures in the context of being a college student (fieldnotes, October 8, 2019). Students of color described how they related to Binti's experience as a racialized Other while attending college, initiating and elaborating a critique of structural racism in higher education.

A different class discussion about the novel *Binti* provides a third illustration of this dynamic. In the book, the Meduse were a non-human species deemed violent and inferior by the Khoush, who comprised the majority of faculty and students at Oozma Uni. After a violent conflict between the Meduse and the humans was mediated by Binti, Owku, Binti's Meduse friend, was invited to stay at Oozma as the university's first Meduse student. When Erin asked students what they thought about this element of the plot and what the author might be saying about the real world, multiple students of color shared comments illustrating how structural racism operates in higher education. Maya shared that her older sister had received a scholarship from a "predominantly white college" but then the college wanted to put her on their "diversity brochure for [their] gain." Jada brought up the concept of "exchange," and Sua, a Hmong woman, built on Jada's contribution. Sua noted that her take on that element of the plot was that Okwu's

staying at Oozma Uni was “an exchange” and that Okwu was “there to be studied” (fieldnotes, October 15, 2019).

These examples demonstrate a pattern of students of color initiating and elaborating class discussion about racism and racialized power. This dynamic, along with the previously elaborated dynamic that students of color shared and related across racialized experiences, illustrates the influence of class demographics on Erin’s efforts at antiracist teaching. While Erin did not manifest these dynamics, nor the composition of the course, her approach to antiracist pedagogy was influenced by them. The next section of constellation element three addresses aspects of Erin’s approach that responded to the class demographics.

Class Demographics Shaped Erin’s Approach to Antiracist Pedagogy

Rounding out an analysis of the influence of class demographics is a look at how Erin’s approach to antiracist pedagogy was influenced by class demographics. Two dynamics will be explored: 1) efforts to decenter white knowledge; and 2) naming personal enactments of racism without projecting them onto students of color. Both of these dynamics point to Erin’s understanding that her efforts at antiracist pedagogy were invariably shaped by the composition of the course. In multiple of our conversations, she reflected that having predominantly students of color in the course and virtually no resistance from the two white students shaped what was possible.

In one of our final conversations, Erin discussed her efforts to decenter white knowledge and authority and noted that her efforts were shaped by class racial demographics:

> Naming whiteness was a way, in that context, to devalue my own knowledge, devalue white knowledge. And to name, "You students have knowledge that I don't" . . . I think that was more possible and more appropriate because I was posing that to the whole class: "You all know better than me. And even though I know some of you are white, too, you're small enough that I can . . ." If there was a more 50/50 [balance of students of color and white students], that would be different. (interview, December 19, 2019)

Here, Erin linked her approach to decentering white knowledge to the demographics of the class and indicated that her approach would be different if there had been more white students. Erin went on to reflect on her efforts to decenter white authority and knowledge related to issues of race and antiracism:

> I didn't want to establish my own authority. I was trying to devalue my own—not devalue my own power, I try to name my power when it was there—maybe knowledge or expertise is better. I didn't want to frame myself as, "I'm the teacher, I know these things that I'm imparting on you." If there was a more equal balance of white students, then the first thing I would want to think about is the socio-political consciousness piece. That is a very, very different thing, I think, for white students than it is for students of color. And so I think I got really lucky that I was able to, this semester, for the most part, think more explicitly about, "What does it mean as a white teacher to try to do this kind of consciousness raising with students that—a lot of them already have it. Or they have the experiences." I think there's a lot I didn't have to do. Or that I could do in a way

> where I wasn't necessarily expecting as much conflict or difficult moments in the classroom. (interview, December 19, 2019)

A second dynamic that illustrates the influence of class demographics on Erin's antiracist pedagogical efforts can be seen in her reflective stance when naming structural racism and her relationship to it. On multiple occasions in class, Erin described the effects of structural racism in higher education by pointing to white deficiencies in understanding race and racism as well as white collusion with and privilege from racist practices. One such example is when Erin provided a summary of the book *Ebony and Ivory* during a lecture on structural racism in higher education, noting that the text provided historical research about higher education's connection to the economics of slavery. After reading the book overview aloud, Erin noted, "This was a new idea for me when I first read the book" and went on to say that this reality about higher education "had been erased, at least for me" (fieldnotes, November 26, 2019). The comment was brief, but did important work rhetorically. The "at least for me" element of her comment suggested that Erin was not assuming all of the students in the class were also unaware of the historical connection between higher education and the economics of slavery. When describing systems and structures of racial oppression, white people often use "we" language regardless of whom they are speaking with; this has the effect of insulating individual whites from personal responsibility (Bonilla-Silva, 2014) while projecting an identical relationship to structural racism for everyone in the environment. In using "I" language to describe her racialized ignorance, Erin named her relationship to structural racism without projecting it onto students of color. This reflective stance, which disrupts

a pedagogy of whiteness (Mitchell et al., 2012), illustrates how Erin's approach to antiracist pedagogy was influenced by class demographics.

The third constellation element of this chapter has thus far explored the question, "antiracist for whom?" by describing the racial and ethnic demographics of the course and exploring what influence they had on student dynamics and Erin's approach to antiracist pedagogy. The final section of constellation element three will continue the exploration of this important question by considering tensions and uncertainties Erin experienced during her efforts at antiracist teaching in a course that was predominantly students of color.

Felt Tensions: A White Teacher Educating Students of Color about Race and Racism?

Time and again, Erin expressed uncertainty about what it meant for her, a white woman, to be practicing antiracist pedagogy in a class of predominantly students of color. She described feeling tension and internal struggle about the very idea of a white person "educating" students of color about race and racism. As I have described in previous sections of this dissertation, Erin consistently asked herself how power and authority attached to whiteness and teacherness was present in the classroom. She strove to name and disrupt that power yet understood that it could not be diminished entirely. Erin's pedagogy invited sharing from lived experience, and yet she felt uneasy that narratives from students of color, even when shared willingly, disproportionately benefited white students' learning. Even while Erin invited students to share and affirmed their narratives when they did, she expressed concern about students of color feeling implicit pressure to share when the class discussed issues of race and racism. She also wondered if/how her

commitment to antiracist pedagogy was motivated by a desire to be viewed favorably by students of color. In other words, she recognized the influence of her desire to feel like a "good white person" in the minds of students of color even as she understood and problematized performative gestures. These particular tensions and struggles strike at the heart of the question, "antiracist for whom?"

To further illustrate the tension Erin felt in her efforts at antiracist teaching in a class of predominantly students of color, I will describe a particular class scenario that I observed and Erin's response when I shared it with her during one of our conversations. The scenario, which centers Darius, an African American man in the course, took place on the last day of class during a reflective activity. Erin asked students to freewrite about and then discuss in small groups the ideas that they wanted to "cement" from the semester. In the group I participated in, Darius shared a story about his time with family over Thanksgiving break. He started the story out by saying, "The course has changed not just how I write, but how I speak." He went on to describe that his uncle corrected something Darius said at home on Thanksgiving break "for being incorrect grammar." In response, Darius told us, he challenged his uncle's comment by asserting that he was "trilingual." (This assertion was a direct reference to a video, "3 Ways to Speak English," shown in the first week of the course. In the video, Dr. Jamila Lyiscott critiqued the notion that so-called non-standard forms of English are inferior and asserted that her ability to codeswitch among three Englishes—her trilingualism—was an asset for resisting white supremacy.) Darius concluded by sharing that he showed his uncle part of the video. (fieldnotes, December 12, 2019).

The story stood out to me. Darius applied Lyiscott's critique of dominant, racist views of Black vernacular to his own chosen way of speaking and challenged an older family member based on that perspective. He went a step further and shared the course materials with his uncle. This fieldnote excerpt captures my response and initial analysis of the scenario:

> When I think about enacting antiracist material beyond the classroom, I cannot imagine a more applicable story . . . I am also contemplating the question, "antiracist for whom?" Oftentimes I think of concepts like these as most beneficial to white students, but in this instance my assumptions about whom that video spoke to most were completely off base. The amount of time that elapsed from when that video was shown in class to Darius' interaction with his uncle at Thanksgiving and then to this small group discussion in the final class session of the semester is compelling to me. (fieldnotes, December 12, 2019)

I decided to share the scenario with Erin during our next conversation. To my surprise, she had already heard the story; Darius had shared it with her during a conversation in her office earlier in the term. Erin recalled her response to the story, describing a tension she felt:

> When he told me about it, I didn't know how to respond . . . because I had all these kind of critically conscious thoughts and I was, like, "Ugh . . ." [voiced as if uncertain what to say next] 'Cause it's interesting to think about that context, the very personal, family context . . . like, I can categorize that as, okay is that internalized racism? or, you know . . . And so it's a cool idea, but . . . it also feels strange to think of the way I'm shaping the class, having that influence over that

> private space. It almost made me feel odd . . . and I didn't really know how to . . . really powerful and awesome, yeah, for Darius as a student. That was really cool for sure. But it's also just an interesting . . . I don't know [trails off] (interview, December 19, 2019)

Erin's expressed uncertainty about the impact of the class on private space in Darius' family life echoes her internal struggle about the power dynamics of being a white educator raising issues of race and racism in a class of predominantly students of color. In the moment, I related to Erin's hesitation to celebrate the story and shared how my own thinking about it had evolved:

> finn: When I was hearing that story I was like, "Oh!" [excited] And then [later] I was checking myself like, is this celebrating something in a way that—because I'm . . . the white gaze, right?
>
> Erin: Exactly.
>
> finn: The white gaze. But then I was like, "Okay. Hold on. The material, the message of what Darius was communicating came from a Black woman." [pause] So even though—
>
> Erin: [interrupts] Yeah, that's true, that's true.
>
> finn: —the concept was delivered in this classroom space where you were the instructor, that material, that whole critique, was levied by a Black woman.
>
> Erin: Yeah, that's true. It wasn't like he said, "Well, my teacher said blah, blah, blah, blah, blah."
>
> finn: [laughter] Right?! "My—
>
> both simultaneous: "white teacher said . . ." [laughter]
>
> Erin: That's a good point. That's a really good point. Yeah. Yeah. And to me that just points out an obvious thing, but that's really powerful, of just needing the content of courses to come, then, from people of color.

finn: Right, Right. [pause] 'Cause I can't speculate, but if you had gotten in front of the class and said the same exact thing that Dr. Lyiscott said [in the video], I don't know that Darius would have brought that home in the same way.

Erin: Yeah
(interview, December 19, 2019)

Multiple layers of racialized power dynamics are illustrated in Darius' story and the ways that Erin and I, individually and then collaboratively, responded to it. Erin articulated a felt tension related to Darius' decision to use content from her course in a private space to challenge an older family member. This tension, like others discussed in this section as well as in previous chapters, illustrates the centrality of the question, "antiracist teaching for whom?" Erin's whiteness in relation to Darius' African American identity was at the center of the uncertainty she experienced in hearing his story.

The third constellation element of this chapter has deepened an analysis of Erin's approach to antiracist pedagogy by engaging the question, "antiracist for whom?" The classroom dynamics that emerged were influenced by the fact that nearly all of the students were people of color; while Erin was not responsible for manifesting students' willingness to relate across racialized experiences nor their tendency to initiate conversations about racism, her antiracist pedagogy efforts were shaped by these dynamics. Little class time was spent care-taking white students' feelings or centering their learning, likely a result (at least in part) of how few of them were in the course.

Constellation element three has illustrated the centrality of asking, "antiracist teaching for whom?" Failing to adequately and critically consider this question: 1) leads to decontextualized, colorblind notions of antiracist pedagogy; 2) centers the learning (and resistance, feelings, etc.) of white students; 3) inadequately considers the knowledge

and experiences of racism and antiracism students of color already possess (whether they would name it as such or not); and 4) does not meaningfully consider what students of color may need that is different from white students in order to develop or deepen their understanding of race, racism, and antiracism. Of course, white educators' ability to engage the question "antiracist teaching for whom?" is always already shaped and limited by our racialized and racist ways of thinking and doing. This paradox reminds us of the (im)possibility of the endeavor.

Conclusion

Chapter Six provided a deeper analysis of Erin's approach to antiracist pedagogy by illustrating whiteness-at-work in her course, exploring shifts in her thinking and doing over the duration of the term, and engaging the question, "antiracist teaching for whom?" to explore how students' racial and ethnic identities mattered to her efforts. The third constellation element of Chapter Six necessarily considered Erin's approach to antiracist pedagogy *as contextualized by* the demographic make-up of the course; this focus on students' experiences will be continued in Chapter Seven. Shifting away from an exploration of antiracist pedagogy as conceptualized and enacted from the instructor's point of view, the next chapter explores how students in the course experienced Erin's efforts at antiracist teaching.

CHAPTER SEVEN: A SHIFT IN PERSPECTIVE: CONSIDERING STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES

While Chapters Four, Five, and Six each explored antiracist pedagogy from the perspectives and practices of white educators, Chapter Seven focuses on students' experiences of those efforts. Teaching and learning are relational, co-iterative processes; a meaningful analysis of pedagogical efforts ought to engage the experiences of the person positioned as teacher alongside the people positioned as learners. Arguably, in everyday learning processes the teacher and learner positionalities are much more fluid than this dualistic framing suggests; however, in the context of formal education the teacher/student duality and resulting power differential is ever-present and has real effects. As such, exploring the experience of students in Erin's writing course is an essential analytical element of this critical collaborative ethnography. Additionally, race matters significantly. Erin and I are both white educators; our observation, interpretation, and analysis of what occurred in the course was influenced and limited by our racialized subjectivity and our role in the classroom (Erin as instructor and I as participant-observer). The vast majority of the students were people of color; failing to meaningfully consider their experiences would have problematically recentered whiteness in the analytical process.

This chapter engages students' experiences of Erin's approach to antiracist pedagogy based on two sets of data: responses on a course evaluation and interviews with students after the course had ended. As in previous chapters, the analysis is organized and presented as elements of a constellation in order to highlight connectedness and contingency. In other words, the constellation elements are not discrete themes but rather

threads that overlap and intertwine; when considered collectively, they illustrate students' experiences of Erin's approach to antiracist pedagogy. Prior to elucidating the four constellation elements, I will describe the methods I used to collect and analyze the data from which this chapter emerges.

Methods

To generate a rich understanding of students' experiences, I utilized complementary forms of data collection that captured both breadth and depth. Responses on the course evaluation provided a broad and general overview of all 18 enrolled students' experiences, while interviews with eight students provided a narrow and deep analysis of select students' experiences. (See Table 2 below for contextualizing information about interview participants; refer to Chapter Three to review a full description of the methods utilized in this aspect of the study.) Together, these two sources of data made possible a thorough and rigorous analysis of students' experiences. The resulting comprehensive analysis in this chapter works to triangulate the insights offered in Chapters Five and Six, which focused on Erin's perceptions and experiences.

The four constellation elements articulated in the remainder of this chapter emerged through synthesizing my analysis of course evaluations and student interviews. In conducting analysis of the student interviews and organizing this chapter, I was intentional to avoid centering the narrative of the single white student whom I interviewed. Too often, scholarship about and efforts toward antiracist pedagogy center the needs, reactions, and development of white students (whether consciously or otherwise). In an effort to disrupt this pattern, my articulation of the four constellation

Table 2

Phase Two Student Interview Participants

Student	Pronouns	Gender	Race/Ethnicity	Interview Date
Ayaan	she, her, hers	female	Black (Somali)	January 13, 2020
Camila	she, her, hers	female	Latino/Hispanic	January 15, 2020
Jaley	she, her, hers	female	white	January 16, 2020
Kathy[1]	she, her, hers	female	Hmong	January 13, 2020
Kayla[1]	she, her, hers	female	Asian (Lao)	January 13, 2020
Lee[2]	she, her, hers	female	African American	January 14, 2020
Maya[1]	she, her, hers	woman	Latina (Mexican)	January 13, 2020
Steve[2]	he, him, his	male	Hispanic/Latino	January 14, 2020

[1] participated in a group interview together
[2] participated in a group interview together

elements in this chapter foregrounds narratives from students of color with supporting analysis from the course evaluations to triangulate and strengthen my assertions. The fourth constellation element of the chapter addresses students' learning about race and racism in the writing course and includes a section titled with the question, "antiracist teaching for whom?" My analysis in that section engages Jaley's narrative, the single white student I interviewed, as a point of comparison to the narratives of the seven

students of color who participated in an interview. Having reviewed the methods utilized to collect and analyze data about how students experienced Erin's approach to antiracist pedagogy, I will next elucidate the four constellation elements and elaborate their nuances by sharing rich narrative from student interviews and summative analysis from student course evaluations.

Constellation Element One: The Influence of Peer and Instructor Racial Demographics on Students' Experiences

This analysis of how students experienced Erin's approach to antiracist pedagogy starts with a consideration of who was in the room. As described in Chapter Six, the course was composed predominantly of students of color and those students claimed an array of racial and ethnic identities. My interview protocol did not directly ask about the racial demographics of the classroom environment, and yet the topic came up in all five interviews. Similarly, Erin's racial identity was also addressed in all of the interviews without a prompting question. The first constellation element explores how students' experiences of Erin's antiracist teaching efforts were influenced by the racial and ethnic demographic make-up of the classroom environment.

Students' Experiences Were Shaped by the Racial Diversity of Their Peers

Across the interviews, students talked about the "diversity" of the class (this was typically how they named it). The frequency and depth with which this topic was addressed, particularly among the students of color whom I interviewed, indicates the magnitude of the influence this dynamic had on students' experiences. All eight students alluded to or directly named the racial diversity of their classmates in discussing their experience of the course. Camila shared,

> I feel like that class was very diverse. There was a lot of people from different backgrounds and cultures and I thought that was really cool. 'Cause you know high schools right now are just white people and just a handful of all these minorities. But when it comes to this classroom, it's just full of people of color and just everyone, and them expressing themself and I think it was really cool.

Most of the students of color compared the racial composition of the writing course to their other classes at Oakdale or to classes taken before college. They spoke about the positive influence of the racial diversity among their classmates on their comfort and ability to participate in the course. In a group interview, Lee and Steve discussed differences in their experience of the racially diverse writing course compared to predominantly white classrooms:

> Lee: That class had more people of color in it than all my other classes. In my other classes it was always dominated by white students. So automatically, you don't really feel like talking. I don't know if that's just me, but when there's less people of color I feel less comfortable talking. But in writing, even though I talked a little bit, it was still more than I usually do. We all connected on things. The discussions where we would piggy-back off each other I thought was so nice. 'Cause in other classes you don't really do that . . . 'cause everyone's different.
>
> Steve: Yeah, and it was nice that the class was very diverse and especially when we had discussions. I remember specifically when we read "Mother's Tongue" and we had the discussion. It felt really good to see how a lot of people in that class were able to relate, even myself. 'Cause I would and sometimes still do translate some documents for my parents, help them out in that way. And seeing that other students in that class also had and have those same experiences, it was really meaningful and it felt really good.

Camila also drew a comparison to her experience in predominantly white classrooms, describing how the racial diversity in the writing course allowed her to express herself more freely and with less concern about the white gaze:

> In my sociology class I was afraid to . . . honestly I personally don't like to be wrong, I always want to be right. But if I'm wrong, I get it and I understand from it. But I just feel like if I raise my hand in the sociology class full of white people and only a handful of colored students, I don't want to be judged, or be wrong, to speak up and have a voice because I don't wanna get that glared look. But when it comes to Erin's class and there's all this diversity, I feel like I have a voice and other people in that class have a voice too, 'cause you know, we're all the same.

In a humorous exchange during a group interview, Kathy, Kayla and Maya (all women of color) expressed their appreciation for racially diverse learning environments and commented on the difficulty they have connecting with white peers:

> Kathy: I was pretty happy that Oakdale was very diverse because my high school was predominantly white, but there were a few people of color too. I mainly made friends with the people of color or with the mixed race people, because I feel like they were the most interesting ones.
>
> Kayla & Maya: [laughter]
>
> Kathy: Because when I was talking to my other friends who are white, they always like strange things.
>
> Kayla & Maya: [laughter, clapping]
>
> Kathy: I mean, they would talk about Queen.
>
> Kayla: I can see that, because also from my high school I feel like the white people were so similar to each other but the people who were diverse—
>
> Maya: [crosstalk] It's like carbon copy, [laughter] carbon copy. I run out of ideas [trying to talk to white people].

This exchange occurred after Maya, Kayla, and Kathy had been talking about the importance of discussing race in educational settings. Like Lee and Camila, they drew comparisons between experiences in predominantly white and racially diverse learning

contexts. For these women of color students, feeling engaged and connected (both of which are critical to learning) was stymied in predominantly white educational contexts. Understanding this truth of Maya, Kayla, and Kathy's educational history shines light on how their experience of Erin's efforts at antiracist teaching were contextualized by the racial and ethnic diversity of their peers in the course.

These narratives from students of color illustrate the positive impact of being surrounded by peers of color on their experience of the course. They discussed the "diversity" of the class and drew direct comparisons between their experience in this class and their experiences in predominantly white classrooms. In addition to articulating that the racial diversity of their peers influenced their experience, the students of color also discussed the race of the instructor in describing their experiences.

Students' Experiences were Shaped by the Instructor's Race

The first constellation element has started this chapter out by considering who was in the classroom and how that shaped students' experiences of Erin's approach to antiracist teaching. Having first illustrated the impact of peers' racial identities, the second section of this constellation element considers the instructor's identity. Erin's race was brought up by participants in three of the four individual and group interviews I conducted with students of color. In varying ways, they noted and reflected on Erin's whiteness as they described their experience of the course. Some students of color described initially perceiving Erin as a teacher of color.

Students of Color Noted Erin's Whiteness in Describing their Experience

All but one student of color whom I interviewed explicitly addressed Erin's white racial identity in describing their experience of the course. (Ayaan, the only student of

color who did not directly name Erin's whiteness, did allude to Erin having a different perspective on the topics of race and racism than many of the students in the course. I interpreted Ayaan's narrative as an indirect reference to Erin's whiteness.) Camila reflected on her experience of being in the class with predominantly students of color and a white instructor:

> We were all mixed in there. There was people of color and then everyone was there, and then the professor. Having a white professor teach us these things, it makes it good to just be in the class. Because you're learning from her perspective and you know that she wants you to be curious about these things because she cares.

