Rethinking PD as Participatory Development: Engaging in Collaboration Toward Racial Literacies Development

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by

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation

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and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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Abstract

This dissertation outlines a participatory action research project collaborative consisting of three early career elementary teachers and one doctoral student. The goal of this collaboration was the racial literacies development of each member of the team through engaging in critical conversations about race and racism with the ultimate goal of improving their teaching in culturally responsive and sustaining ways through a dialogical and teacher-led form of professional development. The four collaborators engaged in this work by following models of racial literacies development in education scholarship. Findings suggest that racial literacies development is an ongoing journey; a journey which requires attention to knowledge, process, commitment, and support. These findings are explained through a closer examination of the role that our goals, background experiences, resources, focus, sharing and vulnerability, and classroom application played in our collaborative and individual development. Implications for research, teachers, and teacher educators are discussed.

Chapter 1: Introduction

In the midst of continuing racial justice movements across the globe aiming to center the experiences of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color's (BIPOC) families and their children, engaging teachers in their own learning and understanding around their students' backgrounds and histories is imperative before authentically and adequately educating children of all families. Since September of 2020, UCLA's Critical Race Studies' tracking tool cites a total of 203 government entities (local, state, and federal) have introduced a total of 619 anti-critical race theory pieces of legislation (CRT Forward, 2023). Missouri has been at the top of the list for proposing bills to "restrict access to truthful information about race and systemic racism through teaching and curricular prohibitions" (CRT Forward Trends, 5/10/22). Some additional legislation, while not focused specifically on race, includes such vague language as requiring teachers to only teach "age appropriate" matters with students. Such a phrase is open to interpretation, with potential legislative intention to further sanction conversations around race and racism. Such legislation and censorship not only ignores much of this nation's history and dehumanizes members of historically marginalized communities, but it places teachers in a precarious position in which they fear getting fired for teaching the truth about race and racism. However, many teachers are still actively working to navigate such a climate.

With the title of his book, *We Can't Teach What We Don't Know*, Gary Howard (1999) issued a call for educators (specifically white educators) to do the necessary work of learning in order to better serve all students. Not only do white teachers comprise the majority (approximately 80%) of the teaching workforce, but many are also culturally isolated (Howard, 1999). Due to such isolated and segregated backgrounds, white educators are often uncomfortable talking about race and racism (e.g., Winans, 2010). Research shows that talking

about race, or even listening to conversations about race can bring out fear, anger, and guilt (Stevenson, 2014), which often lead to one's reacting with silence or deflection (Mazzei, 2008; Matias et al., 2017). A teacher reacting this way in the classroom does little to address and deconstruct race and racism, but speaks volumes as it dehumanizes the historically marginalized and oppressed voices and experiences.

Numerous scholars have issued calls for professional development to engage in the work of educating their teachers toward antiracist, anti-oppressive, and equity-focused practices (e.g., Sealey-Ruiz, 2011) to better prepare them to teach their current and future students. However, related efforts in the United States seem to be caught up in "symbolic action" (Sealey-Ruiz, 2021, p. 281), providing professional development courses such as "culturally responsive pedagogy" without addressing the racism embedded in the institutional structures in education. Simply having access to scholarly articles in such courses is insufficient for helping teachers engage in racial literacies development (RLsD). While professional development can be a valuable asset for many teachers, there is a lack of effective professional development around RLsD and, specifically, the practice (Svendsen, 2020; McCormack et al., 2006) in teaching in racially literate and culturally responsive ways. Learning *what* is often presented in the professional development sessions, but learning *how* often comes from practice. This practice is often left to the teachers, without adequate feedback and continual support.

Furthermore, teachers often lack the support (Clandinin et al., 2015; Darling-Hammond, 2005) and practice they need when expected to teach in racially literate ways. In fact, teachers are increasingly looking to non-traditional platforms for support (i.e., peer groups; Mercieca & Kelly, 2018). Scholarship has already illustrated the prevalence of teachers seeking support for

engaging in critical conversations around race, ethnicity, and Indigeneity (e.g., Segall & Garrett, 2013).

In response to these needs, scholars have proposed strategies to help better prepare teachers such as engaging in deep and critical reflection on their own racial socialization (Stevenson, 2014), developing a "common racial literacy" (King et al., 2018, p. 316) to prevent misunderstanding and confusion around race and racism, or engaging in collaborative professional development during which teachers can establish a "unified discourse and shared practices of racial literacy instruction" (Skerrett, 2011, p. 327). Such efforts can help bridge the gap between knowledge and practice.

In the current study, we[1], a graduate student and three early career[2] elementary teachers, respond to the call put forth by Brown (2017): "the time has come where we can no longer wait until the 'just right time' emerges for us to address race and racism. We must create opportunities to do this work now" (p. 93) by engaging in collaboration toward RLsD[3]. Recognizing that RLsD is not prescriptive (Boutte, 2021), but is instead, based on and tailored to

[1] While switching back and forth between first person ("I") and third person ("we) can certainly be maddening, I have struggled to remain consistent with either considering the tension of the nature of collaborative research as well as the acknowledgement that "I" am the individual writing these pieces for the dissertation. When I use "we," I am referring specifically to my co-researchers in the current study.

[2] In this study, I define teachers within their first two years of full-time teaching employment as *early career teachers* – as opposed to novice or beginning. *Early career teacher* is consistent with the Early Career Framework based in the United Kingdom (Gov.UK) while the United States' scholarship defines teachers within their first two years as either novice or beginning teachers, but that is often confused with those who are still in their pre-service, practicum stage. And some use early career teachers and beginning teachers interchangeably (Mansfield et al., 2014).

[3] As we developed this collaboration model, we attended specifically to our own contexts and backgrounds, as well as the contexts of our students and schools. In doing so, we came to an understanding echoed by Grayson's (2017) sentiments: there is a "need for instructors interested in developing racial literacies curricula to expand their conceptualization(s) of race to include those who do not identify as Black or White" (p. 159) in order to address the "problematic binary of American racial discourse" (p. 159). Such a binary view rejects the racialization of other historically marginalized groups (i.e., Indigenous peoples). Thus, we consider the term *racial literacies* to include all historically marginalized groups who have been historically racialized. Recognizing that the experience of racialized groups widely varies, it is important to attend to how race is used differently in diverse contexts, thus calling for multiple literacies.

the educators' context, the current study examines how early career educators not only address their own implicit biases and misunderstandings, but work together to set expectations for more culturally responsive teaching practices (Gay, 2010; Hammond, 2014).

We recognize that learning, in and of itself, is not enough. Among calls for white people to be coconspirators (Love, 2019) is the imperative for us to not only listen to People of Color but act on our new learning. Change remains limited when the learning sits inside the minds of teachers. Instead, educators must push themselves to engage in antiracist and anti-oppressive action (Dover et al., 2020). Engaging in collaborative and participatory efforts like the model utilized in this study can provide the confidence, motivation, critical reflection, learning, and action necessary for educators to become more equitable and inclusive for all students. In this study, we examined how such a model might be helpful for aspiring allies.

Overview of the Current Study

Considering certain limitations of qualitative research (see chapter 3), we designed this study as a collaborative venture toward developing our racial literacies. In this design, we emphasized the importance of developing together through multiple iterations over an extended period of time. We understood this work as a form of critical professional development, unlike the typical antidialogical professional development offered in schools. By following through with a more dialogical and critical professional development, we found this model to be a support for early career teachers to lean into in their first years.

There is a wealth of scholarship on racial literacies in education, but only a few (e.g., Nash et al., 2018) researchers employ more collaborative methodologies. Considering that racial literacies are not prescriptive, but are tied to specific contexts, it was imperative to conduct research using methods and methodologies that encouraged specific attention to the contexts in

which collaborator's racial literacies are developed. Although I explain this further in chapters two and three, we found that working collaboratively helped us maximize our collective and individual RLsD because we were not only learning from others experiences and contexts, but learning with our own individual experiences and contexts in mind. Below, I provide a brief overview of the design of the study.

Participatory Action Toward Racial Literacies

Participatory action research (PAR) gives specific attention to balancing power dynamics, involving community members throughout the process, creating relevant knowledge, and committing to action (Northway, 2010). Thus, we engaged in this study together to develop our racial literacies in ways that were relevant and useful in and across our respective contexts. We recognized that we were working in a unique time in the field of education. Teaching through a pandemic brought such personal and administrative challenges. Establishing a collaborative environment from the beginning helped sustain our motivation.

In the spirit of PAR, the participants for this study served as co-investigators and collaborators. While I was the lead researcher and facilitator, this dissertation study was not possible without the three co-investigators. At the time of the study's beginning, Joey was preparing for her second year of teaching fifth grade language arts and science in a charter school in Denver, Colorado. Trustin was also preparing for his second year teacher at the same school and grade level, but taught mathematics and science. Rylie was preparing for her first year of teaching in a second grade classroom in Kansas City, Missouri. While their contexts spanned a considerable distance during the study, they all graduated from the University of Missouri-Columbia teacher education program. My relationship with each of them began when I was an instructor for a class they took.

Data collection for this study includes the following data formats: semi-structured individual interviews, focus group conversations, and reflective journals (Milner, 2003) which took the form of text messages, personal memos, and writing projects. Beginning with recruitment in February of 2021, this study spanned fifteen months. Formal data collection for this dissertation study ended in July of 2022 (see Appendix A for timeline).

The collaboration continued throughout the analysis portion of the project. We engaged in collaborative readings of the transcripts and one iteration of open coding. We worked across the open codes to create general patterns and themes found across the data. These patterns were grouped to form seven major findings divided between two major focus areas: participating in the collaboration and learning from each other within the collaboration (see chapter 4).

Guiding the focus of this collaboration was primarily Sealey-Ruiz's (2020) theorization for racial literacy development. To Price-Dennis and Sealey-Ruiz (2021), racial literacy development consists of three principles: question, engage, and reflect (p. 286). This requires one to question their assumptions and biases, engage in critical conversations around bias and racism, and reflect continuously on one's own beliefs and actions as they are related to race. This suggests that racial literacy development is a cyclical and ongoing journey. Sealey-Ruiz (2020) provides a more nuanced way of understanding the principles through her model: interruption, archeology of self, historical literacy, critical reflection, critical humility, and critical love (p. 6). The six components of this model provide scaffolds for addressing the three principles of question, engage, and reflect. In this study, we designed our collaborative model to incorporate and build from these six components in efforts to develop our racial literacies.

Significance of Study

We believe our collaborative model speaks to areas generally related to a teacher's development through professional development. More specifically, this study's findings offer implications and significance for early career teachers working in collaboration, school staff and administrators working with teachers through induction processes, faculty working with preservice teachers in teacher education programs, and education researchers engaging in collaborative research, all especially within the current sociopolitical climate and anti-race sentiments. First, we hope and believe this work will impact education at both the individual and group levels. By documenting our journey through fifteen months of collaboration, we hope to encourage individual teachers to form a group of their own in their respective contexts. Administrators may also see merit in this work and encourage the teachers in their school to form such collaborative groups for development. Also, those in professional development may see merit in making professional development involvement more collaborative, context-based, and interactive (Kohli et al., 2015).

We hope that this current study may offer insights for these audiences as a professional development model, and one specifically tailored toward supporting early career teachers. While schools may engage early career teachers in mentoring partnerships with veteran teachers or professional development from the beginning, teachers are still looking for support in alternative settings (e.g., Mercieca & Kelly, 2018). Findings such as these suggest that the support offered in schools is not enough to help develop early career teachers' practices, especially when teaching students of historically marginalized and racialized populations. Understandably, schools must consider the financial cost of bringing in professional development, but we hope others can find our grassroots, bottom-up model can be implemented in any school, regardless of the budget.

The study also presents another method of learning about teacher identity and development. The research on white teachers teaching about race (see chapter two) cautions teachers from repeating the same mistakes (i.e., reacting in silence or resisting), and rightly so. However, it is well known that guilt and shame without action are useless. For aspiring allies that simply do not know where to start, we hope that this model, being created by three early career teachers and a doctoral student, can provide an accessible starting point. We ultimately hope that the work we have engaged in bears some relevance for others in their RLsD too, serving rather as a hand to hold through a similarly ambiguous developmental process.

Conclusion

This model of sustained collaboration illustrated how early career teachers engaged in RLsD, joined together by a commitment to being and doing better for our students. Forming such a group of early career teachers, with an emphasis on teacher's commitment to critical collaborative sense making and RLsD, provides an appropriate model to implement when attempting to become more equitable and inclusive educators. As Brown (2017) stated, we cannot wait. We need to find ways to engage in this work now. We hope that this model can be helpful as a starting place for others.

In this chapter, I provided the methodological and theoretical rationale for the current study, as well as the perceived significance to the field of education. Chapter two presents a literature review, focusing specifically on how I understand the theoretical foundation for racial literacies development and how I position the study within early career teacher's professional development. First, I historicize the construct of race then outline my understanding of racial literacies. In positioning racial literacies as a theoretical framework, I also outline a brief genealogy of racial literacies and acknowledge its main principles before explaining how I apply

racial literacies to my current work with white early career teachers. Finally, in chapter three, I outline the methodological components, decisions, and trajectory of my current study with three early career teachers as we work collaboratively towards greater RLsD. I start by troubling certain characteristics of qualitative research then define participatory action research as my chosen methodology by tracing its genealogies and outlining its philosophical foundations. This section also includes attention to background, researcher and collaborator positionalities, data sources, and a proposal for data analysis. Attached is an appendix of related tables and figures.

Chapter four outlines findings from our collaborative data analysis meetings and my personal analysis, regarding two components of our work together – participating in the collaboration and learning from each other within the collaboration. Finally, chapter five offers detailed implications for teacher professional development and education research.

Chapter 2: Theoretical and Literature Review

In this chapter, I outline some of the literature that informs the making of my conceptual and theoretical frameworks and where I locate my current study within the field of teacher education as a form of professional development. First, I historicize the construct of race[4] before positioning racial literacies as my theoretical framework. In doing so, I also outline a brief genealogy of racial literacy and acknowledge the main principles before explaining how I apply racial literacies to my current work with early career teachers.

Second, I position my (our) work within three strands of scholarship focused on (1) teachers teaching about race, (2) racial literacies in education, and (3) early career teachers engaging in teacher development. I position my work as intersecting with these areas and as a response to a lack of literature around early career teachers engaging in racial literacies development (RLsD). I do so to highlight a weakness of in-service professional development. With our participatory action research, we hope to push the field of in-service professional development toward a greater focus on early career teachers' engagements with RLsD through such reflective communities of practice (i.e., critical professional development).

Exploring Definitions of Race

Race scholars define race in different ways and on different plains: political, social/societal, individual, institutional, moral, among others. While many scholars' definitions of race share certain elements, some differ.

[4] I now understand race to be situated within the larger umbrella of settler colonialism. Some of the work in these three chapters resonates with this developing understanding of mine, but there is more work for me to do in better understanding it. As McKay et al. (2020), explain– "Settler colonialism expands race and racism beyond ideological perspectives and reveals the links between historical and contemporary racialized social relations and practices–the racial structure–of American society" (p. 2) –I find settler colonialism helpful for understanding how white supremacy has been maintained in the form of racial inequality. I hope to explore this further in additional passages.

First, race is **fluid**. Omi and Winant (1986) echoed this phenomenon: "the meaning of race is defined and contested throughout society, in both collective action and personal practice. In the process, racial categories themselves are formed, transformed, destroyed and re-formed" (p. 61). In such a brief statement, they spoke to the fluid nature of race and its diverse contributors. While not all may agree on the parameters of race, I find Goldberg's (2002) definition of race in the U.S. context to be a helpful starting place:

> Throughout U.S. history, race has always been a central strand of state administration; a silent (and sometimes not so silent) barrier to kinship and adoptability; a condition of advancement and advantage, of power and privilege; and a mark of preference and improvement, of intellectual prowess and jury participation, of law's empire and social injustice, of ethnic excludability and historical denial, of social invisibility and sociospatial segregation. It has been so whether explicitly invoked or silently, invisibly evoked. (p. 10).

His definition points even more explicitly to what Omi and Winant (1986) imply in their brief statement: race has played a major and central role in institutions, both visibly and invisibly, towards many different ends.

Race is also an "**ideological construction** with structural expressions (racialized or 'ethnicized' structures of power)" (Essed, 1991, p. 18) and is not simply a "societal construction" because the "idea of 'race' has never existed outside of a framework of group interest" (p. 18). In other words, she indicated that race exists as a manifestation or tool of group interests. For example, the European colonists used race as a tool to ensure their own success by rationalizing the subjugation of African descendents through forced labor.

Race is **contextual**. Frankenberg (1993) noted the importance of context in determining what race is and means: “Race was, in fact, lived in as many different ways as there were women I talked with” (p. 45). She noted the contextual and constructed nature of race, even at the individual level. To circle back, Omi and Winant (1986) agree: “Racial categories and the meaning of race are given concrete expression by the specific social relations and historical context in which they are embedded.” (p. 60). For example, there is a wide range of meanings of “Black” and each depends on the context. Omi and Winant (1986) noted that in British politics, Black was any “non-white” person. In Brazil, sometimes members of the same nuclear family were named Black and some not.

With these few definitions or descriptions of race, it is apparent that race exists and is influenced by many levels or plains (i.e., personal and institutional, moral and political, ideological and geographical). While race endures, its appearance and function may shift due to diverse factors.

In this section, I highlight how Mill’s (1997) racial contract, Omi and Winant’s (1986) racial formation, and Goldberg’s (2002) racial state theories blend to explain how race has been used and sustained through history. Furthermore, such theories highlight the possibility of “new racisms” (Bonilla-Silva, 2010). With foundations set by religious racisms and norms of engagement guided by colonization and imperialism, Mill’s (1997) racial contract theory speaks to an exclusive agreement among white people to “maintain the white polity” (p. 19). As compared to the idea of a social contract, Mills (1997) suggests that such a contract acts as political, moral, and epistemological contracts in one (p. 9). As Bell (1990) and those before him (e.g., Holmes) noted in their critique of liberalism, Mills (1997) claims that such a contract’s “officially sanctioned reality is divergent from actual reality” (p. 18). In other words, it is an

"epistemology of ignorance" – "a particular pattern of localized and global cognitive dysfunctions (which are psychological and social functions), producing the ironic outcome that whites will in general be unable to understand the world they themselves have made…a consensual hallucination" (p. 18).

The purpose of such a racial contract is to maintain the dominance of white people over nonwhite people, by way of "exploitation of [nonwhite] bodies, land, and resources, and the denial of equal socioeconomic opportunities to them" (p. 11). Thus, it is a contract between "we the white people" (p. 3) for their own group and individual advantages. Although Mills (1997) provides multiple characterizations of the racial contract, the ones most relevant for this chapter are the following: the racial contract is "continually being written" (p. 37), norms (and races) space, norms (and races) the individual, and is enforced through violence and ideological conditioning. Thus, race (and the redefining of race) is a mechanism by which the status quo is maintained. Goldberg calls this the "labor of race" (2009, p. 4), in which "racial thinkers" (i.e., politicians, writers, scientists) created race as a "foundational code" to rationalize "social arrangements of power and exploitation, violence and expropriation" (p. 4).

The racial contract, then, is enacted within the creation of the racial state (Omi & Winant, 1986; Goldberg, 2002). According to Omi and Winant (1986), state institutions "organize and enforce the racial politics of everyday life" (p. 77) whether or not such policies are "explicitly or implicitly racial" (p. 77). Because the state is composed of not only institutions and policies but the social conditions in which they exist as well, race and the racial state are co-constitutive. Goldberg (2002) argues that

> race is integral to the emergence, development, and transformations (conceptually, philosophically, materially) of the modern nation-state. Race marks and orders the

> modern nation-state…The apparatuses and technologies employed by modern states have served variously to fashion, modify, and reify the terms of racial expression, as well as racist exclusions and subjugation. (p. 4).

