

**TEACHERS' COLLABORATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF AN ANTI-
RACISM UNIT IN THE KINDERGARTEN CLASSROOM**

by

Jennifer Lynn Ofeimu

Bachelor of Arts – University of Victoria 1987

Certification of Teaching – University of the Fraser Valley 2012

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Approval

Name: Jennifer Lynn Ofeimu

Degree: Master of Education (Educational Leadership and Mentorship)

Title:

Examining Committee:

Name: Dr. Awneet Sivia

MEd Chair or Designate, Teacher Education Department

Name: Dr. Nikki Lynne Yee

Senior Supervisor

Educational Consultant

Name: Dr. Joanna Sheppard

Second Reader

Associate Professor, Teacher Education Program

Date Defended/Approved: June 12, 2021

Abstract

Racism and Anti-racism are complex issues that can be challenging for educators to navigate. Learning how to support educators to examine their own identities and engage in anti-racism education is critical. As such, this research asks: (a) “How do early primary educators situate themselves in anti-racism education?” and (b) “What systems do early primary educators find supportive to engage in anti-racism education?” The literature review includes a broad definition of racism, a discussion on the hidden curriculum and anti-racism education, and finally, a review of the professional development and practices that promote systemic change. This research is a case study of four teachers’ (three kindergarten and one support teacher) lived experience collaborating and implementing an anti-racism unit in the kindergarten classroom. The analysis revealed that leadership can foster systemic changes to facilitate anti-racism education by providing time for planned self-regulated collaboration embedded with supports that reduce risk and promote relational trust.

Key words: Anti-Racism Education, Kindergarten, Early Primary, Collaboration, Inquiry, Pathologies of Silence

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Dedication

To all the change-makers along the way, it is your shoulders we stand upon with gratitude.

“I have great belief in the fact that whenever there is chaos, it creates wonderful thinking.

I consider chaos a wonderful gift.”

– Katherine Melon Charron, *Freedom's Teacher: The Life of Septima Clark*

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Introduction

Purpose

This research aims to create supportive possibilities for in-service teachers to engage in anti-racism education, particularly primary teachers in the Western Canadian context. When I began my inquiry into anti-racism education, I found there was limited research in this context. The lack of research is a concern, as it leads to significant ambiguity and unanswered questions for primary educators to engage in anti-racism education. More significantly, the lack of research may lead primary educators to wonder if they should engage in anti-racism education with children at such a young age. The urgency to find answers to these questions becomes amplified when school districts encourage educators to take anti-racism action.

In the past year, several of British Columbia's (B.C.) mainland School Districts initiated an anti-racism stance by adapting district policies, working groups, and district-wide frameworks. For example, the Vancouver, Mission, and Surrey School Boards have updated or incorporated new anti-racism policies (Mission School District, 2021; Surrey School District, 2021; Vancouver School District, 2020). The Superintendent of the Langley School District wrote an open letter to the district's parents/guardians and staff members outlining the district's anti-racism stance. He included in the letter that the district incorporated an Anti-racism Working Group (Langley School District, 2021). The Abbotsford School District has developed a framework for Equitable and Inclusive Schools (Abbotsford School District, n.d.). The framework includes four domains: (a) Individuality - Deepening Equity Consciousness, (b) Interpersonal - Healing for Equity, (c) Structural - Dismantling Oppressive Structures, (d) Pedagogical - Embracing Responsive Pedagogy (Abbotsford School District, n.d.). The

framework's recommendations are consistent with anti-racism narratives (E.g., Aveling, 2006; Bennett, 2019; Knowles & Hawkman), especially when it suggests teachers "Interrogate our assumptions, biases and beliefs," "explore our own identities in relation to others," and "explore the nature of our connectedness and the kinds of discourse we have within our school communities about various student populations" (Abbotsford School District, n.d.). These are essential starting points for educators if they want to address systemic racism. However, to bring the framework's objectives to fruition, schools and educators will need to prioritize the work. While School Districts are initiating anti-racism policies and frameworks, providing staff with guidance and skills to enact new anti-racism initiatives is essential.

Early Learning in British Columbia

Although limited research is published on anti-racism education in the primary school years, B.C.'s focus on early primary education presents a viable context for anti-racism education at the onset of students' academic careers. The revised Early Learning Framework is directly connected to B.C.'s curriculum and core competencies (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2021). The document is written in partnership with Indigenous Elders and organizations, primary educators, and the B.C. government. It is an invitation for all stakeholders to re-envision early learning spaces for all students up to grade three (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2019). One intention of the framework is to promote dialogue about the understandings of early childhood, knowledge, education, and learning (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2019). Critical to the narrative of anti-racism work is that the Early Learning Framework document illuminates' challenges to the values and assumptions embedded in prevalent developmental theories that evolved from particular social and political contexts. Dominant educational theory promoting universal best practices privilege Eurocentric ideologies and silence other perspectives (Pacini-Ketchabaw et

al., 2015, as cited in B.C. Ministry of Education, 2019). Furthermore, the Early Learning Framework (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2019) incorporates several principles that do not directly address but open possibilities for anti-racism education:

(a) Children are strong, capable in their uniqueness, and full of potential. (b) Families have the most important role in contributing to children's well-being and learning. (c) Educators are researchers and collaborators. (d) Early years spaces are inclusive. (e) People build connection and reconnection to land, culture, community, and place. (f) Environments are integral to well-being and learning. (g) Play is integral to well-being and learning. (h) Relationships are the context for well-being and learning. (i) Learning is holistic. (p.15)

Hence, the framework's principles observe children as competent and holistic beings capable of acting on their world in purposeful ways, ready to build meaningful connections to peers, community, culture, and place. Thus, anti-racism education has its place in the early learning context, aligning with the directives many school districts in British Columbia are developing.

Problem

Educators may struggle to engage in this critical work without viable supports. For example, the Abbotsford School District's Equitable and Inclusive Schools Framework lays out complex initiatives. Without supportive systems to facilitate implementation, it is difficult to see how this framework will become a dynamic action-orientated intervention. Firstly, exploring our own identities in relation to others and interrogating our biases and beliefs depends on the assumption that educators actively explore or understand their own racial identities. Examining racial identities centred in the Western Eurocentric paradigm is a complex task (Aveling, 2006). It involves interrogating one's own beliefs and values to get to the core of racialized biases

(DiAngelo, 2018; Kendi, 2019). Delgado and Stefaniec (2017) may see this examination as problematic for White educators as they often do not see themselves as racialized. As a result, they do not examine their own racial identity.

Secondly, examining the connectedness to others through discourse in school communities would require educators to be engaged in dialogue with one another on racialized issues. In my experience, many educators exist in a paradox; they may identify the importance for their students to create positive racial identities, yet they maintain a pervasive silence about race that ultimately diminishes the importance of diversity. When educators decide to embrace anti-racism education, examining their personal beliefs and values involving race is fundamental to their journey (Egbo, 2009; Vaught and Castagno, 2008; Ullucci, 2012). However, to fully address the pervasiveness of dialogic paralysis requires a critical look at systemic structures (Kendi, 2019; Safir, 2017). Transgressing racialized silence to a place of generative dialogue requires leadership that is willing to address systemic changes (Adams et al., 2019; Safir, 2017). Without this examination, meeting the equity and inclusion frameworks' primary objectives becomes problematic, and communities remain fragmented by unresolved systemic racism.

Positionality

Before I engage in a deeper conversation on this topic, I invite you to learn about my positionality as a mother, wife, and educator in connection to anti-racism. My lived experiences have generated an understanding of the commitment required to examine my beliefs, values, and biases to engage in this critical work. I am a third-generation White European Settler, born and raised on Vancouver Island. I spent most of my formative years in Victoria, British Columbia. As an adult, I have spent more than half my life residing on the lower mainland of British Columbia. My family and I reside on the S'olh Temexw (sacred lands) of the Stó:lō Peoples. I

am cisgender, a wife, a mother, a teacher, middle-class, neurotypical, and despite spending the last year with the rest of the world in the COVID-19 pandemic (Government of Canada, 2020), I have stable mental health, finances, and connected relationships. I state this information as my acknowledgment that I experience privilege as the mainstream Western Eurocentric paradigm centres many intersections of my identity.

Years ago, I started a deep introspection into my racialized privilege when I came to understand that my own immediate family did not experience the same privileges that I am afforded. My husband and I have been married for thirty years, and we have three adult daughters. My husband is a Nigerian, Black, cisgender male, and we were committed to raising our daughters in a culturally fluid home. It became clear to me how I took my privilege for granted. I never searched for the positive, self-affirming representation of my European, White identity in media but finding the same for my daughters was challenging. Meritocracy always worked for me. I achieved recognition for my hard work, both academically and professionally. The colour of my skin has never associated me with any biases, talents, behaviours, or emotions. I have not experienced overt racialized comments or aggressions. Painfully, I can not say the same for my family.

My husband and I were very intentional in supporting our daughters to gain positive identities. I recall one family dinner when our girls were younger. My husband had just finished telling our daughters a childhood story as a boy back in Nigeria. The girls were laughing at their father's story, and our middle daughter, probably five at the time, sighed and said in a very woeful voice, "I feel so sad for Mommy." When we asked her why she replied, "She is the only one that is not African in our family." For her, this was a very sad thing. The insight of her revelation as a young and innocent child, to me, was rather profound. She felt a sense of

belonging, and she was concerned that I might not have that same connectedness. However, her statements demonstrate that children are racially aware and know when they are centred and valued at this young age.

Our role as parents was to ensure our daughters felt the same centeredness in the world outside of our home. We encouraged open and honest dialogue in our family to normalize conversations about race and identity. At times, it meant helping the girls navigate conversations with peers to set boundaries around biases. Significantly, it meant keeping our family friends diverse and modelling that our lives were more meaningful for the experiences we shared. In return, my children knew they were valued and loved by a diverse range of people. I want the same experience for all our students. Every child needs to know their value and worth, and educators at all grade levels can facilitate this understanding through intentional actions.

I can not deny, understanding of my Whiteness is supported by my personal family experience. However, unpacking my privilege required immersing myself in vital learning by actively listening, reading diversely, and reflecting on my biases. I had to embrace and ride through my discomforts, and I continue to do so. With so many things yet to learn and understand, I acknowledge that engaging in allyship and anti-racism is not a finite destination. It is a continuum of my growth. I have made a lifelong commitment to learning to identify, dismantle, and relearn new ways of being and doing. The personal accountability I have taken to engage in anti-racism work helps to inform me in my research.

The experience of understanding my privilege has raised my consciousness as an educator. I am critical of how and what I am teaching students in the classroom. My practice as a learning assistance teacher (LAT) has always centred around equity and inclusion, not just in race but in many intersections of student identity. I am engaged with my colleagues in learning

and sharing inclusive pedagogy in our school, but it tends to focus on physical-cognitive-neuro diversity. I desire to open the conversation and engagement with anti-racism pedagogy to add another intersection of inclusivity and equity within elementary schools.

I have reflected deeply on the need for equity and inclusion to build healthy and connected communities, and I recognize the insurmountable work in front of us. I have given considerable thought to the roles educators can play in creating equitable and inclusive communities where all people, with diverse intersections, have physical and emotional well-being and are recognized and valued for their contributions to society. Imagining the possibilities of inclusive communities creates a sense of joy within me. My reflections led me to the quote of Septima Clark, an educator and civil rights activist. “I have great belief in the fact that whenever there is chaos, it creates wonderful thinking. I consider chaos a wonderful gift” (Charron, 2009, p.354). I choose to become a wonderful thinker. I position the problems that I have outlined as an opportunity to uncover possibilities for primary educators. In particular, to engage in conversations about their identity in relation to the students’ diversity in their classroom and engage in anti-racism education.

Scholarly Significance and Research Questions

My inquiry question ascends from my desire to ensure all students obtain a sense of belonging within the classroom and that teachers are supported as they make shifts in their practice. Educators may have difficulty unpacking their identities in isolation (Matias & Mackey, 2016). If the mirror is only held up to oneself, the reflection is limited to a singular perspective. However, looking through windows to the world beyond the singular experience provides opportunities to examine oneself through multiple perspectives. Dismantling core values is challenging but significant work that assists educators to move to a place of action. What is

requested of educators to engage in anti-racism work can not be underestimated in its complexity. With the objective of supporting educators in becoming anti-racism educators, I ask the following research questions: (a) “How do early primary educators situate themselves in anti-racism education?” and (b) “What systems do early primary educators find supportive to engage in anti-racism education?”