Maya was thinking about Erin's whiteness from the very start of the term. In this excerpt, Maya elaborated on how Erin's racial identity impacted her experience of the course by drawing comparisons to previous experiences with white educators:

> I think it was one of the first classes, where she acknowledged who she was and how her . . . I forgot how she put it. I don't want to put words into her mouth or anything. But she was just like, "I'm a white person." And acknowledging her privilege and where she stands and all that. And I feel like a lot of times with a lot of white teachers [there is] kind of a white feminist, type of—especially with English teachers—where they're feminist and they're progressive and everything, but they'll never talk about race. Or they tiptoe around race, or they never acknowledge their position as a white person, even if they are talking about gender and sexuality, they won't talk about how race affects that. And so I felt like Erin was a very like intersectional type of person, when it came to that stuff. I

> really liked how open she was where she was talking about how she was gay and stuff like that. But then she also talked about race and stuff.

Kayla also noted Erin's white racial identity in describing her experience of the course. Recalling a class session early in the term, Kayla was struck by Erin's disclosure of her race and sexuality:

> I really liked how at the beginning of the year, she introduced herself and was like, "Oh, yeah I'm white and queer." I don't know why it stuck in my head, but she's just like, "If I say something wrong, tell me, you know, like I wanna . . ." She said she wants to learn more about it. And she was like, just let her know if there's something wrong.

Maya and Kayla's comments indicated not only that Erin's whiteness was on their minds as they described their experience of the course, but also that Erin did certain things i*n relation to her whiteness* that shaped their experience of the course. Aspects of Erin's approach that students suggested shaped their learning about race and racism will be further explored later in this chapter.

Some Students of Color Initially Perceived Erin as a Teacher of Color

Six of the seven students of color I interviewed spoke explicitly about Erin's race; of those six, three shared that they initially perceived Erin to be a teacher of color. The fact that students brought this up and elaborated on it in multiple interviews was compelling given that the interview protocol did not include questions about Erin's racial identity. Camila described her initial perception of Erin:

> At first, when we had our first day of class, I thought she was mixed because of her curly hair. And so I was like, "Oh, she's a mixed professor! That's cool!" But

> then she pointed out that she was white, like full white, [when] we did those introductions. Once she said she was white, I was really shocked . . . And I didn't tell her, you know, "How'd you get your hair like that?" [laughter] because I don't feel like that's appropriate or professional. [laughter] But I've always wanted to ask, like was her parents mixed . . . but she said she's full white so maybe she just permed it or something.

In a group interview, Lee and Steve discussed their response to hearing Erin name herself as white on the first day of class:

> Lee: I didn't even know [Erin was white] [laughter]
>
> Steve: Yeah, honestly I was shocked. I thought she was like, of color . . .
>
> Lee: Yes!
>
> Steve: And I saw that people around me too were like, "What?!"
>
> Lee: I was trying not to look shocked!
>
> Steve: Yeah [laughter] I was trying to not give a bad vibe or sense, but I was like, "White?"
>
> Lee: 'Cause I was walking back to my dorm and to my roommate, I was like, "I totally thought she was like, I dunno, mixed."
>
> Steve: Uh huh
>
> Lee: Like I didn't know that she was white. [laughter] So that was like super surprising.
>
> finn: So you were both surprised when she shared that she was—
>
> Lee: Yeah!
>
> Steve: Yeah, yeah, I was shook. [laughter]

In addition to these narratives from student interviews, data gathered during participant-observation in the classroom supported this pattern. When Erin named her

whiteness on the first day of class, I overheard Jada (who did not participate in an interview) say, “I definitely thought she was mixed” (fieldnotes, September 5, 2019). The fact that at least four students of color initially perceived Erin to be an instructor of color is compelling and raises all sorts of questions about educator racialization and efforts at antiracist pedagogy. My research was not designed with such questions in mind, given its focus on white educators, but I was deeply compelled by this insight. Students’ racialized (mis)perceptions of their instructors invariably shape their experience of those instructors’ efforts at antiracist teaching; future research ought to explore this complex dynamic.

Constellation element one has illustrated the influence of racial demographics on students’ experiences in the course. Students of color noted the positive influence of peers’ racial diversity on their learning and level of comfort. They also took note of Erin’s white racial identity in describing their experience, articulating an appreciation for the ways that Erin named her whiteness as well as intersecting identities. This chapter’s exploration of students’ experience of Erin’s antiracist teaching efforts necessarily started by considering who was in the room. Contextualizing the learning environment in this way generated important insights about students’ experiences. Next, the chapter pivots to considering how students experienced Erin’s approach to teaching writing, a key element of her conceptualization of antiracist pedagogy.

Constellation Element Two: Voice and Agency in Writing

Erin’s approach to writing instruction was deeply informed by antiracist frameworks, as demonstrated in Chapter Five. Consequently, gaining insight into how students experienced her approach to writing instruction is an important element of

considering their overall experience of her approach to antiracist pedagogy. Across interviews and course evaluations, students articulated a common theme in describing what they learned about writing and how they had come to think of themselves as writers. Constellation element two addresses what were primary take-aways for many students in the course: feeling free to express one's voice through writing; having agency in determining what and how to write; and understanding that one's writing has power.

Looking first to responses on the student course evaluation provides a general sense of the magnitude of this pattern in students' experiences. One of the items I analyzed asked students what ideas from the course most stood out to them. Ten of the eighteen responses described feeling free to express one's voice or ideas in writing with less concern about judgment because there is no single correct way to write. Additionally, three responses described the realization that one's writing has power to make change. Sharing two responses to this question on the evaluation helps illustrate this pattern. One student replied, "What makes a good writing. You shouldn't worry about judgemental audience, because everyone has their own views. When you write without worry about judgemental comments your writing is more genuine and seem better." Another student responded, "There is power in what you write / speak. There is no '<u>real</u>' way to write. Writing should make you feel free, not trapped."

This pattern was evident in student interviews as well. In all five interviews, students described feeling more free and more in control of their writing because of the course. Camila addressed feeling able to express her feelings and experiences:

> I feel like I had a voice. Like I can express my feelings if I wanted to. Like I can talk based on what I've gone through, what I feel like is happening, or what I believe in, compared to like, you have to have a right answer.

Ayaan also described a sense of freedom in choosing how to express herself in writing:

> I felt more like I was in control, and I got to do what I wanted to do, even in the way of writing. She taught us that there is no correct way to write, [and] you could write however you wanted to [in your reading journals] . . . In high school and elementary and middle school, you have a rubric, you have to do this, or you have to do MLA format . . . She taught us that in your journals you could write however you want to and it's all up to you, like your words are your voice.

Like Ayaan, Steve drew a comparison to previous educational experiences in commenting how Erin's approach to writing instruction impacted his ability to express himself:

> It allowed me to actually write what I wanted to write and how I wanted to write. I remember in high school the rubrics were like, "No spelling mistakes," or "No run-on sentences," or "If you have this many run-on sentences you're down a letter grade." Not having that really helped me better express myself, like throw my ideas and not be scared of saying something and thinking, "Oh, what if I'm saying it in the wrong way?" or "What if it doesn't make sense?" It opened up a whole bunch of more doors to be able to express myself . . . [With the rubrics in high school] that pressure on you, it's like it having to be very good so that you would succeed in that class. It was helpful to not have to focus on that but I would still pay attention to—just 'cause I wouldn't be required did not mean that I would

> make a whole bunch of spelling mistakes. I would still re-read my papers and correct spelling errors, but it was helpful not having that burden on your shoulders.

Steve went on to say, "I realized . . . about the rubrics and how that kind of silenced my writing. Now I'm more aware of that and it's in the back of my mind that rubrics shouldn't limit or control what I want to say."

For Camila, freedom in writing meant that she could choose to explore issues of importance related to her cultural identity. In the following narrative, Camila describes that she chose to write an assigned essay about her experiences with codeswitching after learning about the concept in a video Erin showed during class:

> I had never put my attention into the three ways of speaking [reference to "3 Ways to Speak English" by Jamila Lyiscott, which addressed codeswitching]. And for different cultures, it goes different . . . and [then] actually writing something that we like, based on our culture. Because when I wrote my essay, I kind of said, "That's actually the same thing that happens to me when I have to talk professionally, but when I also talk with my family in Spanish."

As in the course evaluation responses, some of the students I interviewed spoke explicitly about writing having power and being a tool for social change in describing what they learned in the class. Building on her narrative of feeling free to express herself in writing, Ayaan reflected,

> One thing Erin did very well was allowing us to be ourselves through the writing . . . She reminded us writing is very powerful, and we have the power to say whatever we want to say, because it's our voice. And we're in power of that and

> we have control. I feel like she was very good at reminding us that, 'cause all our lives we've been taught that the standard is this and standardized testing needs this and to get into a good college you need this.

Maya discussed how Erin's class introduced her to the notion that writing can be a tool for social change:

> Most of my teachers have always been white women. None of them—other than one high school teacher, and then Erin—have ever actively been an antiracist classroom and made that very clear and actually integrated that into the curriculum. And so I really, really liked that part of it, using writing as a social justice platform. I feel like she introduced me to what writing could be.

Maya made a clear connection between writing instruction and antiracist teaching. In this narrative, Maya described Erin's approach to antiracist pedagogy as active and integrated and pointed specifically to Erin's framing of writing as a tool for social change. Maya and Ayaan both expressed that this course shifted their experience of writing as well as their notion of what writing, as a practice, can accomplish in the world.

As demonstrated in course evaluations and interviews, many students were influenced by Erin's approach to teaching writing and left the course with changed perceptions of what writing ought to look like and who they were as writers. The primary writing-related take-aways for many students in the course fall into three themes: feeling free to express one's voice through writing; having agency in determining what and how to write; and understanding that one's writing has power. Writing instruction and the evaluation of writing are pedagogical practices that took shape and continue to operate within a container of white language supremacy (Inoue, 2019). So-called writing

conventions and standards are but one manifestation of a structurally racist system of formal education in the United States. As such, understanding how students of color experience antiracist approaches to teaching writing is of utmost importance. The data analyzed in this constellation element come largely from students of color, and the narratives shared are from students of color exclusively. This analysis points to shifts in their conceptions of and relationship to writing; shifts toward freedom of expression without judgment and shifts toward agency in understanding writing as a site of power and a tool for social change. An exploration of how students experienced Erin's approach to writing instruction provides meaningful insight about how they experienced her approach to antiracist teaching, since writing instruction was integral to Erin's conceptualization of antiracist pedagogy. Related to writing instruction, the evaluation of writing was also a central component of Erin's approach to antiracist teaching. The next constellation element explores students' experiences of labor-based grading.

Constellation Element Three: Experiences of Labor-Based Grading

As discussed in Chapter Five, labor-based grading was a central element of Erin's approach to antiracist pedagogy. Erin's grading philosophy and practice were informed by Inoue's (2019) conceptualization of antiracist writing evaluation. She sought to disrupt the white language supremacy that characterizes standard disciplinary approaches to teaching and evaluating writing. Understanding how students experienced labor-based grading is critical to exploring their experiences of Erin's antiracist pedagogical efforts.

The grading policy was a departure from what they were accustomed to in that they did not receive a letter grade for every assignment but rather earned credit purely for their labor (i.e., full completion of assignments according to objective standards).

Because labor-based grading is built on transparency and student agency, the grading contract laid out precisely the number and types of assignments that needed to be completed to earn a particular grade in the course. Students were encouraged to consider what grade they wanted (and why) and make their own decisions about the amount and type of work they would complete. For each assignment students completed, they received feedback on the effectiveness of their writing from Erin but that feedback was unrelated to evaluation. In this way, students were encouraged to explore their ideas and lived experiences freely through their writing without fear that technical errors (such as grammar) or content decisions would deflate their grade. (In describing their experience of the course, students often referred to this element of the grading policy as "no judgment.") Erin's utilization of labor-based grading asked students to be responsible for tracking their own work (using a labor log, as described in Chapter Five); for most students, understanding and effectively using the labor log took a number of weeks. Some students struggled with or felt frustrated about the organizational skills and attention to detail required to track completion of their work. Overwhelmingly, though, students expressed appreciation of labor-based grading by the end of the term.

Course evaluation responses illustrated that a majority of students found this approach to grading to be beneficial to their learning. One of the course evaluation questions that I analyzed stated: "What aspects of the course (the overall structure of the class, in-class activities, the labor-based grading system, writing workshops, conferences, focus on small-group work, course policies, etc.) did you find most beneficial to your learning? Least beneficial?" Out of 18 responses, 10 listed labor-based grading as the most beneficial aspect of the course. Students shared brief but meaningful explanations of

their embrace of the grading system. One student noted that labor-based grading "better reflected the work that I was putting in the class." Another student shared, "The labor-based grading system motivated me the most because I could see what I need to accomplish my goals (getting an A) and it gets me to actually do the work." A third student wrote, "The labor-based grading system and labor log was very beneficial to me because it helped me better value my work." In responding to this question on the evaluation, no students listed labor-based grading as the least beneficial aspect of the class.

Moving from broad analysis to specific, narratives shared during student interviews provided deeper insight into students' experiences of labor-based grading. The interview protocol did not include a question specifically about labor-based grading; in four of the five interviews, students raised the topic and spoke explicitly about their experience of the grading system. Multiple students articulated appreciation for this approach to grading, elaborating on how it impacted their writing and their overall experience of the course. Two students, speaking in one group interview, expressed frustration about organizational aspects of the labor-based grading. The following two sections of constellation element three describe students' positive and negative experiences of labor-based grading.

Positive Experiences

Multiple students of color described labor-based grading as having a beneficial impact on their experience of the course and, in particular, their approach to and motivation for writing. Reflecting on her experience of labor-based grading, Lee described feeling trusted. Referring to filling in her labor log (the mechanism by which

students self-reported the labor they completed for the course), Lee shared, "I feel like Erin was super trusting with us, that we were doing it ourselves, and she wasn't emailing like, 'I saw that you didn't do that.'"

For Ayaan, Erin's embrace of labor-based grading was a welcome disruption to standard grading practices that presumed earning an A should always be the goal. Ayaan described her understanding of Erin's approach to grading, reflecting on how that approach motivated her to work hard and increased her engagement in the course:

> Erin was very flexible with our way of writing and she didn't give us like a standard. With her labor-based grading, she didn't really say, "In order to get an A you have to do this, this, and this. And you have to get an A." She kind of broke that stigma that an A is perfect, in any class, really. She said, "Yeah, if you really want to work for an A, you can, but if you do what's required for you to do, you get a B." She was more flexible with it . . . Unfortunately it's not an easy A. But it's like, we have to work for what we want, and it taught me to be more hardworking and if you want something you have to do it . . . I was actually more aware of what was going on [in the class]. I kind of knew what the end goal was for me, and it was to get the best grade that I can get. And so that influenced me to stay up to date. Because even if I did miss a class I would go to her after and be like, "So what did I miss?" And she would explain to me what the topic was that day. And I feel like I was more involved, if anything. Not that I'm not involved in other classes, but it was more motivating to follow up with her.

For Lee and Ayaan, labor-based grading elicited a sense of agency. Lee felt trusted to accurately record her labor without oversight or questioning from the instructor. Ayaan

felt ownership over determining how hard she wanted to work based on *her* goal for the course. The power imbalance inherent in grading students' work cannot be entirely diminished and ought not to be ignored. Introducing greater student agency in the evaluation process is one way to disrupt the teacher/student power differential in formal education contexts.

Steve, like Lee and Ayaan, described labor-based grading as a beneficial element of the course. In this narrative excerpt, Steve articulated what he learned about writing as a result of this grading policy:

> At the beginning I was really excited and I was kinda nervous 'cause I had never had a class that had labor-based grading. But throughout the class it made me realize a lot of things that I would've otherwise not realized. Like when we talked about how, as writers, we were silenced by rubrics and how sometimes rubrics limited how we write or what we write. It's something that was always there for me throughout high school, the rubrics, but I never had really paid attention or given it importance as to how it kind of controlled me until I took this class. That's when I opened my eyes to it.

Steve went on to describe how Erin's approach, in particular, shaped his experience of labor-based grading:

> Professor Erin's energy and way of teaching was really nice and unique and was really helpful, 'cause it would have been different if another professor with a different teaching style said, "Oh, labor-based grading, do this and that is your assignment." I feel like some students maybe would have not given it a lot of importance, it would have been like just, "I want to get this done. If I just finish it

> I will pass the class." But with Erin, her energy actually gave me the vibe of wanting to put effort into it, even though it was based on completion.

Lee, Ayaan, and Steve described their experience of labor-based grading in positive terms. They discussed feeling trusted by Erin, motivated to meet their goals, engaged in the course, and liberated to write in different ways. Some students reported divergent experiences of labor-based grading; the next section of constellation element three addresses those students' narratives.

Experiences of Frustration

The course evaluation, as noted above, included a question about what aspects of the course students found most and least beneficial. Only three students' responses addressed the "least beneficial" element of the question, and none of those three named labor-based grading. During one group interview, however, two students of color discussed mild frustration with the grading policy. Kathy was the most outspoken about her experience:

> With the labor-based grading, it kind of makes me procrastinate with the writing more. Because it didn't really give me a structure of when I have to write it by, as in my other classes . . . I get it that the labor-based grading was trying to be more lenient with the time. But it kinda throws off my schedule planning and pattern. So it's kinda like I have to implement it on myself.

Shortly after Kathy shared her narrative, Kayla reflected on how her level of engagement tapered off over the course of the term in relation to the grading system:

> The first half of the semester I was super engaged, but then the last half I started to procrastinate more, just 'cause of the grading system and all that stuff. And I started to put everything else first, because of that.

Kathy and Kayla's narratives illustrate that not all students in the writing course wholly embraced labor-based grading. They articulated frustrations related to structure and motivation even while speaking largely positively about their experiences in the course. (For example, each student offered multiple examples of elements of Erin's approach to teaching the course they appreciated and indicated they had learned important concepts related to race and racism. Such comments will be included in constellation element four.)

Constellation element three has explored students' experiences of labor-based grading, which was conceptualized by Erin as a key element of her approach to antiracist pedagogy. Erin's use of this grading philosophy and practice sought to disrupt the white language supremacy that characterizes standard disciplinary approaches to teaching and evaluating writing. According to course evaluation responses, more than half of the students considered labor-based grading to benefit their learning more than any other aspect of the course. Narratives shared by three students of color during interviews further illustrated how the grading policy benefited their learning, while narratives from two students of color described mild frustration. Labor-based grading was not purported by Erin to be the *single answer* to disrupting white language supremacy in collegiate writing instruction and evaluation, nor was it presumed to match every student's learning style or mode of completing coursework. (Recall the discussion in Chapter Five of Erin's uncertainties about implementing the grading system.) From an analytical perspective, it

was not surprising that some students expressed frustration with Erin's utilization of this grading policy. What is notable, in terms of considering labor-based grading as an element of Erin's approach to antiracist pedagogy, was the nature of the frustration. Kathy described a motivation-related effect (procrastination) in response to what she perceived as a leniency in the grading policy. Kayla described declining engagement as the term wore on because she wanted to prioritize other coursework. Read another way, Kayla's narrative could be understood as a marker of agency. As Ayaan described, Erin encouraged students to think critically about their goals for her course in relation to their other courses. Were they motivated to earn an A? Was a B satisfactory? Kayla's decision to "put everything else first" can be understood as her strategically *choosing* to de-prioritize the writing course in order to have more time and energy to direct toward other classes. These types of decisions, which can only exist when grading policies are transparent and foster student agency, are actually encouraged by labor-based grading. Erin, too, invited students to exercise agency in determining what their goal was for her course and how much labor they wanted to exert in attaining that goal relative to the other responsibilities and commitments in their lives.

Thus far, this chapter has explored students' experiences of Erin's approach to antiracist pedagogy through three lenses: the impact of classroom racial demographics, conceptions of writing and approaches to writing instruction, and labor-based grading. Pivoting once more, the chapter will next explore students' learning related to race and racism. Constellation element four analyzes course evaluation and student interview data to illustrate what and how students learned about race and racism.

Constellation Element Four: Learning About Race and Racism

Integral to analyzing Erin's efforts at antiracist pedagogy was considering how students experienced the emphasis on race, racism, and racial justice in her course. Constellation element four rounds out this chapter by exploring what students indicated they learned regarding race and racism and how they felt about Erin's effectiveness in fostering that learning. This section begins with broad analysis of students' experiences based on course evaluation data and transitions into deep analysis based on student interview data. Together, analyses of these two data sources vibrantly illustrate students' experiences of learning about race and racism.

One of the three course evaluation questions that I analyzed was constructed to garner direct feedback about Erin's antiracist teaching efforts. It stated:

> Early in the semester, I shared with you all that I wanted this class to not only help you become more effective writers but to also help you think about questions of race, power, and social justice in higher education. In your experience, what aspects of the class contributed to that goal? Where did I fall short? (Please be as open and honest as you would like to be.)

Responses to this item were overwhelmingly positive; just 2 of the 18 evaluations offered any form of constructive feedback. Most students reported that they felt Erin had met this goal. For example, one response stated, "I don't think you fell short. You actually showed me a lot of things about race, power, social justice that I did not know about. I learned a lot about them." Many responses alluded to content (i.e., assigned readings, videos, and writing assignments) in describing what aspects of the course contributed to Erin's goal. For example, one student noted, "I do believe that we did encounter race, power, and

social justice in the class. We watched TED talks, read articles and even did reading journals on what we felt about the topics." Another student pointed to content and noted a sustained focus on these topics: "Class contributed to that goal because we looked at literature where we saw power and race. We discussed those things throughout the semester." A third illustrative response focused on the integration of these topics into writing assignments: "Having most of the writing assignments be about social justice issues and explaining why the problems needed to be brought to the open and addressed." Curiously, three students responded to this question by discussing their own development as a writer. For example, one student answered the prompt with: "Giving me the freedom to write how I wanted made me talk about these things from a different perspective." As discussed in constellation element two, Erin imagined and worked to enact antiracist pedagogy *through* writing instruction. At least three students indicated a similar conception of antiracist teaching, as they responded to this question by naming their personal development as a writer. Finally, one student's response to this question on the course evaluation was particularly detailed in offering both positive and constructive feedback:

> I think that the readings and documentaries we had on race in higher education / racism in [Midwest State] really helped better my understanding of racism / racist policies within higher ed. I think we could've had more conversations / dialogue on it that maybe went deeper on to the systems that keep POC from high ed. *Very important to not use Black and POC interchangeably. They are not the same.