The individual's relation to the racial state is guided by the racial contract (Mills). In other words, the individuals act as members of the group, because they know that acting in such solidarity, and thus consenting to white supremacy, benefits them. Through deeply embedded racial ideologies (Essed, 1991), the group directs how the individuals give consent. The racial contract binds the individuals to their role or function in society, or, in the racial state.

Mills (1997) aptly stated: "White misunderstanding, misrepresentation, evasion, and self-deception on matters related to race are among the most pervasive mental phenomena of the past few hundred years, a cognitive and moral economy psychically required for conquest, colonization, and enslavement" (p. 19). He notes that such an economy requires "a certain schedule of structured blindnesses and opacities in order to establish and maintain the white polity" (p. 19). These evasions or opacities result in new developments, or definitions of race. For example, liberalism served as a front through which white people maintained dominance while pursuing such abstract concepts as equality. Judges used racial ideologies familiar to them to make their rulings on racial equality, instead of leading with racial realism in mind. In addition, dominating institutions and politicians develop new tools of hegemony (i.e., census). Such a tool serves as a "political technology…making it appear that the race naturally characterizes social formation" (p. 56).

New tools then contribute to new racisms, such as colorblind racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2010) which serves today as the "ideological armor for a covert and institutionalized system in the post-Civil Rights era" (p. 3). While claims of inferiority were no longer largely held, a new

ideology (i.e., colorblind racism) developed to maintain the status quo. Bonilla-Silva's idea of colorblind racism echoes Mills' (1997) epistemology of ignorance because this new ideology sets "paths for interpreting information" (p. 26) or rather misrepresenting reality. In other words, Bonilla-Silva (2010) claims that these dominant racial lenses "provide the intellectual road map used by rulers to navigate the always rocky road of domination and… derail the ruled from their track to freedom and equality" (p. 26).

One common element that runs through each of these theories of race is this idea of an epistemology of ignorance or "consensual hallucination" (Mills, 1997, p. 18). Race is defined through white people's consensual ignorance, both intentional and unintentional. The system attempts to operate in the shadows in order to keep hegemonic motives hidden: herein lies the reason for engaging in RLsD. By coming together with the motivation to challenge this epistemology of ignorance and to disrupt the racial contract we buy into, we developed our understanding(s) of race, not only as a construct, but as a tool which dominant/dominating groups have used for centuries to maintain their positions of power. Ultimately, this developing understanding led us to transform our daily and teaching practices. Having just outlined theories of how race is defined, changed, used, and sustained, I focus next on how scholars define and conceptualize racial literacies, which all aim, in various ways, to disrupt this epistemology of ignorance and the racial contract.

Race and Racial Literacies

The most often cited scholars of racial literacy are Guinier and Twine, one writing from a legal perspective and the other from a sociological perspective. Added to that are others, such as Stevenson and Sealey-Ruiz, who write from an educational perspective. Across these fields, there understandably exists differences yet the shared understandings of racial literacies bring

them all within the umbrella of racial literacies scholarship. While all four scholars offer important concepts to consider when focusing on racial literacies as a theoretical framework, I lean primarily on Sealey-Ruiz, whose conception of racial literacy artfully blends components of the other three towards a focus on development. To highlight this blending, I include abbreviated definitions, principles, and goals from each of the four (see Table 1) before explaining how I understand and apply Sealey-Ruiz's conception of racial literacies development.

Table 1

Definitions of Racial Literacy

Scholar	Definition	Key Constructs or Principles	Goal
Guinier	Racial literacy is a mechanism through which people can identify the contextual nature of race, the role of race and power in pereptuation racism, and the intersectionality of race and other variables.	Racial literacy reads race as "epiphenomenal" (p. 114) with a specific focus on race and racism endure at the systemic and structural levels of society and law.	The citizenry must learn to read race as intersectional and racism as systemic and structural.
Twine	Racial literacy is the skills and practices employed and utilized by transracial parents in raising their multiracial children. Racial literacy exists in the efforts that white parents expend as they "translate and transform the meaning of whiteness, blackness, and racism in their families" (Twine, 2004, p. 881).	Racial literacy employs "conceptual tools" and "discursive practices" to train children to discuss and evaluate representations of Black people (p. 885). Racially literate parents are otherwise described as "racism-cognizant" (p. 885).	The parents must teach their children to develop skills for navigating and dealing with future racial or racist experiences.

Stevenson	Racial literacy is a practice to be developed and internalized at the individual level in order to "read, recast, and resolve racially stressful encounters" (Stevenson, 2014, p. 27).	The school functions as an extension of the systemic nature of race and racism and administrators' and teachers' discursive and behavioral practices can disrupt this dynamic.	Students and teachers must engage in "racial socialization" (p. 18) -- the emotional, intellectual, and behavioral skills -- to develop "racial self-efficacy" (p. 18).
Sealey-Ruiz	Racial literacy is to be developed through a multi-dimensional process of reflection and dialogue.	Racial literacy requires questioning assumptions, engaging in critical conversations, and practicing reflexivity (Price-Dennis & Sealey-Ruiz, 2021, p. 286).	Educators and students, alike, must question, engage, and reflect through a development process involving attention to each of the six components in a cyclical and fluid manner: interruption, archeology of self, critical humility, critical love, historical literacy, and critical reflection.

Guinier. In response to racial liberalism, Guinier (2004) argued for a need for racial literacy. She argued that advocates must move beyond racial liberalism to “treat the disease and not just its symptoms” (p. 100), suggesting that race and racism is a systemic and structural issue. Racial liberalism, post World War II, rejected the idea of Black inferiority, but in its place suggested instead that the problem of race was rather interpersonal and psychological, not structural (p. 100). While racial liberalism ignores much of the factual information about the lives many historically marginalized communities live and experience, racial literacy serves as a mechanism through which people identify the contextual nature of race, the role of race and power in perpetuating racism, and the intersectionality of race and “explanatory variables” (p. 115). Thus, Guinier suggested the first step is to make this ignorance “legible” (p. 114):

> acial literacy reads race as epiphenomenal. Those most advantaged by the status quo have historically manipulated race to order social, economic, and political relations to their benefit. (p. 114)

The *Brown v. Board of Education* legislation and the Little Rock Nine serve as examples of this manipulation. While the *Brown* decision claimed an "exalted status" (Guinier, 2004, p. 92) as one of the most important legal decisions in the twentieth century, systemic and structural racism were so deeply embedded that little progress was made.

> Fifty years later, many of the social, political, and economic problems that the legally trained social engineers thought the Court had addressed through *Brown* are still deeply embedded in our society (Guinier, 2004, p. 92).

And ten years after *Brown*, a large majority – over 98% – of African American students still attended segregated schools (Allen, 2007, p. 68). Little Rock Nine served as an example of how strongly many resisted *Brown's* implementation, considering the federal government had to send army officials to ensure the peaceful entry of the "nine carefully chosen black students" (Guinier, 2004, p. 104). While this may have appeared to some as a great movement towards desegregation of Little Rock schools, there are a number of factors to suggest the continued racism: the creation of and white flight to a new, all-white high school catering to affluent white families; the continuance of the all-Black Horace Mann High School; and the strategic placement of these nine Black students with the poor white students in Central High School. Thus, Guinier's focus was on the systemic and structural nature and endurance of race and racism. Although her work was largely concurrent with Twine's (2004) chronologically, they probed varying areas of study. While Guinier situated her theory of racial literacy as an analytical tool in the legal field, Twine (2004) focused on the skills and practices employed and utilized by transracial parents with their multiracial children.

Twine. Through a sociological lens of race relations in families, Twine (2004) attended to the "micro-cultural social processes in which racial hierarchies are negotiated within

multiracial families" (p. 882). In her seven year ethnographic case study of white transracial birth parents in Britain, she built upon the work in Black studies and whiteness studies on racism and anti-racism, specifically focusing on how it manifested in the "'labour' that white parents perform as they translate and transform the meaning of whiteness, blackness, and racism in their families" (p. 881). By examining these practices, Twine (2004) developed a theory of how these parents' practices were developing certain skills of racial literacy in their children. Here is an example:

> The provision of conceptual tools at home is the first practice that I detected when analysing parents' practices and the descriptions of their efforts to prepare their children of African Caribbean heritage to respond to racism. White parents also described a number of discursive practices in which they trained their children to discuss, and critically evaluate media and textual representations of black people. (2004, p. 885)

Her study focused on parents who were, or were not, "racism-cognizant" (p. 885) and how they encouraged certain practices (i.e., openly discussing the children's experiences with race) in order to develop skills for dealing with future experiences. Thus, Twine's focus on racial literacy engaged with the interpersonal interactions with race and racial hierarchies within the family.

Stevenson. Although Stevenson's work in race began before Twine's (2004) and Guinier's (2004) publications regarding racial literacy in their respective fields, Stevenson's (2014) work reflected nearly two decades of focus on racial socialization in schools. He defined racial socialization as "the transmission and acquisition of intellectual, emotional, and behavioral skills to protect and affirm racial self-efficacy by recasting and reducing the stress that occurs during racial conflicts with the goal of successfully resolving those conflicts" (p. 18). While he recognized that the school was an extension of the systemic nature of race and racism (Guinier,

2004), he primarily recognized that one way to address and disrupt it is through teachers' and administrators' practices (Twine, 2004). He gave specific attention to the need for administrators and teachers to develop racial stamina and embrace one's racial self. Specifically, he attended to certain behavioral practices used when one faces racial stress, such as pauses, avoidant eye contact, redirection, or silence (p. 19). By bringing attention to these practices, he offered his work as strategies (i.e., reflecting on one's racial identity) for disrupting such evasive practices. Ultimately, he pushed Twine's (2004) and Guinier's (2004) work forward by positioning racial literacy as something to be developed, practiced, and internalized in order to "read, recast, and resolve racially stressful encounters" (p. 27). Thus, his work was unique in that it revolved around acknowledging and reflecting on oneself as having a racial identity and position, then engaging in relationship to navigate racially stressful situations to lessen psychological damage.

Sealey-Ruiz. In response to teachers' need for greater education around race, racism, and racial dynamics, Sealey-Ruiz's (2021) work put forth a more step-by-step approach to developing racial literacy. Her more general principles of racial literacy were to question assumptions, engage in critical conversations, and practice reflexivity (Sealey-Ruiz, 2021, p. 286). These three principles are largely resonant with Stevenon's (2014) attention to reflection on racial selves and engaging in dialogue in relationship. However, she went further in providing a heuristic for developing such racial literacy. In her years as a teacher educator, she identified six components of racial literacy development, although not necessarily in linear order: interruption, archaeology of self, historical literacy, critical reflection, critical humility, and critical love (Sealey-Ruiz, 2021).

Elements of Guinier (2004), Twine (2004), and Stevenson (2014) are manifest in Sealey-Ruiz's (2021) six guiding principles of racial literacy development. For example, Guinier's

(2004) focus on the systemic nature of race and racism by way of learning the history of race (historical literacy), approaching such analysis with the intent to disrupt race (interruption), and taking a critical lens to institutions and structures under analysis (critical reflection).

Similarly, Twine's (2010) work attended to how these transracial parents approached raising their children with a focus on interrupting the cycle of racial hierarchies (interruption), while also relating to their children and their peers with humility, acknowledging that they might not always understand what practices and skill development were best for their children (critical humility). Yet, the parents' work was led by love for their children and a desire for them to be prepared to cope with racism (critical love).

Finally, Stevenson's (2014) work involved those similar to Twine's, but with the added attention to the archaeology of the self. He called for educators and administrators to engage in deep reflections about their own racial identities to then inform the racial literacy practices and skills they sought to develop. Naturally, I understand Sealey-Ruiz's six components as a culmination of three racial literacy scholars' influence, coupled with her own teaching experiences. Below, I explain in more detail how I understand racial literacies and apply Sealey-Ruiz's framework to the current study.

Definition and Application of a Racial Literacies Framework

Perhaps this is the case with other theoretical frameworks, but it is challenging to define racial literacy, partly because it is a moving target and each racial literacy concept has distinct differences. One of its main principles is that race is contextual and not universal, shifting over time. A theoretical framework based on a shifting concept then influences shifts in the theorization of such a framework. Thus, the "definitions will continuously evolve and will be based on geographical (local and global) and historical/presentist contexts" (King, 2022).

Considering that concepts and understandings shift over time, I recognize that the principles I outline below are principles I work with at this present time. To put it simply, I consider racial literacy to be captured well in Boutte's (2021) statement:

> Racial literacy entails being able to describe, interpret, and explain historical and contemporary aspects that comprise racism, including how race was socially constructed and how it is endemic in systems…[and] involves praxis (reflection and action). (p. 2)

Boutte's definition captured abilities, skills, reflection, and action as critical components of racial literacy that resonate with the majority of racial literacy scholarship. Price-Dennis and Sealey-Ruiz (2021) essentially boiled it down to racial literacy being the "ability to examine, discuss, challenge, and take antiracist action in situations that involve acts of racism" (p. 19). These definitions lean on Twine's work on the individual and relationship levels, Guinier's focus on the institutional and systemic levels, and Stevenson's focus on personal story. In my work with white early career teachers, I take racial literacy scholarship on teacher education and professional development into account in focusing on seven principles (see Table 2).

Table 2

Selected Principles of Racial Literacies

Principles	Brief Description
Understanding the social construction of race and racial identity	Race has been and is continually constructed by individuals and communities within society in such ways to affect how a person is identified.
Recognizing that racism is not only a historical problem, but also a contemporary one	Racism existed in our nation's history such as through enslavement, but it still exists today, although perhaps with slightly differing functions or appearances, through redlining.
Recognizing the impact of racisms at the individual, institutional, and societal levels	Racism is not limited to one sector of reality, but is instead embedded in and throughout multiple areas and institutions in our daily lives (i.e., in classrooms, social circles).

Considering the ways race and racism are influenced by multiple factors (i.e., class)	The effects of race and racism on individuals and communities cannot be separated from how such are also identified in regards to their socioeconomic status, gender, sexuality, skin shade, faith, and more. Each of these intersectional factors place people on a spectrum of power.
Developing language practices and vocabulary in and for discussing race, racism, and antiracism	Just as race may function differently based on time and place, the language used to describe race/ism also depends on time and place. For example, one must be aware of how using terms such as *tribal* position individuals who identify as Indigenous or how deficit language can position Black and brown students as naturally lacking skill or knowledge.
Practicing the reading of racial interactions and engaging in antiracist action	In order to engage in antiracist action, one must be able to understand (or read) and appropriately react to racial interactions with the goal of resolving situations.
Applying new racial literacy to roles as peers and educators	Gaining knowledge around race and racism does not automatically ensure one's ability to implement such learning in their occupations. An important component of developing one's racial literacies is the application of such learning to one's present contexts.

In addition to these principles, I also understand racial literacy to have certain characteristics. First, racial literacy is not an outcome but an ongoing journey (Grayson, 2019). Second, racial literacy is also a humanizing project for all people (Price-Dennis & Sealey-Ruiz, 2021). Third, based on its contextual nature, racial literacy is not a prescription (Boutte, 2021), but instead leads to tailor-made approaches for respective communities. Finally, it must also be critical, which implies an unrelenting attention to power dynamics and structural racism (Boutte, 2021).

One specific characteristic I understand to be inherent in the intersectional nature of racial literacy is the attention to all racialized groups. Grayson (2017) and others note the "problematic binary of American racial discourse" (p. 159) that communicates race and racism as limited to Black and white folks. Such a view rejects the racialization of other historically marginalized groups (i.e., Indigenous peoples). I do not mean to equate racial inequality with

ethnic inequality. Instead, I consider the term *racial literacies* [5] to include all historically marginalized communities who have been racialized, despite whether they appear on formal platforms (i.e., US Census) as a racial category. Recognizing that the experience of racialized groups widely varies, it is important to attend to how race functions differently in diverse contexts, thus calling for multiple literacies. Hence, I refer to it henceforth as racial literacies development (RLsD) even though Twine, Guinier, Stevenson, and Sealey-Ruiz did not.

Racial Literacies Development

Considering Sealey-Ruiz's (2020) specific focus on RLsD, I lean primarily on her model (see Appendix of six components of RLsD and on Price-Dennis and Sealey-Ruiz's (2021) three principles of RLsD–*question*, *engage*, and *reflect* (p. 286). First, one must "question their assumptions about race, acknowledge their biases, and take the stance that much of what they 'assume to know' about race is faulty and incomplete" (p. 286). Second, one must "engage in critical conversations", focusing on how bias and racist attitudes manifest through language (p. 286). Third, one must "practice reflexivity," engaging in a "cyclical process of (re)examining perceptions, beliefs, and actions relating to race" (p. 286). These are all resonant with the principles of racial literacies as shown above, but provide a bit more tangible and concrete plan for moving forward, especially coupled with Sealey-Ruiz's (2021) six components of RLsD: Critical Love, Critical Humility, Critical Reflection, Historical Literacy, the Archeology of the Self, and Interruption (p. 287, see Appendix B).

In all, Price-Dennis and Sealey-Ruiz (2021) note that

[5] I hope to address this shift to the plural form of racial literacies more deeply in future writing. Such a shift exists in others' work, some without carrying it throughout the work (e.g., Sealey-Ruiz, 2021) and others explicitly but with a slightly different explanation (e.g., King, 2022; Stanton, 2022).

> for teachers who develop racial literacy, a natural progression is (re)examination of what and how they are teaching, and a deliberate development of culturally responsive educational approaches in their classroom. Teachers who engage in racial literacy development seek to decolonize their pedagogy and create a foundation for equitable practices in their classroom (p. 22).

To help guide this cycle of engagement and (re)examination, Sealey-Ruiz (2021) designed her six level pyramid, which directs the larger picture of how our collaborative group utilized racial literacies. My co-researchers/participants and I (see Chapter 3), sought to attend to each of the six stages of her model within our group inquiry. These elements have certainly directed how we engaged with each other as members of a collaborative research group. Here I briefly discuss our interaction with these core ideas.

First, regarding *interruption* – "interrupting racism and inequality at personal and systemic levels" (Sealey-Ruiz, 2021, p. 6) – we came to this work wanting to do better for our students and their families. We acknowledged the way curriculum, our own implicit biases, coworkers' beliefs and values, and other factors influenced our teaching in problematic ways which reinforced racial hierarchies and left racist structures intact. While we attended to the personal level by way of learning about the systemic level, we primarily focused on developing our own racial literacies and began enacting this in our classrooms.

Second, we considered the *archaeology of the self* – "exploration of beliefs, biases, and ideas that shape how we engage in work" (Sealey-Ruiz, 2021, p. 6) – to be built upon courses taken before graduating from the teacher education program. However, we attempted to instill such exploration as ongoing, to make it a habit. We intentionally cultivated a habit of reflecting on our beliefs and ideas, those that stemmed from our backgrounds or from more current

experiences. This was done, in part, to increase our capacities for reflection beyond the habits cultivated in the teacher education program.

Third, through resources we consulted (i.e., James Loewen's *Lies My Teacher Told Me*) we attended to the *historical literacy* component – "develop a rich and contextual awareness of the historical forces that shape the communities we work in but also the society we live in" (Sealey-Ruiz, 2021, p. 6). While each person within the group chose certain resources of their own preference, we all engaged in learning about the historical context of race, whether it was related to society as a whole or their immediate context.