Creating connected, healthy communities benefits us all, and initiating this work at the onset of children’s academic careers is powerful and exciting. It is hoped this study can inform school and district leadership and primary teachers of the possibilities available to navigate into the space of becoming anti-racism educators. This research is for the primary educators that are brave enough to address racial inequities, or as the late John Lewis (2018) urged us to make “good trouble”.

Literature Review

In this research, I seek to find how teachers situate themselves in anti-racism education. Also, I want to learn what systems will support primary teachers to engage in anti-racism education. Given this focus, scholarly definitions of racism in the broader social context provide a critical starting point. Then I will position racism within the school setting and define anti-racism education. Next, I will review the literature to understand the phenomena that perpetuate teachers’ disengagement from discourse and engagement in anti-racism education. Lastly, I explore systems that facilitate educators’ engagement in generative dialogue to foster anti-racism education and activities that promote systemic change within schools.

Definitions - Racism as a Social Construction

Attaining a clear understanding of racism creates a foundation for educators to appreciate the importance of examining their identity in relation to the students they teach. It also provides

an opportunity to identify the necessity of taking action in anti-racism education. Delgado and Stefaniec (2017), two renowned scholars in Critical Race Theory (CRT), provide a provocative definition of racism. They define racism as having three main attributes.

The first attribute of racism is that it is ordinary and challenging to address because it is not often acknowledged (Delgado & Stefaniec, 2017). The dominant group's values are presented as "normal," and they are even valued as necessary for success in society (Delgado & Stefaniec, 2017; Saad, 2020; Vaught & Castagno, 2008). Many organizations such as politics, health care, law enforcement, and education prevalently practice Eurocentric values (Egbo, 2009). For example, in education, Eurocentric dominant values show up in the curriculum in schools (Egbo, 2009). Traditionally dominant values are apparent from the kindergarten to grade twelve curriculums, found in historical narratives focusing on the single perspective, the literature in class and school libraries, and embedded in math and science processes. However, it can also be observed as excessive scrutiny of certain racial groups or devaluing non-dominant groups' ways of knowing and doing (Egbo, 2009). White people often have the freedom of not thinking about or discussing their race because it is considered normal (DiAngelo, 2018; Knowles & Hawkman, 2020; Mosley, 2010; Ullucci, 2012). Thus, it requires an explicit examination of self to develop an awareness of how the Western Eurocentric paradigm does not afford the same normalization of beliefs, values, and ways of knowing and doing to all people in society.

The second attribute of racism is that it is a hierarchical system placing White people above Black, Indigenous, and Peoples of Colour (BIPOC; Delgado & Stefaniec, 2017; Kendi 2019; Menakem, 2017). Dominant Eurocentric groups often benefit materially and emotionally as meritocracy works for them (Delgado & Stefaniec, 2017; DiAngelo, 2018). The system that centers their beliefs, values, and ways of knowing and doing has demonstrated that they can

achieve their goals if they work hard. Not all White people become successful, but their racial identity is usually not considered a barrier (Kendi, 2019). Delgado and Stefanic (2017) suggest that if the system works for a large portion of society, then they have limited incentive to eradicate racism if it does not impact them. However, when educators become aware that social systems do not treat or value all students equitably, they may be motivated to advocate for systemic change to increase opportunities for BIPOC students.

Lastly, race is not biologically grounded but rather a product of social thoughts and relations (Delgado & Stefanic, 2017; Kendi, 2019; Menakem, 2017). Thus, race is a social construction to benefit the dominant racial group (Delgado & Stefanic, 2017; Kendi, 2019; Menakem, 2017). Racialized groups were typically identified by physical features and believed to be intellectually, physically, and culturally inferior (Egbo, 2009; Kendi, 2019; Menakem, 2017). These socially constructed beliefs justified denying equitable access to privileges afforded to the dominant culture (Egbo, 2009; Kendi, 2019). The construction of race historically justified the exploitation of BIPOC and created beliefs, values, and biases that continue to permeate society (Kendi, 2019; Menakem, 2017). Racism is considered an enduring structure in the Western Eurocentric paradigm that must be challenged to create more equitable and healthy communities (Amiot et al., 2020; Kendi, 2019; Vaught & Castagno, 2008).

All three domains of racism can operate at an individual, institutional, or systemic level. Individual racism is the most overtly observed with racialized opinions and actions of individual people (Delgado & Stefanic, 2017; DiAngelo, 2018; Kendi, 2019). Institutional racism is the policies and laws that are held within various institutions such as law enforcement, education, real estate, and health care that benefit White people and place BIPOC at a disadvantage (Delgado & Stefanic, 2017; DiAngelo, 2018; Kendi, 2019). These institutions are interrelated

and create a system of racism or systemic racism (Delgado & Stefanic, 2017). The literature views systemic racism as most virulent because it pervasively denies non-dominant groups access to what society offers White people (Egbo, 2009; Kendi, 2019). The denial is based on the socially constructed ideas around the supposed inferiority and the unfounded behaviours, aptitudes, and emotions associated with various skin colours (Egbo, 2009; Kendi, 2019; Menakem, 2017). However, if racism is socially constructed, racism should be capable of deconstruction and the pernicious beliefs challenged (Delgado & Stefanic, 2017). If educators value building equitable societies, their actions can impact dismantling racism and help to provide students with optimistic futures of connection and inclusion.

Acknowledging Privilege

White People benefit from the normalization of “Whiteness,” and it is referred to as privilege. Often the privileges associated with White racial classification are perpetuated subconsciously (Bennett, 2019; Bennett & Driver et al., 2019; DiAngelo, 2018; Knowles & Hawkman, 2020; Mosley, 2010; Ullucci, 2012). McIntosh (1988), a feminist, anti-racism scholar, coined the term “White privilege.” She made an analogy of White privilege to owning an invisible knapsack, “of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was meant to remain oblivious” (McIntosh, 1989 p.1). The analogy describes how White people can expect freedoms that they can take advantage of every day, based solely on the colour of their skin. McIntosh (1989) describes White privilege as showing up in several ways in the Eurocentric paradigm, including (a) White parents can be assured that their White children will receive curricular materials that will acknowledge the existence of their race; (b) when discussing national heritage, White people will see representations of themselves declaring they made the nation what it is; (c) there is a plethora of quality picture books, toys, and children’s

magazines featuring White children (McIntosh, 1989). These are a few examples of privilege that pertain to this discussion on anti-racism work within the elementary school system. These ideas on privilege formed the basis for the discussions amongst the educators in this case study.

Power is Pervasive

In the context of anti-racism education, it is essential to clarify the definition of “power.” Power is often thought of as one entity dominant over the other entity to obtain a prescribed action. However, the French philosopher Michel Foucault creates a paradigm shift in how power is defined and utilized. Foucault states that power is omnipresent, and knowledge is a socialized phenomenon (Fendler, 2014; Taylor, 2011). Thus, knowledge is not always representative of reality, but something humans construct to exercise power (Fendler, 2014). School routines and curriculum privilege knowledge that facilitates White People’s use of power. At the same time, this knowledge systematically excludes BIPOC Peoples and impedes their ability to exercise power. Hence, in anti-racism education, providing all students equitable access to power by creating and legitimizing knowledge beyond the Western Eurocentric paradigm becomes a deliberate action.

Anti-Racism Education

When White educators understand that dominant ideologies often shape their beliefs and values, they can examine their biases and engage in critical self-examination of how and what they teach in their classroom. Egbo (2009) takes a critical lens in preparing teachers for diverse classrooms in the Canadian context. The following discussion on the hidden curriculum illuminates how systemic racism permeates the educational setting. (Bennett & LeCompte, 1995; Henry & Tator, 2006, as cited in Egbo, 2009):

A substantive amount of what students learn is not openly stated, even though such implicitly conveyed knowledge (the hidden curriculum) underpins student and teacher behaviour. Generally defined as the behaviours, attitudes, and knowledge the school unintentionally teaches through its content selection, routines, and social relationships, the hidden curriculum provides additional space for spreading dominant ideologies in schools and consequently promotes institutional racism (p. 9).

Egbo's (2009) discussion on the hidden curriculum informs the need for anti-racism education. The crux of unveiling the hidden curriculum begins with teachers explicitly examining their identity and biases in relation to the students within their classroom (Cui, 2017; Ullucci, 2012). For decades, several scholars have addressed the critical conversation about the lack of cultural and racial congruency between teachers and their students (Calliste & Dei 2000; Egbo, 2009; hooks, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Educators are encouraged to identify their biases reinforced by Eurocentric ideologies to engage in anti-racism pedagogy (Calliste & Dei, 2000; Cui, 2017; DiAngelo, 2018; Egbo, 2009; Ullucci, 2012). The literature claims that when educators fail to reflect upon their biases, they may perpetuate Eurocentric ideologies that lack positive representation for all students (Cui, 2017; Bennett, 2019; Ullucci, 2012).

Traditionally, Canadian schools are organized around hierarchal models of instruction, negating the value of different ways of knowing and doing (Cui, 2017; Egbo, 2009). This historic model conveys who has value and whose voice matters through curriculum, the school calendar, hallway displays, school spirit days, and collections in school libraries (Cui, 2017; Egbo, 2009). Thus, stripping down the hidden curriculum through understanding privilege, examining personal biases, and normalizing power are positive steps towards anti-racism education.

When White educators engage in anti-racism education, the work involves shifting their world views and representing and connecting to the diversity within the classroom. It is much more than a token celebration of diversity but intentional activism and pedagogical practices (Egbo, 2009; Dei, 1996). Anti-racism theorists believe this level of intervention is required because incorporating multi-cultural experiences into the curriculum is not enough to combat racism (Egbo, 2009). Anti-racism education focuses on the salience of race and equalizing the social positioning of students through equitable actions. The normalization of power in education must be taken very seriously as it can mean “education either does something *to* you or it can do something *for* you” (Dei, 2014, p.240). Thus, schools and educators can either be solutions or contributors to systemic racism; it depends on their actions (Egbo, 2009). Students can experience a liberating education when they are authentically represented, provided choices on how they wish to engage in their learning, and offered continuous opportunities to share their voice within their learning community (Cui, 2017; Dei, 2014; Egbo, 2009; hooks, 1994; Safir, 2017). Anti-racism pedagogical approaches of delivering choice and valuing students’ voice can happen from the start of every child’s academic experience in the Canadian context.

Envisioning New Possibilities - Anti-Racism is Good for Everyone

Opening up and valuing other perspectives in this conversation is honouring anti-racism work. Also, examining diverse perspectives creates more possibilities to approach and conceptualize anti-racism education. Anti-racism education framed as a movement towards acknowledging the strength of diversity as vital to a community’s health positions the work in terms of universal benefits. Examining decolonizing literature creates a vision of what educational settings can strive towards in creating equitable and connected communities. Indigenous scholar Dwayne Donald (2016) shares his learnings from Cree Elders, framing the

need for diversity through an ecological understanding, “Ethical relationality does not deny difference, nor does it promote assimilation of it. Rather, ethical relationality supports the conceptualization of difference in ecological terms as necessary for life and living to continue” (Donald, 2016, p.11). In essence, communities with low diversity become weak and unstable (Donald, 2016). Re-positioning educators to view diversity in their classroom as a strength builds ethical relationships with their students (Yee, 2020). Indigenous or decolonizing perspectives can help educators re-frame anti-racism work as a movement forward; diversity adds vitality and life to promote healthy learning communities from which we all benefit.

Understanding Disengagement - To Engage Dialogue and Action

Prior to developing strategies for teachers to engage in anti-racism education, it is critical to understand teachers’ disengagement. This section of the literature review examines barriers that educators may experience, including the teacher’s beliefs and values, contextual barriers, emotional literacy, and the need for organizational support.