The course evaluation responses suggested that nearly all students felt that Erin satisfied her goal of helping them to become more effective writers while thinking about questions of race, power, and social justice in higher education. For many students, course content was a significant factor in reaching that goal; for a few students, the satisfaction of this goal was conceptualized mostly through their own development as a writer. One student expressed a desire for conversations about structural racism in higher education to go deeper; this feedback was echoed in some narratives during student interviews and will be further addressed later in this section. The remainder of constellation element four explores students' learning related to race and racism based on analysis of interview data. This analysis is organized into two categories: elements of Erin's teaching practice; and "antiracist teaching for whom?" As stated at the beginning of this chapter, I intentionally focused on narratives from the seven interview participants of color in an effort to decenter whiteness in my analysis of students' experiences. That remains true in the remainder of constellation element four with the exception of the section "antiracist teaching for whom?" which includes data from all eight interviews.

Elements of Erin's Teaching Practice

Each of the seven students of color who I interviewed indicated that they had learned important concepts related to race and racism in the writing course. They described specific aspects of Erin's teaching practice that were influential to what and how this learning occurred. This section of constellation element four explores students' learning experiences by considering what they had to say about the content and process aspects of Erin's teaching practice. As discussed in Chapter Five, the separation of content and process is an organizational and analytical tool rather than a suggestion that

these aspects of teaching practice are in fact entirely distinct. As some students' quotes illustrated, content and process were often deeply intertwined. The section concludes with an illustration of lasting impacts, or that learning which students suggested will stick with them.

Content

Students consistently described Erin's writing course as being different from other English classes they had taken because of the content. Overwhelmingly, they expressed appreciation for this difference and articulated how it influenced their learning. Camila shared,

> We talked about race and discrimination, and we read—we saw videos about it, and I thought that was pretty cool to learn about something, like bring our culture in our writing class . . . I feel like the reason that Erin's class was more helpful and fun was because she brought these things that are actually happening in real life.

Maya also named the influence of course content in reflecting on her learning about race and racism. She described gaining an expanded understanding of racism:

> I really liked the TEDTalks and all the videos that we would watch 'cause I think it gave a history of like, "Oh, so that's how that happened." And also talking to one another and hearing everyone's experience, that was really helpful too. And growing my knowledge about it. Erin did a good job of giving us resources and giving us books and all of the things that we read, to have some type of understanding. And also break the thought that I feel like a lot of people have that racism is only something that happens in the South. I think she did a very good

> job of breaking like, "No, it's like everywhere. And here are some very specific examples of racism in [Midwest State], and [in this city], and three blocks that way." I think that was really good.

For Kayla, too, the resources that Erin used were informative and even stoked a desire to seek out more information. Kayla addressed the impact of course writing assignments in reflecting on her learning about race and racism:

> I liked how we would watch videos and TEDTalks on people who talked about race and ethnicity and all of that. I think that really—it gave me more information on it. I was like, "Where do I find these resources? And find out more reliable sources." So I liked that. I liked the papers, how they're different forms, like the cultural blog analysis was a website kind of thing . . . it was just really interesting.

One topic from the course stood out to all seven students of color whom I interviewed. Midway through the semester, Erin did an in-class viewing of the documentary film *Jim Crow of the North*. This film portrayed the history and lasting impact of racial covenants in real estate, illustrating structural racism as it manifests in residential housing policy and urban development. The film had a significant impact on students; many of them referred to "the neighborhood thing" in describing what they learned about race and racism from the course. Camila named the film in describing her learning about race and racism in the course:

> The things that stuck out to me was some of the things that I learned that I hadn't known, like I remember we talked about the deeds and how in the deeds it said that certain people of certain color or certain religions could not take ownership of this property. In the past I never knew that that ever happened or even existed

> until this class. Not even in history classes had I been informed or become aware that that existed. So when I learned about that, it kind of shocked me, like, "Why did I not know about this?" And it has stuck with me.

An excerpt of Ayaan's narrative illustrated the impact of *Jim Crow of the North* and a related writing assignment:

> Erin talked about the racial dynamics and how—unfortunately I did not know, there was this one subject in class where we were talking about the neighborhoods and how suburbs were meant for the whites and regular neighborhoods were meant for people of color. I never really comprehended that until the topic was brought into class. And I feel like it was important because people really do need to hear that. It was different for me because usually in English classes we're taught a different way, we're taught stuff from the textbook and it's not real world situations. And she kind of merged the two into like, "Okay this is what's happening and this is related to social justice because dah dah dah dah dah." In one of our [reading journal assignments] we talked about our viewpoint and our perspective of the neighborhoods. I thought that was really good because that let us think, "This is really happening in our community and where we live. And we're not really thinking about that."

For Maya, the film's discussion of racial covenants in real estate represented not just a site of new learning about race and racism; its emphasis on structural racism symbolized what she understood to be the overall aim of the course. Maya spoke about the topic of racial covenants in reflecting on her learning in the course: "I feel like everything that we learned would build off of each other; that's the thing that stood out to

me the most ‘cause I feel like it summed up the whole—like, a lot of what we talked about.”

In discussing their learning about race and racism, multiple students of color commented on ways that course content departed from previous educational experiences that centered whiteness. Camila referenced a disruption of white normativity in describing her experience of reading and discussing an assigned text: "With *Binti*, we had group discussions and we talked about the book and . . . what we felt when reading the book. And we not only kind of focused on like, the white, you know, like stuff like that." Lee also alluded to a particular reading while reflecting on her learning related to race and racism. The essay “Should Writers Use They Own English?” by Vershawn Ashanti Young was written to illustrate codemeshing and utilized Black English alongside so-called standard English in a scholarly discourse. Narrating her experience of reading the essay, Lee shared:

> I thought that I should [be able to understand Black English]. I was like, “Imma get this, I’m gonna understand what [the author is] saying.” [laughter] But I didn’t, and then I realized that’s because in high school and middle school, they’re not giving you books where someone’s talking in that way. They’re giving you books where it’s probably an old white dude who’s using big words and then you grow up knowing all these big words that you don’t really have to know.

Kathy, too, described her learning in the course as related to content that did not center whiteness. In this excerpt, Kathy compared her experience of Erin’s approach to teaching about race and racism to her experience during high school:

> I learned a lot more about antiracism [in this class] than I did in high school. Because every year [in high school] we had this day called iRace, where it's just practically a day talking about racism. In my opinion, it wasn't really helpful at all. 'Cause it's just talking about how white people are more privileged when, honestly, it's just more in depth than that. The way Erin talked about it and shared videos was more helpful.

In various ways, course content contributed to students' learning about race and racism. They expressed appreciation that texts and assignments related to their life experiences and described ways that course content expanded their understanding of structural racism. Some students specifically noted a decentering of whiteness and white norms in course content that was influential in shaping their learning. Next, this section addresses students' learning about race and racism by exploring process elements of Erin's teaching practice.

Process

As discussed in previous chapters, antiracist pedagogy entails questions of not just *what* to teach but *how* to teach. Students referred to various approaches and practices in Erin's teaching as they described their learning about race and racism. For Kathy, Erin's self-awareness and approach to inviting discussions about race and racism felt empowering:

> I feel like Erin was a great teacher who's very self-aware of her identity, and of her privileges, and how she wants to kind of use it in a way to empower. Instead of making things better for herself, she wants to make things better for her students. To kind of understand where racism is coming from. Because, it's very

> hard to talk about, especially if you have many different experiences and very personal issues. She's very subtle, like asking you if it's okay talking about it or not.

Maya reflected positively on her learning experience in the course by contrasting Erin's approach to talking about race and racism with that of a white high school teacher:

> I had a teacher in high school who I would stay in her class a lot for lunch . . . [One time] someone was talking about reverse racism. At first the teacher was like, "That doesn't exist." And I was like, "I know. It doesn't." And then she said, "Racism against a white person is just racism." And I was like [makes skeptical facial expression] "I don't know girl." For a long time, [the teacher] really wanted to teach [sighs] an African American history course. And so I always felt very confused [laughter] with her because I was like, "How do you . . . ?" First, I mean, I know that there's a lot of discussions on white teachers teaching African American history courses. But then she didn't—and not to bash her and where she was in her journey or whatever, but it felt to me like, "How do you not . . . ?" I felt like if you're gonna teach a history course like that you should at least have some type of understanding that racism isn't what you think it is. How are you gonna teach an African American history class and not even know what racism is? And know that no, white people do not experience racism. And I feel like with Erin it was the complete opposite, where it was very genuine. I felt like every time she talked, she knew what she was talking about. And I know that she had done a lot of research and reading, and she was a very educated person. But at the same time, she was very genuine. And how she was like, "I know that I don't

> know everything and I know that I have a lot to learn and if you feel like I'm doing something wrong or I'm saying something wrong, tell me." I feel like it was very genuine.

Lee also discussed Erin's self-awareness in reflecting on her learning, and commented on Erin's willingness to acknowledge her privilege. For Lee, this important practice of acknowledgment was done in such a way that did not make Erin and her whiteness the focus of class discussion:

> It was cool she acknowledged her own privilege. Some teachers don't do that. They know it's there, but they're not gonna tell us that they know. And she just did a good job of putting it out there and letting us form the conversation around the topic.

Later in our conversation, Lee expanded on her reflection about Erin's approach to framing class discussions. She articulated an understanding that antiracism in educational contexts is rooted in shared power, and described her experience of Erin's teaching practice as an effort to level out power in the classroom. Steve agreed with Lee's perspective and commented as well on how this practice shaped his learning:

> Lee: Racism is kinda like there's always the oppressed person and the oppressor, so I feel like in academic sense, [antiracism is when] there's no one that feels like someone else has more power than them. Or holds a higher status than them. And I feel like in that class, we were all pretty equal. I feel like Erin as professor, she lowered herself in status so that we were all like the same. So we didn't feel like, "Oh, she has the power in the room."
>
> finn: What are some of the things she did that, for you, kind of signaled that she was lowering her status to try to level out the power?
>
> Lee: Being open with us about her life, about, just anything. Having conversations instead of just going on with lessons like we don't know anything about her. And then, even like discussions. I feel like that was lowering her position. 'Cause you're not controlling something, like she wasn't

> controlling the discussions. She was just letting us be. I feel like that was the whole class, she wasn't hovering, or asserting her dominance or anything. She was just there to tell us, "Here's what you could talk about. Talk about it."

Steve: Yeah, and she would join us in our group, the big group. Rather than sitting in the corner like other professors or walking around, she would become physically part of the group and sit at the table. And like that gave a good feeling when we were having discussions rather than having her sitting outside looking over us.

This exchange illustrated how Erin's self-awareness and modes of engaging influenced Lee and Steve's learning experiences. Like Kathy and Maya, they experienced Erin's approach as empowering. All four students named specific behaviors of Erin's that helped to create an environment in which students could engage about the potentially sensitive topics of race and racism in ways that felt validating. Lee's narrative, in particular, elucidates the impact on her learning of Erin's awareness of role-related and identity-related power dynamics. For Lee, Erin's effort to level out these power imbalances was understood as antiracist teaching in action.

In addition to describing Erin's self-awareness, her willingness to acknowledge her privilege, and her efforts to account for power imbalances, students noted Erin's approach to facilitating discussion in reflecting on their learning about race and racism. For Lee, Erin's practice of framing discussions about race and racism and then stepping back and allowing students to lead the way had a positive effect on learning: "Something that I enjoyed is like she let us talk about [the topics], instead of like, some teachers they try to be part of the discussion too much." Maya described a different element of Erin's approach to facilitating discussion that benefitted her learning:

> For me sometimes, I feel like when we talk about these types of issues [race and racism] I either don't have the knowledge or the vocabulary to talk about them.

> And so I think Erin did a good job of explaining things without like, the hard words [laughter] . . . She would still use them, but it was—at least, when I talked to her, I understood what she was trying to tell me. And whenever I would try and explain something to her, she would say it back to me. And I'm like, "Yeah, that's exactly what I mean. I just don't know how to articulate that."

Steve also indicated that Erin's approach to facilitating class discussions about race and racism positively impacted his learning:

> She would give definitions as to like, "When I'm talking about this word or this phrase, this is what I'm meaning." So she made sure that things were not taken in the wrong way, or perceived in the wrong way. Even as she was speaking, I remember she would say like, "Does this make sense?" or "Do you guys get where I'm coming from, or the way I'm saying this?" She was able to give the structure as to where things were clear and not maybe some students were wondering like, "Is she being rude or racist?" She explained herself so those things wouldn't happen. I would say she was effective at providing a good environment for discussion.

For Lee, Maya, and Steve, Erin's facilitation practices of centering students' voices in class discussions, defining concepts clearly and accessibly, and checking for understanding had positive effects on their learning. Ayaan described an additional aspect of Erin's teaching practice that contributed to her learning about race and racism. In this poignant narrative, Ayaan shared a specific experience in the course that illustrates how Erin's approach to teaching about race and racism had a deep impact on Ayaan's learning:

> She didn't speak for students of color but she just laid out the basics, like, okay, this is what they're experiencing. For example, the documentary [excerpt] that we watched [*2 Fists Up* by Spike Lee] and it was about higher education, with colored people. She didn't really speak for them but she showed us . . . Rather than her speaking and telling us, "So this is what happens in some universities, and this is how Black students feel," she showed us the documentary. People who've lived that firsthand spoke to us—or spoke to the screen—and said, "Yeah, our dean isn't listening to us, and we have to do something about it." And she let us just listen to them rather than her speaking for them . . . I feel like that was different for us because either way we could've listened to Erin and she could've been like, "This is how Black students are treated." But it was more influential for us to actually see [said with emphasis] what's happening and actually listen to their voice and actually listen to their pain about how—or their frustration, actually, of how they're being unheard. 'Cause Erin could have said the same thing that they are, but I feel they have the voice and they have the pain. You could feel the emotion.

Ayaan's powerful narrative makes explicit an element of Erin's teaching practice that impacted her learning about racism in higher education. As Ayaan described, the instrumental element of this learning experience, for her, was *the way* that Erin shared the content. From Ayaan's perspective, the Black students activists at Mizzou spoke on their own terms about their painful experiences of and strategic resistance to structural racism in higher education. The same ideas, delivered by Erin, would not have impacted Ayaan in the way that viewing the film did.

The example Ayaan shared illustrated an instance when both content and process were critically important to students' learning. In her efforts to teach students about structural racism in higher education, Erin selected content produced by a Black filmmaker that featured the narratives of Black student activists. She introduced the content (from Ayaan's perspective, at least) in such a way that the student activists' narratives stood on their own; both the *what* and the *how* were critical in creating the experience Ayaan so powerfully described. Similarly, Lee and Steve shared an exchange during their group interview that pointed to the importance of both content and process in their experiences of learning about race and racism:

> Lee: In other classes [when we discussed race and racism] sometimes they just throw the topic at you and then you're like, "Ohh . . . okay" [voiced with skepticism] Like you're not really comfortable. I feel like we eased into it [in Erin's class]. Reading about it before talking about it was really cool, instead of talking about it, or trying to talk about it, and then like, "Oh, here's a reading about it." Like individually reading it, understanding things. Then I think sometimes we talked to a partner about what we read. And then as a group. So I feel like Erin did a good job easing into the topics instead of forcing it.
>
> Steve: Yeah, I feel like the readings and activities were a very good and effective way to go into a topic, especially because sometimes the topic of race and racism can be sensitive. Doing the readings before the class, some of the readings, I remember the one of the student that went down South and then came back up [North] and experienced racism. And so having those readings, in a way, prepared you to what we were gonna be talking about in class. So rather than the topic coming out of nowhere or being newly introduced from Erin, we already had exposure to it from readings. And so I think that was helpful and made it more easy to go into those kind of topics. I feel like overall the class did a really good job in talking about racism. The readings were definitely key in helping those out.
>
> Lee: And I feel like definitely for people that probably don't know about racism with other races, like reading it privately and figuring out themselves privately instead of being put on the spot, and knowing you don't know anything about what another race goes through. I thought it was helpful . . . like even my roommate who is Asian, there's stuff about what Black people go through that she doesn't understand. So for her, probably

> reading it to herself instead of being in a room and asked a question, you're just awkwardly sitting there and not knowing how to think about it. 'Cause I think that could be intimidating, for you to hear about something another group is going through and you don't even know anything.

Students of color noted various elements of Erin's teaching practice in describing what and how they learned about race and racism. Content and process (and the intersections of the two) contributed to their learning. This analysis of students' learning as related to elements of Erin's teaching practice will wrap up by considering how students articulated the broader impact of their learning in Erin's course.

Broader Impacts

Multiple students of color spoke about their learning in ways that expanded beyond the course itself and even beyond their roles as students. Describing these narratives provides further analysis of students' learning about race and racism as it related to elements of Erin's teaching practice. Lee discussed using knowledge she gained about structural racism in higher education from Erin's course to complete assignments for other classes. She also articulated a broader impact of her learning about race and racism in Erin's course: "That whole [structural racism in] higher education thing, I didn't know about that . . . There's a lot of things I didn't really look into, 'cause sometimes you need a class to guide you into certain topics. You can't just find it yourself googling and wondering."

Narratives from two additional women of color students further illustrate this point. For Maya, Erin's approach to teaching was effective in fostering an embodied understanding of a complex topic like structural racism: "She was very good at this really big subject and concept, kind of breaking that down and being like, it's not above us, it's about us. So that's why it's so important." As a result of her experience in the course,

Camila described feeling more aware, more confident, and ready to apply what she had learned to make change in the world:

> I'm more aware of what other people have to say and the class in general and Erin made me feel more confident about myself, that I can do this, that I have a voice. I have learned about these things before in her class, and I can use that for the outside world. Talk to my friends about it, be aware of what's going on, talk about race and discrimination, make a change.

In articulating what they learned about race and racism in the writing course, Lee, Maya, and Camila each described insights and impacts that extended well beyond the course itself.

The first section of constellation element four has illustrated what and how students learned about race and racism in relation to their experiences of Erin's teaching practice. Students of color described their learning as connected to both course content and teaching processes, such as Erin's efforts to level power imbalances and her approach to facilitating discussion. They articulated their learning about race and racism as having broader impacts, both within and beyond their college experience. Constellation element four next pivots its analysis of students' learning about race and racism by considering the question, "antiracist teaching for whom?"

Antiracist Teaching for Whom?

Teaching and learning are processes instrumentally shaped by the people engaged in them. Instructors' and students' subjectivities and experiences matter greatly to what is learned and how that learning occurs. As this dissertation has already asserted, a meaningful consideration of antiracist pedagogy must engage the critical question,

"antiracist for whom?" Chapters Four, Five, and Six explored this question through white instructors' conceptualizations and practices; now, in Chapter Seven, the question is explored through students' experiences. The following narrative from Ayaan introduces this section's analytical focus on the question, "antiracist teaching for whom?":

> Erin was very open about teaching us about [race and racism] and she knew that not everybody in the class is going through the same struggle as anybody else. But she made sure that people understood each other. I remember it was the neighborhood thing [reference to racial covenants and structural racism in housing]—one student spoke about how they never realized that this was going on. And it's 'cause they weren't in that environment. So because of Erin, that student realized that their peers might be experiencing something that they're not. It's stuff like that that brings it into the spotlight and helps others be more aware of what's happening in their colleagues' environments.

Ayaan expressed that students' lived realities shape their awareness and understanding of issues related to race and racism, describing a specific example of this dynamic. Ayaan indicated that, at least from her perspective, Erin's approach to teaching about race and racism accounted for varying levels of awareness and sought to increase students' understanding "of what's happening in their colleagues' environments." This section of constellation element four explores the question "antiracist teaching for whom?" through three lenses; it is organized to contrast the learning experiences of the seven students of color I interviewed with those of Jaley, the single white student I interviewed. Analysis of students' narratives demonstrates differences in how students connected to topics of race

and racism, the learning they articulated about those topics, and their satisfaction with the depth of their learning.

Students of Color Made Personal Connections to Course Content

When students of color discussed what and how they had learned about race and racism in the course, all seven articulated personal connections to course content. In describing what it was about the course they enjoyed, students of color remarked on the inclusion of "real world" topics and repeatedly referenced specific readings and videos to which they related personally. For example, Camila shared, "I feel like the reason that Erin's class was more helpful and fun was because she brought these things that are actually happening in real life." The students of color each shared multiple narratives that drew connections between course texts and their lived experiences related to race and racism. Select narrative excerpts and exchanges serve to illustrate this pattern.

Ayaan made a personal connection to the essay "Mother's Tongue" by Amy Tan, which explored the relationship between racism and language through the lens of an immigrant family's experience. Ayaan shared,

> With bringing social justice into the conversation, or the light, Erin was encouraging us to embrace our background and to embrace where we come from. For example, reading "Mother's Tongue," Erin encouraged us to like . . . there's no standard speaking. Speaking is speaking. There's no correct English. She reminded us that there's no correct English, like your English is your English. That came back to me because my mom was born in Somalia, and she's very fluent at Somali. She speaks English too, but when she does speak English she

> carries that accent. And she says a few English words differently. That kind of resonated back to me.

Ayaan was not alone in finding personal resonance in the essay by Tan. Steve, too, brought up this particular text in discussing his experience of the course. Steve shared,

> I remember specifically when we read "Mother's Tongue" and we had the discussion. It felt really good to see how a lot of people in that class were able to relate, even myself. 'Cause I would and sometimes still do translate some documents for my parents, help them out in that way. And seeing that other students in that class also had and have those same experiences, it was really meaningful and it felt really good.