Fourth, we engaged in *critical reflection* – "think through the various layers of our identities and how our privileged and marginalized statuses affect the work" (Sealey-Ruiz, 2021, p. 6) – through our lines of questioning during our focus group conversations, as well as through our writing together. For example, writing positionality statements for our book chapter was a unique opportunity for each of us to further develop this reflective skill. Also, our frequent biweekly text messaging exchanges and prompts contributed to this habit.

Fifth, we intended to engage in this work through a position of *critical humility* – "remain open to understanding the limits of our own worldviews and ideologies" (Sealey-Ruiz, 2021, p. 6) – partly through consulting outside perspectives (i.e., books, scholas, social media groups) to increase our awareness. Our exchanging ideas and pushing each other to do more or to entertain a different way of thinking addressed this as well.

Sixth, this *critical love* – "a profound ethical commitment to caring for the communities we work in" (Sealey-Ruiz, 2021, p. 6) – for our students, coworkers, and society grew as we learned more. With each conversation we had and each resource we consulted, our desire and

commitment to do better and to do more deepened. Thus, each of the six components within Sealey-Ruiz's (2021) conceptualization of RLsD guided elements of our collaborative work.

Racial Literacies to the Literature in Teacher Professional Development[6]

Consistent with participatory action research (PAR, see chapter 3), I worked alongside participants as co-researchers to design the study and collectively develop our racial literacies through collaborative and individual efforts. We understood our collaboration to serve as a **reflective community of practice**, essentially functioning as a more grassroots, teacher-led professional development. We also situate our work within and take cues from the literature focused on teachers **teaching about race**. Finally, we consider our work as a support specifically for those recently **transitioned from teacher education programs** to full-time teaching positions, therefore, we position our study among the literature focused on early career teacher development. Here, I trace how we positioned our study within and among these three areas.

Building a Reflective Community of Practice Around Racial Literacies

Picower (2015) noted that "few [professional development] opportunities exist to support teachers committed to [social justice education]" (p. 1). Teachers lacked the support (Clandinin et al., 2015; Darling-Hammond, 2005) and practice they needed when expected to teach in racially literate ways. In fact, scholarship highlights the prevalence of teachers seeking support for engaging in critical conversations around race, ethnicity, or Indigeneity (e.g., Segall & Garrett, 2013), and teachers are increasingly looking to non-traditional platforms for the support they seek (i.e., peer groups; Mercieca & Kelly, 2018). Grant and Gibson (2011) and others (e.g., Irvine, 1990; Sleeter, 2001) suggested engaging in social justice education as a community of

[6] While I critique the focus on race as a Black/white binary in many spaces, for the purposes of this study, I focus my literature review largely on scholarship focused on Black and white populations because the context in which this study and collaborative were conducted consisted primarily of Black and white students.

educators– "reflective communities of practice" (p. 32) – was powerful for influencing teachers' beliefs and ideologies about educating students with diverse backgrounds and identities and cultivating the habits of mind (Hollins et al., 2004) needed for action.

A recent example of such a reflective practice exists in the form of Critical Professional Development (CPD) (Kohli et al., 2015; Picower, 2015, also see Dover et al., 2018; Dover et al., 2020). In direct contrast to the traditional, "antidialogical" (Kohli, 2015, p. 8) professional development offered in schools, CPD is a dialogical action for social transformation rather than social control and "frames teachers as politically-aware individuals who have a stake in teaching and transforming society" (Kohli et al., 2015, p. 9). Such dialogical action, whether done with classroom teachers (Kohli et al., 2015; Picower, 2015) or higher education faculty members (Dover et al., 2020), requires provoking cooperative dialogue, building unity, providing shared leadership, and meeting needs of teachers (see also Navarro, 2020). Such work often provides numerous emotional (i.e., motivation, energy, confidence), intellectual (i.e., content knowledge), and professional (i.e., resources) benefits (Picower, 2015).

Stemming from an "inquiry stance" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999) model, this type of teacher inquiry engages teachers in reflection, learning, and acting. Sealey-Ruiz's (2021) model of RLsD--question, engage, and reflect (p. 286) – resonates with CPD. Across these three studies, it was apparent that dialogic professional development in which teachers reflect inward, engage in learning, giving and receiving feedback, and enacting transformative teaching practices led to an increase in teachers' "efficacy and authenticity as social justice educators" (Dover et al., 2020, p. 50).

My own co-researchers were engaged in antidialogical professional development focused on topics such as Black excellence (Trustin, Joey) and Zaretta' Hammonds' (2014) *Culturally*

Responsive Teaching and the Brain (Rylie) but they were given less guidance regarding enactment of such topics and practices in their own classroom. We responded to this concern by working together and designing our own *participatory* development through establishing and cultivating a sense of community, learning to address our knowledge gaps as well as correcting false information we had learned growing up, designing curriculum to implement our new learning, and seeking and sharing feedback about teaching. This engagement follows in a cyclical, iterative manner. We understand our work as a form of CPD with Sealey-Ruiz's (2021) guide for RLsD.

Because of our joint commitments to foster our own RLsD, we reviewed literature on teachers' racial development and racial literacies, teachers' reactions to racism, and teaching about race, especially for early career teachers.

Teaching About Race and Racial Literacies

There is a wealth of literature addressing whiteness in teacher education (Aronson, et al., 2020; Matias, et al., 2017; Sleeter, 2016, 2017) as well as how teachers enact and reinforce such whiteness (Levine-Rasky, 2000; White, 2012). Such interdisciplinary work (i.e., from sociology, psychology) sheds light on teachers' beliefs, dispositions, resistance, emotions, and development as being important aspects of teachers' teaching about race. In addition, there is more literature about how teachers move, or not, from gaining knowledge to acting on that knowledge.

Teachers' Reactions to Race and Racism. Although to varying degrees, many scholars note the invisibility of whiteness (Marx, 2006) and the "possessive investment in whiteness" (Lipsitz, 2006) for all white people. Similar to the analogy of a fish swimming in water, it remains easy for white people to not notice that they are swimming through whiteness (Hawkman, 2017) unless *something* specific draws their attention to it. Multicultural education

and social justice education efforts intentionally focus on these *something*'s to guide white educators toward greater awareness, and ultimately antiracist action. Because of this possessive investment and the hegemonic indoctrination of whiteness and white supremacy, many white educators produce many different reactions when confronted with conversations around race, racism, and antiracism. Many of these reactions exist in forms of resistance.

Helms (2017) defined whiteness as the "overt and subliminal socialization processes and practices, power structures, laws, privileges, and life experiences that favor the White racial group over all others" (p. 718) and to begin to address and disrupt it, we must "name the wrong" (p. 719). There is a wealth of literature that illustrates such practices of naming the wrong with white teachers. In the field of psychology, DiAngelo (2018) and Matias (2016) named several reactions employed by white people. DiAngelo (2018) suggested that because white people largely grow up in segregated spaces, they are "insulated from racial stress" (p. 2) and do not possess the racial stamina needed to engage in conversations around race and racism. Instead, they exhibit their "white fragility" through emotional responses such as anger, guilt and fear, along with defensive, argumentative, and evasive behaviors. Matias (2016) referred to these emotions as the surface-level indicators for emotionalities lying beneath, such as shame, which then surfaces in the form of guilt or blatant disrespect.

In education, the literature focuses on ways in which white preservice teachers have resisted such conversations and teaching practices (Busey & Vickery, 2018; Dunn et al., 2014; Matias et al., 2016; Smith & Crowley, 2015). Thankfully there is scholarship (e.g., Annamma, et al., 2017) that suggests many white people are moving from a "color-evasive" stance to a more receptive stance regarding racism, but such efforts are often examples of shallow performativity (e.g., Phillips, 2020) and do not lead to lasting shifts toward antiracism. The white privilege

pedagogy that resulted from McIntosh's (1989) infamous piece about "unpacking the invisible knapsack" of white privilege has been critiqued by many (e.g., Lensmire, et al., 2013) for its tendency to lead to confessions but not action. Discussing white privilege might help a white teacher name whiteness, but will not address the roots.

In other education scholarship, white teachers have reacted by claiming their innocence (Orozco & Diaz, 2016), holding to their beliefs of individual (not systemic) racism (Flynn, 2015), positioning themselves as good white people (Helms, 2017), and claiming existence in a post-racial society (Cho, 2011). What is largely missing in these studies is the preservice teacher who recognizes their racial socialization and works toward antiracist action. However, the scholarship on racial literacies and RLsD provides potentials for overcoming this stuck-ness.

Teachers' Racial Literacy. While much of racial literacy scholarship addresses students' racial literacy (Grayson, 2017; Rogers and Mosley, 2006; Skerrett, 2011), fewer focus on preservice teachers' racial literacies. Most of those are focused on white preservice teachers, in particular, or a mix of racial identities (Brown, et al., 2021; Flynn, et al., 2018; King, 2016; Mosley Wetzel & Rogers, 2015; Rolón-Dow, et al., 2020; Winans, 2010), while a few focus on preservice teachers of color only (e.g., Gardner, 2017). Other literature in racial literacies scholarship focus specifically on teacher educators' racial literacies (Sealey-Ruiz, 2021). However, I am not aware of any that focus specifically on early career teachers. While literature on students' racial literacies and the racial literacies in policy and curriculum (e.g., Radd & Grosland, 2018) provide valuable insights, I consider this current study as specifically positioned at the intersection of two areas of racial literacies scholarship: teacher educators and inservice teachers.

Acknowledging that empirical work focused on racial literacies is still an area needing greater development, we gained understanding about the current study through reading empirical work by scholars such as Sealey-Ruiz and Greene (2011), Grayson (2017), Mosley Wetzel & Rogers (2015), King (2016; 2022), Rolón-Dow et al. (2020), Flynn et al. (2018), Brown et al. (2021), and others.

Laughter et al. (2021), in their recent review of the literature on racial literacy, suggests that in the majority of the fifty articles they analyzed, the focus of the study involved the idea of "becoming" (p. 12) literate. Numerous racial literacy scholars understand RLsD as a continual and cyclical process (e.g., Horsford, 2014). Nash et al. (2018) suggest that racial literacy is learned over time and in diverse contexts, but not without contradictions. In addition, Rolón-Dow et al. (2020) refused to place participants on a "developmental continuum" (p. 14), but instead, positioned their teacher candidates as learners, and accepted that the outcome of engaging with race and racism "will vary in depth, speed, and clarity" (p. 14) within the group. This idea of RLsD being a cyclical process, and one in which outcomes are nearly guaranteed to vary, closely relates to our study. Each co-researcher was developing at their own pace, which was contingent on many factors (i.e., context, background). We engaged with each other as lifelong learners and with an awareness that we all brought various experiences with us to the conversation. Depending on our immediate teaching and living contexts, what we each gleaned from a conversation varied as well.

As part of this development process, much of the scholarship on racial literacy involves a methodological component of targeted learning or intervention. For example, King (2016) developed a Black history reader that "examined race and racism through various historical eras" (p. 1306). Similarly, Flynn et al. (2018) developed "assignments, materials, and lessons with

the goal of fostering racial literacy" (p. 241). This methodological strategy extends to much of racial literacy scholarship and reflects the understanding that racial literacy is a knowledge, as well as a practice and skill set (see Appendix B). In these studies, the researchers welcome participants into the learning process through engagement with these resources, then the researchers examine the participants' responses (i.e., verbal, emotional, physical; Skerrett, 2011) to the learning.

Relating the Study to Teachers' Racial Literacies Development. In this section, I highlight literature on teachers teaching about race, specifically regarding white teachers' development, reactions, resistance, and racial literacy. One source of initial inspiration for our group was a quote attributed to Malcolm X, although we learned of it through Gary Howard's (1999) work regarding white teachers in multiracial schools-- "we can't teach what we don't know". We recognized that we had to learn for ourselves before we could teach. Of course, the learning process was filtered through our own philosophies and paradigmatic views. Having been educated in environments infused with white supremacist ideology and "swimming through whiteness" (Hawkman, 2017), we recognized that even the way we learned and interacted with more social justice-oriented work must change.

Regarding our development, we considered the idea of cyclical and iterative learning to be key. Granted, we did not believe our development would ever be complete. Race itself is contextual, thus, our learning greatly depended upon the political and economic environments we found ourselves in, as well as who was in our classroom at the time. The experiences of students in teachers' classrooms varies from year to year, if not day to day.

Finally, because I was a teacher educator and a facilitator of sorts for this collaborative group and because we wanted to encourage others to follow suit and engage as teacher educators

in their own contexts, we positioned aspects of our work within the literature and scholarship regarding *racial literacies for teacher educators*. Because this was a collaborative effort and the group consisted of members serving in various capacities (teacher educator, inservice teacher), we also positioned our work within the scholarship on *racial literacies for inservice teachers*.

Though these teachers were not far removed from their time as preservice teachers (only 1-2 years), these early career teachers positioned themselves within environments vastly different from a teacher education program. While they would still be considered novice teachers, it was important to position our work as addressing racial literacies of inservice teachers, although we recognized that our work might shed light on preservice teacher contexts as well. Because I had not found examples of empirical scholarship focused specifically on racial literacies of early career teachers, I considered our work to specifically address the absence of research on racial literacies of early career teachers.

In the study, we designed the learning opportunities together. Throughout our time, each co-researcher had the opportunity to choose resources they wanted to consult as a group (i.e., guest speakers) as well as resources they wanted to consult independently (i.e., podcasts, books, social media) to share with the group through conversation. In addition, while we attended to our verbal and emotional reactions to the materials, we specifically focused on putting our new learning into practice in our classrooms, considering our common goal of learning in order to be better teachers.

Research on Elementary Educators and Race. At present, there is a lack of research in elementary classrooms specifically focusing on the teaching of race. Often teachers and researchers must lean rather on research focused on teacher educations' instruction of pre-service teachers (Demoiny, 2017). More specifically, more research is needed which explores not only

"what teachers say and do" to facilitate conversations about race and racism but how white teachers navigate "the tensions of their identities and systems of white supremacy to foster healthy and productive conversations about race" (Daly, 2022, p. 481). However, what I have found regarding in the literature about elementary teachers, whether in-service or pre-service teachers actually practicing this in the classrooms, focuses on a variety of approaches to teaching race, the reactions teachers often give to teaching about race, and an examination of the rationales for why teachers react in various ways to teaching about race.

First, research shows that the most common approaches and reactions to teachers' teaching about race fit into categories of avoiding, diminishing, or embracing (i.e., Buchanan, 2015; Demoiny, 2017; Martell, 2017, 2022). In addition, the teachers had different understandings about what teaching about race meant. Some saw teaching about race as teaching for racial prejudice (tolerance-oriented) and others saw it as teaching for racial inequity (equity-oriented). While much research highlights what it looks like for teachers to avoid or diminish these conversations with their students (i.e., Matias, 2016), Daly (2022) highlights what embracing these conversations can look like in the elementary classroom. She found that an elementary teacher employed five distinct "race talk moves" (p. 488) in her teaching about race: listening, participating, synthesizing, challenging, and anchoring. These approaches were "used to interrupt silences around whiteness and sustain discussions about race" (p. 488). Anchoring moved the teacher and students to greater depths by taking the discussion beyond "surface-level conceptions of race to systemic racism" (p. 488). Unfortunately, these attempts at embracing conversations around race in the classroom don't always fulfill the hopes the teachers have. In some cases, these attempts instead normalize Whiteness "in ways that shut down explorations of racial diversity, power, and oppression" (Hollingworth, 2009, p. 30). In summary, elementary

teachers exhibit a variety of approaches and reactions when teaching about race. Some could consider the research to show a spectrum of approaches with avoidance on one end and embracing on the other. Yet, research is still needed that shows exactly how teachers can embrace such conversations in real classroom spaces.

Research on elementary teachers teaching about race also features speculation about the reasons or rationales for why teachers approach such conversations as they do. For many, its the lack of knowledge or understanding (i.e., Wetzel & Rogers, 2015) whether that knowledge is racial-pedagogical-content-knowledge (Chandler, 2015; Demoiny, 2017), historical knowledge (Buchanan, 2015), or related to a lack of understanding about the teachers' racial identities and how they "resist or comply with dominant social and political discourses that silence conversations about race" (Daly, 2022, p. 484). While knowledge and understanding certainly influence a teachers' ability and approach to teaching about race, research shows a number of factors that influence these conversations: the classroom context (demographics, political climate, student maturity) (Demoiny, 2017); lack of preparedness in a teacher preparation program for how to engage in such conversations (Rogers & Mosley, 2006), having designated social studies time (Martell, 2022), and the effects of one's background experiences (Buchanan, 2015).

As aforementioned, many studies that speak to elementary teachers' conversations about race in classrooms stem from researchers' work with pre-service teachers. Thus, further research must look at what these conversations look like for practicing elementary teachers, of various levels of experience, in their own classrooms. This present research study was an attempt to highlight what these conversations could look like, as well as what the learning behind-the-scenes could look like.

Early Career Teachers Teaching About Race

There is little scholarship regarding early career teachers' engagement with race, racism, and racial literacies, and even less scholarship on such in elementary contexts. However, I focus here on the few that I have found within social justice education that shed light on what we attempted to do in our own work, specifically offering valuable insights regarding development and pedagogies as they related to the current study.

Early Career Teacher Development. Lazar's (2013) work with three early career teachers "underscores the need to emphasize teacher development in the first few critical years of professional practice" (p. 725, see also Paniagua & Sánchez-Martí, 2018). She noted that, while teacher programs may claim to prepare their preservice teachers to teach for social justice (Zeichner, 2009), it was not yet clear how these social justice principles were implemented in the recent graduates' minds and practice (p. 701). Though the research shows preservice teachers in 2010 were more aware and accepting of cultural diversity (Castro, 2010) than in 2000, they still held onto deficit approaches to teaching their students and lacked the nuanced understanding (i.e., structural and societal inequalities) needed to serve those in marginalized communities. With this in mind, Lazar (2013) examined the social justice practices of three early career teachers and found many influential factors. She noted how teachers' experiences with racial oppression factored into the teachers' "capacity (Haberman, 2005) to form alliances with students and their caregivers" (p. 722). Another participant's teacher education program served as a "catalyst that led her to teach in urban schools" (p. 723). From these two factors, Lazar (2013) suggested that additional education could deepen and advance early career teachers' "social justice understandings" (p. 723). She added that the "school environment affected

teachers' authority and their ability to enact social justice practices" (p. 723), specifically citing curricula and standardized testing as limiting the teachers' engagement.

Professional Development. A tangentially related component to teachers' development exists in the form of professional development. While CPD was explained earlier, Anderson and Olsen (2006) and Ingersoll and Strong (2011) offer valuable insights regarding early career teachers' perspectives on professional development.

Anderson and Olsen (2006) spoke to ways that teacher education programs could better support their graduates toward longevity in the field of education. They conducted a qualitative study focusing on the perspectives of fifteen recent education graduates who had begun their first teaching positions, specifically regarding their views on professional development. The authors communicated certain complexities of "early career needs" (p. 359), which included those related to developmental needs (p. 365), school context (p. 366), new roles or responsibilities (p. 369), and collaborate with like-minded colleagues (p. 367). In their findings, Anderson and Olsen (2006) suggested teachers be offered professional development characterized by clarity and choice as well as a "grow your own" (p. 372) type of program that remained responsive to the needs and contexts of the moment.

Ingersoll and Strong's (2011) findings added to Anderson and Olsen's (2006). From a critical review of fifteen empirical studies focused on teacher orientation or induction programs, Ingersoll and Strong (2011) found that the majority of the studies illustrate the importance and positive effect of offering assistance for beginning teachers. This support showed a positive impact, with a few exceptions, on three specific outcomes: "teacher commitment and retention, teacher classroom instructional practices, and student achievement" (p. 201). While the types of induction support varied across the studies, the study results showed a noticeable impact on

elements of teaching such as "keeping students on task, using effective student questioning practices, adjusting classroom activities to meet students' interests, maintaining a positive classroom atmosphere, and demonstrating successful classroom management" (p. 202).