Beliefs and Values - Racism as Pervasive and Not Individualistic

The definition provided earlier discussed how racism is difficult to detect, which is also true for educators. White teachers who are unaware of their privilege may struggle to engage in anti-racism education. Saad (2020) points out “you cannot change what you can not see” and “you cannot dismantle what you do not understand” (p.38). Vaught & Castagno (2008) point out that self-awareness of privilege is often limited because a lack of structural awareness accompanies it. Furthermore, the structure is very self-preserving, influencing social interactions and even the way people think in the educational system (Miled, 2009). Thus, creating opportunities for educators to examine identity and developing structural awareness becomes more significant.

It is essential to examine how professional development meets the needs of teachers to gain awareness of how their racial biases impact the students they teach. A study conducted by Vaught and Castagno (2008) discusses how a one-day professional development failed to support the teacher's understanding of systemic racism and how it contributed to the racialized students' low academic performances. Teachers' statements attributed low scores to the behaviours of the students. Many of the teachers defined themselves as hard-working teachers, and they were sorry for the past. However, they had nothing to do with slavery and other wrongdoings of racialized people, and thus racism was not understood as their responsibility (Vaught and Castagno, 2008).

The educators' statements in Vaught and Castagno's (2008) study may indicate how some teachers may see racism solely as individualistic acts and not as pervasive and systemic. DiAngelo (2018) would explain their responses as examples of how individuals view racism in terms of a binary. Often people see racism in terms of good-bad; I am a good person, and therefore, I can not possibly be racist (DiAngelo, 2018). However, their statements also support classifications of colour-blindness that may impede self-examination of racialized issues. In this example, colour-blindness may be understood as (a) Cultural racism – there are cultural deficits, and as a result, the suffering is at the hands of the racialized groups' own harmful doing, (b) Minimization of racism – racism is no longer a central factor, and (c) Abstract liberalism – that systemic racism is a thing of the past, and equal political, economic, and social opportunities are available; thus, equity has been achieved (Decuir-Gunby et al., 2020; Jayakumar & Adamian, 2017). As such, the limited scope of one-time professional development can not address educators' overarching beliefs and values. Providing educators with support systems that allow for examination of their racialized identity will assist them to understand they can either maintain

or dismantle oppressive educational structures (Amiot, Mayer-Glenn, et al., 2020; Jayakumar & Adamian, 2017; Knowles & Hawkman, 2020; Vaught & Castagno, 2008).

Contextual Barriers

White educators may be disengaged from anti-racism education because they may not have the tools to support their journey. A study conducted by Alaca and Ryle (2018) involving six teachers from the Toronto area acknowledged significant barriers that the teachers faced when teaching to the diversity in their classrooms. There was a lack of access to vetted resources, such as books and play materials (Alaca & Ryle, 2018). Often teachers had to go to costly specialty stores for diverse resources for their classrooms. The teachers expressed a lack of knowledge in teaching to the students' diversity, and they placed high importance on wanting to do it well (Alaca & Ryle, 2018). Finally, they said an absence of professional development was also problematic (Alaca & Ryle, 2018). Often, teachers were selected to attend district professional development and then report back to their teams. Teachers not attending the sessions usually did not implement the strategies because the passing of information was a quick synopsis of the professional development (Alaca & Ryle, 2018). Providing teachers with resources and transformational professional development opportunities may support educators engaging and sustaining their activism in anti-racism education.

Emotional Literacy

Teachers may experience a range of emotions when engaging in anti-racism education, ranging from feelings of guilt to futility. These feelings might be a barrier to engaging with anti-racism education. Matias and Mackey (2016) state that teachers require emotional literacy to work through possible emotions of guilt and shame. They add, if educators are not emotionally ready to engage in conversations of racism, they are not emotionally secure enough to engage in

anti-racism pedagogy, especially for the long term. However, teaching is a risky endeavour; if educators wait to initiate a new practice until they reach being “emotionally ready,” they may never or significantly delay engaging in the new practice. Professional learning takes place in the social context, and establishing trust, safety, and a reasonable amount of vulnerability can help teachers engage in practices (Adams et al., 2019; Twyford et al., 2017). Understanding that teachers may likely experience vulnerable emotions when first engaging in anti-racism education, it is critical that supports are created to build confidence to promote and sustain engagement.

Understanding Pathologies of Silence

There is also the challenge of having educators recognize and label racism within their settings. Miled (2019) observed a strong resistance from the teacher participants in her research to even talk about racism. It was as if merely mentioning the word “racism” would ruin the image of the school district, and this confirms “how diversity-proud organizations are often the ones that defend hardest against hearing about racism” (p. 91). Parhar and Sensoy (2011) shared that often in professional development sessions, Canadian teachers in the Lower Mainland of B.C. experienced discomfort in critical conversations about race and some teachers expressed resistance to the content of the professional development.

DiAngelo (2018) provides another perspective regarding silence. If individuals speak up against racism, they can risk being accused of being angry, humourless, combative, and not suited to go far in the institution. As a result, individuals may avoid conflict and remain silent. Often silence is rewarded with “social capital as being fun, cooperative, and a team player” (p. 58). These reasons are very legitimate concerns for educators to remain silent about racism.

However, if schools shift their culture to encourage open and non-judgemental conversations, educators may engage in dialogue.

Another point of view on silence in the literature is that silence is not benign, and it is not neutrality; it is a dynamic full of self-protection (Kendi, 2017; Saad, 2020). The literature suggests that when White people remain silent about racism, it communicates: *I am fine with the way things are because they do not negatively affect me. I enjoy the benefits I receive with White privilege* (Kendi, 2017; Saad, 2020). Shields (2004) contributes to the conversation on silence by stating that educators are often uncomfortable with differences and thus fail to hear diverse voices within the structure. Discomfort manifests into what Shields (2004) describes as *pathologies of silence*. If leaders want to transform education for all students within their schools, understanding the pathologies of silence becomes critical to the anti-racism narrative. Healing can begin by engaging in difficult conversations and creating safe spaces for educators to engage in discussions without fear of reprisal (Bennett, 2019; Safir, 2017; Shields, 2004; Stone et al., 2010).

In summary, disengagement from anti-racism education is complex. It is based on beliefs, value systems and complicity. It is context-driven and can be challenged through emotional investment and organizational support. Considering these factors are important, as they can ultimately contribute to or confront the pathologies of silence.

Moving Forward to Initiate Change

The literature review yielded no research on successful programs for primary educators to initiate change through anti-racism education within their classrooms. However, the literature states that the value of representing cultural diversity and teaching its importance and value in kindergarten is essential (York, 2016). Children come into the kindergarten classroom shaped by

their home cultures. Their kindergarten experiences have significant implications for later academic, social, and emotional outcomes (York, 2016). However, early primary educators do not seem well-prepared to provide an anti-racism education. There was ample literature on disengagement of anti-racism education at all levels of education and preparing pre-service teachers to educate classrooms with diverse learners. Thus, I offer the following research on transformational professional development and practices that create systemic change as a starting point to consider a plan to engage primary teachers in anti-racism education.

Transformational Professional Development for Anti-Racism Education

The literature does surface successful professional development and individual interventions to facilitate teachers' capacity in anti-racism education. McManimon and Casey (2018) describe participants in a two-year professional development group learning about anti-racism. The professional development was voluntary, had relational accountability emphasizing collaborative relationships, and incorporated self-designed anti-racism interventions. Overall, the educators experienced transformations in their thinking. The researchers recognized that many professional development sessions for in-service educators are often "one-and-done" sessions (McManimon & Casey, 2018). One-time, top-down professional development that is out of the educators' context often fails to nourish any ongoing anti-racism work, as noted in Vaught's and Castagno's (2008) study discussed earlier. Failure to have educators chop at the roots of their beliefs and values perpetuates defensive reactions that distance themselves as part of systemic racism (Aveling, 2006).

Providing educators with sustained ongoing professional development could support teachers in engaging in self-reflection and examining their beliefs and values. Bennett's (2019) case study demonstrates a successful intervention to support an in-service educator that held

ideologies centred in racial narratives. Bennett conducted four dialogic meetings with a pre-service teacher to understand their perceptions of racism and then ten dialogic meetings with them as an in-service teacher. Bennett's research findings demonstrated that cultivating relational trust allowed for difficult conversations to bring forth racial understanding. A significant amount of research echoes the importance of building trust as a staple of entering critical discussions with teachers to do the rigorous work involved in anti-racism (see Adams et al., 2019; Sharpe & Nishimura, 2019; Nowell et al., 2017). Thus, building trust with the participants can be identified as a supportive structure to engage in anti-racism education.

Understanding the dynamic nature of trust is essential, as educators may experience high-risk levels even within trusted relationships. Kaser and Halbert (2009) state that trust does not always transfer from context to context and can easily be lost and hard to regain. Some theorists state that risk and the emotional responses to risk are socially constructed (Twyford et al., 2017). Thus, social interactions can either escalate or reduce the emotional reactions a person has to a situation (Taylor-Gooby & Zinn, 2006). When teachers feel vulnerable, they may engage in seeking reassurance, seeking help from trusted colleagues, preparing lessons more diligently, and building their knowledge (Twyford et al., 2017). Finally, socio-constructivists also state that positive emotions can enhance teachers' risk-taking, especially when teachers know the risks will improve their students' learning (Twyford et al., 2017). As the participants engage in anti-racism education, positive social interactions that value voice throughout the process can reduce the risks they may experience. Lowering teachers' risks may sustain their involvement in anti-racism education.

Practice that Promotes Systemic Change

The limited research on transformational anti-racism professional development for primary teachers meant this literature review was expanded to include general professional development studies that might inform anti-racism work. In this section of the literature review, I discuss practices that promote schools' systemic changes. Moving away from "top-down" initiatives, Butler and Schnellert (2012) conducted a case study of a complex community of inquiry. One aspect of the research focused on how inquiry-orientated approaches to professional development can impact systemic change. The research includes using a three-tier inquiry framework consisting of (a) teacher learning-level inquiry, (b) practice-level inquiry, and (c) student-level inquiry. The teacher learning level inquiry is described as self-regulated, involving a cycle of planning, enacting learning strategies, monitoring, and revising approaches to achieve set goals (Butler & Schnellert; 2012). Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) state that educators withstand the journey of learning and implementing new ideas when they are supported through an inquiry group of peers. Also, if teachers learn through practice-level inquiry, their understanding may be heightened if they also focus on self-learning (Hargreaves, 1999; McLaughlin et al., 2004, as cited in Butler & Schnellert, 2012). Thus, providing the participants with a high level of autonomy and the ability to plan, enact, monitor and revise to achieve the goal of engaging in anti-racism education may be a positive place to begin.

In addition to iterative collaboration cycles, the literature suggests that formal and informal leadership plays a significant role in igniting systemic change in education. Safir (2017) expands the conversations beyond collaborative inquiry work and discusses the importance of leadership roles and institutional reorganization. She cautions leadership that they are "in charge but not in control" (Safir, 2017, p.191). When leaders listen and respond to educators' requests

for support and follow through on providing that support, it builds trust and relational capital (Safir, 2017). Together, all stakeholders can re-organize the system where voice and choice are accessible to students, families, and staff. The purpose of leadership is to influence the team with enough guidance and options, then step back and allow the team to do the creative and powerful work they are capable of doing. The focus can then be on generative dialogue to “find the answer within the room” (Adams et al., 2019, p.1). To address system change, leadership in “context” is explicitly essential to facilitate solutions from “within” to become a reality (Adams et al., 2019).

Summary

Understanding the broad context of racism helps to explain how it surfaces as socially constructed beliefs and values traditionally held by a dominant group and hierarchical power structures within education. Educators involving themselves in anti-racism work will benefit from examining their identity in relation to the power structures and pushing against the system to make changes. The system itself is long-standing and self-preserving, placing challenges on teacher’s endeavours to engage in anti-racism work. However, offering educators a space to engage in self-regulated, iterative collaborative inquiry and dialogue about their own racial identity supports shifting their practice to engage with anti-racism education.