Here, Steve named both his ability to relate to Tan's narrative of translating for her mother and the positive effect of knowing that others in the class also related to Tan's experience. Steve's assertion that "It was really meaningful and it felt really good" was poignant and revealed important insight regarding the question "antiracist for whom?" During the class discussion that Steve alluded to, seven Latinx, Asian American, and Somali students discussed their experiences of translating for family members (fieldnotes, September 12, 2019). For Steve, sharing his personal connection to the Tan essay and hearing that many of his classmates of color could also relate was an impactful and validating experience.

A second text to which multiple students of color related personally was "Disparate Impacts" by Taiyon J. Coleman. The essay explored Coleman's realization about regional differences in the expression of white supremacy, highlighting the author's experience of thinly-veiled racism as a graduate student at a predominantly white

university in a purportedly progressive Northern city. This text was mentioned in multiple interviews with students of color as one that resonated in a personal way. The following exchange was from a group interview with Maya, Kayla, and Kathy:

> Maya: I forgot exactly what story it was in or who the author was, but when she was talking about the difference in the racism between when she—I forget where she was from, but she went to the South to look at a grad school and then she came to [a grad school in our city] and she was like, "In the South you'll see Confederate flags everywhere but here they'll smile first."
>
> Kathy: [crosstalk] "And say thank you."
>
> Kayla: [crosstalk] I remember that, too.
>
> Maya: Yeah! That one. I really liked that one. I was born in Texas, and my parents lived in Texas for a really long time. And they'll tell me sometimes about the things that they've experienced when they used to live there or just in the South generally. And so I saw that reflected in my life a lot, where it's very prevalent to be very open about your racism.

Maya's narrative illustrated how she made a personal connection to the Coleman essay. After this exchange, Kayla described her memory of the class discussion related to this essay. One thing that stood out in her recollection was Darius' comparison of the overt racism he experienced as a Black man who grew up in Missouri to the ways he experienced racism as a college student in Midwest State. Kayla was impacted by hearing her classmate's personal connection to a course text (just as Steve was in the previously described example). Through personal experiences and relating across the experiences of classmates of color, students of color consistently found salience and resonance in course content about race and racism.

A final illustration of this pattern can be seen in Lee's reflection about the film *Jim Crow of the North.* As previously noted, the film's discussion of racial covenants and the lasting effects of structural racism in housing stood out when students of color

described what and how they learned about race and racism. In this narrative, Lee made a personal connection to the film:

> The deeds and the redlining stuff, I've learned about that, but in this class, I don't know, it made me kind of sad 'cause you realize like . . . my grandparents don't own their house and my parents want to, but it's still super hard for them to 'cause like . . for some reason, people of color, they don't make as much as white people so automatically it's harder for them to do those things. So seeing other people's experiences, like the family where he was—wasn't he a veteran? [reference to *Jim Crow of the North*] And he came home from war, he fought for the country but still they were fighting him out their neighborhood. So he did all this for the country and he's still getting treated like crap. That stuck with me. All the things that all these families go through for a country that doesn't really want them in the end.

For Lee, the film had a lasting impact and elicited an emotional response. She exhibited applied learning in describing how her family was also oppressed by structural racism and anti-Blackness. The pain and sadness in Lee's narrative were stark reminders to me that, for students of color and Black students especially, learning about and discussing racism are not abstract, disembodied experiences.

Across multiple texts and with varying emotions, students of color articulated personal connections to course content and class discussions related to race and racism. They expressed appreciation that the course addressed "real world" issues. Time and again, students of color shared personal narratives and experiences that illustrated their application of concepts and frameworks in making meaning of their lived realities.

Narrative from the students of color I interviewed illustrates that their engagement with topics of race and racism in the course was embodied, emotional, and true-to-life.

White Apathy: Disconnection and Passive Acceptance

Jaley, the one white student who I interviewed, shared narratives that both aligned with and departed from those offered by students of color. Analyzing Jaley's narrative highlighted critical insights in response to the question, “Antiracist for whom?” Jaley described her appreciation of how “diverse” the class was and noted that other students were open to sharing their “opinions and views,” which made her “feel more comfortable to open up.” Noting that she attended a racially diverse public high school, Jaley shared that she felt accustomed to and most comfortable in classrooms with many students of color. Jaley described feeling “uncomfortable” when she was “around too many white people.” For Jaley, as for the students of color, the racially diverse class demographics had a positive effect on learning. However, it is critical to consider the students’ asymmetrical experiences of discomfort in making meaning of this comparison. As illustrated in constellation element one of this chapter, students of color described their feelings of comfort in this racially diverse course by sharing contrasting experiences of feeling silenced, hypervisible, and alone in predominantly white classrooms. The narratives of students’ (dis)comfort in classroom environments must be considered in light of the effects of structural racism in education. Jaley’s expressed sense of comfort in racially diverse classrooms is an individual experience and preference, while that described by students of color is an effect of white supremacy in education. To uncritically parallel these reported experiences of comfort in a racially diverse classroom erases the asymmetrical power relations within which the students’ experiences unfolded.

The implications for learning cannot be equated because the conditions that create a sense of comfort for white students are drastically different than those for students of color. So, too, are the educational effects of racialized (dis)comfort.

In significant ways, Jaley's experience of the course and her reported learning about race and racism diverged from that of students of color. Her relationship to course content and discussion about race and racism can be described as disconnected and depersonalized. She did not express explicit resistance or defensiveness in describing her experience of the course, nor did she articulate enthusiasm or emotional connection as did the students of color. As an illustration, the following excerpt captured Jaley's reflection about her initial response to Erin's emphasis on antiracism in the course:

> At first I was like, "Really?" But that's 'cause I've never had it before. So it was something new and I was like, "How's this gonna work? Is this actually gonna work?" . . . I didn't think that it was gonna be as well done as it was [laughter] . . . I guess my first [reaction was], "What is she doing?" [Over time] I was a lot more open to it. 'Cause I was like, "Okay, I can see this is working. Other people are liking this, and so I can like it too." Other people were sharing their experiences and so then I felt like, "Okay, this is working, this is doing something."

Jaley's narrative depicted skepticism and confusion about Erin's expressed commitment to antiracism. Only when Jaley noticed her classmates' embrace of the approach did she decide that "[she] could like it too." Her choice of words indicated a passive acceptance of the course's focus on race and racism, a far cry from the enthusiasm and personal connection articulated by students of color.

Further evidence of Jaley's disconnection can be seen in this narrative, where she recalled a particular conversation with a classmate of color:

> During [a class activity] Camila was talking about how her parents had come here with nothing and how she's still struggling. The fact that people are going through a lot worse than I do, like, I know I do have it good. Better than some, and I mean obviously others have it better than me, but like knowing that—it just made me be thankful for what I have, and everything that I get to experience that she might not be able to. And I know I can't do anything about it, but it kinda makes me feel a little guilty . . . Obviously we live in a white supremacy society and I just, I know—obviously I can't do anything about it . . . But it just sucks for those that aren't white. And I wish it was different for them. And I feel bad, and I wish I could change it, and I know there's nothing I really can do, on my own . . . And I don't think I have the motivation to try to change that, which is another thing I kind of feel guilty for. 'Cause I want it to change. But I am not doing anything to implement the change. So I feel like I'm kinda just talking to talk 'cause I'm not doing anything. 'Cause there's all these people that talk about like, "Oh let's do this, let's do that," but they never do anything about it. And that's how I feel like I am, because I'm not doing anything about it.

Jaley articulated an awareness of her white privilege and an understanding of white supremacy as a structuring ideology even while communicating a personal disconnection to these concepts. Her narrative contrasted starkly from that of students of color, who named various real world connections and intentions to effect social change in describing what and how they learned about race and racism. White apathy is painfully evident in

Jaley's reflection about and meaning-making of her exchange with Camila. In her narrative, Jaley expressed both passive acceptance of white supremacy and active denial of responsibility for working to change the racist structures from which she acknowledged benefitting. Even while she articulated a conceptual understanding of structural racism and acknowledged how white privilege operates to her benefit, Jaley was not moved to action.

In addition to expressing apathy through disconnection to topics of race and racism and passive acceptance of white supremacist structures, Jaley reported that she did not learn much about race and racism from the course. When I asked if any particular ideas related to those topics stood out to her, Jaley responded, "Nothing that I didn't really already know. It was more like reinforcing my own thoughts in my head, I guess. And saying like, 'Yeah, you're thinking about that the right way.'" This was a stark contrast from the narratives of students of color, who readily shared specific concepts and course materials that stood out and often did so in ways that included personal connections. Jaley's feeling satisfied with her depth of and approach to thinking about race and racism was particularly poignant given her previously-shared comment about feeling unmotivated to take action toward challenging structural racism.

Jaley also described feeling satisfied with the class' depth of discourse related to race and racism. She expressed appreciation for getting to "see what other people had experienced" and noted, "It was kind of nice to talk about it because it's not really talked about in a classroom setting." For Jaley, the course was antiracist in that it addressed race: "I feel like the fact that Erin was addressing race in the class as a whole, that right there was antiracist."

Jaley's narrative raises multiple important questions about antiracist pedagogy, each connected to the consideration, "antiracist for whom?" Is increasing white students' *awareness* of structural racism and their relationship to it an adequate goal, or does antiracist pedagogy necessarily entail movement toward white responsibility-taking and behavior change? What is lost and what is gained when instructors strive to decenter white students' learning as an element of their antiracist pedagogical practice? (How) can educators thoughtfully engage and challenge white students' predictable emotional responses (i.e., guilt, apathy, depersonalization) without prioritizing those students' learning over the learning of students of color in a course? What is *beneath* white students' guilt, apathy, or otherwise resistant affective responses, and what are just and equitable pedagogical approaches to interpreting and responding to such resistance in the classroom? These questions have no simple answers, though they highlight the tensions and (im)possibilities of antiracist teaching for white postsecondary educators. Jaley's narrative contrasted starkly from students' of color narratives not only in terms of personal connection to the issues of race and racism, but also related to satisfaction with the depth of course discussion about these topics. As noted above, Jaley was content with the degree to which and complexity with which Erin's course engaged these issues; multiple students of color, on the other hand, expressed a desire for deeper engagement.

Desire for More Depth Among Women of Color Students

Returning once more to the experiences of students of color, this section explores further insights in response to the question "antiracist for whom?" While Jaley was satisfied with the depth of discourse about race and racism in Erin's class, multiple women of color students expressed a desire for more depth in the course's engagement

with these issues. As previously noted, students shared minimal constructive feedback regarding Erin's approach to antiracist teaching in both the course evaluations and the interviews. The nature of the constructive feedback that was shared and by whom it was offered generates key insights to the question, "antiracist for whom?" Maya, Lee, and Kathy, all women of color students, expressed desire for deeper engagement with race and racism in class discussions and writing assignments.

Maya wished the course had grappled more meaningfully with complex issues like structural racism in housing, even while she recognized the difficulties of doing so:

> Sometimes I wish we could have gone more to like . . . I don't know, sometimes I felt I didn't really have a basic understanding of whatever we were talking about. Like when we talked about housing, we watched a video on it and we talked about it for a little bit . . . and I know you could have a whole degree in it, so there's obviously a lot more you could go in depth. But I wish we would've talked more about it so that we all had kind of a basic understanding of how things . . . I don't know. [pause] I don't know how that would work, in that class, with timing and everything.

Maya's desire for deeper engagement with the topic of structural racism and expressed wish for a more complete understanding of this complex issue marked a significant departure from Jaley's narrative.

Lee also articulated a desire for deeper engagement:

> I felt like the deeper we got into the writing assignments, we weren't really talking about the meanings of the things . . . I felt like I was writing stuff that was so meaningful and then it would be like, "Done." And just graded, and like,

> "Okay!" [laughter] I felt like in class we didn't talk about meaning as much as I thought we would . . . There was one paper, I think it was the cultural analysis, where we would take something and write what you learned about it. For me, that was meaningful 'cause I connected something to my life and what I learned from that thing. So it was weird to just take it to class for the workshop, share it, and then turn it in and we were done with it. We didn't even talk about the deeper meaning behind our writing, as much . . . It was more like feedback, turn it in, get feedback, then turn it in again.

Many of the students in the course chose to write about personally important topics in their assignments. For Lee, this meant exploring the interconnected issues of race, racism, class, and classism in her writing. Lee indicated a clear desire for more and deeper engagement with the themes she explored in her assignments. This sort of writing was personal and meaningful for Lee, who wished to have been able to share and explore the meaning behind the writing.

Kathy and Maya both expressed desire for deeper engagement and broader participation in class discussion about race and racism. Each student alluded to her experience that certain voices dominated class discussion to the detriment of fuller participation and deeper discourse. Kathy shared,

> I feel like Erin was really positive and nice about handling [class discussions about race and racism] but in my opinion, I feel like [with] that topic, I think it would be better if she makes everyone at least write one question, and put it into a bowl and have different questions, or different audience of people. So not just the

> same person talking. Because [when] the same person is talking, it's not really helping expand the idea of the topic that we're talking about.

Maya shared a similar reflection about class discussion: "Sometimes when there would be just one person talking, I'd be like, 'Oh, I want to—but oh, now she said something else and now the topic changed.'" Like Kathy, Maya desired deeper engagement during class discussion of issues related to race and racism.

The context of the conversation between Maya, Kathy, and Kayla (all women of color) in this group interview made it clear that Maya was alluding to Jada when she said, "Sometimes when there would be just one person talking . . ." (Recall the discussion in Chapter Six: Erin was initially concerned that Jada's eagerness to speak up in class was preventing other students from contributing. I wondered aloud if/how race and racism were impacting Erin's perception of Jada's participation; we discussed how racialized and gendered power dynamics shaped Jada's modes of engagement and our perception of it. Erin opted against asking Jada to step back in classroom conversation, a determination made in alignment with her commitment to antiracist teaching.) A second comment of Maya's illustrates her desire for deeper classroom discourse about racism while providing insight into her experience of the airtime dynamic and Erin's handling of it. Maya shared,

> There was times where I feel like I wanted to tell Erin to be more assertive. I felt there was one time where there was one person that would keep talking. And I think Erin wanted to tell them to let other people talk. I think so. But Erin was like [makes face as if listening, nodding along] and I was like, "Girl, can you shut up and let other people talk?"

Maya's narrative illustrated her desire for deeper engagement with issues of race and racism in class discussion; it also revealed a site of tension. Maya experienced Jada's participation as stifling her and other students' opportunities to broaden and deepen the dialogue and wished that Erin had been more assertive in managing classroom airtime. Erin had chosen *not* to encourage Jada to monitor and limit her participation, even while she recognized that Jada contributed frequently. This "allowance," rooted in Erin's commitment to antiracist pedagogy, had a stifling effect on the participation of at least one woman of color student and, presumably, other students of color in the course. In other words, Erin's very effort to disrupt the operation of white supremacy and anti-Black racism in her thinking and doing related to Jada's participation in the course contributed to conditions that felt stifling to other students of color.

In analyzing this "allowance" and the tension it manifested in Erin's efforts at antiracist pedagogy, it is critical to consider what other "allowances" were granted in the course. Notably, Maya and Kathy's concern about the degree to which Jada spoke up in class did not extend to Andrew, despite the fact that he typically contributed first and frequently in class discussion. The lack of expressed concern about Andrew's verbosity was an "allowance" granted him, the only white man in the class, by the same students who expressed frustration about Jada's level of engagement. It is critical to point to the operation of anti-Black racism and intersectional oppression in analyzing the airtime dynamic in the course. Erin, Maya, and Kathy each perceived Jada's participation as excessive and having the effect of stifling conversation yet did not describe Andrew's participation in this way. Erin is a white woman; Maya and Kathy are both women of color, but they are not Black women. The perception by multiple people in the classroom

environment that Jada spoke up too frequently must be considered through the lens of intersecting oppression. Jada is a Black woman. Anti-Black racism and sexism operate intersectionally in and on her experiences in education, as well as in and on others' perceptions of her as a learner. In imagining and striving toward antiracism in pedagogy, it is critical to remember that racism and white supremacy do not have symmetrical impacts for all students of color. Anti-Black racism is, unfortunately, prolific in education; meaningful efforts at antiracist teaching must work to account for this reality.

While complexity and tension existed within Maya's narrative, it was a clear demonstration of her desire for more depth in class discussion about race and racism. Along with Lee and Kathy, she appreciated the course's focus on race and racism while craving deeper engagement with these issues. These women of color students' expressed desire for more depth in their learning was in sharp contrast to Jaley's perception that the course was antiracist in that it addressed issues of race and racism at all. This section has explored the question, "antiracist for whom?" by contrasting the learning experiences of students of color and a white student in Erin's course. Two sites of marked divergence were evident: 1) students' personal connection to course content about race and racism, and 2) students' satisfaction with their learning and the depth of discourse about race and racism. Pointing to the racialized contrasts in students' experiences, perceptions, and reported learning sheds light on the necessity of contextualizing antiracist teaching efforts. Race neutral approaches to antiracist pedagogy (i.e., those that do not consider the racialized realities of the students they purport to educate) are likely to have the opposite effect of disrupting white supremacy. When race is not named and acknowledged, white normativity is perpetuated in the silence. Antiracist pedagogical

efforts must attend to the question, “antiracist for whom?” lest they perpetuate the centering of white students’ learning.

To conclude this section, I return to Ayaan’s narrative and its illustration of the centrality of considering what racialized knowledge and experience students bring to the learning environment and whose learning is centered in efforts at antiracist pedagogy. When I asked Ayaan if there was anything related to the course topics of race and racism that would stand out to her as she continued her college experience, she responded,

> Yes and no. There are some things, for example, the neighborhoods [racial covenants]—that is one thing that I did learn. But there are others that I had experience from my own, and that I knew existed. I feel like [the course] was very beneficial to me, and there are some things that I’m going to take away from it, but if anything I feel like people who aren’t me could benefit more from the course than I did. People who aren’t really brought into that type of conversation . . . a person who isn’t of color and a person who just lives a good life and isn’t really oppressed in any way.

Ayaan’s narrative brings into focus the fact that students bring into the classroom varied frameworks and lived experiences related to race and racism, which significantly impacts what and how they learn in relation to instructors’ efforts at antiracist pedagogy. Students of color who I interviewed expressed markedly different learning experiences than their white classmate, highlighting the necessity of engaging the question, “antiracist for whom?” in designing and facilitating antiracist pedagogical efforts.

Conclusion

Chapter Seven has explored students' experiences of Erin's approach to antiracist teaching, providing an essential triangulation of analysis presented in Chapters Five and Six. Stemming from course evaluation and student interview data, the constellation in this chapter illuminated *what* and *how* students learned about race and racism in Erin's writing course. The narratives of students of color were foregrounded in analyzing interview data. Students' learning experiences were shaped in various positive ways by the diverse racial demographics of their peers, and Erin's approach to naming her whiteness also influenced their learning. Students shifted toward understanding their writing as a site of agency and feeling freer to express their ideas without fear of judgment about their writing. These shifts were related to Erin's approach to writing instruction as well as her utilization of labor-based grading. Finally, students' learning experiences were asymmetrical; students of color made personal connections to course content about race and racism, and multiple women of color desired deeper engagement with these issues. The white student I interviewed, one of just two white students in Erin's class, articulated a depersonalized and disconnected relationship to content about race and racism and indicated feeling satisfied with her learning and the course's engagement with issues of race and racism.

This final chapter of analysis and insights has added complexity and depth to the questions about antiracist pedagogy explored in Chapters Four, Five, and Six. Together, the constellations of insights elucidated in these four chapters comprise a sweeping exploration of antiracist pedagogy defined by (im)possibility and paradox. In the final pivot of this dissertation, Chapter Eight turns to synthesizing insights about antiracist

pedagogy as imagined and practiced by white educators that emerged across all four chapters of analysis. By stepping into sites of possibility and paradox, the final chapter works to offer potential ways forward without distilling so-called implications or best practices.

CHAPTER EIGHT: A SYNTHESIS: INSIGHTS AND ABIDING QUESTIONS ABOUT ANTIRACIST PEDAGOGY AS IMAGINED BY WHITE EDUCATORS

The culminating chapter of this dissertation offers a synthesis of the insights shared in the four preceding chapters and poses questions and important considerations about antiracist pedagogy in theory and in practice. In the same way that my approach to framing data analysis resisted dominant notions of findings as fixed, discoverable truths, my approach to constructing this final chapter resists the expectation that research produces generalizable implications. Indeed, to offer implications in such a way would undercut the very theoretical foundations on which my research was built. Poststructuralist approaches to critical pedagogy, as exemplified in Kumashiro's work, trouble fixed solutions and routinized approaches to complex educational problems. So-called best practices (which could be gleaned from a list of implications for practice, were one to be offered) fail to adequately account for context and encourage educators to believe there are "correct" approaches which are likely to be successful in all or most situations. Even while resisting the notion of implications as an outcome of this research, I hope to offer something of value to educators who are committed to developing and practicing antiracist pedagogy. As such, this chapter explores a collection of interconnected questions and considerations. Like the four previous chapters wherein I offered analysis of the data I collected, this chapter is presented as a constellation with multiple elements. Taken together, the four constellation elements of this chapter illustrate core tensions, questions, and considerations of antiracist pedagogy as it is taken up by white educators. While this study focused on white instructors, it is my hope that it has generated insights for any educator committed to antiracist pedagogy. My intent in

organizing the final chapter in this way is to make clear the threads that connect the four previous chapters of analysis and to leave the reader with enduring questions rather than simple answers. The tension, passion, and paradox that have illuminated my research endeavor are, I hope, felt and carried forward through reading this culminating chapter.