Inquiry and Discomfort. In Boylan and Woolsey's (2015) study of "beginning teachers" of mathematics in England, they focused on teachers' identity development in terms of their responses to a "discomforting and inquiry based pedagogy" (p. 62). The authors noted that teacher identity is often marked by either commitment or resistance to social justice efforts, which reflected trends in white teachers teaching about race discussed earlier. These stances result from certain teacher dispositions and beliefs, which Boylan and Woolsey (2015) note come from having an open mind (Garmon, 2004), engaging in self-reflexivity (e.g., Gay & Kirkland, 2003), or approaching inquiry "as means to development of practice and as a pedagogical tool" (p. 64, also see Nieto, 2000). When these are accompanied by critical pedagogical approaches (Ladson-Billings, 1999), the "links to social justice become evident" (Boylan & Woolsey, 2015, p. 64). They also mentioned that those who are resistant, either react with "defensive hostility to consideration of issues of social justice" (p. 64) or through shallow levels of engagement which often silence marginalized voices.

Early Career Teachers' Approach to Race. The literature on early career teachers engaging with race is extremely thin, but I consider it as value added to the literature on white teachers teaching about race, regardless of teaching status (preservice, inservice, or teacher educator) or years of experience (novice or veteran). While two works of scholarship are insufficient to base a study on, I do find that our current study fits well within the work of Pearce's (2014) English context and Gere et al.'s (2009) U.S. context.

Pearce (2014) focused on four schools' responses to four different racist incidents and what the new teachers learned from such involvement and responses. In each of the four racist incidents, the four new teachers noted that their confidence was shaken and that they received such little support from their mentor teachers, such that they would shy away from any such incident in the future (p. 18). Pearce noted that the situations were handled such that the "perpetrators faced no consequences, and the victim was unprotected" (p. 18), thus doing nothing to address "patterns of racism" (p. 18). Pearce's findings suggested the need for more support for beginning teachers, and such support needs to exist within the school context. Drawing on the work of those before her, she suggested

> Providing a "learning space" (Solomon et al 2005) in which new teachers can think, talk and thereby make sense of their experiences beyond their initial training phase may be one effective approach (Lander 2011)... Time to reflect, the opportunity for dialogue, and a supportive and reflective mentor are key elements of that learning space (Turner, 2012).

Although these three sources she cited come from work with preservice and not inservice teachers, they add to the findings she has found while working with inservice early career teachers. The need for collaborative, reflective spaces applies to developing teachers at any stage to help them navigate and better identify racist incidents.

Gere et al.'s (2009) work focused on the multiple challenges many transitioning teachers – those transitioning from pre-service status to in-service or student teaching capacities – face when attempting to enact culturally relevant pedagogy. Such challenges resulted in the following: "emotional responses to racialized situations, inner conflicts over Whiteness, and the dynamics of the school context combined to mediate the development of cultural competence" (abstract). The authors interpreted these challenges as the "fraughtness of how emotion, race, and

school context complicate cultural competence" (title) and suggested that teacher education needs to address this "fraughtness" to better prepare early career teachers for interactions with racism. As discussed in an earlier section, many things happen when teachers engage (or do not engage) in conversations around race and racism. Many interactions lead to emotional reactions (DiAngelo, 2018; Matias, 2016), among other reactions, which inhibit progress toward antiracism. Others indicate teachers moving in and out of, or in between, stages of racial identity (Helms, 1990). Providing support through these challenges can help move white early career teachers into more agentic positions.

While there is little work focusing on early career teachers engaging in conversations or teaching about race and racism, the little there is supports the related scholarship focused on white teachers, whether inservice or preservice, and their reactions and responses to the same.

Early Career Teachers in This Study

This section on literature related to early career teachers highlights the need for more scholarship. Ingersoll and Strong's (2011) and Anderson and Olsen's (2006) studies on the impact and importance of professional development for early career teachers' support the need for future studies focusing on professional development with other levels of teacher status. We engaged in our work because of findings like this and positioned our own work as adding to this body of scholarship. While we do not conduct professional development in an official or institutional capacity, our collaborative engagement provided the necessary support for the specific contexts and developmental stages of the co-researchers involved.

Regarding the inquiry and discomfort inherent in this study, the three early career teachers enthusiastically joined the group as aspiring allies. While we might not have seen evidence of hostility toward topics of conversation, any one of us might have shown resistance

through a shallow level of engagement. As stated earlier, teachers develop at different speeds and in different ways, but it is important to attend to types of resistance exhibited in our work as a group of white teachers. With this in mind, we engaged in our work through what Boylan and Woolsey (2015) call pedagogies of inquiry and discomfort, embracing both as working together and not mutually exclusive. In summary, our work sought to respond to such a call for collaborative and reflective communities of practice, providing space for developing teachers poised to challenge racism in their school contexts, at the individual and institutional level, but need support in doing so.

With the intention to focus on how individuals, in a collaborative setting, attend to and disrupt their epistemology of ignorance and their role in upholding the racial contract, I composed two research questions. The following questions address both the nature of developing on the individual level within a collaborative and collaborating together toward collective racial literacies development, while also attending to how such development occurs in early career teachers:

1. How do white early career teachers engage in RLsD in a collaborative group?
2. How do white early career teachers develop their racial literacies in a collaborative group?

In the next chapter, I outline the methodological components, decisions, and trajectory of the study. Chapter three includes a critique of qualitative research as I argue for a turn to PAR. I define PAR by tracing its genealogies and outlining its philosophical foundations before attending to additional study components such as background, researcher and collaborator positionalities, data sources, and data analysis.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Having described how this study is positioned in the literature and theoretically framed in the field of education, I now explain how I position it methodologically both within and in resistance to qualitative education research. Generally, qualitative and naturalistic research – research in which the researcher "observes, describes, and interprets the experiences and actions of specific people and groups in societal and cultural context" and incorporates their own subjective experiences to provide "rich, evocative descriptions of social phenomena" ("Naturalistic Inquiry," SAGE) – allows, and often encourages, researchers to spend an extent of time within the research site. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) describe qualitative researchers as "interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (p. 6). Qualitative research, then, attends to understanding at its most basic level, or understanding "human knowledge and experience" (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013, p. 5). In addition, for interpretivist and constructivist qualitative researchers, research "should be holistic rather than reductionist" (p. 6). Although researchers conduct such holistic research in many different ways (i.e., ethnography, narrative, and phenomenology), most qualitative researchers agree that attention to "values, passion and politics" (p. 6) requires "patience, honesty, courage, persistence, imagination, sympathy and self-disciplines" (p. 7) and positions researchers as working with and among the participants, not conducting "research on them" (p. 7). To me, this perspective is exemplified in participatory action research (PAR) approaches.

In this chapter, I outline the methodological components, decisions, and trajectory of the study with three early career teachers as we work collaboratively towards greater racial literacies development. First, I critique certain characteristics of qualitative research, then define PAR as

my chosen methodology, highlighting its genealogies and outlining its philosophical foundations. To provide background, I briefly explain the context of the study, including brief collaborator biographies as well as some information about each of their teaching contexts. To more firmly position myself as both a collaborator and researcher, I outline my positionalities. Next, I describe the data sources collected and analysis completed. Finally, I highlight measures of trustworthiness within the study.

Troubling Qualitative Research: Limitations and Bad Things

Qualitative research has served colonizing and dehumanizing functions, and sometimes in the name of attempting to decolonize or to humanize. For years, scholars have critiqued the traditional, colonial, and dehumanizing nature of qualitative studies (i.e., Cannella & Lincoln, 2011; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999). Tuhiwai-Smith (1999) links "research" to the "worst excesses of colonialism" (p. 1) as colonizers taking knowledge and information from Indigenous groups and then applying their own interpretations before relaying it to groups in their Western contexts. Similarly, Denzin and Lincoln (2005) cite qualitative research as a "metaphor for colonial knowledge, for power, and for truths" (p. 1).

Colonizing

Tuck and Yang's (2012) work calls for researchers to acknowledge that "decolonization is not a metaphor " but rather decolonization brings about "repatriation of Indigenous land and life" (p. 1). Decolonization, thus, is not just the improvement of conditions for marginalized communities, but it specifically refers to a giving back of what was once taken. While many scholars claim their work is decolonizing, Tuck and Yang (2012) suggest the term has become a metaphor for other social justice efforts, and in doing so,

> it kills the very possibility of decolonization; it recenters whiteness, it resettles theory, it extends innocence to the settler, it entertains a settler future...The easy absorption, adoption, and transposing of decolonization is yet another form of settler appropriation (p. 3).

Oftentimes, scholars claim decolonizing work in order to "reconcile settler guilt and complicity, and rescue settler futurity" (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 3). Such caution exhorts scholars to attend to the nature of their work and discern whether they are misappropriating the work of decolonization. Thus, while Paris and Winn (2014) claimed their work was decolonizing qualitative inquiry, I intentionally avoid using the term when describing the current study and instead refer to it as humanizing.

As a white woman raised in the United States where colonialism is deeply embedded, I see that while I attempt to act in more decolonizing ways, I am simultaneously[7] acting in colonizing ways. That being said, I choose to lean more on the theoretical basis put forth by scholars of humanizing research methods rather than decolonial theory, reserving that term for efforts that do more to acknowledge what has been taken from Indigneous groups, but without completely forgoing any attention to also trying to decolonize research practices.

Dehumanizing

In addition to research being colonizing, it can be dehumanizing. I resonate most with Paris' (2011) description of humanizing research as a "methodological stance which requires that our inquiries involve dialogic consciousness-raising and the building of relationships of dignity

[7] Bhattacharya (2009) argues that there is "no purist decolonizing space devoid of imperialism" (p. 105). In other words, she claims that it is possible to act in both colonizing and decolonizing ways simultaneously, leaning on Audre Lorde's sentiments: "I am in the master's house breaking down the walls, but I'm still in the master's house, making room for myself" (Bhattacharya in Kuby & Bozalek, 2020). This de/coloniality acknowledges that while the researcher may try to disrupt coloniality, they are trapped in colonial ways.

and care for both researchers and participants" and that such a practice is "not only ethically necessary but also increases the validity of the truths we gain through research" (p. 137). Engaging in more traditional types of qualitative research can produce findings and processes that are inauthentic, irrelevant, irresponsible, and without appropriate or due benefit to the participants (e.g., McIntyre, 2008). Though Paris specifically calls for scholars to engage in humanizing practices with marginalized and oppressed communities, I believe any study in which the researcher aims to better understand a person or community should enact a humanizing approach.

According to his definition of humanizing research, many decolonizing and Indigenous researchers' work could fit. For example, Patel's (2016) attention to research as relational and answerable, Tuhiwai-Smith's (1999) attention to humility and reflexivity, and Kirkness and Barnhardt's (2001) "Four R's" (responsibility, relevance, respect, and reciprocity) fits well within this humanizing research frame. Winn and Ubiles' (2011) work presents a variation of this Indigenous perspective, suggesting that researchers humanize the participants or community by acting responsibly in the research context, exercising reciprocity, ritualizing respect, and collaborating (p. 305-306). So it seems that many scholars who identify as engaging in decolonizing, Indigenous, or humanizing work have common fundamental beliefs about how a researcher is to treat the participants (or co-researchers), the data, and the setting.

Here, I address how these processes of colonization and dehumanizing emerge within the traditional characteristics associated with qualitative research. While methodologists Savin-Baden and Howell Major (2013) name several characteristics of qualitative research, I believe the call to research with the "Four R's" encouraged by scholars of decolonizing and humanizing research requires a move beyond the basic characteristics of qualitative research. Below (see

Table 3), I highlight some inherently colonizing and dehumanizing forces in these characteristics with the hopes of showing how PAR can be an appropriate response to moving beyond some of these traditional, qualitative missteps.

Table 3

Qualitative Characteristics as Colonizing and Dehumanizing

Qualitative Characteristic	Examples of Colonization	Examples of Dehumanization
Setting: Research occurs in natural settings of people whose experiences are the object of exploration	-breaking & entering -etic-oriented questions -fast delivery	-people as objects of observation
Participants: Researchers must show respect for the participants, acting ethically toward them, and where appropriate, engage participants as co-researchers.	-unclear motives -institutional ethics vs. relational -lack of accountability	-lack of reciprocity -shallow relationships
Data: Researchers choose which data are the most significant and influential.	-data ownership	-mis-appropriated data -singular construction

Setting and Qualitative Research

Qualitative research "occurs in natural settings of people whose experiences are the object of exploration" (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013, p. 13) and requires immersion in the research setting (p. 14). This aligns with general expectations of naturalistic research in which researchers are encouraged to observe phenomenons or participants in natural settings as part of a research study. While there may not be anything inherently wrong with such a goal or characteristic, qualitative and naturalistic methodologies do not always attend to what

"observing" and stepping into a setting means for those in the setting, in terms of respect and reciprocity.

Examples of Colonization

Paris and Winn (2014) characterize this traditional type of research as "breaking and entering" in which the researcher takes what they need and does not give anything to the participants, or the site, in return. In such an approach, even if the researcher did want to reciprocate, they may not have become well enough acquainted with the research site or participants to accurately discern what benefits are appropriate. In addition, researchers often take on a utilitarian persona when entering the site, seeking to answer the research question by any means necessary. More often than not, this leaves the participants and research site at a disadvantage, without sufficient benefit for the efforts expended.

Also, the researcher often asks research questions inspired by outside (etic) forces or inspirations with the hopes of seeing "what develops emically (from the inside)" (Stake, 1995, p. 29) without specific expectations for how closely the researcher must work with the participants to inform these changes and ensure they are authentic and appropriate. A researcher's position and disposition in the study can lead to an occasion of this "breaking and entering".

While some qualitative researchers (e.g., Bhattacharya, 2017) suggest extending the observation time to further develop more relevant and authentic research questions, the typical qualitative study seems largely drawn by external pressures, limiting the time a researcher can spend in a setting. In Koro-Ljungberg's (2016) words, students of qualitative research are "caught between the expectations of academic conformity, linearity, audit culture, and external control" (p. 7). She blames neoliberal movements in higher education for the push to conduct scholarship in "decontextualized, temporal, disengaged ways by focusing on fast delivery, easily

attainable outcomes, and other cost-saving measures" (p. 115) which considerably narrowed concepts of "good" or "acceptable" work. This not only applies to the colonial and colonizing tendencies of traditional qualitative research methodologies, but extends to the researcher's position toward all aspects of the research process.

Examples of Dehumanization

Briefly, qualitative research can be dehumanizing in its positioning of people as objects of observations. Such an objectification can elude modes of respect toward participants, whether human or non-human. Tuhiwai-Smith (1999) notes the colonizing gaze of researchers toward both people and spaces, taking what is not theirs but claiming it as their own or twisting and misappropriating what is observed.

Participants and Qualitative Research

Qualitative researchers "must show respect for the participants, acting ethically toward them, and where appropriate, engage participants as co-researchers" (p. 13).

Examples of Colonization

If qualitative researchers understand this principle, what does that mean or entail? The lack of attention to research ethics in much of qualitative research positions respect toward setting and participants as bonus components to focus on when all else is already covered. Patel (2016) highlights the importance of considering "research as relational" (p. 48) as well as implying a dialogic component through her concept of researcher "answerability" (p. 71). Patel notes that questions about ethics in research are "collapsed and circumscribed to institutionally driven procedures of informed consent that ritualize the appearance of 'giving voice' to others" (p. 15). To respond, she calls for researchers to consider the following questions before they even approach a research project: "Why this? Why me? Why now?" (p. 57). She asks the researcher to

consider the motives behind their approach to the research site and participants. Such questions prompt the researcher to consider and reflect on whether their motivations come from a space of colonizing a less-known-to-them space. Patel, and other decolonial researchers (i.e., Tuck & Yang, 2012; Tuhiwai-Smith, 2013) ask researchers to consider the history of colonization in each of these spaces and proceed with the utmost respect and humility.

Similarly, Kirkness and Barnhardt (2001), both of whom identify as Indigenous research scholars, encourage an enactment of the "Four R's" in research. Similarly, Tuhiwai-Smith (1999) states that whether the researcher considers themselves to be an outsider or an insider, research must be ethical, respectful, reflexive, critical, and humble (p. 139). By engaging with participants in relationship and with a sense of accountability, reflexivity, humility, respect, and criticality needed to check the researcher's authority, the research can work against colonizing forces.

Examples of Dehumanization

Within the umbrella of what counts as humanizing research, I find it helpful, for practical and methodological purposes, to lean on scholars of PAR to specifically address what humanizing or dehumanizing research looks like. While qualitative researchers are expected to treat participants with respect and engage participants when "appropriate" (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013, p. 13), who is responsible for determining when it is "appropriate" to do so? Is it ever inappropriate to involve the participants as co-researchers, at least in some capacity? As Stake (1995) notes, and likely this is the experience of others in qualitative research, participants are often "happy to help...although not optimistic that the research will be of benefit to them" (p. 58). How did qualitative research become a charity in which participants donate their time and effort knowing they will receive nothing in return? Many scholars of PAR, and generally decolonial and humanizing scholars, would suggest that it should be the reverse.

Ideally, research should signify to participants that they will receive something that will benefit them and be worth their time. As Charmaz (2006) stated, "remember that human beings are unlikely to relish being treated as objects from which you extract data. Reciprocities are important, and listening and being there are among them" (p. 110). Kinloch and San Pedro's work (2013) presents a good example of this humanizing work.

In Kinloch and San Pedro's (2013) understanding of Projects in Humanization, they claimed such projects (intentionally not called "research") were "grounded in acts of listening that situate us as researchers, advocates, and humans who work with, and not for, each other and other people" (p. 26). Furthermore, engaging in this way redefines relationships "against dichotomous categories of researcher versus participant to researcher-as-participant-as-listener-as-learner-as-advocate" (p. 28). Therefore, while qualitative researchers are expected to "show respect for the participants, acting ethically toward them, and where appropriate, engage participant as co-researchers" (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013, p. 13), many methodologies present varied ideas of "respect" and "appropriate". For example, a case study researcher may deem respect as being limited to showing up on time to scheduled meetings, ensuring that consent forms are signed before data collection begins, and saying "thank you" to the participants when data collection is complete. Perhaps the researcher would deem an appropriate time to involve the participants as co-researchers to be relegated for member checking only. To those aiming to engage in humanizing research, this researcher is dehumanizing the participants, treating them as an object of observation, not worthy of relationship, or not considering that the relationship and collaboration may yield something much deeper and longer-lasting than the original approach. Rather, Kinloch and San Pedro's understanding of humanizing research was the engagement with participants as co-researchers and collaborators, each imparting some

knowledge, learning from the other, and forming new knowledge together. Rather than a give-and-take approach, it was more of a give-and-co-create approach. The space between researcher and participants, or between collaborators, must welcome people to "ask, answer, and receive questions" (p. 40).

Data and Qualitative Research

Qualitative research considers that "data have primacy" in which researchers choose which data are the most significant and influential (p. 14).