Methodology

In my research, I locate myself under the socio-constructivist paradigm. I take a firm ontological stance that through dialogue and action, we can open our view of the world and co-construct new ways of thinking and doing. To answer my research questions, (a) “How do early primary educators situate themselves in anti-racism education?” and (b) “What systems do early primary educators find supportive to engage in anti-racism education?” I need to gain a deep and fulsome understanding of the participants’ lived experiences as they engage with anti-racism

pedagogy and curriculum. I embrace the epistemology that my direct connectedness to the teachers who engage in the study will enhance my understanding of their experience. I position myself within their work on co-constructing and implementing the unit, facilitating collaborative and debriefing group sessions, and co-teaching in the classroom.

The method that best addresses my inquiry questions is a qualitative case study. A case study involves an in-depth examination of a real-life situation, so the information's essence is not lost by time (Yin, 2014, as cited in Creswell & Poth, 2018). In this case, the research looks at the lived experiences of kindergarten teachers collaborating and implementing an anti-racism unit. A significant case study feature is that it is a bounded system, defined by time and by place (Stake, 2005, as cited in Creswell & Poth, 2018). The bounded case in this study was a group that included three kindergarten teachers, Symone, Dena, and Sarah (pseudonyms), and Kate (pseudonym), a part-time English language learner (ELL) teacher that works with the kindergarten pod. I acted as a facilitator and participant-observer in the case study. My role was to provide a purpose for our work together but not to prescribe how it was done. The participants and I worked at the same school and have an established collaborative practice. The group and I co-constructed and implemented an anti-racism unit over seven weeks.

A case study involves using multiple sources of information to gain a detailed understanding of the case (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The data sources discussed in further detail below included the unit-plan framework/lessons, weekly participant reflections, weekly summary derived from the team debriefing/collaboration meetings, and the written transcripts from the participants' final individual interviews. The various data sources allowed for the participants' multiple perspectives and facilitated thick descriptions of their experiences collaborating and implementing the anti-racism unit.

Context

The research setting described below provides the context for the group of four teachers, who teach at the same school, located in the lower mainland of B.C. This context was chosen because, in order to co-teach, I had to adhere to the COVID-19 protocols and remain with the teaching pods I am assigned to for the school year.

Setting

The research took place in a kindergarten to grade five elementary school located in the lower mainland of B.C. The school's geographic location is in a matured residential area near the city core, with apartment rentals, subsidized housing, and single-family dwellings. The diverse population of the school is approximately two hundred and seventy students. The classroom teachers implemented the anti-racism units in the kindergarten classes in this school.

Participants

Before recruiting participants for this study, the University of the Fraser Valley's Human Research Ethics Board (Appendix A: HREB Protocol No. 100540) and the local school district granted consent to conduct this research. I recruited primary teachers and non-enrolling teachers who worked with the primary teaching pods to participate in my research. The COVID-19 pandemic (Government of Canada, 2020) impacted how participants were recruited for this research. Assigned teaching pods were a part of the school district's safety protocols. Thus, the participants would have to be within the same teaching pod to collaborate. Also, the participants needed to be in a teaching pod that I was assigned to as a learning assistance teacher so we could co-teach together. I sent out a letter of invitation through an email and chose the teaching pod with the most participants that came forward. Once the participants showed interest in doing the

research, I pursued their informed consent through individual interviews. I provided each participant with the opportunity to ask and answer any questions concerning the research.

The participants Dena, Sarah, Symone, and Kate, as shown in Table 1., are all female, of White European descent, with a range of teaching experience. The four participants were interested in learning about anti-racism education, and three participants had begun to engage in self-education on racism. However, they all found it challenging to engage in conversations about anti-racism with others. None of the participants had previously implemented explicit anti-racism education in their classroom.

Table 1

Demographics of Teacher Participants

Demographics	Participants			
	<u>Dena</u>	<u>Sarah</u>	<u>Symone</u>	<u>Kate</u>
Self-Identity	White/European Female	White/European Female	White/European Female	White/European Female
Years of Teaching	16 Years kindergarten	3 Years kindergarten	21 Years kindergarten	9 Years ELL teacher
Current Engagement in Anti-Racism Dialogue and Work	Open to learning, has not engaged in conversation	Open to learning, self-study conversations on anti-racism limited	Open to learning, self-study conversations on anti-racism limited	Open to learning, self-study conversations on anti-racism limited
Experience in Teaching Anti-Racism	None in teaching anti-racism	None in teaching anti-racism	None in teaching anti-racism	Teaching grade 5 curriculum - Addressing students' questions on racialized social issues

Research Methods

The research involved four specific steps: Step 1. Collaboration Before Teaching, Step 2. Teaching the Anti-Racist Unit, Step 3. Team Debriefings and Collaboration, and Step 4. Final Interviews. Each step is described in detail below.

Step 1 - Collaboration Before Teaching

The team, which also included me, met on January 13 and January 20, 2021, for approximately two hours in total to co-plan the unit. The administrator provided permission to utilize the weekly collaboration time. Thus, we could meet face-to-face, but socially distanced, for the two collaboration sessions. At the first meeting, the group accepted the suggested norms, and we agreed that it was a fluid document that could be revised as needed (Appendix B: Debriefing Norms). Next, we decided on a meeting schedule including the final individual interviews and co-constructed a fulsome definition of anti-racism pedagogy. The team had the autonomy to determine if they wanted to (a) take a unit they were already working on and apply anti-racism pedagogy or (b) create a new unit with an anti-racism focus. The participants decided they wanted to co-construct and implement a unit on teaching their students explicitly about anti-racism. None of the participants had ever taught an explicit anti-racism unit in kindergarten or any grade.

In the second meeting, on January 20, I observed the participants were generating much conversation around ideas for the anti-racism unit, but no concrete planning had been established. Thus, we needed to work out a proposal to produce what the participants envisioned within the case study time frame. One of the first considerations to accommodate was that the participants had different teaching philosophies. A participant shared that she was “Reggio Emilio” (Brown, 2019) trained, and she did not have experience in writing formal units. To

facilitate the participants' teaching philosophies and their desire to implement a unit, I suggested we develop a unit framework to start us off and then build lessons as we progressed. The team agreed that it was a plan that worked for everyone.

Using a Universal Design for Learning model (Katz and Sokal, 2016) and Backwards Design (Davis and Autin, 2020), we built the unit framework. Once the participants established the outcome for all students, they established stepping-stones to arrive at the final destination. To facilitate the team's cohesiveness, I suggested we also co-construct definitions of essential vocabulary taught in the unit. By the end of session two, the participants established the anti-racism unit framework consisting of four main themes: 1. Community, 2. Diversity/Race, 3. Racism/Anti-racism, and 4. Activism/Ally. We also established a fulsome definition of community in kindergarten student language. The team discussed possibilities for the initial lessons; I typed the ideas into formal lesson plans offering various resources and activities for the teachers. The lesson plans were distributed to the participants via email before initiating the unit the following week. Utilizing the lesson plans was optional. I sourced out anchor books for the initial lessons. The participants co-constructed subsequent lesson plans after they began teaching the unit.

Step 2 – Teaching the Anti-racism Unit.

The unit's teaching commenced on January 22, 2021, and data collection continued until February 27, 2021. The participants taught lessons each week at their own pace in response to the students' needs. Overall, the teachers taught lessons for the same theme within the same week. As regular learning supports to the classrooms, Kate and I were available to co-teach the lessons. I was available five days a week, and Kate was available on Wednesdays and Thursdays. The participants were very receptive to co-teaching with us. The teachers led how they wanted

the co-teaching to happen. The co-teaching varied from scribing student's responses while the teacher taught, having one-on-one conferences with students after lessons, supporting activities and art projects, or taking the lead role in teaching a class.

There was a variety of activities utilized to teach the unit. Many of the lessons implemented thematic children's books to help the children understand a concept. The books were also a starting point to generate discussions with the students. To help the children conceptualize the lessons' main themes, the participants used several activities such as visuals, videos, story workshop materials, maps of the students' hearts, art projects with customized paints to reflect their skin, and thematic bulletin boards.

Step 3 – Team Debriefings/Collaboration.

When the participants started teaching the unit, we met once a week for debriefing/collaboration meetings. We met on January 27, February 3, February 10, February 18, 2021. Instead of having a debriefing/collaboration meeting in the final week of February, the participants' final interviews were conducted. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the afterschool debriefing/collaboration meetings were online using the Zoom platform, as they were not part of the regular workweek collaboration time. In the original research design, the meetings were solely for debriefing the lessons because the unit was to be thoroughly planned before commencing teaching. The goal was to have the debriefing sessions last thirty minutes to respect the participants' time. However, by participant request, the sessions ran for approximately 60 minutes. The sessions involved the participants debriefing the lessons they taught for the week and then co-planning the lessons for the following week in the same session.

The debriefing/collaboration meetings had three distinct components. In the first part of the meeting, the participants all took turns and shared what they taught that week, the resources

they used, and how the students responded. Kate and I also shared key observations we made while co-teaching. After the participants shared out, I would casually highlight some strategies the participants had shared that were exemplars of pedagogy that responded to students' needs. This practice generated conversations with the team. The participants embraced this practice and started to ask each other questions about strategies that appealed to them. If a participant mentioned a barrier they were facing in the classroom, I asked what would support them to achieve the desired results. Often these questions generated discussion on how the co-teaching could accommodate the needs in the classroom.

In the second portion of the meeting, after the participants debriefed the lessons, they taught that week, and I asked them how they would like to move forward for the following week. The teachers utilized the information they had learned from each other and reflected on their students' responses to formulate the following week's lessons. The participants and I brought an assortment of thematic books and other resources to share with the team to support the collaborative co-planning. After the sessions, I wrote up and emailed out formal lesson plans based on our discussions to use the following week.

Finally, after the share-outs and collaborative planning, the conversations evolved into deep anti-racism discussions in the third portion of the meeting. The participants engaged in discussions about their revelations and how their learning supported their teaching in the classroom.

Step 4 – Final Interviews.

The final part of the case study was individual interviews involving open-ended questions. (Appendix C: Interview Protocol and Questions). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the interviews were online using the ZOOM platform. I provided the participants with the

questions a few days before our scheduled interview to provide them ample time to think about and prepare their responses. I informed the participants that it was acceptable to go over their debriefing reflections. Each participant could go back to any questions during the interview to expand upon their answer. I audio-recorded the interviews using the Otter application. Each of the interviews lasted approximately sixty minutes for three participants and about forty minutes for one participant.

Managing Bias

As the principal researcher of this study, I have made several intentional actions to manage my own bias. Miles et al. (2019) reminds researchers that while there is no single reality, the researcher has the responsibility of ensuring their research is trustworthy. In this section, I discuss three ways I have attended to the trustworthiness of this study.

Triangulation

A significant feature of the case study method is that several data sources are collected. The multiple data sources (described in detail in the section below), consisting of the lesson/unit plans, the participant debriefing /collaboration written reflections, the debriefing/collaboration notes, and the transcripts from the final interviews, allowed for several perspectives from each participant. The data's intersection provided for a layered analysis of the participants' lived experiences. In essence, instead of a one-dimensional view, there became a multi-dimensional view and a deeper understanding of their truths (Miles et al., 2019).

Member Checks

I wanted to ensure that the data I analyzed reflected what the participants experienced and shared. A member check allows the participants to review the debriefing/collaboration notes and interview transcripts to decide if they wanted to make any additions, omissions, or revisions to

the documents. Thus, I had the participants member check all the debriefing notes and the final interview transcripts. Throughout the data collection, I was vigilant, particularly in the debriefing sessions and the final interviews, to have the participants clarify what they meant rather than me assuming what they meant. Two members made additions that they forgot to share in their final interviews.

Expert Reader

Dr. Nikki Yee, my research supervisor, was invaluable to me. As my mentor throughout the entire research process, we met regularly, and she asked me provocative questions. In articulating my answers, I became more accountable to my own beliefs and values to open my thinking. Furthermore, she helped me evaluate my coding by challenging me to rationalize my coding choices. She also offered her expert insights to make the coding more concise. In addition, Dr. Joanna Sheppard provided her perspectives as a second reader for the written report and provided her insights and feedback.