Constellation Element One: Context is Paramount

Across Chapters Four, Five, Six, and Seven, it was evident that meaningful conceptions of and approaches to antiracist pedagogy must take into account the learning context. At the broadest level, this entailed white educators' understanding of higher education as a foundationally racist institution. More narrowly, this included critically considering who was in the classroom environment (both students and instructor) and how individual and collective racialized subjectivities, experiences, and ways of knowing shaped conceptions of and approaches to antiracist pedagogy. In other words, white educators' efforts at antiracist pedagogy ought to be critically informed by the questions "antiracist teaching *by* whom?" and "antiracist teaching *for* whom?" Teaching and learning, as highly relational processes, are instrumentally shaped by the people engaged in them. In considering antiracist pedagogical practice, students' and instructors' racialized subjectivities and experiences matter greatly to what is learned and how that learning occurs. So, too, matter the myriad intersectional subjectivities which shape and mediate racialization. Constellation element one will further explicate the necessity of considering context by engaging the questions that lingered through all stages of analysis: "antiracist teaching by whom?" and "antiracist teaching for whom?" Though posed and explored distinctly for organizational purposes, the questions are of course intertwined;

racialized power dynamics in the classroom environment are a product of both questions simultaneously and cannot be meaningfully analyzed through a single lens.

At the heart of this study is the question "antiracist teaching by whom?" As it was conceptualized, this research aimed to explore white educators' conceptions of and efforts at practicing antiracist pedagogy in postsecondary contexts; "by whom" is germane to such an exploration. While my emphasis on white educators did not shift over the duration of the study, the way that I conceptualized whiteness did. At the culmination of this project, I understand my work to be less so about the white *identity* of an educator and more so about the *power relations that white racialization manifests* and how a teacher navigates those vectors of power in their efforts at practicing antiracist pedagogy. For example, in Chapter Five I engaged the concept *whiteness and teacherness* as a set of intersectional and entangled subjectivities (and sites of power) which profoundly informed Erin's conceptualization of and approach to antiracist pedagogy. And Chapter Four illustrated that whiteness and teacherness together produced an unquestioned authority in the classroom, particularly for white men. The move away from conceptualizing whiteness as an identity and toward understanding it as a site and vector through which racialized power is generated and flows makes possible more nuanced analysis of antiracist pedagogy. Such a move broadens the question "antiracist teaching by whom?" beyond the scope of white educators. Shifting the analytical lens away from white identity and toward one's racialized relationship to white supremacy creates myriad entry points regardless of racial identity. At the same time, such a move keeps central the principal power formation (white supremacy) and demands white accountability by asking white educators to critically consider our relationship to it. Additionally, the

conceptual shift away from white identity makes possible a clearer read of how whiteness and teacherness operate in tandem. A flattened conception like identity cannot easily hold the complex, fluid, and sometimes paradoxical layers of power working in and on educational contexts. The phrase *white teacher* evokes a subject position while the phrase *whiteness and teacherness* evokes ideologies of and relationships to power; the latter, in my estimation, is much more useful in critically exploring the possibilities and paradoxes of antiracist pedagogy in higher education, particularly as imagined and attempted by white educators.

Inherent in my insistence of the importance of considering the question "antiracist teaching by whom?" is the assertion that white racial subjectivity significantly impacts educators' understanding of, motivation for, and practice of antiracist teaching. (Chapter Five, for example, illustrated how Erin's white subjectivity contextualized her commitment to and efforts at antiracist teaching.) Inadequate consideration of the relationship between racialized subjectivity and antiracist pedagogy perpetuates the erroneous notion that antiracist teaching is an objective practice that is symmetrically available to all educators in all contexts. Rather, instructors' efforts at antiracist teaching are foundationally influenced by their position relative to white supremacy. Whether and how instructors conceptualize and articulate their relationship to white supremacy further influences efforts at antiracist pedagogy.

For white educators striving to enact antiracist pedagogy, three dispositional and behavioral characteristics that seem to be significant are white humility, white reflexivity, and white responsibility-taking. Without practicing these, white educators are unable to hold the complexity of acknowledging the foundationally racist nature of formalized

education and our role in perpetuating structural racism *while* striving to disrupt it. Critical, reflexive interrogation of one's positionality vis-à-vis whiteness and teacherness along with an embodied understanding of the structurally white supremacist character of education are necessary baselines for white educators striving to embrace antiracist teaching. So, too, must white educators be capable and willing to embrace discomfort in our efforts. Antiracist action, even fleeting, requires a disruption of whiteness; such experiences are very likely to feel destabilizing to white educators, for whom "normal" and "typical" are functions of whiteness. White educators committed to antiracism ought to endeavor to practice humility, reflexivity, and responsibility-taking while building the capacity to exist and persist in a state of discomfort. These attitudinal and behavioral dispositions cannot be elaborated as a list of specific actions nor conceptualized as accomplishable goals or arrival points; rather, they are frameworks for approaching everyday encounters, constant strivings which require sustained commitment. Considering the question "antiracist teaching by whom?" reveals compelling insights generated by this research. Constellation element one continues its exploration of the necessity of considering context in antiracist teaching efforts by engaging a second enduring question raised in my analyses.

Chapters Four, Six, and Seven each engaged thoroughly with the question, "antiracist teaching for whom?" The racialized subjectivities, experiences, and ways of knowing that students carry into the learning environment arguably impact every aspect of antiracist pedagogy, from the conceptualization of learning to content selection to modes of grading and facilitating class discussion. And, of course, it is not a single student's racialized subjectivity, experiences, and ways of knowing at play in a specific

classroom context but rather those of a collection of students. How a group of students relate and communicate across racialized difference and whether they form a sense of relationship and community with one another add interactional layers of racialized dynamics in the learning environment. Instructors cannot influence the demographic composition of their courses; what they can (and ought) to do, in their commitment to antiracist pedagogy, is critically consider who is in their classroom and what antiracist learning might mean for those students, individually and as a group. Here, it might be easy for white educators to slip into reductionist thinking by imagining students in one of two racialized categories: students of color and white students. While this distinction is necessary in considering how students are positioned in relation to white supremacy, it is also insufficient. Structural racism is not felt symmetrically by students of color; failing to consider how colorism, for example, operates would result in the perpetuation of anti-Black racism. So, too, matter the subjectivities and life experiences that are enmeshed with racialization. In other words, as educators strive to account for their students' various racialized subjectivities, experiences, and ways of knowing, great caution ought to be exercised. It is paramount that instructors avoid making assumptions, employing stereotypes, and/or flattening or collapsing nuanced distinctions in perceiving students' racialized subjectivities.

At the heart of foregrounding the question "antiracist teaching for whom?" is the disruption of a so-called race neutral approach to conceptualizing and practicing antiracist pedagogy. Race neutral approaches to antiracist pedagogy (i.e., those that do not consider the racialized realities of the students they purport to educate) are likely to have the opposite effect of disrupting white supremacy. When race and racism are not

named and acknowledged, white normativity and white dominance are perpetuated in the silence. Generalized or decontextualized approaches to antiracist teaching (such as "best practices" or standardized syllabi) fail to adequately consider who is in the learning environment, what it is that those students might benefit from learning, and how such learning might best occur. As was illustrated in Chapter Four, white educators expressed racialized hopes for student learning as an element of their conceptions of antiracist pedagogy. Chapter Six discussed significant shifts in Erin's understanding of antiracist pedagogy as a result of teaching a class of predominantly students of color. And Chapter Seven made evident that what and how students of color learned in Erin's course diverged from what a white student reported learning, particularly concerning the topics of race and racism.

The insights generated in my research are, of course, specific to the sites and contexts in which I gathered data. The analysis I have offered (particularly that of students' experiences of Erin's approach to antiracist teaching) cannot be generalized, and yet it can and does point to critical questions and considerations, such as the centrality of asking, "antiracist teaching for whom?" Failing to adequately and critically consider this question: 1) leads to decontextualized, colorblind notions of antiracist pedagogy; 2) centers the learning (and resistance, feelings, etc.) of white students; 3) inadequately considers the knowledge and experiences of racism and antiracism students of color carry into the learning environment; and 4) does not meaningfully consider what students of color may need that is different from white students in order to develop or deepen their understanding of race, racism, and antiracism. Importantly, the question "antiracist teaching for whom?" ought not be posed and answered solely by the instructor

of a given course, particularly if that instructor is white. The design of my study was carefully constructed to triangulate Erin's narratives and experiences related to antiracist pedagogy with those of students in her course, with an emphasis on the ideas and experiences of students of color. Without essential information from students about what and how they learned about race and racism in Erin's course, my analysis of her approach to antiracist pedagogy would be sorely lacking. Additionally, white educators' ability to engage the question "antiracist teaching for whom?" is always already shaped and limited by our racialized and racist ways of thinking and doing. While gathering feedback from students cannot remedy this limitation, it can work to disrupt the centrality of the white gaze and loosen the constraints of the white imaginary in considering and empirically exploring antiracist pedagogy. White educators' efforts to develop and practice antiracist pedagogy ought to include meaningful engagement with the question "antiracist teaching for whom?" Such engagement, in my estimation, should include avenues for honest and critical feedback from students, and especially from students of color.

Constellation element one has asserted the necessity of considering context in the pursuit of antiracist pedagogy. The related questions, "antiracist teaching by whom?" and "antiracist teaching for whom?" ought to inform educators' work in conceptualizing and practicing antiracist pedagogy. Inadequately contextualized efforts at antiracist teaching are likely to perpetuate racialized marginalization and oppression in education. The time and labor required to meaningfully engage these questions necessitate changes in the ways that teaching and learning typically occur. For example, instructors may be inclined to select course texts and design assignments only after getting a sense of who is in their course. Perhaps students are invited to actively shape the content and form of courses

based on their learning needs and desires. Traditional modes of evaluating students' comprehension and progress may need to be cast aside. The deeper one digs into these contextualizing questions (i.e., "antiracist teaching by whom and for whom?"), the more likely they may be to encounter tension and paradox (as has been my experience in conducting this research). And, as illustrated in Chapter Four, the foundationally and structurally racist nature of higher education calls into question the very possibility of antiracist pedagogy. Striving to enact antiracist pedagogy cannot be simply understood as finding the "right" content or devising the "perfect" learning activity. Embodying whiteness and teacherness evokes nuances, tensions, and paradoxes in one's efforts at antiracist pedagogy. The remaining constellation elements of this chapter offer frameworks for engaging and exploring the (im)possibility of such an endeavor.

Constellation Element Two: Antiracist Pedagogy is More Than Having the "Right" Content

In the postsecondary classroom, content matters. Greatly. Unfettered by the state control of curricula that characterizes K-12 public education, postsecondary educators often exercise extensive agency in determining what and how to teach. (The degree of agency varies, of course, among contingent faculty, pre-tenure faculty, graduate instructors, and tenured faculty as well as in relation to social identities that grant educators more or less power institutionally.) So, too, does content matter in regards to antiracist pedagogy. As illustrated in Chapter Seven, students in Erin's course spoke with detail about how texts and videos with which they engaged shaped their learning. At the same time, this research has demonstrated that antiracist pedagogy entails significantly more than questions of content alone. Constellation element two iterates the both/and

nature of this assertion. It begins with an elucidation of the importance of considering content in striving to enact antiracist pedagogy and continues with an elaboration of other critical considerations for such an effort, particularly when undertaken by white educators.

Chapters Four and Five both addressed white educators' inclination that content mattered to antiracist pedagogy, while Chapter Seven conveyed this assertion through analysis of students' narratives and experiences. Students of color, in particular, expressed appreciation that texts and assignments in Erin's course related to their life experiences; they described ways that course content expanded their understanding of structural racism. Some students specifically noted a decentering of whiteness and white norms in course content that was influential in shaping their learning. Importantly, Erin's approach to selecting course content (as described in Chapter Five) was not to "diversify" the canon. In other words, she did not consider it satisfactory to add in select works by scholars of color to a mostly white, male authored list of standard, conventional texts for her discipline. Rather, the content Erin selected was overwhelmingly work by scholars of color. Disciplinary conventions and so-called academic canons reflect and replicate white supremacy ontologically, epistemologically, and methodologically. Curriculum design logics such as "adding more voices" or "diversifying perspectives," in addition to problematically employing race neutral language, leave undisturbed the central force of white supremacy. When one or two texts by scholars of color are added to an otherwise unchanged syllabus featuring texts by predominantly white scholars, the message remains that white ways of knowing are superior and central in the discipline. In addition, students may be primed to draw sweeping generalizations and employ reductionist or

essentializing logics. A significant part of what resonated for students of color in Erin's class was the degree to which they could relate personally to ideas engaged in course readings and videos. If the learning of students of color is to be prioritized in efforts at antiracist teaching, course content ought to be selected with the intention of engaging *broadly and deeply* with ideas, frameworks, and experiences of scholars of color.

Content selection, while important, is just one piece of the pedagogical puzzle. Very often, white educators' initial attempts to practice antiracist teaching begin with the desire to find the "right" content. As the previous four chapters have illustrated, efforts at antiracist pedagogy involve significantly more considerations than "what to teach." Focusing exclusively or even primarily on content fails to account for the multitude of ways that structural racism operates in and on the classroom environment. In addition to ongoing interrogation of positionality and subjectivity (as discussed in constellation element one through engaging the question "antiracist teaching by whom?"), educators might be encouraged to embrace an expansive conception of antiracist pedagogy. Power differentials abound in formalized education. Given the entanglement of whiteness and teacherness in constructing and regulating power and authority in the classroom, white educators committed to antiracism might strive to disrupt power dynamics that shape pedagogical domains such as grading, classroom facilitation, and disciplinary conventions. Steeped as it is in structural racism, higher education is characterized by so-called standard pedagogical practices that reify white supremacy ideology and perpetuate dominant epistemologies, beliefs, and value systems. In imagining antiracist pedagogically expansively, educators can strive to disrupt practices, policies, and educational philosophies that produce drastically inequitable educational outcomes.

One such site of potential disruption is that of racist disciplinary conventions. As illustrated in Chapter Four, white educators articulated an awareness that their academic disciplines were steeped in white normativity and white supremacy. To varying degrees, they also embraced discipline-informed approaches to disrupting racist conventions. Chapter Five described in detail Erin's approach to conceptualizing and teaching writing as a core element of her approach to antiracist pedagogy. The practices of writing instruction and the evaluation of writing are deeply shaped by and operate within a container of white language supremacy (Inoue, 2019). So-called writing conventions and standards are but one manifestation of a structurally racist system of formal education in the United States. It would seem that Erin's efforts to interrupt white language supremacy by disrupting disciplinary standards were noticed by students and did indeed shape their relationship to writing, as described in Chapter Seven. Students were influenced by Erin's approach to teaching writing and left the course with changed perceptions of what writing ought to look like and who they were as writers. Analysis pointed to shifts in students' conceptions of and relationship to writing; shifts toward freedom of expression without judgment and shifts toward agency in understanding writing as a site of power and a tool for social change. Erin's approach to talking about, teaching, and grading writing was different from what they had experienced to that point in their educational journeys. Working to disrupt racist disciplinary conventions might be thought of as one approach to utilize alongside careful selection of content in order to strive toward an expansive conception and practice of antiracist pedagogy.

Classroom facilitation is a second realm of instruction in which educators committed to antiracist pedagogy might work to disrupt deeply ingrained, power-laden

approaches. As illustrated in Chapter Four, white educators understood as a component of their efforts at antiracist teaching the necessity of troubling the "teacher as authority and expert" mindset of formalized education. They expressed a preference for dialogue-based instructional techniques that invited collaborative knowledge generation. In Chapter Five, a tracing of Erin's approach to antiracist pedagogy revealed that multiple classroom facilitation practices were central to her efforts. Erin's approach to classroom instruction was characterized by low exertion of control and explicitness in her antiracist commitment. She also demonstrated a sustained effort to disrupt the typical teacher-student power dynamic (which positions instructors as objective, rational, and unfeeling experts whose purpose is to impart knowledge to students) through practices of disclosure and humility. It would seem her classroom facilitation efforts to flatten the typical teacher-student power dynamic had the desired effect, for some if not all students. Chapter Seven analysis articulated students' perceptions of Erin's classroom facilitation practices, including their appreciation of her direct engagement with race, racism, and with her own whiteness. They indicated that Erin's self-awareness and approach to inviting discussions about race and racism felt empowering. Lee invoked the concept of power explicitly in describing her perception, noting that she experienced Erin's self-awareness and willingness to acknowledge her privilege as an effort to level out power in the classroom without making Erin's whiteness the focus of class discussion. Importantly, the classroom facilitation practice of explicitly naming one's pedagogical approach as antiracist was not embraced universally by participants in this research. As discussed in Chapter Four, all of the white instructors I interviewed hesitated or refused to name their pedagogy or themselves "antiracist," suggesting that determination was

better made by students in their courses. For white educators, in particular, such self-skepticism and humility seems important and necessary. An enduring question raised by this project is: How might white educators navigate the tension of explicitly naming structural racism, our embodied relationship to white supremacy, and our commitment to antiracism *without* centering our whiteness and/or asserting that our teaching is in fact antiracist? Everyday classroom facilitation practices bear greatly on this question, perhaps even more significantly than practices such as composing lofty statements for course syllabi or carefully constructing a course title.

Classroom facilitation practices entail not just what educators teach, but how they teach. Student feedback analyzed in Chapter Seven generated powerful insights and considerations about instructional strategies for educators committed to antiracist pedagogy, particularly for those who are white. Students commented on Erin's efforts to define complicated concepts related to structural racism clearly and accessibly, and then to get out of the way, so to speak, and allow students to guide class discussion. Erin's classroom facilitation practice of centering students' voices in class discussion reportedly had positive effects on student learning and contributed to students of color feeling comfortable and connected to their peers in the classroom. Students' narratives pointed to the important ways that content selection *alongside* thoughtful classroom facilitation impacted their learning about race and racism. Ayaan's narrative recalling the documentary *2 Fists Up* by Spike Lee, in particular, illustrated the mutual consideration of what and how to teach. She described the power of being able "to actually see [said with emphasis] what's happening and actually listen to [Black student activists'] voices and actually listen to their pain," and reflected, "Erin could have said the same thing that

they are, but I feel they have the voice and they have the pain. You could feel the emotion." Erin's approach to introducing the documentary and facilitating discussion about it aligned with what I described in Chapter Five as her typical practice when engaging works by scholars of color: not re-interpreting or otherwise qualifying content in ways that (re)centered the white gaze, or taking ownership for the insights generated. An important consideration for white educators striving to practice antiracist pedagogy is *how* we are introducing and engaging the works of authors of color. Central to postsecondary teaching are the practices of selecting, scaffolding, presenting, and contextualizing course materials. Whiteness and teacherness shape our approach to and execution of these instructional practices. As white educators, we may be well advised to strive toward identifying and disrupting how racialized power operates in and on our perceptions of, engagement with, and instructional utilization of texts authored or created by people of color.

In addition to classroom facilitation, grading offers another site of potential antiracist pedagogical practice. Evaluation of student work (which culminates in the awarding of course credit) is a teaching practice steeped in power. Grading has material effects on students through a variety of means, including access to financial support and progress toward degree completion. As described in Chapter Five, Erin understood labor-based grading as a central element of her approach to antiracist pedagogy and an integral aspect of her effort to disrupt white language supremacy through teaching and evaluating writing. Labor-based grading is championed by Asao B. Inoue (2019) as an antiracist approach to grading student writing. Erin embraced this grading policy in large part because she believed it positioned students as *agents* capable of making decisions about

what grade they wanted to earn in the course and encouraged them to express their ideas more freely in their writing since feedback and evaluation were completely separate processes. Labor-based grading may not be practical in every classroom nor appropriate in all disciplines. The notion of devising grading philosophy and policy as an element of one's approach to antiracist pedagogy, however, is transferable beyond the specific context of this case study. As power-laden and subjective the process of grading is, it seems an obvious point of intervention for instructors committed to disrupting structural racism in education. And yet, unlike content development, grading is not a teaching practice that is often discussed among educators striving to practice antiracist teaching. (Recall that in Chapter Four, just 2 of 10 participants discussed grading explicitly in articulating their conceptions of antiracist pedagogy.)

Grading is an unavoidable element of formal education. So long as colleges and universities continue to confer degrees based on students' accumulation of credit, instructors will be tasked with devising and implementing policies for determining when student work merits the awarding of course credit. Immense power is exerted in both determining grading policy (the criteria according to which students are evaluated) and applying that policy. Whiteness and teacherness operate on and through grading, making the practice an ideal site of intervention for educators committed to antiracist pedagogy. Philosophies that inform dominant approaches to assigning grades (such as individualism, competition, and mastery according to narrowly conceived terms of competence) can themselves be understood as shaped by whiteness (as well as intersecting power formations such as colonialism, capitalism, and patriarchy). The often unquestioned norms of grading seem to be deeply ingrained in educators, as illustrated by

the way that Erin's embrace of labor-based grading was met with disapproval among colleagues. Concerns about "diminished rigor" and "compromised standards" seem to abound when traditional approaches to grading are challenged. What insight might be gained if educators increasingly turned those concerns in on themselves, asking instead, "Rigor according to whose metrics and what logics?" and "Standards based on whose priorities and what notions of competency?" Harm-reducing measures (such as blinded review and evaluation of student work) are increasingly discussed and offer the possibility of reducing instructor bias in determining and assigning grades, but fail to question and problematize the foundations on which grading as an educational practice is built. This research suggests that grading philosophy and policy can be a critical point of intervention for instructors who seek to interrupt structural racism in postsecondary education. Importantly, the power imbalance inherent in grading students' work cannot be entirely diminished and ought not to be ignored or denied. Rather than diminishment, the goal might be disruption or even interruption. Introducing greater student agency in the evaluation process, as attempted by Erin in her embrace of labor-based grading, is one way to disrupt the teacher/student power differential in grading; undoubtedly, other approaches exist. The more educators dare to question and turn away from long-established approaches to grading, possibilities as yet unimagined may begin to proliferate.

In concluding constellation element two, which has elaborated why antiracist pedagogy entails more than questions of course content, I suggest that educators expand our conceptions of and approaches to antiracist pedagogy beyond a focus on "what" to teach. In this effort, there are two reflexive practices I encourage educators, and

especially white educators, to adopt. First, instructors are encouraged to meaningfully inquire about student experience and engage student criticism. As illustrated in Chapter Seven and reiterated in the first constellation element of this chapter, students' experience must be considered centrally in questions of the impact of antiracist pedagogy. White educators, especially, ought to consider how students of color are experiencing our efforts at antiracist teaching and take seriously their feedback and critique. Failure to do so may easily lead to exaggerated or even distorted perceptions of the efficacy of our efforts, skewed inevitably by our white gaze. At the same time, such requests for feedback and critique ought to be made with multiple understandings: 1) crafting and delivering thoughtful feedback requires time and labor; 2) students of color in a white instructor's course may not feel able or inclined to share what they truly think and feel for myriad legitimate reasons; and 3) receiving critical feedback and failing to adjust one's approach to antiracist teaching may evoke deeper mistrust and cause harm, particularly among students of color.