Examples of Colonization

If the researcher chooses what data is valuable and what is not, then one may ask how the researcher determines what data is valuable, how it is valuable, or to whom it is valuable? In other words, if the researcher traditionally determines "what evidence to gather and what analysis techniques to use" (p. 164), what does that mean for the participants the researcher is trying to represent? bell hooks (1990) describes it as the researcher saying to the researched: "no need to hear your voice when I can talk about you better than you can speak about yourself. No need to hear your voice...I am still author, authority. I am still colonizer" (p. 343). Similarly, Patel (2016), Sefa Dei (2017), and Tuhiwai-Smith (2013) suggest that Indigenous epistemology does not hold the same opinion of truth that the western world does. Thus, a participant's or community's idea of data may likely differ from that of the researcher, as well as who "owns" the data (Patel, 2016, p. 19). To my knowledge, qualitative research methodologies do not espouse a deep enough understanding and application of this idea.

Understandably, qualitative researchers attend to data validity and trustworthiness, or "goodness" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), with such strategies as data triangulation, but it is unclear in traditional methodologies how the researcher can determine if any data is valuable to

those in the setting without consulting with the participants. What matters to the researcher, and how it matters, may not be the same as what matters to those in the research setting. When engaging in research, Tuhiwai-Smith (1999) also notes the importance of considering the history of the "positional superiority of Western knowledge" (p. 59) and how colonizers interact with Indigenous people, land, and knowledges: "they came, they saw, they named, they claimed" (p. 80). Researchers, thus, must attend to how they may be claiming something that they do not understand or do not have authority to claim.

Examples of Dehumanization

For many humanizing researchers (i.e., Kinloch & San Pedro, 2013), co-construction is a primary goal. Instead of going along with the traditional qualitative research notion that researchers choose which data to use, humanizing research requires "dialogic consciousness-raising" and that doing so "increases the validity of the truths we gain through research" (Paris, 2011, p. 137). Some qualitative methodologies, such as case study, involve a degree of co-construction, but this co-construction often implies the researcher co-constructing interpretations from multiple data sources, not with the participants as co-researchers.

While a methodology may claim to be flexible in its procedural components (i.e., case study, ethnography, narrative), it is often only responsive to conditions or a change in focus due to the researcher's perspective or perception, not as a collective or collaborative venture with the participants. In this sense, there is a lack of collective sensemaking (Archibald, 2019) between the researcher and participants. Constructing knowledge should be considered shared and relational (Brayboy & Maughan, 2009). Thus, if co-construction is the goal of humanizing research, a researcher's determination of the value of the data is dehumanizing to those who contributed to such construction.

Again returning to Kinloch and San Pedro's (2013) work, they engaged in a "dialogic spiral" in which neither "owns" (p. 32) any part of the data, but rather they constructed it together through listening and sharing. They leaned on Battiste's (2002) understanding of knowledge to inform their approach to what many researchers might call data:

> Knowledge is not what some possess and others do not; it is a resourceful capacity of being that creates the context and texture of life. Thus, knowledge is not a commodity that can be possessed or controlled by educational institutions, but is a living process to be absorbed and understood (p. 15).

Kinloch and San Pedro engaged in this "living process" through sparking one another's next thoughts or stories, which sparked more thoughts or stories. Through their dialogic spiral, they weaved together their stories, and times of listening and responding, to form the "space between" in which their two sets of words came together to form a new, co-constructed knowledge. To some, this could simply be called having a conversation. Yet, such a positioning of co-constructed knowledge humanizes both (or all) people involved by embracing and building on what is shared, instead of one person owning or claiming anything from it independently.

Qualitative Research as Inactive

In qualitative research, many research studies end with an analysis and publication or a final report to a sponsoring agency. Such action is often limited to meeting institutional requirements (Koro-Ljungberg, 2013), such as striving to check another box for tenure and promotion, defending a dissertation to earn a doctoral degree, to meet required or desired outcomes for grant funding, or simply as a means to the next research project. However, action could mean something else entirely. For example, taking action can turn a research project into an act of decolonization (Tuck & Yang, 2012), giving back resources to Indigenous groups that

were once colonized. Taking action can also humanize participants (Paris & Winn, 2014), suggesting that their knowledge and experiences are valued and worthy of enacting change in their community and the world.

Blackburn (2014) noted that "to Freire (1996) action is just as integral to humanizing as dialogic communication and consciousness raising are" (p. 54). Freire (1970) named action coupled with reflection as praxis. Both stem from the desire to enact transformation, not prowess or success, or to fill a gap (Patel, 2016). In addition, action might look different in different contexts, visibly or not: "Action often happens at personal and communal levels but has consequences at institutional and societal levels" (Patel, 2016, p. 55). So, although action may include publishing a research study to disseminate results, the researcher must consider its transformative power in such a venue. For example, if the researcher published results of research in order to influence practicing teachers, publishing in an open-access, practitioner journal or in an education magazine may have greater transformative power than publishing in a high-ranking research journal. This component of action, and aiming to engage in research in humanizing ways, directly leads to the next section. Finally, my understanding of dehumanizing and colonizing tendencies of traditional qualitative research directed me towards PAR.

PAR's History and its Possibilities

In academic literature, PAR is generally described as a collaborative effort toward taking social action to solve a problem, often involving marginalized and oppressed groups. As such, it is a means of conducting research *with* people, rather than *on* people (McIntyre, 2008). By engaging in and designing a PAR design with collaborators, I not only pursued the question of racial literacies development but did so in a way that was more responsive and contextually

efficient for the benefit of these teachers. Although it was not the only component of importance, I mention it here to provide a starting point from which the rest of this chapter follows.

PAR is an "attempt to collaboratively generate knowledge (i.e., as a participatory process) for the purpose of both using that knowledge (i.e., acting upon it) and sharing potentially valuable lessons with others (i.e., disseminating the findings)" (Lake & Wendland, 2018, p. 12). Collaboration is cyclical or dialogical, consisting of exploration, reflection, and action (Chabot et al., 2012; Kinloch & San Pedro, 2014; McIntyre, 2008; Robertson et al., 2017). Furthermore, to McIntyre (2008), PAR engages "people in processes of reflection, education, and change" (p. 79). Other PAR scholars (i.e., Krueger-Henney & Ruglis, 2021; Mirra et al., 2016) might disagree on some aspects of PAR, but the majority center transformation, agency, and action as distinguishing elements of PAR.

McIntyre (2008) attempts to summarize PAR's tenets and aims as the following:

- A collective commitment to investigate an issue or problem
- A desire to engage in self- and collective reflection to gain clarity about the issue under investigation
- A joint decision to engage in individual and/or collective action that leads to a useful solution that benefits the people involved, and
- The building of alliances between researchers and participants in the planning, implementation, and dissemination of the research process (p. 1)

And these aims are accomplished through a cyclical or "living dialectical" process of "exploration, knowledge construction, and action" (p. 1). Thus, PAR presents a different way of doing research than traditional research approaches in which a researcher enters a site and proceeds to take whatever the researcher deems useful (Bird-Naytowhow et al., 2017).

I believe Krueger-Henney and Ruglis (2020) said it best: PAR is a "way of life". PAR is more than a methodology. It is a philosophical stance and an approach to living collaboratively and humbly (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013). As such, PAR can exist in various forms, including but not limited to the following: community-based participatory research (Lewis et al., 2020; Stanton, 2014), emancipatory research (Northway, 2010), action research (Northway, 2010), youth participatory action research (Mirra et al., 2016; Petrone et al., 2020), teacher action research (Cochran-Smith, 2009), and university-community participatory action research collaborations (Lewis et al., 2020). Based on this wide variety of methods, approaches, objectives, and principles that qualify as PAR, McIntryre (2008) notes that it is "unreasonable to think that there will ever be a *fully* realized PAR project" (p. xvii). However, the reason why people engage in PAR is because of its "potential to explain and interpret reality so as to change it" (p. xvii).

PAR pulls from many roots, making its genealogy(ies) quite complex, "benefiting from the thoughtful work of hundreds of people from more than sixty countries" (Zeller-Berkman, 2014, p. 518). To more fully understand PAR with its affordances and limitations, one must understand its origins and variations. There seem to be two main lineages or genealogies of PAR: a pragmatic line and a postmodernist/critical line. Some scholars boil it down to Lewin and Freire, suggesting that the pragmatic line comes from Lewin's work in psychology ("action research") and the other comes from Latin American social reformer Freire. However, when given the opportunity, other PAR scholars nuance this genealogy.

Pragmatic Origins of PAR

Dewey

To begin, PAR stems from Dewey's (1859-1952) democratic experimentalism or pragmatism (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013). Dewey "believed that professional educators should be involved in community problem solving" (p. 243) and that people have a responsibility to make the earth better through reform and education. Dewey (1916) believed the basis for education was "reconstruction or reorganization of experience which adds to the meaning of experience and which increases ability to direct the course of subsequent experiences (p. 89-90). In other words, he believed learners do and must learn from their mistakes and make informed decisions. This continual process, however, needs a "method of thinking or a process of intelligence" to help "regulate it" (Hlebowitsh, 2006, p. 74). For Dewey, this process was the scientific method.

The scientific method (i.e., question, predict, gather data, analyze, and conclude) espoused systematic and continual inquiry as the most successful mode of bringing progress, and democratic practices were free of absolutes, which inhibited inquiry (p. 82). First, this method puts all "truth" up to ongoing inspection, thus making an inquiry stance necessary. Second, it is "designed to be responsive to the improvement of existing conditions" (Hlebowitsh, 2006, p. 74). Third, it refines skills of reflective thinking as is required for "informed participation in a democratic society" (p. 75). This experimentalism is rooted in pragmatism, which aims to focus on the here and now: "to look at life as a matter of present significance" (p. 75). Thus, epistemologically, truth and knowledge for the pragmatist is based on the human experience and continually co-constructed (p. 76). There are no absolutes. Axiology here, goes along with epistemology: both knowledge and values are contextual and cultural (p. 16). Dewey, therefore, pushes against binaries of mind and body, theory and practice to suggest that thinking and doing exist as a "unified flow of ongoing experience" (p. 83), thus happening inside and outside school.

Lewin

Kurt Lewin's (1890-1947) action research was believably influenced by Dewey's work. Starting in the 1940's, Lewin's work focused on the "minority problem" in the United States (Zeller-Berkman, 2014, p. 519). Immigrating from Nazi Germany in 1933, Lewin pulled from a Marxist foundation (focusing on class conflict and organized resistance to economic and political domination) to work on preventing prejudice and discrimination as director of the Center for Group Dynamics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, then through the Commission on Community Interrelations (CCI) outside of academia (Zeller-Berkman, 2014). He pushed the field of psychology to focus more on working with groups, as did Moreno (1889-1974) in Austria (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005), than with individuals. In his "Action Research and Minority Problems" piece, he wrote: "In recent years we have started to realize that so-called minority problems are in fact majority problems, that the Negro problem is the problem of the white, that the Jewish problem is the problem of the non-Jew, and so on" (1946, p. 44). He pushed to flip the dominant focus.

With roots in field management psychology, Lewin named four types of action research: diagnostic, participant, empirical, and experimental (Adelman, 1993, p. 13-14). Generally, Lewin focused on group dynamics, with the belief that the group members would organize and mobilize themselves to improve their own conditions (McIntyre, 2008). According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), Lewin characterized his work in action research as consisting of five main components, very similar to PAR as described above: 1) a focus on a problem, 2) the study design is emergent and collaborative with iterative phases, 3) participants are co-investigators, 4) the lead researcher is an outsider and insider to varying extents depending on the context, and 5) all investigators collect and analyze data in systematic ways (p. 52). In summary, Lewin's PAR was based on a

"spiral model of self-reflective cycles of planning a change, fact-finding, acting, observing and evaluating the process and consequences of change, reflecting on these processes and then replanning, acting, observing, and so forth" (Zeller-Berkman, 2014, p. 520).

Building on Dewey's focus on evidence and the scientific method, Lewin claims that "fact-finding has to include all the aspects of community life—economic factors as well as political factors or cultural tradition. It has to include the majority and the minority, non-Jews and ourselves" (as cited in Cherry & Borshuk, 1998, p. 126). Though this description of action research nearly mirrors that of PAR, variations in philosophical and theoretical foundations are responsible for the differences in approach and considerations of ways of knowing, being, and doing. Plus, although Lewin valued the impact of participatory work, evidence of that time suggests that he worked primarily with academic co-researchers, and not those outside academia (McTaggart, 1997).

Many variations of action research exist in the field. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) name feminist action research, critical action research, collaborative action research, and cooperative inquiry, along with PAR as variations of Lewin's action research. Savin-Baden and Howell Major (2013) name additional variations of action research such as traditional/post-positivist, practical/pragmatic, responsive/constructivist, transformative/social constructionist, emancipatory/critical, and PAR (p. 246). Generally, the differences between these variations depend on the theoretical framework informing the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In these and other sources, many scholars situated PAR as under, from, and outside of action research due to PAR's philosophical components. Following Freire's emphasis on criticality, as we attempt to do in our present study, PAR may stem from action research but attempts to take a more postmodern and critical approach to acting on critical problems.

Postmodern and Critical Origins of PAR

Postmodernism

As a second surrogate of PAR, the philosophy of postmodernism greatly emphasizes the importance of attending to the imbalance of power between dominant and marginalized groups. This extends specifically to the use of text and how dominant classes have used texts to maintain their dominant position in society. Thus, postmodernism's epistemological assumption is that knowledge is subjective and that dominant classes often position their beliefs as superior. Like pragmatists, postmodernists do not believe there are absolute truths. Axiological assumptions of postmodernism focus on valuing historically marginalized and oppressed individuals and groups, attempting to disrupt power structures. This involves attending to multiple realities, as opposed to one shared reality (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013, p. 62). By focusing specifically on text, whether written, spoken, or (re)presented in other modalities, postmodernists aim to highlight how structures gain meaning through "relations of power" (p. 62).

Critical theory

Rooted in postmodernist philosophy and Marxist ideology, critical theory focuses on power and privilege. Starting with the success of the Cuban revolution in 1960, many scholars began "braiding a revolutionary research paradigm that influenced people around the world" (Zeller-Berkman, 2014, p. 521). In the Latin American context, the goal of working with "common" folks was to collectively inquire and act to solve problems (Fals Borda, 1997). PAR scholars in this critical lineage espoused the view that "domination of the masses by elites is rooted not only in the polarization of control over the means of material production but also over the means of knowledge production, including control over the social power to determine what is useful knowledge" (Rahman, 1991, p. 14). Much like the Marxist view of disrupting and

exposing false consciousness, Freire, in 1960's Brazil, advocated for social transformation and knowledge construction through a process of "critical consciousness" (Freire, 1972). Freire believed such a process required inquiry and praxis (reflection + action). With inspiration from Freire, Swantz (1982) in Tanzania then coined the term "participatory research" in her work with women in education and Tandon (1981) coined the term "community based research" in his work focused on adult education in India. Inspiration spread to European and North American contexts as well (Zeller-Berkman, 2014).

It is also important to note that Marx (1818-1883) and Gramsci (1891-1937) influenced many of these Latin American theorists, philosophers, and practitioners (Zeller-Berkman, 2014). Marx's dialectical materialism suggests that institutions and practices can be reconstituted by human action (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). This dialectic (i.e., oppressor-oppressed binary thinking) led to the Latin American PAR scholars' push against dichotomies, such as researcher-researched. Thus, these scholars featured researchers and community members as equal partners in the hopes that PAR "would valorize common knowledge and democratize knowledge producing in service of the oppressed" (p. 522). This idea also relates closely to Gramsci's "organic intellectuals" (1971) positioned in ways to push against the status quo by using their own culture and language to empower the people. Another enduring influence of Marx is his idea of praxis (i.e., enactment of theory) "as an essential component of knowledge creation" (Zeller-Berkman, 2014, p. 522). This was a vital component of Freire's own consideration of one's means to achieving social transformation.

In fact, much of this critical lineage of PAR is attributed to Freire and his focus on critical consciousness and dialogue. Freire's *conscientização* represents a critical thinking and consciousness that allows one to "enter the historical process as responsible subjects" and

"enrolls them in the search for self-affirmation" (1986, p. 20). This "authentic thinking" (p. 64) takes place in dialogue. In his work in education, Freire troubled the dichotomy of teacher and student, and suggested rather that the teacher and student must both be teacher-student, allowing each to be "critical co-investigators in dialogue" with each other (p. 68). Thus, co-investigators engage in such dialogue with humility to gain mutual trust and "resolve the contradiction between teacher and student" (p. 81).

Furthermore, Freire (1989) espoused the belief that "none of us possess the truth. It is to be found in the 'becoming' of dialogue" (p. 32). Without dialogue and this reflective participation on the part of all co-investigators, is to treat the oppressed as "objects which must be saved from a burning building; it is to lead them into the populist pitfall and transform them into masses which can be manipulated" (1986, p. 52). His ideas push toward the idea of balancing power between traditionally dichotomous concepts (i.e., researcher-researched, subject-object) and continuous and reflective dialogue toward enacting theory.

Feminism

At the intersection of postmodernist philosophy and critical theory, feminism also informs PAR's focus on bringing the "margin to the center" and making the invisible visible (McIntyre, 2008, p. 3). According to McHugh (2014), feminist research holds to certain values: reflexivity, power, collaborations, and research as advocacy and empowerment. All of these resonate with PAR's foundations and push PAR even further toward enacting social transformation.

In response to PAR's growing tendency to serve only as a "tool for improving practice" (Lykes & Coquillon, 2009) and no longer for social transformation and exposing inequity, feminist scholars troubled this concept of democratic participation, noting specifically which

voices had been traditionally absent from such participation (i.e., women). Lykes and Coquillon (2009) claim that PAR had failed to push against gender hierarchies and that, while PAR addresses local issues, it fails to address larger structures (Lykes & Coquillon, 2006; McIntyre et al., 2004). And with this more recent push to revamp and reconstitute PAR came critical PAR.

Critical PAR

Zeller-Berkman (2014), Torre et al. (2012), and Kemmis and McTaggart (2005) trace the beginnings of critical PAR as stemming from a combination of pragmatism, critical theory, feminism, and more. Torre et al. (2012) explains it this way: "drawing on critical theory (feminist, critical race, queer, disability, neo-Marxist, indigenous and/or post-structural), critical PAR is an epistemology that engages research design, methods, analyses, and products through a lens of democratic participation" (p. 1). She noted such a lineage began in the 1800's with William Dilthey's (1833-1911) questioning of positivism and emphasizing the importance of sociopolitical and sociohistorical contexts, which W.E.B. Du Bois (1868-1963) championed in utilizing surveys in African American communities to show the importance of context in understanding the formation and impact of structural racism (DuBois, 1903; Torre, et al. 2012). El Salvadoran Martín-Baró (1942-1989) also developed surveys to expose the social conditions of those living there in the 1980's. According to Torre et al. (2012), Martín-Baró created a science "of the oppressed rather than for the oppressed, that designs research from the perspective of those most impacted by injustice" (p. 11). Zeller-Berkman (2014) claimed that critical PAR theorists follow his lead by "creating research firmly based in historical context, generating research on forgotten alternatives in the history of science, and drawing on the strengths of all those in research collectives to produce important research and action that disrupt injustice" (p. 525).

Feminist influence also helped direct and redirect PAR's focus toward upholding "diverse ways of knowing, encouraging dissent, exploring silences, developing relationships, and interrogating how one's position in structures of subordination shape one's ability to see the whole in a way that may not be possible from a top-down perspective" (Zeller-Berkman, 2014, p. 527). Fine (an academic descendent of Lewin), Torre, Maguire, Lykes, McIntyre, and others comprise some of this feminist influence by way of Hill Collins' (1990) attention to the role of power in gender relations spanning race, class, and sexuality. Standing on the influence of those from pragmatic, critical, and feminist lines of scholarship, Torre curated principles and assumptions of critical PAR as part of her work with Fine in the Public Science Project (see Table 4 in the following section).