Data Sources and Analysis

Four sources of data were collected in the case study for data analysis. The written transcripts from the individual interviews were the primary data source. The unit lesson plans, weekly participant reflections, and the detailed notes generated from the weekly online team debriefing/collaboration meetings provided context to the individual interviews. I selected a holistic thematic coding analysis described by Saldaña (2009) and Nowell et al. (2017) to review all the data as I received it initially. The familiarity of the data allowed me to organize and cross-reference it to the final interviews. I used a more in-depth analysis of the final interviews, which is described below.

Unit Framework-Lesson Plans

The first source of data received was the unit framework and the unit plans. I organized the lesson plans in chronological order into a three-ring binder. On an excel spreadsheet with a column for each enrolling classroom teacher, I noted the lessons, along with the resources, activities, and any significant changes, omissions, or additions to the lessons that each participant made. I also noted when Kate or I co-taught in the classrooms.

Participant Weekly Debriefing/Collaboration Reflections

It was optional for the participants to complete a reflection after each debriefing/collaboration meeting. I provided the participants with a reflection template (Appendix D: Reflection Template). Despite being optional, I received all reflections, some were late, and one participant missed a week. I printed the reflections and chronologically placed them for each participant in the same binder separated by a divider. Once I received the reflections, I conducted a holistic thematic coding analysis described by Saldaña (2009) and Nowell et al. (2017). On an excel spreadsheet with a column for each participant, I entered their key themes. I colour-coded common themes of all four participants and bolded interesting or pivotal themes for each participant that did not fall under the collective theme.

Debriefing Notes

I wrote up notes after each debriefing/collaboration meeting. Then I shared them with the participants within 24 hours of the meeting. They could member check the debriefing/collaboration notes and have them for their records. The participants could email back any revisions, omissions, or additions before the subsequent debriefing/collaboration meetings. No participants made any revisions to the debriefing/collaboration notes. I chronologically organized the member-checked debriefing/collaboration notes into a third section of the binder. I

conducted a holistic thematic coding analysis described by Saldaña (2009) and Nowell et al. (2017). On an excel spreadsheet, I created a column for each session and entered the prominent themes. I observed the trends each week and colour-coded themes at the end of the data collection.

Final Interview

The last data source was the individual interviews. The audio recordings of the interviews were made into text transcripts by the Otter application. The participants did a member check of their transcripts. I requested that the member checks be completed in seven days. If they did not offer me any feedback, after seven days, I presumed that they accepted the original transcript, and I prepared the analysis. (Appendix E: Timeline of the Events).

Once the transcripts were member-checked, I did a holistic thematic analysis described by Saldaña (2009) and Nowell et al. (2017) of each interview. I then did descriptive coding with sub-coding. Through discussion with my Supervisor, Dr. Nikki Yee, I reflected on my literature review in relation to my codes. I decided to refine and re-organize my analysis by engaging in process coding (Saldaña, 2009). Through process coding, I identified the gerunds the participants highlighted to dismantle the pathologies of silence.

Collective Data

After I had the final interviews coded, I arranged all of the data chronologically for each week. Organizing the collective data allowed me to supplement the final interviews' processing codes with rich context and thick descriptions. My interactions throughout the planning and co-construction of the unit permitted me to gain a clear insight into the participants' lived experiences. Engaging with the data sources through the research allowed me to keep it organized and facilitated an ongoing analysis.

Results

I welcome you to acknowledge with me the dedicated work of the four participant teachers. Each participant bravely decided to teach anti-racism to five- and six-year-olds for the first time during the year of the COVID-19 pandemic. Their actions and voice have created these research results, and I am honoured to share their experiences. To answer the first inquiry question, “How do early primary educators situate themselves in anti-racism education?” I first discuss the participants’ experiences with anti-racism. I then include the participants’ statements demonstrating how they situated themselves within anti-racism work before and after participating in this research. It is important to share where the participants situate themselves within anti-racism education to understand their lived experience and how it connects to current literature on anti-racism. Most importantly, it helps to learn if and what support systems benefit teachers in anti-racism education.

To answer the second inquiry question, “What systems do early primary educators find supportive to engage in anti-racism education?” the remainder of the results section will focus on the three supportive systems, (a) co-planning, (b) co-construction of knowledge, and (c) co-teaching. The participants recognized these three support systems as foundational for them to become emergent anti-racism educators. It is noteworthy that all three support systems involved working collaboratively with one another. The systems are discussed in sequential order according to when they initially happened in the research. However, as the study progressed, the support systems were happening simultaneously with no overall prioritized importance.

Research Question One: Pre-Collaboration and Implementation of the Unit

This section will discuss the participants’ experiences with anti-racism and anti-racism education before engaging in this study to answer the first research question, “How do early

primary educators situate themselves in anti-racism education?”. During the final interviews, the participants expressed they were interested in learning more about anti-racism education before becoming participants in the case study. Racialized events in the United States were significant catalysts for three participants to engage in deeper personal learning about anti-racism (Canadian Broadcast Corporation, 2020). Kate, the current ELL teacher, who taught grade five last year, shared her experiences, “In June, what was going on in the States was the first push to get me out of my comfort zone ... I decided I needed to keep learning and to better myself” (FI Kate). Sarah echoed that racialized events in the States raised her awareness, “The whole Black Lives Matter was the push that made me read a lot more ... I am actively trying to be anti-racist in my practice” (FI Sarah). The racialized events brought Symone to a realization that she needed to learn more, “The events of last spring in America was the fuel for my attention that we need to do better ... I just wanted to know more, so I can do better” (FI Symone). It was interesting to hear how they each reflected on the racialized events of last spring and that they needed to learn more to be part of the solution to racism. The broad social context clearly played a role in the educators’ emergent understandings of themselves in relation to anti-racism.

The three participants stated they engaged in self-learning to broaden their lens and learn about Black and Indigenous lived experiences. Kate, Symone, and Sarah shared that they read books featuring BIPOC authors (FI Kate; FI Sarah; FI Symone). Kate also expressed how she opened her lens to following BIPOC on social media, not just professionally but also in her personal life, to bring a broader scope to her interests. “I was following various teachers on Instagram and even in other areas of my life. I made an initiative to follow Black ceramicist and to follow Black cooks” (FI Kate). Despite initiating their self-directed learning, the participants expressed apprehension and challenges engaging in critical conversations with others involving

anti-racism. “It did not feel easy to bring up with anyone; it did not feel accessible to have the conversations” (FI Symone). Often the participants expressed a fear of “saying the wrong thing” when they wanted to engage in conversations about anti-racism (FI Dena). Symone added that she tended to “overthink things,” inhibiting her from initiating conversations (FI Symone). When Kate engaged in discussions, she stated how she found it challenging when “people had their walls up” (FI Kate). Thus, engaging in learning about anti-racism was not providing them with the tools to engage in conversations with others about anti-racism, nor had it provoked them to engage in anti-racism education. Thus, before our work together, the educators situated themselves in the racial narrative as observers and consumers of knowledge but struggled to engage as active agents of change.

Research Question One: Post-Collaboration and Implementation of the Unit

After the seven weeks of working together, the four participants shared their newly discovered empowerment through collaborating and implementing the anti-racism unit. Dena reflected on her experience, “I learned where to start with this huge topic and that I could start with something little. Before, I thought this was unapproachable” (FI Dena). Feeling the confidence to engage in conversations was a common sentiment of the team. “The biggest growth for me, if someone were to do something in the school, I could say something about it” (FI Sarah). For Symone and Kate, the collective experience provoked excitement in their teaching and learning. Symone explained how she felt like an agent of change in her classroom, “It has brought me so much joy, and it has made me so excited for teaching. I feel I am making a significant difference by teaching the children each and every one of them is important and needed” (FI Symone). “I just loved the whole experience. It just spurred that piece that had been growing in me since June [2020]. This is what we need more of” (FI Kate). “I would love to see

this continue next year in some form” (FI Kate). Dena also expressed, “It would be nice to see if other teachers in the school would like to take on this work with us” (FI Dena). The participants became so committed to the anti-racism work that they wanted to continue with our collaborations and involve other teachers. Thus, the teachers recognized that they experienced a transformation in themselves and their practice. After participating in the collaboration and implementation of the unit, they now situated themselves as active agents of change in the racial narrative.

Research Question Two: Responsive Co-Planning

In this section, I address my second research question, “What systems do early primary educators teachers find supportive to engage in anti-racism education?” The first supportive system that the participants identified was the responsive co-planning of the unit. Utilizing the participants’ responses in the final interviews, I defined co-planning as a group of teachers contributing ideas and resources to work towards a common goal. Likewise, I built from the group’s responses to define ‘responsive’ as positioning the teachers’ and student’s needs as a priority through universal design to foster inclusion. Responsive co-planning was the main focus of the first two planning sessions, and it continued as a portion of the four debriefing/collaboration meetings. There are three sub-themes within responsive co-planning: differentiating planning styles, providing resources, and working together to provide a sense of safety to the participants as they developed a potentially controversial unit.

Differentiating According to Planning Styles

For the four participants and myself, coming together to co-plan meant having to navigate different planning styles. Two participants emphasized the importance of their teaching styles, philosophies, and entry levels into anti-racism education being validated during the planning

process. Sarah was vocal in the second collaboration meeting (CM2 January 27) and the final interview, “I have never formally planned a unit; it is not how I was trained” (FI Sarah).

Honouring Sarah’s “Reggio Emilia informed practice” (FI Sarah) was vital to maintaining her active participation. “If this [unit] were prescribed, my engagement would have disappeared” (FI Sarah). Whereas Dena, newer to anti-racism education, was appreciative of more guidance, “I liked having the lessons because then I knew I would be ok” (FI Dena). The responsive co-planning accommodated both participants. For Dena, it supported her in finding an entry point into anti-racism education (FI Dena) and made it “comfortable and easy to do hard work” (FI Dena). Sarah described the co-planning as “non-judgmental and safe,” providing her with a sense of agency (FI Sarah). Providing responsive co-planning from the onset of the process provided the participants with individualized entry points into anti-racism education. More importantly, they identified that having their voice validated supported their engagement with anti-racism education.

Providing Resources

The participants appreciated having salient resources readily available with collaborative discussions on incorporating the resources into their lessons. Also, they were excited to see the plethora of excellent children’s books made available to them. Many of the books could be used successfully with kindergarten students and broad enough in context to engage grade five students in conversation. The participants could choose the books that worked best within their classrooms. For example, Symone noted, “The books you sourced were so helpful; there were so many good books” (FI Symone). Kate said she could also use the same books for her grade five class next year, “I felt a lot of the books that were selected were powerful at conveying important messages to the kids and great for higher grades too” (FI Kate). Sarah shared how the team’s

conversation expanded her ideas of what she could do in her classroom, “I was always excited we would discuss the resources and decide how to fit them in” (FI Sarah). Over our time together, the group collectively gathered many excellent resources, which enabled the teachers to have various options they could choose from to best fit their students’ needs. Also, providing the resources saved the teachers’ valuable time required to source out viable resources. During the collaboration, discussions on implementing and utilizing the resources provided the teachers with ideas beyond their own. The sharing of ideas supported their ability to engage with anti-racism education.

Together We Can

The participants articulated a sense of safety and support in co-planning the unit, and it freed them to take new risks and engage in anti-racism education. Sarah discussed how she knew some of the terminology used might be considered controversial but fleshing it out together as a team in kindergarten-appropriate language was reassuring. “There is power in knowing that what I am going to do and say in my classroom is being similarly done in two other classrooms. I can use the words racism, anti-racism, and ally, and it is not me on an island by myself” (FI Sarah). Dena emphasized how the responsive co-planning process was invaluable for her, particularly developing the unit vocabulary definitions. “I thought, oh those are big words ... I could not imagine planning this by myself, not without talking to other teachers or discussing things” (FI Dena). The responsive co-planning process motivated Symone to “just try” as she tends to “overthink things ... it was so supportive to have people trying this with me for the first time” (FI Symone). The responsive co-planning provided an assurance check that the content they taught was appropriate for kindergarten children and reduced their anxiety about their level of expertise in anti-racism education before starting teaching anti-racism.

All participants expressed how instrumental it was for them to support one another to initiate new practice, which they struggled to do independently. Individually they had the desire and were motivated to engage in antiracism education, but collectively they became the supportive system to engage actively.