The second practice I encourage educators to embrace in our efforts to expand conceptions of and approaches to antiracist pedagogy is attending to whiteness-at-work in our classrooms. As Yoon (2012) demonstrated, even well-meaning educators perpetuate racialized power formations in their thinking and doing: "Whiteness-at-work strategies can perform functions that, on first appearance, in reasoning, or by intention are anti-racist" (p. 590). In Chapter Six, I outlined multiple examples of whiteness-at-work in Erin's writing course. As a participant-observer in her class, I took note of these instances and patterns and elected to share with Erin my interpretation of what was occurring as whiteness-at-work. Educators committed to antiracist pedagogy, particularly those who

are white, ought to strive to identify and disrupt whiteness-at-work in our classrooms. (The next section of this chapter, constellation element three, will introduce a possible framework for doing so.)

Chapters Four, Five, Six, and Seven, collectively, demonstrated that antiracist pedagogy entails much more than identifying course content. Focusing exclusively or even primarily on content fails to account for the multitude of ways that structural racism operates in and on the classroom environment. Imagining antiracist teaching more expansively than content selection equips instructors to be more comprehensive and more strategic in working to disrupt racialized power imbalances in formalized educational contexts. Power differentials abound in formalized education; whiteness and teacherness work together to construct and regulate power and authority in the classroom. White educators committed to antiracism might strive to disrupt power dynamics that shape pedagogical domains such as grading, classroom facilitation, and disciplinary conventions *alongside* thoughtfully selecting and/or creating course content. None of these interventions are suggested to be standalone "solutions" or so-called best practices of antiracist teaching. As elaborated in constellation element one, approaches to antiracist teaching must be informed by context; no singular practice can be assumed to be broadly effective. Rather, educators might embrace an expansive conception of antiracist pedagogy characterized by multiple strategies and practices that include and extend beyond content selection. Developing such an approach (including the skills, materials, and practice to adaptively implement it in varying contexts) requires critical self-reflexivity about whiteness and teacherness (particularly for white educators) and

continued pedagogical growth. The next section of this chapter offers a conceptual framework for fostering such development.

Constellation Element Three: Pedagogically Productive Talk Towards Antiracism

As previously noted, my intent in writing this chapter is to pose questions and considerations I believe are critical to white educators' efforts at antiracist pedagogy rather than suggest so-called best practices. Constellation element three builds on the first two constellation elements by offering a possible framework for instructors who seek to develop an expansive, integrated, and contextualized approach to antiracist pedagogy. This section starts with an introduction and overview of *pedagogically productive talk*, a framework that I assert offers immense opportunity to educators committed to developing and practicing antiracist pedagogy. Next, the section will detail how and why I understand pedagogically productive talk to have been present in the critical collaborative ethnography component of this research project. Finally, I will extend the framework as it is described in the literature by drawing out its utility as a strategy for uncovering and disrupting whiteness-at-work in the postsecondary classroom.

It was not until I was deep in the process of analyzing data from the ethnographic case study phase of my research that I became aware of the framework pedagogically productive talk. Having been done with gathering data for many months, I was immersed in reflection and synthesis when I read Lefstein et al.'s (2020) essay introducing an innovative conceptual framework for ongoing teacher learning and development. As I took in their argument and read about the details of the framework for which they were advocating, I felt strong resonance with my research; in particular, their notion of pedagogically productive talk aligned quite stunningly with the relational dynamic Erin

and I developed during the course of our work together (see Chapter Six, constellation element two). Though I came to it in the later stages of my research endeavor, this framework was instrumental in my processes of reflexive meaning-making, analyzing data and synthesizing insights, and generating this final chapter.

Defining Pedagogically Productive Talk

Pedagogically productive talk is a framework that focuses on teacher on-the-job discourse as a site of and practice for educator growth and development (Lefstein et al., 2020). Given the limitations and unproven efficacy of formalized professional development (i.e., training and workshops facilitated by experts outside of the school), more attention ought to be focused on the "naturally occurring interactions at the heart of teachers' ongoing, spontaneous learning . . . the conversations embedded in teachers' day-to-day work through which they learn from one another what it means to be a teacher and how to perform their duties" (Lefstein et al., 2020, p. 360). Through the lens of discourse theory, teacher talk (or teacher on-the-job discourse) is a critical element of teacher socialization and ongoing development: "the way teachers talk about educational aims, learning, knowledge and what it means to be a teacher are consequential for how they think about their work and themselves" (Lefstein et al., 2020, p. 361). Educators' work-based discussions, the authors argued, are likely to have a greater impact on teacher socialization and development than official workshops or training given the collaborative nature of these place- and practice-based discussions and the situated knowledge they produce. Extending the conception of *academically productive talk* (a form of classroom discourse which evidence suggests is beneficial for student learning), Lefstein and colleagues defined pedagogically productive talk as "discourse that is rich in pedagogical

concepts and reasoning and that has the power to develop participating teachers' professional judgement" (p. 361). A broad range of capabilities and qualities contribute to effective pedagogical practice; the "productive" element of this framework focuses on the development of adaptive expertise and professional judgment. Teaching, a highly situated and deeply relational practice, is often characterized by complexity and uncertainty; adeptly engaging and responding to such complexity requires adaptive expertise. Pedagogically productive talk is a framework for teachers to develop adaptive expertise and bolster their capacity to respond to complex, nonroutine classroom dynamics and problems of practice.

Six dimensions characterize this form of teacher collaborative discourse. Pedagogically productive talk:

(1) is focused on problems of practice: teachers discuss issues and concerns that have arisen in their classrooms;

(2) involves pedagogical reasoning: the use of evidence, explanations, and reasons to interpret classroom events and analyze and justify courses of action;

(3) is anchored in rich representation of practice, for example, student work, video recordings of classroom practice;

(4) is multivoiced: different perspectives are presented and attended to;

(5) includes generative orientations toward students, learning, content, teaching, and problems of practice; and

(6) combines support and critique: fostering trust and collegiality, on the one hand, and critical, problematizing inquiry on the other. (Lefstein et al., 2020, pp. 362-363)

The first dimension grounds the entire framework in *problems of practice*, critically distinguishing pedagogically productive talk from so-called best practices approaches (which inadequately account for context and encourage routinized responses to complex and situated classroom dynamics).

Multiple dimensions of the framework are poised to disrupt norms of educational institutions that are unhelpful to ongoing pedagogical development (i.e., individualism, teacher noninterference). So, too, does the framework offer generative disruptions to unhelpful norms of teacher talk (i.e., emphasis on logistics and planning, tendency to offer tips rather than critically engage problems of practice, avoidance of pedagogical disagreement in favor of team/department solidarity). Dimension four, for example, points to the necessity of both introducing and attending to multiple and perhaps conflicting perspectives when working through a particular problem of practice. The importance of multi-voicedness emerges from the principle that "each individual teacher's perspective is limited, her or his rationality bounded" (p. 363). Collective engagement with a problem of practice experienced by one educator can result in the sharing of various (and perhaps conflicting) perspectives, analyses, and responses. An "open discussion" pattern of teacher talk (characterized by direct and open disagreement) when engaging problems of practice offers greater potential for the development of adaptive flexibility than a conflict avoidant pattern of teacher talk. The sixth dimension, too, offers a generative disruption to norms of teacher talk by encouraging critique

(alongside support) among instructional colleagues. Pedagogically productive talk requires that teachers practice critical colleagueship by "challenging and critiquing one another from within relations of collegiality and trust" (p. 364) towards the goal of collaborative critical inquiry into problems of practice. A shared commitment to critical inquiry includes "casting doubt on common assumptions and practices, problematizing that which is accepted without thinking" (p. 364). Pedagogically productive talk is, the authors asserted, "in tension with cultural norms—for example, not to expose or admit to problems, to avoid face threat, and the vulgar pedagogical relativism of 'to each his own' [and by] privileging informal learning in teacher teams runs counter to numerous institutional structures" (p. 365). Having briefly described pedagogically productive talk in order to frame the remainder of constellation element two, it is important to note that this framework is grounded in primary and secondary educational contexts rather than postsecondary teaching. Additionally, the framework is not geared toward antiracist pedagogy; in fact, it does not address the influence of racism (or any form of structural oppression) in formal education. I understand these factors not as limitations, but as opportunities. After explaining why I understand my work with Erin to have been an experience of pedagogically productive talk, I will conclude this section of the chapter by extending Lefstein et al.'s framework. Pedagogically productive talk, I will assert, is a framework that offers immense generative possibility to white postsecondary educators striving to critically conceptualize and practice antiracist pedagogy.

Naming the Nature of Discourse Erin and I Developed

As described above, I was not familiar with this framework during my work with Erin, the data gathering phase of the ethnographic case study element of this project. In

other words, I did not approach the work that Erin and I were doing together with this particular framework in mind. Rather, my intent was to foster a collaborative, trusting, and mutually beneficial working relationship; these aims inspired and were aligned with my chosen methodological approach—a critical collaborative ethnographic case study. Chapter Six described the evolution of our relational dynamic and shared discourse to a collaborative and conversational connection, which I noted diverged from and disrupted dominant, strictly-bounded, power-laden conceptions of researcher/researched. The reciprocal relationship, characterized by shared vulnerability, trust, and mutual desire for growth, created a container in which Erin and I could engage critically with problems of practice that arose in her writing course, and, more specifically, in her efforts at antiracist pedagogy. This section of constellation element three elucidates why our work together can be characterized as pedagogically productive talk.

Collegial, or teacher-to-teacher, discourse is at the heart of pedagogically productive talk. While I am not an instructor at Oakdale, I designed and conducted this research in ways informed by my instructional experience in postsecondary education, my interest in and commitment to antiracist pedagogy, and my racialized and intersecting experiences. The liminality of my role as a participant-observer in Erin's class (i.e., not teacher, not student) was an asset, not a barrier, in our ability to practice pedagogically productive talk. Though not a colleague of Erin's in the strict sense, I entered her classroom focused on observing, interpreting, and analyzing dynamics of the learning environment *through the lens of a fellow white educator striving to do better and be better in regard to antiracist teaching*. Typical power dynamics of researcher/subject were flattened and disrupted in our relationship (as is integral to critical collaborative

ethnographic research). For instance, our shared embrace of feminist theory manifested in our modes of relating and communicating. So, too, did our queer subjectivities work to disrupt normative research power dynamics. (As articulated by Eliason (2016), binary notions of insider/outsider status in research contexts over simplify and artificially flatten the nuanced and sometimes paradoxical relational dynamics between queer researchers and queer participants.) Our efforts at building trust and establishing a relational container for open dialogue about antiracist teaching were aided by a sense of familiarity and overlapping values and politics related to our queer subjectivities. We were able to connect and relate across experiences of whiteness and queerness, as well as conceptions and experiences related to gender (through both feminist and trans* frameworks), in addition to having a deep shared investment in our individual and mutual growth. Despite the fact that Erin and I were not colleagues in the traditional sense, our working relationship evolved in ways that approximated collegiality (or, perhaps, reimagined collegiality through feminist and queer frameworks). Together, we created an apt relational container within which pedagogically productive talk could occur.

Integrated throughout the framework of pedagogically productive talk is an emphasis on critical and collaborative engagement with problems of practice. This focus is premised on the fact that educational researchers "view the sharing of and reflection upon problems of practice as critical to teacher learning and instructional improvement" (Lefstein et al., 2020, p. 362). As a function of my research aims, my presence in Erin's class was focused on observing dynamics and interactions with as much detail as possible. The purpose of our ongoing conversations outside of class was to discuss Erin's experience of antiracist teaching. In particular, our conversations became a space to

process specific classroom interactions and dynamics. In these ways, our discourse was wholly grounded in problems of practice.

One of the challenges of pedagogically productive talk stems from the fact that teaching is (most often) conducted individually. Pedagogically productive talk, by definition, occurs asynchronously from the teaching act and relies heavily (though ideally not exclusively) on an instructor's representation of what occurred in the classroom. (Dimension three of the framework, noted above, indicates the importance of complimenting, to the greatest degree possible, an individual teacher's account with various representational resources such as student work or video recordings of instruction.) The fact that I was physically present in nearly all of Erin's class sessions with the sole purpose of observing and participating in classroom activities had a significant impact on our capacity to engage in pedagogically productive talk. My immersion in the classroom environment, with no responsibilities for performing instructional functions, allowed for deep observation, interpretation, and analysis of classroom interactions and dynamics. This was true of frontstage classroom interactions (i.e., Erin speaking to the whole class, or one student speaking during large group discussion) as well as backstage interactions (i.e., student-to-student conversation in small group discussion, students' whispered side conversations or comments, or informal conversations between students and I before or after class started). My positionality as a nonteacher made possible different types and depths of conversation and connection with students. My lack of authority over students' decorum, my noninfluence over their performance in the course, and my full participation in class activities situated me in more of a peer role in their minds. (In fact, multiple students mistakenly believed I was a

fellow undergraduate well into the term despite my having introduced myself as a graduate student researcher on the first day of class.)

This pseudo insider status, borne of my unique and liminal role in the course alongside the immersive and ongoing nature of my presence, made possible observations and insights that contributed significantly to the pedagogically productive talk Erin and I shared. I brought to our sharing and reflecting on problems of practice a different perspective and understanding of interactions and dynamics; in multiple instances, I was able to add information or insight based on having seen or heard things that Erin had missed. This relates to the fourth dimension of pedagogically productive talk, that it is multivoiced. Lefstein et al. (2020) asserted that "multiple perspectives, especially when in tension, can give rise to argumentation and evidence in order to resolve conflicting interpretations and positions" (p. 363). It is not the mere presence of multiple voices that is important, but rather the concerted effort to attend to, explore, and build upon multivoicedness. The authors suggest that open discussion, including the embrace of generative conflict, leads to more productive engagement with problems of practice and thus more pedagogically productive teacher discourse.

Two examples of discourse between Erin and I illustrate the importance of multivoicedness to pedagogically productive talk. In Chapter Six, I described three instances of whiteness-at-work in Erin's course. The first regarded Erin's ways of relating to Andrew, the only white man in the course, by recounting a particular in-class exchange about Marxist theory. Recall that my interpretation of that moment as an instance of whiteness-at-work was informed by a whispered comment I heard from Jada. In recounting that interaction with Erin and sharing my perception of how whiteness was

operating, I included Jada's comment as evidence of my interpretation. Upon listening to my analysis of the interaction and learning of Jada's comment, which she had not heard during class, Erin's interpretation of the interaction shifted. (And, as outlined in Chapter Six, changes in her modes of interacting with Andrew were observed throughout the remainder of the course.) The second instance of whiteness-at-work in the course that was outlined in Chapter Six regarded Erin's utilization of race neutral language to capture on the board explicitly racialized comments from students of color. When I shared my interpretation of this teaching move as a form of silencing and an example of whiteness-at-work, Erin agreed. She indicated that, until I recounted my observation of the interaction, she had not been aware of the de-racing of students' comments in her teaching action. In our discussion, Erin reflected "That's just straight up unconscious racism right there" (interview, September 26, 2019). These two discourse examples demonstrate how multivoicedness contributed significantly to the practice of pedagogically productive talk that Erin and I developed. The ongoing and immersive nature of my presence in her course made it possible for me to gather observational information to which Erin did not have access and generate insights that complicated, in generative ways, Erin's own perceptions and interpretations of classroom interactions and dynamics.

To further explicate how the discourse about problems of practice in antiracist teaching that Erin and I shared was an example of pedagogically productive talk, I turn next to the fifth and sixth dimensions of the framework. Dimension five calls for the use of generative orientations towards the people and processes involved in teaching, while dimension six emphasizes the necessity of balancing support (fostering trust and

collegiality) and critique (critical, problematizing inquiry; Lefstein et al., 2020). I understand these dimensions as related in the way that Erin and I developed and practiced pedagogically productive talk. Utilizing a generative orientation includes assuming an inquiry stance toward teaching, employing asset-based rather than deficit-based logics, and framing problems of practice in ways that are actionable (Lefstein et al., 2020). Erin and I shared a deep commitment to critical reflexivity and approached our work together as an opportunity for learning and growth. As white educators striving to practice antiracist pedagogy, we shared an understanding that white supremacy operates in and on higher education, a practice of reflecting critically on our relationship to white supremacy, and a moral obligation to take responsibility for our enactments of white supremacy while striving to interrupt it through pedagogical practice. Approaching our work together through these shared dispositions and intentions resulted in a collaborative emphasis on learning with and from one another without attachment to being "right" about antiracist pedagogy, being a "good white antiracist teacher," or even being a better white antiracist than the other (related to the common dynamic among white progressives to position ourselves as "more socially just" or "less racist" than other white people). The noncompetitive, humility-driven, generative orientation Erin and I shared toward learning about antiracist pedagogy with and through one another's experiences made it possible, eventually, for us to practice both support and critique (dimension six) in our discourse. (Given my researcher role in our work together, much of the supportive feedback and critical inquiry we shared focused on Erin's teaching; however, important learning occurred for me, too, and will be elaborated subsequently.) Again alluding to Chapter Six, multiple examples exist of my sharing alternative interpretations of Erin's

perceptions and teaching actions. In our ongoing conversations, I was intentional in being honest about what I observed in class and how I was thinking about it while working to frame my feedback. For example, I often shared stories of my own efforts at antiracist teaching that entailed failure or uncertainty. Sometimes I did this immediately after hearing Erin reflect on a teaching moment that did not go as she had hoped. I do so in an effort to suggest, "This is hard for me, too," and with the intention of reminding Erin that I was not an expert whose aim was to point out all of the ways she was failing in her efforts at antiracist teaching. This discourse practice took time to develop and required vulnerability in order to build trust, but eventually our critical inquiry into problems of practice was characterized by mutuality and a collaborative rhetorical style that defied normative discourse patterns of research interviewing.

As noted above, the flow of our critical inquiry was not always unidirectional. Though we focused primarily on Erin's thinking and doing related to antiracist pedagogy, I learned a great deal from our pedagogically productive talk. Perhaps the most significant shift in my thinking related to what is and is not included in antiracist pedagogy. During our work together, Erin was focused on her classroom environment but also her department and the institution in terms of her commitment to antiracism. Although this was not initially on my mind in designing the study, Erin pushed me to expand my ideas about antiracist pedagogy beyond classroom teaching to include structural and institutional interventions. This shift in my thinking is important, as a singular focus on the individual classroom/teacher reinforces the individualism characteristic of an ideology of whiteness and does not frame antiracism as a structural intervention to the structural problem of white supremacy. In many of our conversations,

Erin and I spent roughly equal time processing classroom dynamics and departmental and/or institutional dynamics. What was on Erin's mind and what she was eager to talk through with me extended beyond what was happening within the four walls of her writing class. Initially, I understood those conversations as unrelated to my research questions, but useful to her and, thus, important in our work together given my commitment to mutual benefit. Over time, I came to understand them as meaningfully connected to my inquiry about antiracist pedagogy as conceptualized and attempted by white educators. Through our practice of pedagogically productive talk, Erin helped me to broaden my conception of antiracist pedagogy by recognizing that, if racism operates structurally, so too must antiracism.

Importantly, our discussions rooted in problems of practice were followed by observable changes in Erin's teaching practice. While I am not suggesting that our practice of pedagogically productive talk resulted in Erin employing "correct" or "best" antiracist teaching practices, I am suggesting that our shared discourse translated to action in the learning environment. One drawback of an emphasis on discourse, as is at the heart of the pedagogically productive talk framework, is the possibility that shifts in thinking (i.e., pedagogical learning and growth) are not followed by shifts in doing (i.e., pedagogical practice). It is possible that the *combination* of our out-of-class ongoing discussions and my in-class participant-observation contributed to behavior and dispositional shifts in Erin's antiracist teaching efforts, and the speed with which they occurred. What is certain, however, is that Erin found value in our pedagogically productive talk. On multiple occasions, she articulated gratitude for the reflection, insights, learning, and support our work together generated for her. Erin noted that she

appreciated my immersive and ongoing presence in her classroom and found great value in learning about my observations, interpretations, and analysis of her efforts at antiracist pedagogy.

A Framework for Developing Antiracist Pedagogy

Lefstein et al. (2020) do not suggest that workplace teacher discourse is the *only* important influencing factor in teacher socialization, nor do they claim that pedagogically productive talk ought to be the *singular* approach to fostering teachers' pedagogical growth and development. Similarly, I conceptualize pedagogically productive talk not as the best or only approach for developing and practicing antiracist pedagogy, but rather as one promising tool. For white educators, in particular, I believe that pedagogically productive talk can be a critical component of ongoing efforts to develop and practice antiracist pedagogy. As described by Lefstein et al. (2020), educators' collaborative processing of problems of practice and collective brainstorming of pedagogical responses influences their thinking and doing related to teaching (i.e., conceptions and pedagogical actions). The phenomenon they describe as pedagogically productive talk might also be used as a strategy for uncovering and disrupting whiteness-at-work in learning environments. For this and other reasons, which I will describe below, I consider pedagogically productive talk to offer great possibilities for educators' development of antiracist pedagogical practice.