Considering PAR's complex root system, conflict may arise when trying to work from multiple philosophical, ideological, and/or theoretical stances simultaneously. One reason why PAR can claim such diverse and potentially conflicting roots lies in its contextual nature. The individuals or communities involved, location, status, time frame, purpose, and other factors direct how PAR is enacted. For example, conflict might have arisen in my own PAR project because we, white educators, might have naturally operated from a pragmatic view that there was a best or superior way (Gutek, 2014) to do something, which might have conflicted with the more postmodern or critical ideal we were aiming for – understanding and upholding multiple and diverse truths. In the following section, I outline my own understanding of PAR.

PAR: Philosophical Allowances and Limitations

To address PAR's allowances more directly, I explain what its position at the intersections and overlaps of these philosophical, theoretical, and ideological beliefs allows it to do. Because there are several types of PAR, I explain the allowances and limitations of my

understanding of PAR. In true pragmatic-postmodern-feminist-critical form, I acknowledge that my knowledge is finite, cyclical, temporal, and contextual. Thus, I find it important to mention that the writing here does not describe PAR, but instead describes my personal understanding of PAR and the way I chose to enact it. My upbringing, occupations, teaching, parenting, traveling, graduate coursework, and other identity-forming experiences, serve as the context within which my evolving understanding of PAR exists. To help explain my understanding of PAR, I utilize Torre's (2009) PAR map and other resources (see Table 4). By using a color code to show how the assumptions and commitments of PAR relate to one or more of the primary foundations[8], I highlight how PAR can be a both/and, while also noting possible areas of tension.

As aforementioned, there are many kinds of PAR work, which naturally follow varying epistemological, ontological, and axiological assumptions. In Fine and Torre's "Public Science Project" (2016), they outline four main types of PAR: youth PAR, teacher action research, community-based PAR, and university-community PAR. Because of the population of recent graduates of Mizzou's College of Education I was working with and my own position as situated within a higher education institution, with access to some of its resources, our work closely mimicked the university-community PAR camp. Such projects are often initiated by university academics who reach out to "community members to conduct collaborative research around community issues that are aligned with the scholars' area of research and discipline" (The Public Science Project, 2016). I attempt to explain the epistemological, ontological, and axiological allowances and limitations of my version of university-community PAR.

Table 4
Assumptions and Principles of Critical PAR

[8] As mentioned earlier, critical theory and feminism are, in some ways, considered to be descendents of postmodernism. With this in mind, the table below often shows assumptions and principles of PAR with overlapping labels (i.e., postmodernism, critical theory, and feminism) because of their common fundamental beliefs. However, when an assumption or belief seems to stand apart as more one than another, I mark it as such.

Assumptions	Commitments
All people have valuable knowledge about their lives and experiences (**P**)	· To value knowledges that have been historically marginalized and delegitimized. (**Pm**, **F**, **C**) · To value traditionally recognized knowledges. (**P)** · To share across the various knowledges and resources within collective so members can participate as equally as possible. (**P, Pm**, **F**, **C**)
All people have the ability to develop strong critical analyses (of the world, data, social experiences, etc.). (**C**)	To collaboratively decide appropriate questions, research design, methods and analysis as well as useful research products. (**P)**
All people have multiple identities, and carry important histories, connections and responsibilities to various communities (**Pm**, **F**, **C**)	· To create a research space where individuals and the collective can express their multiplicity and use this multiplicity to inform research questions, designs and analyses. (**P, Pm**, **F**, **C**) · To creative risk-taking in the interest of generating new knowledge; that individuals and the collective are "under construction" – that ideas, opinions are in formation, expected to grow, etc. (**P, Pm**, **F**, **C**)
All people and institutions are embedded in complex social, cultural and political systems historically defined by power and privilege. (**Pm**, **F**, **C**)	· To interrogate and engage power relationships within the collaborative and throughout the research. (**Pm**, **F**, **C**) · To excavate and explore disagreements and disjunctures rather than smooth them over in the interest of consensus (as they often provide insight into larger social/political dynamics at play in the research). (**Pm**, **F**, **C**) · To strategically work the power within the group when necessary to benefit both individual and collective needs/agendas (**P**)
The production of knowledge is not objective, or value-free. (**Pm**, **F**, **C**)	· To think through consequences of research and actions. (**P**) · To attend theoretically and practically to issues of power and vulnerability within the collective and created by the research. (**Pm**, **F**, **C**)

Social research is most valid using multiple/triangulated methods to help capture interconnected individual, social, institutional and cultural layers. (**P, Pm**, **F**, **C**).	To use a variety of approaches best suited to address the questions being asked. (This requires strong awareness/honesty about what types of data/knowledge can and cannot be derived from certain methods.) (**P**).
Participation is not automatic. (**P**).	To ongoing negotiation of conditions of collaboration; building research relationships over-time. (**P**).
Change is an ongoing process (**P**)	To conceive of action on multiple levels over the course of the PAR project – some of which occur in one project, some of which link multiple projects over cross-sectional moments over time (past and future). (**P**)

**Taken from Torre's (2009) PAR map, also featured on the Public Science Project.*

* Key: Pragmatic = **P,** Postmodern = **Pm,** Critical = **C,** Feminist = **F**

Epistemology

Within this table, I have coded the majority of the assumptions and principles as rooted in pragmatism (**P**). However, there are areas of overlap between the philosophies mentioned here. For example, the assumption that "change is an ongoing process" relates to each, but is perhaps a more notable component within or originally stems from Dewey's experimentalism because of the cyclical nature of the scientific method.

Each of the philosophies reject the idealist and realist idea that there is an antecedent reality (Gutek, 2014). Instead, knowledge comes from "experiencing and using the scientific method" (Gutek, 2014, p. 16). Postmodernists (**Pm**) agree that knowledge does not exist before the experience. Similarly, none of these foundational philosophies ascribe to the idea of there being any absolute truths. Postmodernists, and thereby critical theorists (**C**) and feminists (**F**), believe that truth is something that dominant groups use as a weapon to marginalize and oppress certain groups of people (Gutek, 2014). Rather, knowledge is determined by those who have historically occupied positions in the margins (p. 16). Pragmatists believe that truth is

"constructed from our tentative warranted assertions that guide us in a constantly changing environment" (Gutek, 2014, p. 87). These epistemological assertions stem from different philosophical foundations, yet complement one another when combined into PAR.

As a critical theorist, Freire firmly believed that human knowledge was incomplete, but that seeking more knowledge was a noble venture (1970/2000). He also believed that this additional learning comes through critical reflection, or as Dewey called it "reflective thinking" (Gutek, 2014, p. 87). According to Gutek (2014), Dewey's thinking called for "active, persistent, and careful examination of our beliefs in terms of the evidence that supports them and the conclusions to which they lead" (p. 87). Freire, like the postmodernist and critical theorist, claimed that this type of reflection would help a person gain critical consciousness and be able to liberate the oppressed.

Thus, in this rendering of PAR, data can include many of the traditional formats, such as field notes, transcripts, surveys, assessments, observations, and more. However, the key to understanding data within PAR is the acknowledgement that data is co-constructed. Each piece of data, although it may have physically or auditorily come from an individual, the whole PAR collective contributed to the rendering of that data. Because of this collaborative decision-making throughout the entire process of PAR, the collective determines what is considered data. Therefore, one team may decide that assessments count as data, but another team may consider assessments as a misappropriation of knowledge and agree to discount assessments as data. A tension arises here, too, regarding cultural epistemologies. Not all epistemologies share the same opinion of truth as the western world does. This is another example of how important context is to the consideration of knowledge, and data, in any PAR project.

The same can be said of how a PAR team thinks about analysis, theory, and the communication of the research. Each of these decisions must be considered within the context of the project. As PAR co-researchers, we must attend to constant reflection by asking questions, including but not limited to the following: *Who is involved? Are there multiple and conflicting epistemologies present? How is each perspective embraced? Are there some dominant perspectives that should not be embraced? How does the team determine whose perspective is oppressive and whose is liberating? Is "analysis" an appropriate component? What might analysis look like in this context? Is it possible to engage in PAR without a theory? What theories allow us to maintain the integrity of PAR as well as the community and context we are working in/with? What means are appropriate for communicating our work? Have we communicated well to both academic circles and community circles in ways that have a palpable impact?*

These are only a few of the questions PAR co-researchers should be asking throughout the process, which for some, can last for decades. Whether one is engaged in one isolated PAR project or an extended PAR project series, the answers to these questions may change at any time. In this project with white early career teachers, I can easily see how our answers to many of these questions would change as we learn more. In fact, I believed that if our answers to several of these questions did *not* change or evolve as we continued throughout the process, we were not truly engaging in critical work and reflection. Pragmatism, postmodernism, critical theory, and feminism all inform the asking and answering of these questions. In summary, I view pragmatism as informing the cyclical and reflective nature of knowledge engagement in PAR. Postmodernism, critical theory, and feminism inform the critical look at power and oppression

that exist in these spaces and often ignites the fire that burns throughout the PAR process, while also requiring the attention to multiple perspectives.

Ontology

According to St. Pierre et al. (2016), ontology "considers the nature of being and the basic categories of existence (e.g., subject/object, essence/appearance, substance/quality, identity/difference) as well as the nature of human being" (p. 99). For postmodernists, critical theorists, and feminists, reality is subjective and either chosen or exerted onto others. Pragmatism, however, views reality as more objective. Although reality is co-constructed, pragmatists support the idea that reality and knowledge are gained through the scientific method, which suggests an objectivity in recognizing reality.

While each of these foundational philosophies reject the idea that there are transcendent or metaphysical truths outside of them, tensions may arise between each of the three. Someone acting from a pragmatic viewpoint within PAR might suggest one way of doing something, or that each member can do things differently in contributing to the collective, while someone acting from a postmodernist viewpoint might suggest that doing so reinforces dominant narratives, rather than upholding marginalized voices. Pragmatists' objective reality determined through the cyclical, methodological process of research might align too closely with western ways of being and thus conflict with the postmodernist, critical, or feminist priority to uphold Indigenous or non-western ways of being.

As I engaged with white educators around the integration of ethnic and Indigenous histories in teacher education and elementary classrooms and more specifically their racial literacies development, I recognized the importance of actively seeking areas of conflict here. If we held to our more pragmatic, westernized views of following processes and methods that made

sense to us, we were likely missing the postmodernist, critical, and/or feminist ways of attending to and learning from the colonized and/or racialized ways of being we meant to integrate into our curriculum. For that matter, we might have even been thinking of integrating in an inauthentic way. Herein lies another aspect of pragmatism: we acknowledge that "thinking and doing" are a "unified flow of ongoing experience" (Gutek, 2014, p. 83) in an ever-changing world in which we use our experiences to solve problems. We aimed to learn from our experiences and use them to solve our collective focus problem.

Axiology

Gutek (2014) defines axiology as "concerned with value theory and attempts to prescribe what is good and right conduct," more specifically "ethics and aesthetics" (p. 6). PAR is designed to take great care of the ethical components of doing research. For example, Petrone et al. (2020) claimed the Four R's of PAR as integral and inseparable components of PAR. While each of these foundational philosophies described here agree in rejecting the idealist and realist claim that values come from ultimate or transcendent beings, they each arrive at values differently. Simply put, pragmatists suggest that values are logically derived from human experience (Gutek, 2014, p. 90). Postmodernists, critical theorists, and feminists emphasize the values of historically marginalized and oppressed individuals and groups (p. 16). Therefore, what happens if a co-researcher feels their opinions are not valued, another feels their opinion is best or most logical (at least according to western ways of doing things), and another feels the others are not valuing marginalized folks? I believe Robert Jones' embodiment of James Baldwin's sentiment in this quote helps illustrate a possible point of tension between these three axiological (and epistemological) views: "We can disagree and still love each other, unless your

disagreement is rooted in my oppression and denial of my humanity and right to exist." So, what happens when the pragmatist chooses logic over the postmodernists' experienced oppression?

I find these axiological intersections and conflicts important in answering the questions: *how is PAR conducted* and *what are participant/co-researcher relationships like*? Some assumptions and commitments of PAR (see Table 4) help to answer these questions. An assumption resonant within all foundational philosophies is that "all people have valuable knowledge about their lives and experiences" (**P**). This assumption leads to the commitment to valuing "historically marginalized and delegitimized" (**Pm**, **F**, **C**) as well as "traditionally recognized knowledges"(**P**). This is naturally paired with the assumption that participation is not "automatic" (**P**) and a commitment to "building research relationships over-time" (**P**). This "ongoing negotiation of conditions" is key to addressing and breaking through some of these conflicting philosophical points. Such a commitment embraces the belief that all knowledges are valuable, yet the negotiation comes into play when some knowledges are oppressive to other knowledges. In summary, as I see it, PAR builds upon its pragmatic foundations with postmodern, critical, and feminist influences to direct its focus toward power, oppression, history, and action.

PAR: As I Understand It

According to Northway (2010), this participatory research design centers the following: the community, a commitment to changing the balance of power by the researcher, a different role for the researcher from that in more traditional forms of research, active participation of the community at all stages of the research process, the production of "useful knowledge," and a commitment to action (p. 174). Within this, there also exists several integral elements as to how PAR is done: communicating dialogically and cyclically (**P, Pm**, **F**, **C**), addressing power

dynamics (**Pm**, **F**, **C** empowering marginalized populations (**Pm**, **F**, **C**), and engaging collaboratively and relationally (**P**, **Pm**, **F**, **C**).

Dialogic Communication

In the spirit of Freire (1970/2000), PAR as a critical approach engages in dialogic communication between participants when positioned as co-researchers. Freire claims that this iterative process of dialogue can lead to critical consciousness, in which all involved learn to question, grow, and reflect in the collaborative meaning-making process. Paris (2011) claimed that by engaging in this "dialogic consciousness-raising" (p. 137), co-researchers were engaging in humanizing acts through research. This type of dialogue also creates conditions in which researchers demonstrate responsibility in the research community, establish opportunities to exercise reciprocity, and ritualize respect (Blackburn, 2014). Such dialogue occurs among different populations and in various forms: in intergenerational communities (Romero-Little, et al., 2014), in culture circles (Souto-Manning, 2014), with youth (Mirra et al., 2016; Petrone et al., 2020), and among populations with various linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Wandera, 2019; Lewis, et al., 2020).

This dialogic nature of PAR attempts to position co-researchers as equals and experts, which leads into a second prominent feature of PAR. In this "dialogic spiral" (Kinloch & San Pedro, 2014, p. 31), researchers and participants communicate as co-researchers making decisions and learning together. Although the researcher's position does not often allow for a completely equal footing (Bhattacharya, 2009), the researcher may employ certain strategies to center the co-researchers' voices, rather than her own. By engaging in this way in our collaborative, we were able to take note of *how* we were engaging in collaboration, how our

goals and values shifted over time and influenced our direction as individuals and as a collective, and how we considered eachother as each invaluable to the process.

Attention to Power Imbalances

PAR attempts to address power imbalances both in community and in the research process. This feature leads to many lines of reflective questions regarding data, data collection, analysis, modes of participation, recruitment, and more. For example, Wandera (2019), an academic in a western institution working with Kenyan youth, focuses on answering the question: *who has ownership of knowledge?* Tuhiwai-Smith (2013) outlines a host of other questions that address where power lies in research: *Who gets to do research? Whose research is this? Who owns it? Whose interests does it serve? Who will benefit from it? Who has designed its questions and frames its scope? Who will write it up? Who will carry it out? How will its results be disseminated?* (p. 10). With PAR's critical theory foundation, the researchers are responsible for doing research differently. Instead of considering the academics or politicians as the experts and qualified to lead the research process, PAR names community members as experts. In Duncan-Andrade and Morrell's (2008) words, PAR "is valuable because it brings in populations that are often alienated within the traditional research paradigm, but it is also important because these populations often have the best vantage point and the greatest vested interest in the work itself" (p. 108). The experts are found in the context where the problem exists. Petrone et al. (2020) provided one example of this in the authors' and students' enactment of a repositioning pedagogy, in which the high school students served as educational consultants, sharing their experiences and expertise with mostly white pre-service teachers. By flipping the roles, those often-silenced voices are given center stage.

Regardless of the form it takes and who is involved, it creates opportunities for "shared governance" (Pandya et al., 2021, p. 4), which also "ensures that the people who are closest to the issues have a central and active role and also helps mitigate researcher biases and blind spots (p. 4). Thus, PAR attempts to address power imbalances both in community and in the research process. This feature leads to many lines of reflective questions regarding data, data collection, analysis, modes of participation, recruitment, and more. We tried to institute this attitude of "shared governance" in our own attempt to answer the question of how we engaged in the collaborative toward RLsD. By trying to keep lines of communication open at all times, I tried to invite collaborator input in each and every aspect of the process in order to better and more authentically (i.e., relating it closely to each teachers' needs and contexts) influence our direction.

Empowerment, Liberation, and Emancipation

PAR's explicit disruption of power dynamics, or repositioning, attempts to empower, liberate, and emancipate historically marginalized and oppressed populations. In Caraballo's (2021) words, she noted that PAR has a tendency for "disrupting epistemological hierarchies" (lecture). Tuck and Yang (2014) fleshed this out a bit more in their writing about "refusing research":

> academic knowledge is particular and privileged, yet disguises itself as universal and common; it is settler colonial; it already refuses desire; it sets limits to potentially dangerous Other knowledges; it does so through erasure but importantly also through inclusion, and its own imperceptibility (p. 235).

PAR attempts to highlight, uphold, and embrace these "Other knowledges" that the western world labels as false, invalid, or lesser. By bringing these silenced and forgotten "Other"

knowledges to the forefront, historically marginalized communities have space to share their strengths, as well as proposing their own solutions for problems they experience. For this project, while we as collaborators were not necessarily members of historically marginalized communities, we attempted to provide as many opportunities for us to learn from and share space with those who did identify as members of historically marginalized communities. This attempt to position ourselves as humble learners was done with the intent to learn for ourselves but also to better direct our own teaching practices through the collaboration process.

Collaboration and Relationship

None of the characteristics listed above are possible without the collaborative and relational aspect of PAR. A unique sentiment is found in Indigenous Archibald's (2008) work referring to how stories lead the witnesses to listen with "three ears" – two on our heads, and one in our hearts (p. 76). In Lewis' (2015) master's thesis titled "'Listen with your three ears': A Pedagogy of the Heart," she claimed that "bringing our minds and our hearts to all aspects of life is part of living a holistic existence" (p. 37). In addition, PAR relies on the idea that knowledge and truth are co-constructed, thus neither of the participating parties "owns the words" (Kinloch & San Pedro, 2014, p. 22). Instead, the knowledge is constructed in and through collaboration in daily lives. Such knowledge construction occurs through what Mirra et al. (2016) termed pedagogies of relationships and communities of practice. Knowledge construction in PAR is a "labor of love" (Caraballo, 2021): serving to build up, from, and with other researchers.

Beyond the humanizing relationship-building that takes place between co-researchers, PAR is relational to the contexts: research "is always entangled with specific researchers in specific spaces and with specific outcroppings" (Patel, 2016, p. 57). Researchers have a responsibility to attend to contextual factors that inform and influence the research and the

relationships within the research collective such as societal, economic, political, and identity factors. This requires the researcher and co-researchers to adapt to situations, sometimes changing course mid-way through the study. PAR invites the co-researchers into that conversation with the lead researcher. The ideal in PAR is that the co-researchers are involved in every portion of the study, giving input and even directing some parts of the study. Because this iterative component is so integral to PAR and to enacting a more humanizing approach to research, flexibility is key.