Research Question Two: Co-construction of Knowledge

The second support system that the participants discussed in the final interviews was the co-construction of knowledge. Utilizing the participants' responses in the final interviews, I define co-construction of knowledge as a group of teachers enhancing their understanding of anti-racism by engaging in dialogue and sharing lived experiences. As a result, the participants felt motivated to engage in their world in new ways. While we were co-constructing knowledge throughout the entire research process, it was particularly prominent during the four debriefing/collaboration meetings. In this theme, the participants discussed how trust provided the confidence to ask critical questions to learn from one another.

Trust Provides Confidence to ask Critical Questions

Through trust, the participants allowed themselves to ask critical questions that enhanced their understanding of racism and other related terms commonly used in anti-racism work but perhaps are not always explicitly stated. By the end of the debriefing/collaborative session held on January 27, 2021, the dialogue evolved into a generative space where the participants began to obtain a sense of trust that elevated their engagement in the co-construction of knowledge about anti-racism. Dena reflected that she felt safe to share and learn from the other participants, “Safety within the group enhanced my learning from the other teachers; it just felt safe to ask questions” (FI Dena). Symone shared how she often does not ask questions in large group professional development settings because often, she feels she should know the answer. “It is

vulnerable to not know something in front of others ... I felt comfortable to ask questions and even contribute what I know” (FI Symone). Sarah observed the group dynamic as non-judgemental and, as a result, she felt supported in her learning. “Someone was always willing to talk through things and go back and forth, and it never felt judgmental. This is exactly how I learn. I learn with conversations” (FI Sarah). The sense of trust and non-judgement was the foundation for asking questions and sharing their understandings.

Once the team began to ask critical questions, the dialogue on anti-racism and related topics started to flow naturally from the participants. We all gained a deeper understanding of some theoretical anti-racism definitions during the debriefing/collaborative meetings (DCM 1-4, January 27; February 2; February 10; February 18, 2021). Symone recalled a conversation where the team helped her reach a fulsome understanding of othering. To summarize our discussion, we viewed othering as the act of exclusion or marginalization based on having identities different from the dominant group, emphasizing division, with the intent to see the dominant groups as *better*. We also discussed how it could show up as ignoring ideas, opinions, exclusion and avoidance of diversity (DCM February 2). “The discussion about othering, it was a term that came up in my readings, and I heard it when we talked about equity and anti-racism, but I did not fully understand it” (FI Symone). All of the group members participated in the conversation that led to a “richer understanding of the term for everyone” (FI Kate). Sarah reflected that “There was so much power in multiple voices to tackle complex topics. We were a team, and we all brought different things to enrich the conversations. There was such power in that” (FI Sarah).

The group discussions expanded into “topics such as intersectionality” (FI Symone). The group discussion was complex, but it involved defining intersectionality as the simultaneous sections of a person’s identity, including but not limited to race, class, gender, sexuality, and

nationality. For example, a Black, lesbian, cis-gender female born in Canada that is neuro-typical with acute anxiety is a holistic being with race, gender, sexuality, and mental health identities happening simultaneously. To support one section of her identity, such as race, is to accept all sections of her identity (DCM February 2). Symone shared, “I had heard you [researcher] use the term [intersectionality] before, and I was pretty sure I knew what it meant (F1 Symone).

However, through the collaborative discussions, she gained new knowledge and stated, “I could not talk about any of this before, and now I feel I can” (F1 Symone). Kate reflected, “It was powerful to sit down and have discussions with the other staff and to hash out the ideas of anti-racism and decolonization” (F1 Kate). Co-constructing their knowledge facilitated their ability to understand the importance of anti-racism education, not only for the students but also for themselves. Discussing current topics in the anti-racism narrative provided the participants with the confidence to engage others in anti-racism dialogue.

Research Question Two: Responsive Co-Teaching

The final supportive system identified in the analysis was responsive co-teaching of the unit. Utilizing the participants' responses in the final interviews, I define co-teaching as two or more educators teaching together in a shared space to reach a common objective. Co-teaching becomes responsive when the lead classroom teachers' needs are a priority, and they are addressed by the collaborative team and facilitated through co-teaching. The teachers identified having a co-teacher observe and scribe students' responses, multiple teacher perspectives, and celebrating pivotal teaching moments as supportive during the co-teaching.

Co-teacher Observing and Scribing Students' Responses

As educators are multi-tasking in busy kindergarten classrooms, the teacher can miss important things that children say. In the first debriefing/collaboration meeting (January 27,

2021), Sarah expressed an interest in having a co-teacher scribing what the students said during her lessons. “Many times, my brain is on classroom management, and I am missing the amazing things the kids are saying” (FI Sarah). As a result, Kate and I would script the student responses when the participants were teaching. During the debriefing/collaborative meetings, direct student quotes were shared with the participants (DCM 1- 4, January 27; February 3; February 10; February 18, 2021). “Later in the debriefings, when you [researcher] or Kate would share what the kids said, I would be like, oh my goodness, that is so important” (FI Sarah). Symone also expressed how valuable it was to hear student responses, “It has been so nice to have other people listen to what they [students] are saying ... I have appreciated that for our planning and for being responsive to the kids” (FI Symone). The participants found responsive co-teaching as a supportive system for them to engage with anti-racism education. They were able to gain greater insight into their students, which allowed them to be responsive to their student’s needs in planning and teaching about anti-racism.

Multiple Perspectives in the Classroom

The responsive co-teaching brought multiple perspectives into the classrooms, which was invaluable to some of the participants. Symone stated, “Teaching anti-racism to kindergarten was 100 times more valuable having four caring adults in here teaching with me. I had you [researcher] and Kate in the classroom with me, but also had Dena and Sarah in here through our collaborations” (FI Symone). Simone explained that she pulled from the experiences shared by Sarah and Dena with her into the classroom, and it provided her with a broader range of options to support the children’s learning about anti-racism (FI Simone).

When co-teaching, the participants and I would consult on how the children responded to the lesson. We shared the consultations in the debriefing/collaboration meetings, and the entire

team benefited from hearing about each other's experiences. It opened windows into the other classrooms, and as a result, we all learned from the shared experiences. The teachers incorporated other teacher's ideas into their lessons (DCM 1- 4, January 27; February 3; February 10; February 18, 2021). As Sarah shared, "It was just so important and powerful to hear what was being said in other classrooms ... often, we teach in our own bubble and do not always see what others are doing" (FI Sarah). Teaching something new and seeing how other teachers approached the content allowed the participants to expand their practice. Finally, Dena shared, "Watching the lessons when you [researcher] came in and read the book with the kids was so helpful because I saw another way to approach the lesson" (FI Dena). There are various ways teachers can support one another with their approaches. It is helpful for teachers to explore different ways to see teaching in action to increase their capacity.

Experiencing Student Responses Together

The responsive co-teaching facilitated a sharing of joy between us as educators as we jointly shared student learning. Celebrating student learning provided the participants with feedback that helped them gain confidence in the classroom as anti-racism educators (DCM 2-4 February 3; February 10; February 18, 2021). While teaching a lesson, Symone wanted the students to understand that we are all vital parts of a community. While reading the book, *All are Welcome* (Penfold, 2018), she stopped and said to each student, "[Student name], *You* belong here" (R1 Symone February 3, 2021). In Symone's reflection, she described this lesson with the students, "[When] I emphasized the word 'you,' each child sat a little straighter and smiled back adoringly" (R1 Symone February 3, 2021). Observing this lesson in the classroom with Symone, this lesson became a pivotal and celebrated conversation. It reinforced the importance of seeing each child as significant and valued, but jointly witnessing the children's reactions prompted an

excellent discussion. (DCM1 January 27th, 2021). In her final interview, Symone reflected on this moment with a huge smile on her face, “The kids leaned in like they were getting a piece of candy as I said their name” (FI Symone).

Another example of a significant shared experience is when I co-taught in Dena’s class. I shared some visuals on a community with diverse representation. One of the students “leaped forward and grabbed a picture and said, “He looks just like me!”” (F1 Dena). This generated discussions and later reflections for Dena on “how important representation is in the classroom” (R1 Dena, January 27th, 2021). When Kate expressed, “How many kindergarten classes are talking about this right now in the school district? It was really exciting to see the term anti-racism brought up in the kindergarten class. And the students were so open to the learning” (F1 Kate). The co-teaching provided validation on two levels. It witnessed excellent anti-racism pedagogy exhibited by the teachers, building their confidence in a new practice. Also, it offered verification to the interpretations of creating pivotal experiences for the students when both teachers would turn to each other with that knowing smile. The more teachers witnessing and celebrating the students’ learning, means higher engagement of the critical work we are doing.

In conclusion, the participants described several supportive systems to enter into the controversial practice of anti-racism education. To develop proficiency in the new approach, they relied on one another's support to reduce the risk and gain confidence in their anti-racism journey. We co-planned, co-constructed knowledge and co-taught, and enacted practices previously perceived out of reach through the collective experience. While doing hard work, the participants realized they did not have to know all of the answers to initiate anti-racism education in their classroom because they were on a continuum of their learning. Also, witnessing the

positive impact it was having on their students motivated their anti-racism work. Both the teachers and the students were positively impacted by initiating the anti-racism education.

Discussion

The purpose of this research was to gain insights into how early primary educators can engage with anti-racism education. Specifically, the research questions are: (a) “How do early primary educators situate themselves in anti-racism education?” and (b) “What systems do early primary educators find supportive to engage in anti-racism education?” Analysis of the data included holistic thematic, descriptive, and process coding, which provided the research results.

In response to the first research question, the results indicated that the four teacher participants were open to anti-racism education before the research. They were involved in self-directed learning to varying degrees but had not engaged actively in dialogue or anti-racism education. Through participation in the case study, all four participants stated that they experienced a transformation in their practice and gained new confidence to continue anti-racism education in their classrooms.

In response to the second research question, the analysis identified three themes that assisted the participants to become emergent anti-racism educators: (a) responsive co-planning, (b) co-construction of knowledge, and (c) responsive co-teaching. The discussions, conclusions, and implications are drawn from the results of the data analysis in this study. The discussion focuses on the importance of listening to educators to facilitate their needs and offering generative processes embedded in responsive pedagogy to build relational trust.

Research Question One: Listening to Understand Educator’s Readiness

As educators demonstrate they wish to engage in anti-racism education, it is helpful when leaders listen to teachers' needs to fully understand and provide the essential tools they require to

support their journey. I was delighted with the findings that all of the participants were open, and some were eager to engage and learn more about anti-racism education. Not only were they keen to learn more, but they had also started the journey of their self-directed learning. These findings are inconsistent with several anti-racism scholars as they describe systemic racism as ordinary, enduring, and who suggest that White people often do not examine their own racial identities (Delgado & Stefanic, 2017; DiAngelo, 2017; Egbo, 2009; Saad, 2020; Vaught and Castagno, 2008). This finding could imply that research does not adequately account for White people who are motivated but unsure how to navigate anti-racism education, particularly educators in the early primary school years.

I was intrigued by the research results that suggested the participants, before the research, started to unpack their privilege by reading Black and Indigenous authors and following various anti-racism educators on social media. The participants' reactions responded to the amplified anti-racism activists' voices on the national and international stage due to recent racialized events (CBC News, 2020). The participants were delving into understanding their privilege as it correlated to their understanding of anti-racism. Again, this contravened the writings of several anti-racism scholars who posit that White people subconsciously perpetuate their privilege, as described by McIntosh (1988), and the lack of acknowledgment often translates to a failure to understand systemic racism (DiAngelo 2018; Knowles & Hawkman 2020; Mosley 2010; Ullucci, 2012). The findings suggest that White educators are motivated to examine their privilege to engage in anti-racism education when they realize their racial identity plays a significant role in the classroom. The current literature appears to underestimate the desire for educators to reach across differences and actively engage in change, given the right

social context. Again, the results provide evidence that educators with wonderful intentions may require support to translate theory into practice through collaborative inquiry.