Whiteness-at-work and pedagogically productive talk are both frameworks that employ discourse theory. As such, they co-articulate in important and interesting ways. For example, each framework highlights the influence of norms, or dominant ways of thinking, on individual and group perceptions and behaviors. For example, Yoon (2012)

noted, “Whiteness-at-work can be difficult to pinpoint because it is often a normative, unspoken assumption of how things are” (p. 607). And Lefstein et al. (2020) described as an important function of (and tension within) pedagogically productive talk the disruption of professional and/or organizational norms in education (i.e., teacher noninterference and autonomy, devaluation of non-local expertise, embrace of so called best practices). The emphasis in pedagogically productive talk on utilizing multivoicedness to identify alternative interpretations and explore varying approaches to a particular problem of practice can be a fruitful approach to identifying whiteness-at-work in one’s own or in a colleague’s classroom. For white educators, in particular, whose meaning-making is always already shaped by our white racialization, it may be difficult to see whiteness-at-work. Recall how my interpretation of Jada’s mode of class participation varied from Erin’s initial interpretation; it was not until I offered a divergent read on the dynamic that she noticed how internalized racism was operating in her thinking. The nature of the pedagogically productive talk that Erin and I shared was shaped by my being fully immersed in her course as a participant-observer. Though very few instructors have a researcher embedded in their classrooms, other practices can elicit pedagogically productive talk among colleagues. A few such examples are: periodic peer teaching observations, co-taught courses, co-taught lessons (wherein two sections of a course join for a shared lesson and instructors observe one another in action), recording video of oneself teaching, reflexive journaling, and/or collaboratively reviewing teaching feedback from former students.

In addition to serving as a tool for the identification of whiteness-at-work, pedagogically productive talk offers immense possibility in its emphasis on the local.

Unlike antiracism training facilitated by outside experts or purported best practices of antiracist teaching, which cannot account for context, pedagogically productive talk is hyper-local and deeply grounded in context. Shared knowledge of institutional (and perhaps even departmental) culture and history; familiarity with the student body; an understanding of region-specific history and culture, including race discourses and racialized conflict; and perhaps even experience teaching the same or a similar course: these are the forms of contextualization that position colleagues as excellent thought-partners in puzzling through problems of practice related to efforts at antiracist pedagogy. Additionally, pedagogically productive talk is aimed at developing educators' adaptive expertise. As described above, adaptive expertise equips instructors with "the capacity to respond effectively to nonroutine situations and problems of practice" (Lefstein et al., 2020, p. 362). Contextualization, I have argued, is critical to efforts at antiracist pedagogy; developing adaptive expertise through pedagogically productive talk can help educators conceptualize antiracist pedagogy expansively while recognizing and responding to shifting, complex, and/or uncertain classroom dynamics. The multiple ways that pedagogically productive talk engages context, as described above, contribute to its capacity as a framework for educators' development of antiracist pedagogical practice.

The collegial nature of pedagogically productive talk means that conversation partners have some degree of insight into the question, "antiracist teaching by whom?" This, too, is a form of contextualization that might offer great benefit to educators' efforts at developing and practicing antiracist pedagogy. It also raises the question of racialized dynamics *within* pedagogically productive talk. Arguably, pedagogically productive talk

focused on antiracist teaching would unfold differently among a group of white educators than it would a group of educators of color or a group that included educators of color and white educators. In my research, pedagogically productive talk unfolded between two white instructors; there are ways that Erin and I spoke about whiteness which I believe would have been left out or dramatically different if that was not the case. We were both aware of the toll of emotional labor many scholars of color experience when white colleagues feel entitled to process racialized experiences and/or pose questions about race and racism. This awareness, along with an understanding that white folks' words and behaviors can and do cause harm to people of color even amidst our best intentions, very likely would have led to each of us engaging differently had we been joined by an educator of color. Careful consideration of racialized dynamics between colleagues seems to me to be a critical consideration for educators engaging in pedagogically productive talk about antiracist teaching. White teachers, in particular, might be cautioned to ask ourselves when and how and with whom we seek to share and process problems of practice that include issues of race and racism.

Another way to think about the potential of pedagogically productive talk as a tool for developing antiracist pedagogy is recognizing how the dimensions of this framework work against characteristics of white supremacy culture. Individualism, fear of open conflict, perfectionism, and defensiveness are characteristics of white supremacy culture that commonly show up in organizations (Jones & Okun, 2001), including institutions of higher education and academic departments therewithin. Within the framework of pedagogically productive talk exist disruptions to each of these dominant norms: collaboration and collegiality, embrace of disagreement and conflict, an

orientation toward generativity and growth, and engagement with divergent perspectives through critical inquiry and with the aim of pedagogical growth and development. In addition to disrupting the named characteristics of white supremacy culture, pedagogically productive talk as a framework for teacher learning offers an alternative to hierarchical, power-laden, and high stakes methods of measuring and encouraging instructors' continued development. The peer-to-peer nature of this approach creates conditions for reflection, learning, and experimentation which exist entirely outside of formalized processes such as students' evaluation of teaching instruments, promotion and tenure reviews (for tenure line faculty), or performance review processes (for non-tenure line instructors).

For a number of reasons that I have outlined in this final section of constellation element three, I believe that pedagogically productive talk offers great potential as one framework for educators seeking to develop and practice antiracist pedagogy. In my estimation, the relationship that Erin and I developed in our work together is one example of what pedagogically productive talk focused on antiracist teaching can look like. The framework offers great potential to help educators, and white educators in particular, notice and work to disrupt whiteness-at-work in our classrooms. Practicing pedagogically productive talk, however, may not be easy or come naturally. As pointed out by Lefstein et al. (2020), the conditions in most educational organizations are not conducive, including "prevalent norms of privacy and noninterference; organizational structures that limit opportunities for teacher collaboration and peer observation; [and] policy environments the devalue local expertise" (p. 365). Intentionally working to foster pedagogically productive talk about antiracist teaching may be one way that educators

work to resist white supremacy in higher education, to the degree that such resistance is possible. In the final pivot of this dissertation, Chapter Eight next engages the (im)possibility of antiracist pedagogy for white educators.

Constellation Element Four: The (Im)possibility of Antiracist Pedagogy for White Educators

Thus far, this chapter has offered questions and considerations for postsecondary instructors striving to disrupt white supremacy through pedagogical interventions. Woven through constellation elements one, two, and three (as well as the preceding four chapters of analysis) was an enduring tension about the very possibility of antiracist pedagogy in the context of a structurally racist institution like higher education. Recall Elliot's reflection, shared in Chapter Four:

> I think [higher education] is structurally, foundationally racist. And so everything that it produces is racist, structurally speaking, which again, doesn't mean that it doesn't allow for lines of flight and open spaces and other things. But it's to say that when it gets reassembled, when it closes shop for the night, it comes back as that racist formation.

Erin, too, recognized that the larger container within which her efforts at antiracist pedagogy took place was characterized by white supremacy and grappled with what that meant for her and for students in her courses. The "open question," to quote Elliot, of whether antiracist pedagogy is possible within formalized educational contexts becomes even murkier when such a pedagogical intervention is imagined and attempted by white educators. As I have asserted, the question "antiracist teaching by whom?" matters greatly; this entire inquiry was designed to explore how white instructors conceptualize

and attempt to practice antiracist pedagogy. The paradox that lives within the "open question" of antiracist pedagogy deepens as a function of whiteness: "As multiple interests converge in an interaction, whiteness requires individuals and societies to embody and accept contradictions and hypocrisies. Hence, whiteness can create paradoxes or contradictions in individuals' actions and statements" (Yoon, 2012, p. 590).

What does this mean for white educators who express a commitment to antiracism and strive to practice antiracist pedagogy as an interruption of white supremacy in postsecondary education? Is such an endeavor even possible? Are white educators equipped to do this work? What harms might be committed in our efforts? What does it mean and where are we to turn if, in fact, such an endeavor is *not* possible? While I cannot offer clear answers to any of these questions, I do believe that exploring the paradox itself is a generative exercise that points to further questions and critical considerations for white educators committed to antiracism. As noted in constellation element one of this chapter, my conceptualization of whiteness in this work changed over the course of the project. I have come to understand my research to be less about the white *identity* of educators and more about the *power relations that white racialization manifests* and how teachers navigate those vectors of power in their efforts at antiracist pedagogy. In the following sections of constellation element four, I use the language "white educators" frequently. It may be automatic for readers to interpret such language as a signification purely or primarily of racial identity. As readers encounter these words, however, I encourage them to hold on to the conception of embodied whiteness as a site and vector through which racialized power is generated and flows. Importantly, when I use the words "white educators," I am speaking to and about myself in addition to

speaking to and about white postsecondary instructors generally. In the remainder of this chapter, constellation element four explores the (im)possibility of antiracist pedagogy for white educators through engaging three notions: the limits of the white imaginary, the necessity of white discomfort, and the embrace of paradox. Grounding each of these notions is the critical (and for me, reflexive) question of how white educators are positioned in relation to white supremacy.

Limits of the White Imaginary

The concept of *the imaginary* (or the social imaginary) is endowed with various meanings and usages in multiple disciplines and discourses. Though this framework is not commonly employed in education theorizing and research, it is a useful approach for exploring the paradox of white educators' efforts at antiracist pedagogy. Citing Taylor (2004), O'Neill (2016) indicated that a social imaginary "is about how people 'imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie all these expectations'" (p. 2). The notion is concerned with how everyday people imagine and express the social, which is often not through academic notions of theory but through "images, stories and legends" (p. 2). O'Neil, again citing Taylor, noted that imaginaries are collectively created and maintained, even if they are employed individually: "'the social imaginary is that common understanding that makes possible common practices and a widely shared sense of legitimacy'" (p. 3).

Some scholars of race have applied this framework in their theorizing and activism for uprooting white supremacy. For example, the *Racial Imaginary Institute,* created by poet and scholar Claudia Rankine, is a collaborative, interdisciplinary, arts-

based, activist organization that "convenes a cultural laboratory in which the racial imaginaries of our time and place are engaged, read, countered, contextualized and demystified" (The Racial Imaginary Institute, n.d., para. 2). The institute leverages the notion of the imaginary in its approach to identifying and unsettling white dominance in all aspects of the social:

> Our name "racial imaginary" is meant to capture the enduring truth of race: it is an invented concept that nevertheless operates with extraordinary force in our daily lives, limiting our movements and imaginations. We understand that perceptions, resources, rights, and lives themselves flow along racial lines that confront some of us with restrictions and give others uninterrogated power. These lines are drawn and maintained by white dominance even as individuals and communities alike continually challenge them. (The Racial Imaginary Institute, n.d., para. 1)

Zeus Leonardo, who has written extensively about whiteness in education, evokes the notion of the white imaginary in his work. For example, Leonardo (2004) observed, "Concerned with the circuits and meanings of whiteness in everyday life, scholars have exposed the codes of white culture, worldview of the *white imaginary*, and assumptions of the invisible marker that depends on the racial other for its own identity" (p. 137, emphasis added). My conceptualization and utilization of *the white imaginary* follows the logics offered by Rankine and Leonardo. This notion offers a more expansive conceptualization than Feagin's (2013) notion of the *white racial frame*. Feagin's work, informed by neurological and social sciences, relies on a narrower cognitive conceptualization. The white racial frame is a perspectival frame that "gets imbedded in

individual minds (brains), as well as in collective memories and histories, and helps people make sense out of everyday situations" (p. 10). The notion of the white imaginary, on the other hand, expands beyond cognitive processes (i.e., perceiving, remembering, interpreting) to include affective, moral, and artistic dimensions.

Exploring the (im)possibility of antiracist pedagogy for white educators necessitates consideration of the limits of the white imaginary. Various analytical insights generated in my research relate to such a consideration. In Chapter Four, white instructors expressed uncertainty about whether their efforts could in fact be characterized as antiracist pedagogy and described navigating multiple tensions related to whiteness and antiracism, including white guilt, white saviorism, and performativity. Elliot described how foregrounding resistant white students in antiracist teaching efforts necessarily centers whiteness, pointing to the contradictory effect that striving to destabilize whiteness by foregrounding it ultimately reifies it. Leonardo (2004) connected this contradictory effect to the limits of white imaginary: "When scholars and educators address an imagined white audience, they cater their analysis to a worldview that refuses certain truths about race relations. As a result, racial understanding proceeds at the snail's pace of the white imaginary" (p. 141).

Chapter Six, too, pointed to the limits of the white imaginary in Erin's efforts at antiracist pedagogy. Recall the difference in Erin's initial perception of Andrew's high level of class participation in comparison to that of Jada's. Through analytical memoing, I contemplated the differences I was observing in how Erin responded to Andrew's in-class comments and how she responded to Jada's. In one memo, I noted,

> My read is that Erin's engagement with Andrew is familiar and comfortable, a function of white habitus. When Jada offers ideas and insights that are, perhaps, more profound or thoughtful than Andrew's, it is possible that Erin cannot/does not recognize them as such. (memo, September 26, 2019)

This analytical memo was written after observing a particular instance in Erin's course. The students had read and were discussing the essay "Age, Race, Class and Sex: Women Redefining Difference" by Audre Lorde. Erin asked the class what they thought Lorde (1984/2007) meant when she wrote, "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (p. 123). Jada was the first to respond, followed immediately by Andrew. I noticed that Erin, after not verbally responding to Jada's comment, responded to Andrew's comment by saying with enthusiasm, "That's a good way to put it" (fieldnotes, September 19, 2019). Erin and Andrew both understood and articulated Lorde's message through their white imaginaries. Jada, in her comment, may have expressed insight about the Lorde quote that was unavailable to Erin and Andrew. In other words, the limits of the white imaginary might have inhibited Erin from recognizing as valid and meaningful the interpretation that Jada shared. The contours of the white imaginary inevitably shape/limit how white educators understand and engage with texts, as well as how we understand and engage with students. As white instructors, (how) can we take into account the limits of our white imaginaries and the contours of our limited epistemological frames when teaching the scholarship of people of color? (How) can we better invite and engage students' meaning-making when their insights may not be recognizable to us as valid? Because white educators (including those committed to antiracist pedagogy) work from within the contours of the white imaginary, there are

certain ways of knowing and being that are beyond our comprehension. Even if we commit to, with humility, critically examining internalized white dominance and work to become more aware of the contours of our white imaginaries, there remain limitations that impact our efforts at antiracist pedagogy. While white educators may be able to bump up against and strive to resist or defy the limits of white imaginaries, such efforts will be constrained by those very limits.[8]

Necessity of White Discomfort

As a racial project, antiracist pedagogy demands the uprooting of white supremacy. At the classroom level, this translates to a disruption of the racialized power and authority that are manifested in and flow through whiteness and teacherness. For white educators, an authentic embrace of antiracism and commitment to antiracist pedagogical intervention will produce discomfort. One effect of structural racism is that educational theory and practice have historically centered white students' learning and development and white educators' conceptions of teaching, in all the processes it entails. College and university campuses and classrooms were created, and continue by and large to exist today, as bastions of whiteness. (An entire body of literature on campus climate demonstrates the enduring centering of whiteness in higher education and the harmful effects for students of color of ongoing marginalization and lack of sense of belonging. See, for example: Gusa, 2010; Harper & Hurtado, 2011; Harwood et al., 2012; Johnston

[8] It is critical for me to acknowledge that this study itself, and therefore all of the insights it generated, were impacted by the limits of the white imaginary. I conceptualized and carried out this research from within the confines of my white imaginary, and much of the data I gathered was generated by white educators whose narratives and experiences were also shaped by their white imaginaries. In my work of designing and conducting this research, there are limits to what I can and will "see" and "understand" because I am wholly enmeshed in the white imaginary.

& Yeung, 2014; Kim et al., 2018; Ncube et al., 2018; Rankin & Reason, 2005; Solórzano et al., 2000; Telles & Mitchell, 2018.) Antiracist intervention, for white educators, means refusing and disrupting policies, practices, and relational dynamics that center whiteness and, therefore, center white comfort. It also entails acknowledging where and how we access and leverage power through whiteness and teacherness, and working to *redistribute* that power. In other words, white educators' concerted efforts at antiracist pedagogy require risk-taking (in order to disrupt the status quo) and relinquishing of power. Meaningful disruption of structural racism in education will inherently produce discomfort for white educators and students; instructors committed to antiracist pedagogy ought to anticipate and be able to embrace feelings of destabilization and discomfort.

Given the role of whiteness and teacherness in constructing and regulating power and authority in the classroom, white educators committed to antiracism might strive to disrupt power dynamics that shape pedagogical domains such as grading, classroom facilitation, and disciplinary conventions (as described in constellation element two of this chapter). Steeped as it is in structural racism, higher education is characterized by so-called standard pedagogical practices that reify white supremacy ideology and perpetuate dominant epistemologies, beliefs, and value systems. Refusal (or in the very least critical disruption) of so-called standard assumptions and practices of (structurally racist) formal education is necessary and will undoubtedly produce discomfort for white educators. (Recall the pushback Erin experienced from faculty colleagues when she embraced labor-based grading.) Disruption of long-standing practices, such as disciplinary conventions and grading philosophies, may evoke disdain from others in one's department. Practicing antiracist pedagogy may result in negative teaching evaluations from resistant students or

elicit skepticism from colleagues, either of which might impact promotion and tenure considerations for tenure-line faculty. These are just a few examples of the ways that embracing antiracist pedagogy requires white educators to assume risk.

Recall my assertion that, as white educators, we ought to stay attuned to how we are positioned in relation to white supremacy. Structural racism and white racial dominance in higher education work to benefit the interests of white instructors and students; for white educators, working to disrupt racialized oppression means disrupting or refusing the power and preference structural racism bestows on us. Taking risks that could result in loss of something of value (material or otherwise) and relinquishing power in order to redistribute it more equitably are likely to evoke discomfort. White educators whose antiracist pedagogical efforts are motivated by a desire to gain notoriety or feel relieved of unpleasant emotions like white guilt will likely have a difficult time embracing this discomfort and sustaining antiracist efforts through feelings of destabilization. A practice of humility, as described in Chapters Four and Five, seems integral to white educators' efforts at antiracist pedagogy. Indeed, Patton and Haynes (2020), speaking directly to white educators committed to racial justice, asked,

> Can you engage Whiteness in a way that is critically conscious and always ready to decenter itself? Can you resist dominant standards of Whiteness that insist on White leadership and White ways of knowing in favor of a reimagined White identity that listens to and partners with minoritized communities? (p. 44)

When one's own needs, desires, and ways of thinking and being are understood as most important or most correct, the destabilizing experience of relinquishing power is unlikely to be embraced and sustained. Rather, one is likely to retreat to what feels comfortable,

familiar, normal. In this way, white educators committed to antiracist pedagogy are likely to encounter internal struggle as we navigate feelings and experiences that decenter whiteness. How we understand and respond to such struggle has significant implications for our efforts at antiracist pedagogy. For example, how will we respond when, despite our good intentions, racism shows up in our thinking and is pointed out by colleagues or students? Do we respond out of defensiveness and/or embarrassment, particularly when our racism is pointed out by colleagues or students of color? The uncomfortable emotions we are likely to experience when our internalized dominance is pointed out (i.e., embarrassment, guilt, shame) pale in comparison to the violent and harmful effects of structural racism endured by educators and students of color. Accountability to students and colleagues of color is, in my estimation, a critical element of white educators' efforts at antiracist pedagogy. When students and colleagues of color provide us with critical feedback, we can recognize it as an opportunity for reflection and growth, receive their critique with humility, and work through our uncomfortable emotions rather than becoming defensive and/or seeking validation in an effort to restore a sense of comfort and stability.

Recognizing and reckoning with internalized dominance in our thinking and doing is likely to be an ugly and unpleasant process for white educators committed to antiracism. As Yoon (2012) pointed out, we can perpetuate racism in our very efforts at antiracist pedagogy because whiteness is at work in and on our teaching discourses and actions. A practice of humility entails ongoing engagement with the contours of our white imaginaries, which include racist thoughts, feelings, and beliefs (be they conscious or otherwise). The discomforting and necessary process of acknowledging and striving to

interrupt internalized white dominance is necessary for white educators seeking to practice antiracist pedagogy. Writing specifically to white people in higher education, Patton and Haynes (2020) stated, "Permanent racial justice, although elusive, requires you to overcome expectations of comfort and understand the pervasiveness and embodiment of Whiteness in your life" (p. 43). Without this critical reflexivity and ongoing self-work, white educators are bound to rely on and reinscribe white dominance in our thinking and doing, despite the best of intentions. And it is possible that, even with critical reflexivity, ongoing self-work, and a deep commitment to antiracism, our efforts at antiracist pedagogy will not have the intended impact of disrupting white supremacy. In other words, white educators need to be willing to take risks, to put our power on the line, and to feel uncomfortable in the experience of doing so *while* embracing the reality that we will perpetuate racism in our very efforts *and* the possibility that what we aspire to do is not achievable.

Embrace of Paradox

As noted at the onset of constellation element four of this chapter, the paradox that lives within the "open question" of antiracist pedagogy deepens as a function of whiteness. Yoon (2012), articulating the discursive paradox of whiteness-at-work in educational contexts, stated, "As multiple interests converge in an interaction, whiteness requires individuals and societies to embody and accept contradictions and hypocrisies. Hence, whiteness can create paradoxes or contradictions in individuals' actions and statements" (p. 590). Having illustrated various sites of tension and contradiction in white instructors' conceptualizations of and approaches to antiracist pedagogy, in this final section of constellation element four I assert the importance of white educators' capacity

and willingness to embrace paradox. This section extends my exploration of the (im)possibility of antiracist pedagogy for white instructors by offering the embrace of paradox as an approach for responding to the limits of the white imaginary and the necessity of white discomfort. That is, rather than striving to "fix" the limitations of the white imaginary (which, likely, is not possible) and ease the uncomfortable experience of confronting internalized dominance (which prioritizes white comfort), white educators might embrace the possibility antiracist pedagogy is not accomplishable for us. Letting go of the struggle *against* uncertainty and impossibility, the struggle *for* clarity, answers, and stability, may very well allow for generative sites of rupture.