To remain attuned to the needs of the co-researchers, the researcher must treat "research as relational" (Patel, 2016), acting with respect, responsibility, relevance, and reciprocity. While the researcher may still hold a lead or facilitating role in the study, it is important that the researcher forms strong relationships to inform necessary changes, remaining flexible to the change of context or the change in direction based on new information. Without understanding relationships between researcher and co-researchers, flexibility is misguided. This iterative and fluid process is not necessarily welcome in many qualitative methodologies and would start to frustrate many researchers because the researcher was trained to have a plan and to carry out that plan. Therein lies the difference between a humanizing approach and a colonizing approach.

In our project, we tried to attend to the relationality of the *how* in our research focus. We always began our meetings by "checking in" with each other, even if that meant talking about dogs, loud neighbors, or other topics that did not directly relate to the topic of RLsD. We acknowledged that our attitudes, relationships, contexts, and presence-of-mind contributed to not only how we participated and engaged in each meeting but how we directed our curiosities and desires to learn.

Action

What distinguishes a humanizing approach from a PAR approach is action. While the researcher and co-researchers engage in relationship-building and knowledge-building in a collaborative way, PAR calls for an intervention to act on the strength of the relationships and the conviction brought by the new knowledge (e.g., Irizarry & Brown, 2014). Many humanizing studies engage the participants in cycles of reflection and education, but PAR studies call the participants, or in this case co-researchers, to act on that reflection and education.

I refer to my methods of research as falling within a PAR approach, but I acknowledge that to many PAR scholars, my version might not be PAR-*enough* because I am not working directly with marginalized communities or because there is not enough action. While my early academic training has taught me to stay in my lane or to ascribe to certain labels, boxes, or categories without transgression, I realize that sometimes ascribing to certain prescriptive methodologies is dehumanizing to the participants. When working with people whose lives are fluid and flexible and who need to respond to internal (i.e., mental health) and external pressures (i.e., school meetings), I cannot justify acting in non-responsive or inflexible ways.

For our project, we also attended to the importance of practicing what we were learning, or, essentially, acting on our learning. We wanted to bridge the divide between theory and practice, thus the whole third phase of our time together was spent planning lessons, implementing new strategies, and reflecting on how it went in order to improve upon it the next time. Learning can often remain ineffective and stagnant, and thus more easy to forget, if it is not put into practice. In the next section, I explain more of the logistical and concrete particulars of the study.

Context of the Study

Qualitative studies are often guided by research questions that sometimes shift slightly after the study's beginning. So, although these two guiding questions have gone through many iterations already, the current iteration centers the following: How do white early career teachers engage in racial literacies development in a collaborative group? And How do white early career teachers develop their racial literacies in a collaborative group?

I proposed to the rest of the collaborative group that we engage in PAR as a general methodological approach for several reasons. First, I wanted to learn from their experiences as a member of and within the group. Positioning myself as a teammate and co-learner would allow for more free exchange. While I often led or facilitated each of our meetings, their participation and input drove the direction of our engagement. For example, we shared resources and listened to guest speakers, but each collaborator had the chance to choose specific resources that they felt were most helpful for their particular development needs, grade levels, and teaching contexts. Secondly, as with many university-community PAR studies, the university-based member is often looking to share resources but allow the community-based members to drive the interactions with their particular contexts in mind. Instead of having only me decide which resources to consult and reflect on, I wanted to have their input in each resource we consulted and from which we learned. They are each based in a different community, and they know and understand the needs and nuances of their communities better than the rest of the group. For example, while we all agreed to engage in a book study of *We Want to Do More Than Survive* (Love, 2019), each member selected additional resources unique to their contexts, individual learning needs, and interests (i.e., podcasts, books, videos, etc.).

Third, although linked to the previous reason, I wanted this research and collaboration to ultimately benefit us all, but not for the purposes of a dissertation or a degree. Racial literacies

development was an area which we all recognized we had (and still have) great need. As the university-based member, and perhaps as one who was most invested in this study (by nature of these interactions serving a vital role in my dissertation work), I wanted to ensure that I was giving back and engaging in reciprocity. Teachers, especially during a pandemic, are under considerable pressure, and early career teachers even more so because of not having established networks of support. While their input and participation was vital to understanding better how collaboration could function specifically for early career teachers' racial literacies development, my role in reciprocating was just as vital. I chose to reciprocate in several ways, one of them being that I provided two books for each of them– Love's (2019) work as a resource for a book club study and one of their choice (i.e., *Culturally Responsive Teaching and The Brain* by Hammond, 2014; and Au et al.'s, 2016 *Reclaiming the Multicultural Roots of U.S. Curriculum*).

In this qualitative, PAR methodological approach we chose to utilize semi-structured individual interviews, focus group conversations, and written reflections to help capture and address our focus on the members' experience collaboratively engaging in development over time. Through providing multiple opportunities for collaborators to engage in learning and reflection, both collaboratively and independently, we more easily charted the course of racial literacies development over the 14-15 months.

Focus group conversations allowed for each collaborator to learn from the life, teaching, and learning experiences of each member, potentially prompting development where it would not have naturally occurred if we were only engaging in individual reflections and interviews. However, focus group conversations naturally limited what each collaborator said, either because of time constraints or discomfort with sharing more sensitive experiences with the whole group. While we have worked to create an open environment in which we all shared potentially

sensitive information with each other, the individual interviews and written reflections offered an opportunity for each collaborator to talk at greater depth, length, and honesty. In addition, these individual interviews allowed for us to work on teaching implementation plans to practice enacting our racial literacies development. Third, the reflective journals (Milner, 2003) in the form of written reflections for a publication and conversation, as well as text strings (biweekly) provided collaborators additional opportunities to sit with and reflect more deeply on how things were going and what was standing out to them, whether challenging, surprising, or exciting in their weekly teaching.

Finally, while I always responded to their reflections, sometimes with my own, I kept my own "running notes" throughout the process to document my own learning toward greater racial literacies development as well as methodological challenges. In all, utilizing individual interviews, focus group conversations, and written reflections allowed us to better gauge how we were charting and engaging with our racial literacies development, as well as how we saw evidence of our learning in our teaching practice.

Sampling Procedures

In February of 2020, I reached out to nine of my previous students. These nine stood out in my mind as having great passion for the profession of teaching as well as deep commitments to their students. All nine agreed to an initial conversation with me in which I asked them what they saw as gaps in their institution's teacher education program. At the end of each conversation, I asked if they saw specific gaps around the program's integration of marginalized and racialized ethnic and Indigenous backgrounds. After compiling commonalities among the nine responses, three had particularly strong leanings toward this desired focus, making them seem more naturally interested in engaging in their own racial literacies development to fill some

of those gaps left by their teacher education program. After meeting to establish a common interest, we aimed to create a plan for going forward.

Rationale for Sampling

I first came to this study through my growing interest and passion for educating myself and secondly for educating my own multiracial/multiethnic children. This passion intersected with my role as a teacher educator. Because I did not have experience as an undergraduate in our current university context's teacher education program, I aimed to recruit those who completed the program as *experts*. The growing awareness of my lack of experience with racialized and marginalized histories and literacies fueled my interest in pursuing this line of research, and it was my acknowledgement that the graduates were best positioned to help inform my own practice that laid the foundation for collaboration within this project.

To allow for greater contributions from each member, I wanted to keep the group limited to a few. Although three more of the original students consulted wanted to be involved, I narrowed down to the three that seemed to have the strongest desire around racial literacies development to forge deeper relationships.

Collaborators

All four participants (henceforth named "collaborators") identified as white. Three were professional, early-career teachers (Trustin, Rylie, and Joey[9]), and the fourth (Mary) was a doctoral candidate and teacher educator.

Trustin, Rylie, and Joey graduated from the same teacher education program in a midwestern state university and immediately entered the elementary teacher workforce upon graduation. At the beginning of the study, Joey and Trustin were finishing their first year of

[9] The collaborators in this study preferred to be identified by their real names, acknowledging that a certain component of accountability comes with doing so.

teaching in fifth grade classes in Colorado, and Rylie was finishing her teacher education program. Thus, by the conclusion of data collection and analysis, Joey and Trustin were finishing their second year and Rylie was finishing her first year of teaching. Joey had also earned a master's degree and had begun working toward a doctoral degree. Trustin and Rylie were working toward master's degrees in education.

Collaborator Biographies and Descriptions

I (Mary) grew up in rural Virginia and attended a small Christian school from K-12, then attended a small Christian college in Pennsylvania to earn a degree in elementary education. During this time, I sought opportunities for travel outside of the United States (Florence, Italy; Adelboden, Switzerland; Xela, Guatemala). Upon graduating, I went back home to begin teaching in Virginia. I finished three years of full-time teaching in upper elementary grades before getting married and relocating to the midwest. Due to relocating a few times, within a short span of time, I was able to gain experience in many different capacities (office administration, nanny care, after school care, etc.). Perhaps the most transformational aspect of the last decade has been marrying my husband. Becoming a teammate to someone whose cultural background greatly differs from my own has been full of excitement as well as challenges, such as: how to cook Ghanaian food well, how to understand certain differences in communication, and ultimately how to identify and correct the ways in which I have been socialized to view others. Currently, I am a teacher educator and doctoral candidate in higher education still committed to pursuing further learning.

Trustin grew up with his mother, father, and three brothers in Rolla, Missouri. He recalled his upbringing as full of support and extensive opportunities for advancement, including the "given" that he would attend college. His educational experiences took place in

predominantly white spaces. Although he recalled little racial diversity, he remembered seeing evidence of economic disparities among students in his classes, and personally identified as a gay man. He experienced environments of greater racial, ethnic, and gender diversity in higher education while studying to become an elementary teacher, and became a fifth grade mathematics and science teacher at a charter school in Denver, Colorado. After his first year of teaching, he decided to pursue a Master's degree studying educational leadership and policy analysis.

Trustin characterized his racial literacy journey as beginning with his experiences growing up with an older adopted brother who identified as Black, African American. Growing up in a more rural setting in predominantly white settings provided limited opportunities for him to fully grapple with the role of race and racism in Rolla, let alone the United States' history and present. However, with the wrongful killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, and the resulting protests taking place at the university campus he planned to attend, he acknowledged that discussing race and racism were increasingly important for him to understand. He naturally questioned exactly how this learning about race and racism should proceed, but he purposed to learn more specifically to better understand his future students. Pursuing such learning in his teacher education program only increased its importance in his mind, thus positioning him as a prime candidate for engaging in this collaboration toward greater racial literacies development.

Rylie grew up with her mother, father, and sister in Jefferson City, Missouri. She was raised by a supportive family, and as a member of the Catholic church. Throughout most of her primary and secondary education, she attended Catholic schools, which were predominantly white spaces. She recalled her transition to her college education as being eye-opening, considering that there was much greater racial, economic, ethnic, and gender diversity than

where she grew up. This growing awareness fueled her interest in becoming a teacher even more. After graduating, she became a second grade teacher at a public school in Kansas City, Missouri. She also chose to continue her own studies as a Master's student studying elementary education.

Rylie cites the beginning of her racial literacy journey as taking a while to get started. She recalls having severely limited opportunities to learn more explicitly what race and racism was beyond what was mentioned in her Catholic school about the Civil Rights movement. However, she remembered feeling terribly uncomfortable in her predominantly white class of fellow students in elementary school when anyone would talk about race because she felt all eyes would be on the one Black student in her class. Beyond feeling uncomfortable in such a situation, Rylie could not recall further interactions with race and racism that would present opportunities for her to more explicitly learn and understand the meaning of race and racism in her life and the society around her. As she began and proceeded through the coursework in her teacher education program, she grew to understand much more about bias, discrimination, microaggressions, and other societal and individual functions of racism. However, by the end, she agreed that race and racism was taught predominantly as a Black-white issue, and recognized the need to dive deeper. She came to this collaboration knowing that her racial literacies development was vital in order to engage in deeper understanding of her students and the communities in which she/they lived. Yet, she had a lot of uncertainty about how to go about learning on her own.

Joey grew up in a Chicago, Illinois suburb with a supportive mother, father, and sister. While she recalled having much greater diversity (racial, ethnic, and economic) in her primary and secondary educational experiences, she remembered such experiences being limited to her engagement in sports and extracurricular activities. Aside from that, most of the classes she took

in high school were “honors” or “advanced placement” classes which were predominantly white spaces. Her interaction outside of these spaces was limited. Her awareness of a stark and problematic division fueled her toward becoming an educator at the elementary level. She then became a fifth grade teacher of language arts, science, and social studies at a charter school in Denver, Colorado and was pursuing a doctorate degree in education reform.

Joey recalled growing up in a predominantly white setting, as did Rylie and Trustin, yet remembered having close friends who identified as Black in her first childhood neighborhood. She recalled noticing and perhaps being somewhat confused by how some neighbors acted differently around this Black family, seemingly engaging in as little interaction as possible. After moving to another location, her interactions with Black students or students of other marginalized communities were severely limited until high school. The enrollment in her advanced placement courses in high school was predominantly white, while the “regular” track of courses were a diverse mix of ethnic, racial, and linguistic abilities. While she may have noticed it at the time, she never engaged in deeper thought about why classes were so segregated until she entered college and heard discriminatory and racist comments made by her own colleagues. At this time, she started to engage in her own deeper learning about contemporary politics along with the courses she took focused on bias. Frustrated at how problematic some of the conversations she was hearing were, Joey purposed to personally dive deeper into her own learning in order to better understand not only her future students but better navigate the school and community climate. This enthusiastic fervor for learning pulled her into this collaboration.

Background

This study took place across many spaces and geographic locations. The relationships between collaborators began in the three collaborators’ teacher education program. While I was

still studying and teaching in the aforementioned teacher education program, which was (and is) a predominantly-white program, two collaborators were teachers in Denver and one in Kansas City. The Denver charter school is a majority-Black environment with Latinx and Indigenous groups following, and the Kansas City school is majority-white, but with a few students from India and of Latinx heritage in the teachers' classroom.

While we engaged in racial literacies development as one type of professional development, it is important to note what other professional development was being conducted in their contexts. The Denver charter school was focusing on Black Excellence, while the Kansas City public school planned to engage in sessions focused around culturally responsive teaching. At this shared higher education institution, I was not officially engaged in official professional development, but the college of education was attempting to uphold its claimed commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, although still facing challenges to enacting those commitments (i.e., lack of support for faculty and students of color).

Positionality and Reflexivity Statement of the Researcher

My positionalities as an educator, doctoral student, Christian, and a white woman most clearly play impactful, and sometimes limiting, roles in this study. I also find that my positionalities as mother, wife, daughter, sister, and friend were instrumental in my engagement with the collaborators toward racial literacies development. For the purposes of this immediate chapter, however, I write more focused on my positionalities as they relate to my research.

White Woman

First, my identity as a white woman impacts how I view the world and how the world views me, although I can honestly say I had not thought much about that until I got married and started this doctoral program. The socialization in Eurocentricism and whiteness worked

efficiently at keeping me from entertaining more critical questions about why things were the way they were in my hometown, why I felt mission trips were such a great way to give back to society, or why my private school had so few students of color. Considering that I still have a long way to go in my journey towards identifying, understanding, and deconstructing white supremacy in my daily life, I often wonder still if I am/was the right person to be engaging in and leading work towards racial literacies development. In some ways, I feel I was in the perfect position to do so because I knew I needed it, but I also understood that being white and working with other white folks toward developing racial literacies can be problematic. As other white scholars (e.g., McIntyre, 2008) working with white teacher candidates have noted, I found it was easy to slip into this "racially privileged naivete" (Roman, 2013, p. 189) by sharing similar experiences with collaborators in an effort to align or establish rapport. But aligning in this way, ultimately results in colluding with the "macro-narrative" (McIntyre, 2008, p. 88) of unexamined experiences. How often did I share unexamined experiences with the collaborators in an effort to grow closer to them?

Educator

My role and identity as an educator led me to look deeper into the experiences the preservice teachers were having in the teacher education program, considering a void I had suspected. In my experience, it seemed that my students often came to class with a deeply embedded Black/white binary way of thinking. I wanted to dig into whether my initial conclusion – that students in this program were largely taught to think of race in terms of a Black/white binary – was correct, according to those who had completed the program, so that I could work to address that void. Ultimately, and perhaps selfishly, I imagined teaching to prepare my students to be better teachers for my own children. I did not assume to know the best

ways to do this, but I firmly believed that this push to do better as an educator was a driving force in my role in this study.

Doctoral Student

My position as a doctoral student simultaneously provided some of the greatest freedoms and frustrating limitations in this endeavor. While I did not have funding agencies or school district personnel putting parameters or requirements on my work with these teachers, I did have institutional requirements to meet in order to earn a degree. Also, while I was busy with other responsibilities as a graduate student (i.e., assistantships), I enjoyed a degree of flexibility and time to engage with the collaborators on a schedule that they preferred. Of course, engaging in dissertation work in the process of pursuing a degree on a self-imposed timeline exerted additional pressures on getting the study done in a timely manner, but without jeopardizing the integrity of the study and its impact. I worried that these pressures pushed me to take shortcuts or to jeopardize the quality of interactions with the collaborators.

Christian

Although in many ways I have attempted to push aside my Christian identity in much of my coursework, it keeps/kept rearing its head. For that, I am grateful. There have been numerous times just this year that people from my hometown have challenged me on many of my beliefs regarding equality and equity, condemning them as “dangerous” or “of the devil.” Statements such as these, spoken to me by those I once considered to be close friends and mentors, just confirmed the tendency of Christians to exert their beliefs on others. In many ways, this is what Christians have been doing in the name of Christianty, but not necessarily in the name of Christ – for centuries (i.e., imperialism, colonization). For example, the Native American Boarding Schools were largely run by those claiming to be devout Christians. Secondly, the Seventh-Day

Adventist church is known to be segregated in many places in the United States into "the main church" and "the Black church" and "the Spanish church" and more. These divisions came, in part, from racist acts committed by Adventist hospitals and churches.

While many Christians claim otherwise, the church stands out to me as one of the most hypocritical and hegemonic structures in existence today, and has departed from following the Biblical truths they so often recite. Identifying problems and inconsistencies in church history led me to see part of my role in doing this study was to serve as a type of translator for those in the church that simply did not see the hypocrisy they enacted (myself included). However, in order to translate, I needed to know two languages well – the Bible and racial literacies. I needed to be able to speak in ways Christians could understand, but I also needed to have developed racial literacies in order to communicate productively with them. While my collaborators did not necessarily share my Bible-based beliefs, my conviction to learn and develop racial literacies for myself and for the collaborators was firmly placed in the need to do better and be better for any student that walks into my/their classrooms.

Researcher's Relationship to Collaborators and Study

Without reiterating too much, I have experience teaching each of the three collaborators: two in elementary social studies methods and one in field experience practicum. Considering that I was once in a position of authority as their instructor, these dynamics have changed since each has graduated from the teacher education program and begun teaching in their own classrooms. However, to help equalize any power imbalances, I attempted to make them feel as if we were all colleagues working together toward the same goal. In the spirit of PAR, I attempted to balance power dynamics by asking often for their input on our meeting agendas, in writing projects we undertook, in presenting at conferences together, and generally positioning them as holding

valuable expertise and knowledge. Over the course of the year, I also grew to consider them as my friends. All the same, I recognized I had certain roles that pushed against equalizing power dynamics. For example, in my position as a doctoral student, I was obligated to engage in dissertation work with the approval of a committee that existed outside of our collaborative team. As such, I felt the pressure to lead and guide the team's meetings and interactions in order to keep to a reasonable timeline for my own graduation. In addition, my position as their previous instructor may have caused them to feel as if they had to further curate how they expressed their thoughts, challenges, experiences, or concerns. Thought I was no longer their instructor, having been in that hierarchical relationship with me only a year or two before would certainly lend itself to infiltrating the new balanced relationship I was attempting to create. While things might have unfolded differently if there had been no direct or tight timeline, I felt that the timeline we held to was largely beneficial without overburdening these early career teachers.