Interestingly, the results are consistent with discussions on the hidden curriculum (Bennett & LeCompte, 1995; Tator, 2006, as cited in Egbo, 2009). Although the participants were involved in self-directed education on anti-racism, they had not yet made significant shifts in their teaching practices. They all stated that they had not engaged in teaching anti-racism education and acknowledged that they often taught through the lens of dominant ideologies. As Dei (1996) states, anti-racism education is activism. The results imply that learning about anti-racism is perhaps not enough to provoke teachers to activate anti-racism education. However, when leadership offers educators tools, such as collaborative inquiry, it may be the supportive environment that some educators need to take the next steps to engage actively in anti-racism education.

Furthermore, critically examining the pathologies of silence is invaluable to this discussion. The findings that the participants' lack of engagement in dialogue with others and anti-racism education in the classroom aligns with DiAngelo's (2018) work. She states that often individuals fear speaking up about racism, as it positions the individual as combative or humourless. They run the risk of damaging their social collateral. During our collaborative inquiry groups, all participants mentioned how bringing up racism was difficult for them for this reason. However, having the safety of the group made it possible for them to participate in discussions on racism.

In addition, the participants said that they just felt they didn't know enough to engage in the conversation about anti-racism with confidence as they were still navigating through their understandings. The research results did not entirely align with the author, Saad (2020) when she

stated that White people remain silent because they are self-preserving their privilege. The participants were silent not because they were complacent with the status quo; they were silent because they had not developed a strong enough voice to convincingly articulate themselves in a critical but complex conversation. Opening up awareness of why people are not engaging in the conversation may remove racialized labelling and encourage creative ways to engage in dialogue. Finding like-minded educators that want to take a stance against racism to engage in anti-racism dialogue allows educators to find their voice. Additionally, uniting with the voice of others reduces the risk of been seen as a lone antagonist. Instead, the collective voice can become the protagonist providing a critical narrative to anti-racism work.

In conclusion, the results indicate that primary educators are interested in engaging in anti-racism education. However, locating entry points to situate themselves in anti-racism education is challenging when working in isolation. After being involved in the case study, all participants stated they now situate themselves into the anti-racism narrative. As Safir (2017) discusses, actively listening to educators' needs and providing access to the tools they require sets them up to do the great things they can do. If there is an awareness that educators are ready to engage in anti-racism education but require support, then listening carefully to their needs is the next step. Thus, leadership can work with their school teams to extend beyond polarized dichotomies of good-bad, racism - anti-racism to fully understand the progression required of educators to reach anti-racism objectives and address the pathologies of silence within their schools.

Research Question Two: Generative Possibilities

In response to research question two, the research's findings offer several explanations as to why collaborative inquiry can offer generative possibilities for kindergarten (and early

primary) teachers to engage in anti-racism education. At the onset of this research, I thought district-wide professional development sessions would be the answer to support teachers to engage in anti-racism education. However, the findings of this research have shifted my understandings and clarified an answer for me.

The study's results agree with current research on how collaborative inquiry supports teachers' professional development. Particularly when the inquiry groups are voluntary, self-regulated with a high level of autonomy, have relational accountability, and extend over a duration of time (McManimon & Casey 2018; Butler & Schnellert 2012). The findings also agree with Hargreaves (1999), who notes that when teachers are involved in self-directed learning, it will also support the benefits of collaborative inquiry. However, the research's results also situate well within Adams et al.'s (2019) discussions on "finding the answer within the room" (p.1). Utilizing teachers' contextual understanding and providing frameworks for generative dialogue can initiate robust systemic changes within schools (Adams et al., 2019). The research results indicate that dialogue and enacting our collective learning yielded positive engagement into anti-racism education through our collaborative inquiry.

Butler and Schnellert's (2012) framework explains how the participants engaged in an iterative cycle of planning, enacting strategies, monitoring, and revising. The findings suggest that the iterative collaborative cycles shifted the participants from passive anti-racism learning to active anti-racism education (Dei, 1996) by interweaving three supportive processes: responsive co-planning, co-construction of knowledge, and responsive co-teaching. The results also aligned with McManimon and Casey's (2018) research placing importance on the inquiry community's connection and relational accountability. Each of the processes, described as necessary by the participants, focused on our joint collaborative efforts. The collaborative processes removed

significant risks of engaging in anti-racism education, which aligns with Twyford et al.'s (2017) and Taylor-Gooby and Zinn's (2006) research on teacher vulnerability. The iterative cycle, embedded with trust, provided a supportive system for the participants to be vulnerable, ask questions, and gain new knowledge.

The findings also demonstrated that the participants found great value in voice and choice (Safir, 2017; Adams et al., 2019), layered through the research's processes, ultimately building invaluable trust amongst the team. (see Adams et al., 2019; Sharpe & Nishimura, 2017; Nowell et al., 2017). In summary, safe spaces and protected time to engage in iterative collaborative inquiry are supportive systems to allow teachers to engage in anti-racism education.

Research Question Two: Responsive Pedagogy Builds Trust

While providing educators opportunities to engage in dialogue and iterative cycles of collaboration, leadership must be mindful of the risks teachers are taking. Therefore, when leaders respond to educators' requests for support to engage in high-risk pedagogy, it can reduce the risk for the educator. The responsiveness is also an opportunity to build collegial trust, a vital component for systemic change (Safir, 2017; Sharpe & Nishimura, 2017). The research results also align with Kaser and Halbert's (2009) work on trust, validating that trust is dynamic and does not always transfer from context to context. Even though the participants knew each other well and had a strong level of trust prior to the research, it was essential to ensure the trust was transferred to our work together on anti-racism. Trust was established in different ways and from the onset of the research. Differentiating the planning for the various participants established their voice was centred in our work together, which gained trust from the participants (Safir, 2017; Twyford et al., 2017).

The findings indicated another layer of trust was established when the participants valued having autonomy in how the co-teaching was implemented. Responding to the participant's request for co-teaching support was a further opportunity to build trust between colleagues, consistent with the literature (Safir 2017; Twyford et al., 2017). Previous researchers have also established that positive social interactions can sustain teachers' commitment to new practices with high-risk levels (Taylor-Gooby & Zinn, 2006). For example, the results indicated that sharing with teachers in joyful learning experiences of the students and celebrating the importance of their critical work impacted the teachers significantly.

Also, the research results indicate that the overall trust established within the group led to the group's vulnerability to ask questions that allowed for collaborative discussions and a richer understanding of personal and teacher identities. Anti-racism scholars state that the interrogation of identity is critical for White educators to engage in anti-racism education (Dei, 1996; Egbo, 2009). Getting to a level of trust where educators can be vulnerable to state what they do not know and do not understand is critical. One participant stated that she had not found this level of vulnerability in large professional development settings. This statement is evidence of why large professional development may not be successful in supporting teacher's transformation of thinking (Alaca & Ryle, 2018; Parhar & Sensoy, 2011; Vaught & Castagno, 2008).

Furthermore, the findings challenge Matias and Mackey's (2016) premise that teachers are required to gain emotional literacy to engage and sustain their activism in anti-racism education. In essence, this belief is positing that emotional literacy will develop in a vacuum. The findings in this research imply that the participants required the reciprocal engagement between learning together and then taking the pedagogy into the classroom to experience the

benefits of anti-racism education. One participant stated that she was thankful for encouragement to “just try” because she had not felt so much joy and excitement in her teaching in a long time. In alignment with Indigenous scholar Dwayne Donald's (2016) work, she created diversity lessons for the children to understand that diversity is the strength of their learning community. Seeing every child as a valuable contributor allowed her to receive her students through a strengths-based lens. She intentionally communicated the value to each child. The children's joyful responses provided her with validation of her investment into anti-racism education. These findings align with prominent researchers in anti-racism education that emancipating students from structures that resist diversity is effective education that does something *for* children (Dei, 2014; Egbo, 2009). The research results indicate that anti-racism education provides benefits to educators as well as their students.

When teachers engage in a new pedagogy, the practical offering of relevant resources can not be under-estimated. The findings indicated that concrete support through resources and lesson plans were highly valued. Alaca and Ryle's (2018) study revealed that teachers found it challenging to find resources that represent all students in the classroom. Many excellent books for the early primary students were sourced and discussed throughout the collaboration. The findings indicated that the participants found discussions on how to incorporate the books invaluable. The resources were another layer to be responsive to the teachers' needs. It further built relational trust as it validated the work and time teachers were expending to implement new pedagogy (Adams et al., 2019; Sharpe & Nishimura, 2017). The participants had the choice to decide what resources would work for the students in their classroom. Anti-racism scholars state that providing options is critical in embracing the philosophy of anti-racism education (hooks, 2000).

In summary, responding to teachers' needs will reduce risk and allow teachers to engage in the powerful experience of anti-racism education. As leadership hears their teachers' voices and provides them autonomy to engage in the work that is inspirational and transformational to school systems, creating pathways that build trust and confidence to do the work is vital. Providing opportunities to collaborate, co-teach, and observe one another's teaching are supportive systems to consider. Offering tangible resources that teachers can discuss and evaluate for their practice validates educators' expertise and efforts. By providing supportive systems, teachers can embark on critical work with success and gain great professional and personal gratification from anti-racism education.

Limitations

The results of this research had a few limiting factors, which are important to indicate. Primarily we were five White female educators centred in the Western Eurocentric paradigm, placing limitations on what we were able to learn and achieve without diversity in our group. Secondly, this research, set in the elementary kindergarten context, involved students who were receptive to talking about the importance of all people in our learning community. The conversational complexities may look very different in other grade levels, impacting the students' needs and teachers' risk. Finally, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected educators and students on how we interact. We had to conduct our collaborative sessions online with a different kind of connection than face-to-face meetings. Thus, the team's diversity, age of students, and restrictions of a pandemic are limitations that may impact how this research may be understood.

Implications and Recommendations

Despite these limitations, this research has many narratives to tell, but the story of hope and engaging in new beginnings is the most impactful to share at this time. This story is about

how five educators, including myself, came together to figure out how to engage in anti-racism education. Together, we learned how to start a critical discussion and sustain the conversation. In future writings, I plan to explicitly share what we taught in the classroom to guide primary educators to formulate their thoughts and ideas for anti-racism education in their settings.

As an ally, I am deeply appreciative of the commitment of anti-racism activists to uplift social consciousness and transcend the dichotomies in racialized narratives. This research illuminates that some White educators are ready to understand their privilege in the Western Eurocentric paradigm to activate anti-racism education in their classrooms. It is critical to continue to understand the nuances of the pathologies of silence to invite educators ready to engage in anti-racism work. As the invitation continues, the normalization of anti-racism dialogue and anti-racism education will continue to grow.

This research provides weight to the possibilities of engaging in anti-racism work in the early primary grades. There is limited literature on anti-racism education in the kindergarten and the early primary grades in the Canadian context, and this research will add to the body of work. Additional research on expanding collaborative inquiry between grade groups and school sites is needed to support anti-racism education further. Also, research on adding diversity into inquiry groups would help provide deeper insights into anti-racism work. Research including community partnerships on developing anti-racism education in the primary grades will open this work to new perspectives and possibilities.

While I have suggested that offerings of iterative collaborative inquiry groups will assist teachers to engage in anti-racism education, not all teams may have learning assistance teachers ready to lead anti-racism inquiry groups. Thus, if enough educators show an interest in anti-racism education, school districts may want to consider equity helping teachers to assist teams

that are ready but unsure how to get started. There are also several other possibilities to explore to engage schools with anti-racism work. We have learned through the pandemic that connecting virtually is an option when face-to-face meetings may not be convenient. The online platforms open up ideas of book studies, sharing ideas on tangible resources, and across-school collaborations. Also, educators with similar school contexts could join established inquiry groups with the premise of taking their experiences back to their school teams. The possibilities to generate “good trouble” (Lewis, 2018) are endless when creative minds work together.

Final Thoughts

When I started my inquiry of anti-racism for my capstone project for my Master’s program, I did not know how much of a positive impact it would have on my colleagues or me. As we grew into an inquiry community and shared many exhilarating experiences together and in the classroom, my inside voice often thought, “Wow, we must be doing this wrong; this should feel heavier.” My reflective practice helped me navigate through my research as I constantly asked myself questions such as, “what do we need to understand as White educators?” and “what do all of our impressionable students need to learn and see in the classroom?”