Multiple of the white instructors with whom I spoke and alongside whom I worked expressed paradox in their conceptualizations of and efforts toward antiracist pedagogy. In Chapter Four, Anthony, Erin, Avery, and Elliot articulated an embrace of paradox as a necessary facet of their efforts at antiracist pedagogy. Rather than looking for or suggesting "best practices" or simple answers, they grappled with difficult tensions and deep uncertainties. Elliot, in particular, problematized the very concept of antiracist pedagogy as a contradiction of terms, particularly as undertaken by white instructors in higher education contexts. Chapters Five and Six detailed various tensions and uncertainties Erin experienced and illustrated her pattern of *stepping into* such struggles. She articulated an understanding and acceptance that her efforts at antiracist teaching would not and could not feel comfortable. Erin described the paradox of desiring to feel effective in her efforts at antiracist teaching while recognizing that such a feeling was not actually beneficial to her aims: "It's pretty rare that [I'm] like, 'Yes! That was good.' That element of, on a personal emotional level, wanting to have those moments and then

recognizing that, if I'm really thinking about this, I can't ever feel comfortable having that" (interview, April 3, 2019). For white educators, choosing to remain in the paradox and destabilization of the (im)possibility of antiracist pedagogy rather than working to alleviate contradiction, find clarity, and ease discomfort may offer an avenue for interrupting white supremacy in our very efforts at antiracist pedagogy.

A significant site of paradox for many of the white educators with whom I spoke related to tensions of de/centering whiteness in the classroom. White instructors openly grappled with the paradox that striving to destabilize witnesses by foregrounding it ultimately reified it. Many described a teaching practice of naming their whiteness for pedagogical reasons even while struggling with the ways such a practice centered whiteness, and their whiteness in particular. As Elliot noted in Chapter Four, this paradox characterizes not just efforts at antiracist pedagogy but the study of whiteness itself. A difficult and important set of questions for educators committed to antiracist pedagogy, and particularly those of us who are white, is: To what degree do we want to center whiteness in our pedagogical interventions?; For what intents and purposes?; and What might be the unintended or unanticipated effects of doing so? These are not simple questions which beg straightforward answers, but rather complex considerations that engage the paradox of centering whiteness in an effort to destabilize it.

As noted in Chapter Four, conceptualizing paradox as a site of a radical otherwise may be a much-needed and generative contribution that queer theory can offer white educators striving to practice antiracist pedagogy. Recall Elliot's reflection from Chapter Four:

> I think one of the things that queer, as a critical concept and as a radical political concept does, is, in its best moments, marks the potential or the space of an otherwise, an unthinkable otherwise. And so there's a certain kind of utopic space there that I always carry with me no matter how jaded and broken down I get.

The embrace of paradox and a willingness to grapple with the (im)possibility of our efforts at antiracist pedagogy may prove generative to white educators committed to antiracism. Queer theory, in its critique of norms and rejection of binaristic logics, may offer a productive disruption to dominant discourses and practices of antiracist pedagogy.

Constellation element four has explored the (im)possibility of antiracist pedagogy for white educators, pointing to various sites of tension and paradox. Critically considering the limits of the white imaginary is integral to white educators' efforts at antiracist pedagogy. So, too, is our willingness to experience discomfort. White educators should anticipate experiencing internal struggle and unpleasant emotions in our efforts to disrupt white supremacy; in our responses to such discomfort, we ought to resist the urge to seek simple answers or neutralize enduring tensions. The final claim of constellation element four urges white educators to embrace paradox as a potentially generative site of disruption in our efforts at unsettling white supremacy through pedagogical intervention. Acknowledging with humility the limits of the white imaginary, accepting discomfort as a necessary aspect of interrogating internalized dominance, and embracing paradox are ways to meaningfully explore the question of the (im)possibility of antiracist pedagogy for white postsecondary instructors.

Conclusion

In the final chapter of this dissertation, I have offered a synthesis of the insights shared in the four preceding chapters and posed questions and important considerations about antiracist pedagogy in theory and in practice. Adequate consideration of context, I have asserted, is central to efforts at antiracist pedagogy; this entails meaningfully and critically engaging the questions, "antiracist teaching by whom?" and "antiracist teaching for whom?" I have suggested that conceptualizations of antiracist pedagogy extend beyond content selection to include pedagogical practices and policies that work to disrupt the racialized power imbued in whiteness and teacherness. Pedagogically productive talk, I have suggested, offers great potential as a framework for educators committed to developing and practicing antiracist pedagogy. And throughout each of these important considerations, I have argued, ought to exist meaningful engagement with the paradox that antiracist pedagogy may not be possible for white postsecondary educators.

My intent in this chapter, and throughout this dissertation, has been to explore complex and difficult questions rather than seek out straightforward answers. The inspiration for this study is captured in Lewis' (1998) suggestion that "The very best teaching is that which simultaneously *troubles and beckons the imagination*" (p. xiii, emphasis added). The question of the (im)possibility of antiracist pedagogy for white educators, in my mind, remains just that—an open question. As white educators, our antiracist pedagogical efforts *may* create fleeting disruptions, or moments of rupture, in the foundationally and structurally racist system of higher education. This research, in exploring that (im)possibility without attachment to certainty, reiterates the urgency of

disrupting white supremacy in postsecondary education by foregrounding the need for deeper engagement with questions of racialized power in the classroom.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Recruitment Materials: Call for Participants

Hello,

My name is finn j. schneider and I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development at the University of Minnesota. I am hoping you will consider participating in and/or spreading the word about research I am conducting on antiracist teaching in colleges and universities.

This research will explore the experiences of White educators at the postsecondary level who are working to implement antiracism in their teaching practice. I am seeking self-identified White faculty or instructors whose teaching philosophy and practice express a commitment to antiracism. Participation is completely voluntary and will include one interview lasting about an hour. The interview will be audio-recorded and will include questions about the individual's interest in, commitment to, and experiences of antiracist teaching.

To share your interest in participating, email me at schn1174@umn.edu. If you know of an individual whom you feel fits the criteria of the research, please consider sharing this message with them directly to encourage their participation.

If you have any questions, please e-mail me at schn1174@umn.edu.

Sincerely,

finn j. schneider

Appendix B: Potential Participant Questionnaire

This questionnaire was formatted as a Google form; interested individuals filled it out online and their responses were collected digitally. All demographic questions used open text boxes so that individuals could respond to each prompt in their own words.

Form title: Antiracist Teaching Study - Participation Interest Form

Form instructions:
Thank you for expressing interest in my study on the experiences of white postsecondary instructors who strive to address issues of racial injustice through their teaching philosophy and practice. Please fill out this questionnaire if you would like to be considered for participation in the study.

Best,

finn j. schneider
PhD candidate, Higher Education
Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy & Development
University of Minnesota Twin Cities
schn1174@umn.edu

Form fields/questions:

Name:

Email:

At what institution(s) do you teach?

What course(s) do you currently instruct? *Please include the discipline, format (i.e., online, in-person, hybrid), level (i.e., undergraduate or graduate), and approximate course enrollment.*

How long have you been teaching at the postsecondary level?

Briefly describe your teaching philosophy:

Briefly describe how you aim to express antiracism in your teaching:

What is your racial identity?

What other identities are important to you?

Appendix C: Consent Forms

Consent From - Phase One

You are invited to participate in a study designed to understand the experiences of postsecondary instructors who strive to address issues of racial injustice through their teaching philosophy and practice.

This study is being conducted by finn j. schneider, a PhD candidate in the department of Organizational Leadership, Policy and Development at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities. This study is being overseen by Dr. Tania D. Mitchell, Associate Professor of Higher Education in the Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development.

Study Purpose
This study seeks to explore white postsecondary instructors' experiences implementing antiracism into their teaching philosophy and practice.

Study Procedures
This study is completely voluntary. If you choose not to participate, it will not affect you in any adverse way. If you agree to participate, you will be interviewed by finn j. schneider. The interview will be audio recorded and later transcribed. Upon completion of the transcription, you will be invited to review the transcript to provide any clarifications or elaborations that emerge upon review. After the interview is complete, you may be asked if finn can observe your teaching for one class session. Participation in a classroom observation is completely voluntary; declining to participate in an observation does not prevent you from participating in an interview. All aspects of your participation are voluntary and may be discontinued at any time.

Risks of Study Participation
This study involves no significant risk to you. Because this research explores identity and experience, you may have reason to comment upon particular instances when your identity was salient to your teaching. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and if any issues of emotional pain or trauma emerge through this questioning, you have every right and opportunity to end the interview.

Benefits of Study Participation
As a participant in this study, you will have the opportunity to reflect on your experiences as a teacher and you will have the opportunity to discuss specific classroom experiences with the researcher. Your participation will contribute to an emerging area of scholarship on antiracist pedagogy in postsecondary education.

Confidentiality
The records of this study will be kept private. Your record will be maintained in an anonymous form and only accessible via a password protected computer. Research

records will be destroyed at the time IRB approval for this project expires (typically seven years from the date of this interview).

Voluntary Nature of the Study
Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate in this study will not affect your current or future relations with your college or university. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships. You can withdraw by contacting finn j. schneider (schn1174@umn.edu) or Dr. Tania D. Mitchell (tmitchel@umn.edu or 612-624-6867).
Contacts and Questions
The primary researcher conducting this study is finn j. schneider. You may ask any questions you have now, or if you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact finn at schn1174@umn.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), **you are encouraged** to contact the Research Subjects' Advocate Line, D528 Mayo, 420 Delaware St SE, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455; 612-625-1650.

Please keep a copy of this information for your records.

Statement of Consent:
I have read the above information, and I wish to be a part of this study.

Signature:_____ Date: _____
participant signature
Signature:_____ Date: _____
finn j. schneider

If you agree with the terms of this study, please keep a copy of this form.

Consent Form – Phase Two, Instructor

You are invited to participate in a study designed to understand the experiences of postsecondary instructors who strive to address issues of racial injustice through their teaching philosophy and practice.

This study is being conducted by finn schneider, a PhD candidate in the department of Organizational Leadership, Policy and Development at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities. This study is being overseen by Dr. Tania D. Mitchell, Associate Professor of Higher Education in the Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development.

Study Purpose
This study seeks to explore white postsecondary instructors' experiences implementing antiracism into their teaching philosophy and practice.

Study Procedures
This study is completely voluntary. If you choose not to participate, it will not affect you in any adverse way. If you agree to participate, you will be interviewed by finn j. schneider multiple times over the course of two academic semesters. The interviews will each be audio recorded and later transcribed. Upon completion of the transcription, you will be invited to review the transcripts to provide any clarifications or elaborations that emerge upon review. In addition to participating in an interview with finn at least one per month during this time, finn will also ask to observe your teaching at least once a week for two academic semesters. All aspects of your participation are voluntary and may be discontinued at any time.

Risks of Study Participation
This study involves no significant risk to you. Because this research explores identity and experience, you may have reason to comment upon particular instances when your identity was salient to your teaching. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and if any issues of emotional pain or trauma emerge through this questioning, you have every right and opportunity to end the interview.

Benefits of Study Participation
As a participant in this study, you will have the opportunity to reflect on your experiences as a teacher and you will have the opportunity to discuss specific classroom experiences with the researcher. Your participation will contribute to an emerging area of scholarship on antiracist pedagogy in postsecondary education.

Confidentiality
The records of this study will be kept private. Your record will be maintained in an anonymous form and only accessible via a password protected computer. Research records will be destroyed at the time IRB approval for this project expires (typically five years from the date of this interview).

Voluntary Nature of the Study
Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate in this study will not affect your current or future relations with your college or university or with the faculty, staff, or administrators involved in service learning or community engagement at your school. If you decide to participate, you are also free to withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships. You can withdraw by contacting finn j. schneider or Dr. Tania D. Mitchell (tmitchel@umn.edu or 612-624-6867).

Contacts and Questions
The primary researcher conducting this study is finn j. schneider. You may ask any questions you have now, or if you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact finn at schn1174@umn.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), **you are encouraged** to contact the Research Subjects' Advocate Line, D528 Mayo, 420 Delaware St SE, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455; 612-625-1650.

Please keep a copy of this information for your records.

Statement of Consent:
I have read the above information, and I wish to be a part of this study.

Signature:_____ Date: _____
participant signature

Signature:_____ Date: _____
finn j. schneider

If you agree with the terms of this study, please keep a copy of this form.

Consent Form – Phase Two, Student Interviews

You are invited to participate in a study designed to understand the experiences of college students in the environment of the college classroom.

This study is being conducted by finn j. schneider, a PhD candidate in the department of Organizational Leadership, Policy and Development at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities. This study is being overseen by Dr. Tania D. Mitchell, Associate Professor of Higher Education in the Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development.

Study Purpose
This study seeks to explore undergraduate college students' learning experiences in a particular classroom setting (ENL 111, Section R, Fall 2019). The researcher, finn j. schneider, has been a participant / observer in the particular classroom setting for one semester and seeks to understand how students perceived and experienced that classroom setting.

Study Procedures
This study is completely voluntary. If you choose not to participate, it will not affect you in any adverse way. Participation in the study will have no impact on your grade in the course; your involvement will occur after final grades are submitted.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to talk with finn j. schneider in an individual or group. The individual interview is a conversation between you and finn; it will be audio recorded and transcribed. The group interview is a collective conversation among 2-4 students with finn present as a facilitator; it will be audio recorded and transcribed.

Upon completion of the transcription, you will be invited to review the transcript to provide any clarifications as you see fit.

Risks of Study Participation
This study involves no significant risk to you. Because this research explores identity and experience, you may have reason to comment upon particular instances when your identity was salient in your experience of the classroom setting. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and if any issues of emotional pain or trauma emerge, you have every right and opportunity to end the interview or exit the focus group.

Benefits of Study Participation
As a participant in this study, you will have the opportunity to reflect on your experiences as a student and to discuss specific classroom experiences with the researcher. Your participation will contribute to an emerging area of scholarship about teaching in postsecondary education. Additionally, if you choose to participate you will receive a $15 Target gift card as a gesture of appreciation for your time.

Confidentiality

The records of this study will be kept private. Your choice to participate or not will not be shared with the course instructor. The researcher will compile themes gathered from across student interviews, removing names and any identifying information so as to protect the identities of the interview participants. These compiled themes will be shared with the course instructor; however, all identifying information will be removed. Any information shared by a participant which would make them identifiable to the instructor will not be shared.

All data collected in this research will be anonymized and only accessible via a password protected computer. Research records will be destroyed at the time IRB approval for this project expires (typically seven years from the date of this interview or focus group).

Voluntary Nature of the Study
Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate in this study will not affect your current or future relations with your college or university. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships. You can withdraw by contacting finn j. schneider (schn1174@umn.edu) or Dr. Tania D. Mitchell (tmitchel@umn.edu or 612-624-6867).

Contacts and Questions
The primary researcher conducting this study is finn j. schneider. You may ask any questions you have now, or if you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact finn at schn1174@umn.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), **you are encouraged** to contact the Research Subjects' Advocate Line, D528 Mayo, 420 Delaware St SE, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455; 612-625-1650.

Please keep a copy of this information for your records.

Statement of Consent:
I have read the above information, and I wish to be a part of this study.

Signature:_____ Date: _____
participant signature
Signature:_____ Date: _____
finn j. schneider

If you agree with the terms of this study, please keep a copy of this form.

Appendix D: Interview Protocols

Phase One Interview Protocol

Protocol:

This semi-structured protocol starts with the researcher giving the participant a printed consent form and reading it aloud. The participant will be invited to sign the consent form if they so choose. If the participant consents and signs, the interview begins by turning on the voice recorder and starting with the first question. Based on the participant's responses, the researcher may ask a probe or go in another direction than that planned outline.

1. How did you first become interested in teaching?
    PROBE: Can you tell me about a favorite teaching moment or experience?

2. Tell me about your current teaching - what and where are you teaching this term?
    PROBE: What course(s) are you teaching this term?
    PROBE: What type of instructor role are you in at your institution?
    PROBE: What kind of institution do you currently teach at?

3. How long have you been teaching at the postsecondary level?
    PROBE: How long have you been teaching in your current capacity, as a [role named in Q1 response]?

4. How do you describe your teaching philosophy?
    PROBE: Who or what has inspired this?

5. How did you first become interested in antiracist teaching?
    PROBE: What experiences did you have as a student that shaped this interest?
    PROBE: What experiences have you had as an educator that shape this interest?

6. How does your commitment to antiracism show up in your teaching practice?
    PROBE: What is your hope for students' learning in choosing to teach in this way?
    PROBE: How do you conceptualize antiracist teaching?

7. Can you remember a particular time when you felt successful in your efforts at antiracist teaching?
    PROBE: Tell me why that particular moment stands out.

8. Can you remember a particular time when you felt conflicted in your efforts at antiracist teaching?
    PROBE: Tell me why that particular moment stands out.

9. How do you name your racial identity?

PROBE: Tell me why you choose to name yourself in this way.
PROBE: How long have you been naming your race in this way?
PROBE: Has/does your way of naming your race change(d) across time/context? How? Why?

10. How do you experience your white racial identity in the classroom as an instructor?
PROBE: Can you remember a particular moment when your white racial identity was especially salient in the classroom? Tell me why this moment stands out.

11. How did you first become interested in reflecting on whiteness as a part of your teaching practice?
PROBE: How has your white racial identity influenced your efforts at enacting antiracist teaching over time?
PROBE: Tell me about a memorable aha moment or insight you've had about antiracist teaching through the lens of your identity as a white instructor.

12. Aside from your racial identity, do other identities influence your experiences enacting antiracist teaching as a white instructor?
PROBE: Tell me about a memorable experience when another identity intersected with whiteness to influence your antiracist teaching practice.

13. What other experiences are important for me to know to best understand your commitment to antiracist teaching?

Phase Two Interview Protocol (student interview)

Protocol:
Welcome the participant(s) when they arrive. Invite them to sit near the recording device. Share the consent form and ask them to read and sign, if they agree. Provide a copy of the consent form to the participant.

Invite the participant(s) to share freely in response to questions posed. Turn on the recorder and use questions and prompts below to guide the interview.

When the interview concludes, invite the participant(s) to complete the demographic questionnaire and give them the gift card for participating.

1. What was your experience of ENL 111?
   Prompts:
   - Was this class different from others you've taken at Oakdale? How?
     - When did you first start to notice [insert a difference shared]?
     - Once you noticed [insert difference shared], did you engage in the class differently than you had been? How?
     - Once you noticed [insert difference shared], were there any other differences you started to notice about this class compared to others you were taking at Oakdale?

2. What was your experience of the professor in this class?
   Prompts:
   - Was this professor different from others you've had at Oakdale? How?
     - When did you first start to notice [insert a difference shared]?
     - Once you noticed [insert difference shared], did you engage in the class differently than you had been? How?
     - Once you noticed [insert difference shared], were there any other differences you started to notice about this professor compared to others you had at Oakdale?

3. How did the class engage with issues of race and racism?
   Prompts:
   - What is a moment from class that stands out to you in terms of issues of race and racism?
   - Now that the class is over, what ideas related to race will stick with you, if any?

4. Do you think the instructor managed issues of race and racism in the course well?
   Prompts:
   - What was her approach to getting students to think about race and racism? Did that approach work for you?
   - Do any moments stand out when you think she managed that well?
   - Do any moments stand out when you think she did not manage that well?

5. Would you consider Erin's teaching antiracist?
   Prompts:
   - What does that mean to you?

6. What kinds of things did Erin do that you might consider to be antiracist?
   Prompts:
   - What is a moment from class that you feel is an illustration of antiracism?
   - What sorts of experiences - assigned reading, class activities or discussions, writing assignments, etc - stand out to you being antiracist?

7. What should Erin have done differently to better fit what you consider to be antiracist?

8. Is antiracism in the college classroom important to you as a student?
   Prompt:
   - Why? Why not?
   - When did this first become important to you?

Appendix E: Phase Two Observation Protocol and Recording Chart

Protocol:
During participant-observations, I will position myself in the classroom so as to be able to clearly see and hear the instructor. I will take jottings on paper so as to minimize noise and potential distractions in the learning environment.

My observation and notes will be focused on the following: participant's actions in the classroom. Initially, I will be looking for instances of the following:

- any spoken reference to race, racism, antiracism, whiteness, or white supremacy
- use of any materials which reference race, racism, antiracism, whiteness, or white supremacy
- any spoken or written reference to oneself racially (i.e., naming their whiteness), but especially use of storytelling or sharing anecdotes that name the participant's whiteness
- moments when race/racial identity was salient in the context of class discussion and the participant did not acknowledge their whiteness
- moments of perceived tension related to race in any way

Recording Chart:

Event Description	Notes

Appendix F: Demographic Questionnaire for Student Interview Participants

Name: _____

Preferred pseudonym: _____

Preferred pronouns: _____

How do you identify your:

Race: _____

Gender: _____

Sexual orientation: _____

Socioeconomic class: _____

Are you the first in your family to attend college? Yes No

What is your intended major? _____

If you wish, please list any other identities or experiences that impact your experience as a college student:

Appendix G: Course Evaluation Survey

1. What idea(s) will most stick with you from this course? Why?

2. What aspects of the course (the overall structure of the class, in-class activities, the labor-based grading system, writing workshops, conferences, focus on small-group work, course policies, etc) did you find most beneficial to your learning? Least beneficial?

3. Early in the semester, I shared with you all that I wanted this class to not only help you become more effective writers but to also help you think about questions of race, power, and social justice in higher education. In your experience, what aspects of the class contributed to that goal? Where did I fall short? (Please be as open and honest as you would like to be.)

4. What, if anything, did I do this semester that supported your learning?

5. How could I have better supported your learning? What suggestions do you have for ways that I could improve my teaching in the future?

6. On a scale of 1 (I never read anything) to 5 (I always read every word), how much of the assigned reading did you complete? (Please be honest!)

7. Did the Reading Journals encourage you to complete more of the assigned reading?
   Comments:

8. Would you recommend that I assign *Undoing the Silence* again?
   Comments:

9. Would you recommend that I assign *Binti* again?
   Comments:

10. Please rate the following assignments from 1 (I learned nothing doing this assignment) to 5 (I learned tons doing this assignment). Try to base your ratings on your learning experience rather than how much you enjoyed the assignment (although hopefully those two things connect!):

Freewriting	1	2	3	4	5
Paper 1: Literacy Narrative	1	2	3	4	5
Paper 2: Cultural Analysis Blog	1	2	3	4	5
Paper 3: Collaborative Editorial	1	2	3	4	5
Paper 4: Community Writing Project	1	2	3	4	5
Paper 5: Grant Proposal	1	2	3	4	5

Please explain your reasoning: what specifically was useful or not useful about

these assignments? Is there any other kind of assignment you wish I had included?

11. Any final comments?