I realized the exhilaration we experienced was the changes we were making within ourselves as educators and how that translated into the classroom for all our students. The organic process of embracing anti-racism education as holistic beings, using our brave hearts and minds to embrace new possibilities, was very liberating. While we pushed against oppressive thinking, we also envisioned and worked towards something new.

I reflected on the conversations I had with Dr. Nikki Yee, my supervisor and trusted mentor, on how vital it is for us not just to see diversity as something to “celebrate” but to understand diversity's critical necessity (Donald, 2016). Diversity is the strength that builds

healthy and sustainable communities that benefit all of us. With this understanding, my passion for anti-racism education developed a more meaningful purpose. Throughout, I have learned that when educators focus on connection and supporting one another, they can accomplish amazing things for themselves and their students.

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Appendix A

Human Research Ethics Board Approval

4/16/2021

Zimbra: Search results

Research, Engagement, & Graduate Studies
33844 King Rd
Abbotsford BC V2S 7M8

Tel: (604) 557-4011
Research.Ethics@ufv.ca
Website: www.ufv.ca/research-ethics

Human Research Ethics Board - Certificate of Ethical Approval

HREB Protocol No: 100540

Principal Investigator: Mrs. Jennifer Ofeimu

Team Members: Mrs. Jennifer Ofeimu (Principal Investigator)

Dr. Nikki Yee (Supervisor)

Dr. Sheryl MacMath (Course Instructor)

Title: Case Study: Primary Teachers Share Their Lived Experiences of Engaging in Anti-Racist Curriculum and Pedagogy.

Department: Faculty of Professional Studies\Teacher Education

Effective: December 16, 2020

Expiry: December 15, 2021

The Human Research Ethics Board (HREB) has reviewed and approved the ethics of the above research. The HREB is constituted and operated in accordance with the requirements of the UFV Policy on Human Research Ethics and the current Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2).

The approval is subject to the following conditions:

1. Approval is granted only for the research and purposes described in the application.
2. Approval is for one year. A Request for Renewal must be submitted 2-3 weeks before the above expiry date.
3. Modifications to the approved research must be submitted as an Amendment to be reviewed and approved by the HREB before the changes can be implemented. If the changes are substantial, a new request for approval must be sought. *An exception can be made where the change is necessary to eliminate an immediate risk to participant(s) (TPCS2 Article 6.15). Such changes may be implemented but must be reported to the HREB within 5 business days.
4. If an adverse incident occurs, an Adverse Incident Event form must be completed and submitted.
5. During the project period, the HREB must be notified of any issues that may have ethical implications.
- *NEW** 6. A Final Report Event Form must be submitted to the HREB when the research is complete or terminated.

****Please submit your Research Continuity Plan to REGS@ufv.ca before beginning your research. The plan can be found here: <https://www.ufv.ca/research/>**

Thank you, and all the best with your research.

UFV Human Research Ethics Board

****Do not reply to this email****

Appendix B

Debriefing Norms

The participants were invited to co-construct norms for the debriefing sessions. All protocols were subject to the examination and approval of the group. The following are examples but are not limited to the norms we can bring forth:

- Schedule meetings at a time that is convenient for all participants.
- Respect the time of the group.
- If participants need a scheduled meeting time to extend a bit longer, we will do so with the group's permission.
- Each participant can have equitable and uninterrupted time to speak. (Talking stick - however, the group decides)
- Confidentiality – what is said in the group stays in the group.
- No judgments – we are all learning together.
- Support of each other's learning – assume the best - come from a place of inquiry – if extra support is required, the researcher will follow up and ensure it is provided.
- The researcher will take notes on the debriefings and offer the notes to the participants for review. They can make revisions, omissions, and additions.
- The participants can opt-out of answering any questions.
- The participants may request a break as needed.

Appendix C

Interview Protocol and Questions

HREB UFV Ethics Permission 100540
Research Interview Questions
University of the Fraser Valley

Interview

This document is an overview of how I wish to open the interview with the participant(s) and the information I will provide. My first question on their previous engagement with anti-racism education will allow me to understand their anti-racism experiences and knowledge. It will also be helpful to hear their definition of anti-racism curriculum and pedagogy from their perspective. My first two questions warm the participant up for my third question, which is the crux of the research, what are their perceptions of working with anti-racism curriculum and pedagogy. It is a very open-ended question as I want to learn about their experiences. I have shared some prompting questions I may use for clarification and expansion of their perceptions.

Introduction to the Interview

I want to extend my appreciation for your participation in my research. This is the final interview where you will share your experiences of engaging in this process, the collaboration, the debriefing, and the teaching of the unit. I expect the interview to last less than 60 minutes. There are no right or wrong answers; please just share the truth of your experience. I have emailed you a copy of your debriefing reflections before the interview for your review. You may refer to them in the interview if you wish.

I previously provided you with my main questions, but I may ask you supplemental questions if needed. Take the time you need to think about the question and answer when you are ready.

Before we begin, I just want to confirm that I have your permission to audio record this interview. If you like, I can provide you with a copy of the notes I will use to analyze what you have said. You may add to the notes, or we can re-visit any sections that are of concern to you. Your pseudonym will be used for the interview, so your identity will remain confidential.

Do you have any questions for me before we begin the interview?

Questions

1. What are your previous experiences with equity and anti-racism?
2. How do you define anti-racism curriculum and pedagogy?
3. Tell me about your experience in collaborating and implementing this unit on anti-racism.

Additional prompts may include:

- a. Can you expand on that?

- b. You have mentioned _____ a few times; how is there significance in this for you?
- c. What is at the heart of that specific experience for you?
- d. You used the term _____. Could you provide me with an example of this?

Additional questions to prompt a nuanced response:

- a. It sounds like you had many positive experiences, is there anything that was not positive or created some dissonance for you?
- b. You have shared many examples of dissonance you experienced; is there anything positive or empowering you?
- c. You have mentioned the co-planning a few times and how that was for you. Was there another part of the experience that was significant to you?

At the end of the interview, I will thank the participant for their time and participation in the interview. I will inform the participant of the next steps for the member check of the transcript and that once they have made their revisions, omissions, or additions, I would like to have it returned one week after they receive it. I will also ask the participants for the demographic information they would like to describe in the final report (age, gender, positionality, years of experience teaching, grade they teach).

Before we conclude the interview, do you have any questions for me?

Appendix D

Debriefing Template

What?	Now What?	So What?
	Front Page	

What? Examples	Now What? Examples	So What? Examples
• What happened? • What did you observe? • What role did you play? • What were your expectations? • What part of the experience did you find challenging? • What part of the experience did you find exciting? • What did you find surprising? • What did you learn?	• What questions are you asking now that you have had this experience? • How did this event make an impact on you? • What did this experience make you feel? • What conclusions can you draw from this experience? • What did you learn about yourself? • What did you learn about others? Back Page	• How will you apply what you have learned from this experience? • What would you like to learn about this experience? • What do you need to do to address any challenges that arose during this experience? • How will this experience contribute to your career? • How will this experience change your community going forward? • How can you continue to get involved in this sort of experience?

Appendix E

Timeline of Events

<u>Team Session Dates</u>	<u>Results of Meeting</u>	<u>Weekly Preparation</u>	<u>Resource Choices</u>	<u>Activities</u>
January 13, 2021 - First Collaboration Meeting	• Group Norms • Meeting Schedule • Definitions of Anti-racism Education • Established teaching an explicit unit on ant-racism	The researcher shared minutes to the team for member check	Gathering Resources	Sourcing Ideas
January 20, 2021- Second Collaboration Meeting	• Plan Unit Framework • Community – Diversity/Race Racism/Anti-racism – Ally/Activism • Lesson Plans 1 and 2 – Definition of Community	The researcher wrote minutes to Share with Team Member/Check • Wrote up Lesson Plans to Email to Participants • Gathered Resources	Gathering Resources	Sourcing Ideas
Team Commenced Teaching Unit In the Classroom January 25, 2020				
Guiding Definition Community - Where people work, play and learn together, everyone is safe, happy, and all belong.				
January 27, 2021 First Debriefing - Collaboration Meeting (Participants are now teaching the unit – and learning from one another – engaged in anti-racism dialogue)	• Participants share out • Planned Lessons for the following week • Share possible resources to use • Discussions – Othering Racism Definitions	The researcher wrote minutes to Share with Team Member/Check • Wrote up Lesson Plans to Email to Participants • Gathered Resources	<i>a kids book about belonging</i> - Kevin Carroll * <i>All are Welcome</i> - Alexandra Penfold * <i>We All Belong</i> - Natalie and Alex Goss * <i>A World of Kindness</i> - Pajamas Press * <i>When We Are Kind</i> - Monique	Bulletin Board - Family Wall - Story Workshop - Inclusive Visuals and Concept Sort - Group Discussions - Share around the room (You Belong Here) - Community Centers -

			Gray Smith * <i>Be Kind</i> -Pat Zietlow Miller	Teacher/Student conferences
Guiding Definitions Diversity - People are different in many ways, and that makes us all special and wonderful. Diversity makes our communities stronger. Race – A group of people with the same ancestors and similar shades of skin. All races are wonderful and beautiful. Melanin – It is in our bodies and protects us from the sun. (If we have lots of melanin, our skin is darker) All colours of skin are wonderful and beautiful.				
February 3, 2021 -Second Debriefing and Collaboration Meeting	• Participants share out • Planned Lessons for the following week • Share possible resources to use • Discussions – on Privilege	• Researcher wrote minutes to Share with Team Member/Check • Wrote up Lesson Plans to Email to Participants • Gathered Resources	<i>You matter</i> - Christian Robinson * <i>Let's Talk About Race</i> - Julius Lester * <i>Same, Same but Different</i> - Jenny Sue Kostecki * <i>Same Difference</i> - Calida Garcia Rawles * <i>Skin Like Mine</i> - Latashia M. Perry * <i>Hair Love</i> - Matthew A. Cherry - <i>Happy in our Skin</i> -Fran Manushkin * <i>I am Human</i> - Susan Verde * <i>Mommy's Khimar</i> - Jamilah Thompkins Bigelow	Painting Project - mixing custom paint pots - Video Bill Nye (melanin - protects skin from the sun) - Diversity Visuals (Do we know how people think or feel by the colour of their skin?)- World Globe (shine a flashlight to show where the Earth gets the most sun) - Different ways of knowing and showing kindness - Heart Maps
February 10, 2021 Third Debriefing and Collaboration Meeting - Team Continues to finish up on Community and Diversity	•Participants share out • Planned Lessons for the following week • Share possible resources to use • Discussions – on Canadian Historical	•Researcher wrote minutes to Share with Team Member/Check • Wrote up Lesson Plans to Email to Participants	As Above	As Above

(Participants are now teaching the unit – and learning from one another – engaged in anti-racism dialogue)	Context – Decolonization	• Gathered Resources		
Guiding Definition Racism - People being treated unfairly because of the colour of their skin. It hurts their heart.				
February 18, 2021 Fourth Debriefing and Collaboration Meeting (Participants are now teaching the unit – and learning from one another – engaged in anti-racism dialogue)	• Participants share out • Planned Lessons for the following week • Share possible resources to use • Discussions – on Canadian Historical Context – Decolonization	• Researcher wrote minutes to Share with Team Member/Check • Wrote up Lesson Plans to Email to Participants • Gathered Resources	<i>Chocolate Me</i> - Taye Diggs * <i>Racism and Intolerance</i> - Louise Spilsbury and Hanane Kai * a kids book about racism - Jelani Memory	Social stories - Role Plays with Puppets: Bullying -Unkind-Racism - What would you do if? Teacher-Student conferences Continue to Build Bulletin Boards
Guiding Definitions Ally – People who want all people to be treated fairly and belong to the community. Activism: When people work together to make sure all people belong to the community.				
February 24-March 1, 2021, Final Interviews with each participant individually. Teachers complete teaching the unit.	N/A	N/A	<i>Intersection Allies</i> - Chelsea Johnson, Latoya Council, and Carolyn Choi - <i>A is for Activist</i> - Innocent Nagara * Let the Children March - Monica	Bulletin Boards - Ways to Support Others- Class Review and Discussions