Data Collection, Rationale, and Analysis

To expand on the background provided in previous sections, I provide greater detail in this section regarding the types of data collected, strategies and rationale for collection such data, as well as the collaborative data analysis strategies in which we engaged. I conclude by outlining elements of trustworthiness that we integrated throughout our study process.

Data Collection and Rationales

Much like Bhattacharya (2017), I consider data to come in many forms, those accepted by traditional qualitative researchers and those considered "soft" or inadmissible. For example, my coursework and life experiences were "soft" data leading me toward this very research study while the following data sources could be considered "hard": individual semi-structured interviews, focus group conversations, reflective journals, and my own personal researcher

journals and memos. Data collection of these specific forms began in February 2021 and ended in the summer of 2022 (see Appendix A for timeline).

Consistent with Sealey-Ruiz's understanding of racial literacy, we believed that this racial literacies development occurred on both individual and collective levels:

> excavation must be done privately, but also in community. The sharing of space in the racial literacy journey helps to push individuals toward publicly declaring their role in the work of interrupting and ultimately dismantling racist beliefs and practices" (Price-Dennis & Sealey-Ruiz, 2021, p. 26).

Thus, we engaged in both individual interviews and focus group conversations. I facilitated semi-structured interviews with each collaborator near the beginning of our collaboration, in the summer of 2021, and again near the conclusion of our time together, in the summer of 2022. The first interview protocol (see Appendix F) included questions designed to evoke reflections on their upbringing, biases, understandings of race and racial literacies, as well as their intentions and goals for participating in the collaboration. The second interview (see Appendix G) was divided into two parts. Part one included questions specifically inviting collaborators to reflect on their responses to their responses during interview one. Part two included questions focused on how they experienced working through the collaborative process as well as questions directed toward accountability, specifically inviting them to share artifacts or evidence of their development. Each collaborator engaged in two interviews that lasted from thirty to forty-five minutes, making a total of six interviews.

We also spent a significant amount of time engaged in group conversations. One reason for doing both focus group conversations and semi-structured individual interviews was to provide opportunities for collaborative conversations, allowing them to build off of eachother in

ways that could not come from individual interviews (McIntyre, 2008). During a total of twenty focus group conversations, each lasting between one and two hours, we allotted time to discuss methodological concerns, project expectations and commitments, as well as each collaborator's well-being (considering we were working and teaching through a pandemic). However, we spent the majority of our time reflecting on our learning, planning future learning, and sharing how we planned to and tried implementing our learning in the classroom. Although I designed the meeting agendas to be flexible to encourage free flow of conversation, I did include specific reflective or guiding questions to direct our focus. For example, on July 14, I included the following questions, encouraging us to spend time reflecting on and sharing about the following:

- how all this learning is changing our thinking
- how it's affecting our lives
- how it's guiding our teaching
- what sources have been most impactful (readings, guest speakers, podcasts, etc.)

In addition to auditory conversations, we engaged in reflective journaling (Milner, 2003) via text messaging and written reflections. I began sending text message prompts to each collaborator to invite them to reflect on their learning and their classroom experiences in between our monthly meetings. The following is the first text message prompt I sent:

> Hi!! How did your first week back go?!… some questions to guide you and your reflection…
>
> 1. Did anything bubble to the surface for you based on the learning and discussing we've been doing around racial literacies and culturally responsive teaching? (Any surprises, challenges, checks on bias…?)

2. Has our learning changed your approach to teaching or does it seem to just be the same as before so far?

Feel free to share whatever else you'd like to as well but I thought two main questions would be good. (August 20, 2021)

Engaging in this biweekly reflection practice, we hoped to further build capacity and habits of reflecting. These written reflections helped to share how they were processing their learning and implementation in context (Bhattacharya, 2017). Such reflection also pointed to the support, accountability, and learning they still needed, individually and collectively. Secondly, we engaged in written reflections such as through practicing a positionality statement and in writing about our learning throughout the process for a book chapter draft.

Lastly, I maintained personal memos as a source of data to chart what this process was like for me and what I noticed as a member of the collective. This served as an audit trail or researcher journal documenting the process, to enable me to retrace my research steps (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013). Overall, by collecting longitudinal data in these forms, we were able to see how the process of racial literacies development looked in a collaborative setting over the course of an academic year and summer.

This learning individually and "in community" (Price-Dennis & Sealey-Ruiz, 2021, p. 26) pushed us to consider our individual racial literacies development alongside our collective racial literacies development by incorporating questions related to our commitments to interrupt racism (interruption), excavating past and lingering biases and beliefs (archeology of self), reflecting on our identities in relation to those around us (critical reflection, critical humility), and discussing our learning about racisms past and present (historical literacy).

Collaborative Data Analysis Rationale

Researchers examining racial literacies do not typically take a collaborative methodological approach to the study. Considering the uniqueness of such a methodological approach, I synthesized related empirical research to highlight how I position this study in the field and how it contributes to the field (see Appendix H). Although there is very little attention to collaboration in this set of twenty research studies, and even less attention to integral components of action, it is important to note the work of Nash et al. (2018) as attending to more collaborative components of the research. While they do not name an overarching methodology that is naturally collaborative, they utilize collaborative methods of data collection and analysis. Nash et al. (2018) pulled from a combination of studies which involved a range of focus groups: elementary students, teachers, and pre-service teachers. However, the Nash et al. (2018) article highlights a study combining the data from these three studies, in which the group of six authors analyzed the data together.

Researchers in this table utilized common analytic methods such as: coding (7), thematic analysis (5), analytic memoing (4), constant comparative analysis (2), and collaborative data analysis (1). Coding seems to be the most common strategy among these twenty studies; whether open coding to identify themes in the data (e.g., King, 2016) or closed coding with theoretically-derived, predetermined codes (e.g., Grayson, 2019; Radd & Grosland, 2018). Only Nash et al. (2018) engages in group coding, in which the codes are decided in a collaborative effort. Secondly, thematic (or pattern) analysis seems to be quite common as well, and for the majority of the scholarship listed in this table, results from the coding process. However, collaborative data analysis is only explicitly mentioned in Nash et al.'s (2018) work.

Although there is a range of methodologies and methods represented across even these twenty racial literacy studies, I found it problematic that so few of them utilized collaborative

components, whether in data collection (Sealey-Ruiz & Greene, 2011) or throughout the analysis process (Nash et al., 2018). Thus, I found the dearth of collaboration exploring further what collaborative research offers for the study of racial literacies development in teacher education.

Seeking strategies used in scholarship employing collaborative data analysis, although not focused on racial literacies, yielded examples of collaborative narrative analysis (e.g., Yeom et al., 2020), pattern or thematic analysis (e.g., Lewis et al., 2020), and phase-long analysis processes (e.g., Stanton et al., 2020). Within select studies, three common elements throughout the analytic process were collective sensemaking, reflexivity, and theoretical interplay. These three components resonated with Sealey-Ruiz's model of racial literacy and racial literacies development considering the important role of reflection, engagement on individual and community levels, and attention to race/ism and thus provided a promising way forward for our collaborative analytic process. Furthermore, they resonated with Kemmis and McTaggart's (2005) description of critical PAR (my notes added in parentheses):

> Critical action research expresses a commitment to bring together broad social analysis—the self-reflective collective self-study of practice (reflexivity and collective sensemaking), the way in which language is used (theoretical), organization and power in a local situation (theoretical), and action to improve things (p. 273).

Collective sensemaking. Kinloch and San Pedro (2014) refer to this as coconstruction or dialogic spiral. Such an idea pulls from Freire's emphasis on dialogue as well as feminist consciousness raising processes. In this process, co-researchers participate in dialogue in which each statement uttered provokes or inspires another comment or direction from another. Such interaction builds toward a more nuanced understanding of the problem or project at hand, because it develops from multiple perspectives within the group and not a sole researcher.

Reflexivity. Collective sensemaking asks for reflexivity, where each member of the team is asked to think about their own identities, epistemology, and other factors influencing one's understanding. For example, reflexivity should prompt a researcher to think about what data is primary for them at that point in time.

Theoretical Interplay. A third common element is how theory or concepts guide data analysis. Marciano and Watson's (2020) analysis was guided by the theory of artifactual literacies and Marciano and Watson's (2017) analysis was guided by theoretically-derived questions. In Kemmis and McTaggart's (2005) quote above, they claim that concepts of power and organization, both theoretically-derived concepts, drive critical PAR.

Considering these three elements found within scholarship employing levels of collaborative analysis, we engaged in phases of analysis to allow for the integrating of each of these components.

Data Analysis

As indicated, we planned phases of data analysis. By engaging in phases, we maximized the time we had together, considering the three collaborators held full-time employment with additional responsibilities. We gained new perspectives from engaging in an iterative process, analyzing the data along with our ongoing reflections (Marciano & Watson, 2020, p. 480). Much like Stanton et al. (2020) we engaged in"interconnected, iterative, and participatory phases" of analysis including the following: collaborative open coding, "participatory sense-making" (De Jaegher & Di Paolo, 2007, p. 485), and focused coding. This focused coding then evolved into using the focused codes to identify repeated patterns (Marciano & Watson, 2017, p. 70), then "collapsed and refined focused codes into categories, and further identified themes" (p. 70).

Finally, our analysis was guided by our research questions and theoretical framing focused on racial literacies development in collaboration.

Considering that the collaborators' time was already highly taxed, there were steps I took independently to organize and prepare the data. I acknowledge that by taking some of these steps independently, I was limiting the impact such a process could have had on their learning and development and funneling the data in ways that might have affected their overall perception. With their permission, I transcribed all interviews and focus group conversations. Keeping in mind that we would have limited time to discuss and analyze the transcript data, I also went through each transcript and "chunked" the data to eliminate excerpts that I did not think held much bearing for our racial literacies development. These eliminated chunks included logistical conversations about conference scheduling, personal conversations not directly related to our racial literacies development (i.e., injuries, pets, etc.), and school-based policies surrounding the pandemic. Cutting out these excerpts reduced the pages of transcription from 375 to 225. I intended to keep the data excerpts that focused specifically on elements consistent with our theoretical framework and the plans we intended to implement in the classroom. Some of these components included, but were not limited to our development, reflection, questioning, challenges, biases, upbringing, and learning that related specifically or indirectly to Sealey-Ruiz's six components of racial literacies development or the three-pronged focus of racial literacy – question, engage, and reflect.

Having familiarized myself with the data and potential collaborative analysis strategies, I sent a proposed plan for analysis (see Appendix I) to get their feedback. Upon receiving input from them, and further familiarizing myself with the data by re-reading each of the transcripts, including text messages and written reflections, I made a detailed analysis plan for our meetings

(see Appendix J). This plan proposed phases of transcript reading (in chronological order) and analytic discussion for the duration of the two days.

This analysis process began with *collaborative coding*, all reading through the first three focus group conversation transcripts on Google Docs, engaging in open coding by inserting comments and highlighting portions of the text, then discussing what themes or patterns we noticed in our highlights and comments across the first three conversations. Coding in this way allowed collaborators to provide additional context or reflection, which we integrated into our final analysis. This pattern continued then with the next batches of excerpts, including discussions and building on the patterns through a conceptual map made on chart paper. At the end of day 2, we organized our noticings into categories. Day 3, we finished reading the final focus group transcripts, relating it to the patterns previously noticed and offering any additions. We also concluded our time together by overlaying the racial literacies development framework components with our noticings chart (see Appendix E).

Using these patterns, I then created a tabular analytic memo to define each category and include data excerpts that fit within each. This existed as three main categories: (1) personal + reflection + relational, (2) perspectives, and (3) practice. I presented a Jamboard of these categories and patterns to the group, to invite them into "collective interpretation" (Stanton, et al., 2020) to make adaptations based on their understanding and experience (also called "*participatory sense-making*") (see Appendix E). This process involved us discussing and deciding to move the "sticky notes" around to more accurately reflect the collaborators' experience, yet remaining aligned with the preponderance of data supporting each category.

After reorganizing the analytic memo to reflect the input from the group, I presented a second Jamboard to them once again to seek their input (see Appendix D). Themes generated

from this phase were representative of themes and values embraced by the collaborators and served as "purposeful coordination of understanding" (Stanton et al., 2020, p. 55). This was also theoretically grounded by giving specific attention to categories and themes that spoke to our development, highlighted our understandings around race/ism, and illustrated how we put such understandings into action. We filtered these themes through the theoretical components of questioning, engaging, and reflecting (Price-Dennis & Sealey-Ruiz, 2021), examining how engaging in these three practices influenced our racial literacies development. In addition, we used Sealey-Ruiz's six components of racial literacies development to make sense of how we collaborated. The five themes we developed were the following: (1) our why, (2) sharing, (3) tools, (4) disruption, and (5) implementation. I then reformulated these five themes into a more traditional form of seven findings (see chapter 4), which I partitioned into two categories: findings of *participating in collaboration* and findings related to *learning through collaboration*. As mentioned in chapter two, I layered in Miller and colleagues' (2020) model of praxis as an analytic and interpretive tool to provide a deeper analysis of our use of Sealey-Ruiz's model for racial literacies development. I then invited the collaborators to respond to this last rendition of findings as a final iteration of member checking.

Overview of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness, often attributed to Lincoln and Guba's (1985) work, primarily refers to the quality of a qualitative study. This is a contentious term for many qualitative researchers because it could mean many different things, yet researchers are still generally expected to establish a degree of trustworthiness in and throughout the study. Some qualitative researchers and methodologists choose to use terms such as reliability and validity (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013), while others claim that using such terms are

inappropriate or questionable for qualitative work because they stem from different ways of thinking and researching in quantitative research (Bhattacharya, 2017). For example, Lincoln and Guba (1985) and numerous other qualitative researchers choose to use terms such as credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability to address and establish a study's trustworthiness. However, Lichtman (2013) noted that there have been several shifts in terminology used to describe trustworthiness since the 1980's, and others note that with different types of qualitative research should come different criteria for assessing trustworthiness (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

For this particular study, I find it important to briefly mention how I understand trustworthiness to function in my study. According to Savin-Baden and Howell Major (2013), trustworthiness stems from a "critical rational perspective, which holds with the position that we cannot separate ourselves from what we know in our search for 'objectivity'" (p. 470). I consider this "objectivity" or "truth" to be unattainable in our PAR study. First, because I am functioning within the group as a participating member, and as the member doing the bulk of the interpretive writing (i.e., dissertation), I cannot claim that this study produced (or will produce) objective truth. What is written and spoken came from my/our own interpretations based on my/our understandings and experiences. Secondly, as aforementioned, PAR is context-specific which means that while we might attain some sense of "truth" of reality in our specific contexts, this "truth" may be only as we saw it and not as others might in their own contexts. Even someone else taking my position in this study might not see things as I saw them. Thus, while we certainly aimed for trustworthiness, we did not claim to produce or reveal a universal truth. Rather, we hoped that the work we engaged in appears as of good quality, having some relevance and

bearing for others in their racial literacies development too, serving rather as a hand to hold through a similarly ambiguous developmental process.

For clarity, I lean on Lincoln and Guba's (1985) four main criteria –credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability–for establishing a study's trustworthiness, or quality. First, credibility refers to how a researcher can claim or suggest that something is true. For the qualitative researcher, the "reality is the participants' reality" (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013, p. 475). Researchers address this in various ways (i.e., triangulation).

Transferability suggests that "findings may have applications in similar situations elsewhere" (p. 475). While we do not claim that any findings from our study would be easily replicated in another setting, nor should they be, we do believe there is value in this work for other early career teachers interested in engaging in development towards greater racial literacies.

Third, dependability "suggests that the research findings will endure over time" (p. 475). This refers to how well documented the context of the study is and how change occurs. Fourth, confirmability more strictly means "that the researcher has remained neutral during data analysis and interpretation" (p. 475). While I cannot claim to remain neutral, my interpretations must be confirmed by others, both insiders and outsiders. In the section below, I show how attention is given to each of these criteria in this study.

Credibility

The specific strategies I used to address credibility in this study include triangulation, member checking, reflexive memo writing, peer evaluation (or debriefing), researcher positionality, participatory research, and longitudinal data collection. Considering that this study was conducted as a participatory research project, I do not include any further explanation for

that strategy here. Rather, participatory research served as a built-in strategy for addressing the study's trustworthiness and credibility by way of the research components listed in previous sections.

Triangulation was addressed through comparing and analyzing multiple data sources. The combination of individual interviews, focus group conversations, written reflections, and personal memos assisted my "search for additional interpretations more than the confirmation of a single meaning" (Flick, 1992).

We engaged in member-checking through our collaborative writing projects in which each of the collaborators gave their input, corrections, or additions to my initial drafts of the writing. Secondly, I engaged in member checking in the summer of 2022 after the formal data collection was complete. This allowed collaborators the opportunity to "correct any possible misinterpretations on the part of the researcher" (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013, p. 477). In addition, I began this process taking notes of how I was experiencing the research and participatory components, both personally and methodologically. This reflexive memo writing began in February of 2021 and extended throughout. Such notes consisted of my own learning through our resource consultations and conversations, patterns noticed, methodological challenges faced, as well as other emotional and psychological experiences (i.e., surprises, frustrations).

In addition, engaging in this project over a period of time allowed me "to gain as much exposure as possible to the *researched* and gives the reader some confidence that the researcher has done due diligence" (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013, p. 477, italics mine). The "prolonged nature" (Bhattacharya, 2017, p. 23) allowed for a more in-depth look at the collaboration's developmental trajectory.

Finally, I attempted to outline my researcher positionality as an "open discussion and interrogation of the researcher's values, assumptions, and beliefs and how they inform the study" (Bhattacharya, 2017, p. 23).

Transferability

To address study transferability, I attempted to write thick descriptions of methods, findings, and the context to allow the reader to get a sense of the data and feel independently able to make their own interpretations. I also attended to this strategy of thick description with the use of vignettes (Spalding & Phillips, 2007), showcasing exchanges that took place as well as the context in which they occurred.

Dependability

In addition to engaging in data collection over an extended period of time, I created a timeline of our phases of engagement as a collaborative group to address study dependability. A thick and detailed description of methods used also helped in tracing the process of the collaboration.

Confirmability

Confirmability was addressed through the data collection timeline (see Appendix A) and archived records of each focus group conversation, individual interview, email correspondence, writing projects together, and written reflections.

Mary: … anything in common with her and [previous speaker], or something unique that stood out to you?

Joey: I think I'm just remembering that she kind of said that she can speak on her story, but not everyone's story. I thought that was important to remember, and that's kind of how our students are, too. They can talk about their stories, and it can be similar to other stories with others in their community, but that … their story's unique.

Mary: Yeah, yeah.

Rylie: I also thought about, you know, like, they're not an expert, and they shouldn't be…they don't want to be seen as an expert, because that just puts a lot of pressure on them too. I feel like that was a common thing for both of [the speakers]. … like Joey said, they have their own individual story… she said, 'I don't think I'll ever be an expert.' So.

Mary: Yeah, that's true.

Joey: But I think still remembering like, the students we have, of whatever ethnicities, they're still more an expert[10] than we are. So letting them share their story when it comes time to ... when it comes to talking about their ethnicity or race or whatever.

Rylie: I totally agree.

Mary: I think something interesting to think about, too, is how do we provide space for that in the curriculum? Especially in testing culture, and with pressure to meet standards, … I feel like there's this pressure to keep it moving. So how do we make time for our students to share their stories? (6.28.21).

[10] Throughout our conversations, even beginning during the recruitment process, we referred to anyone as an "expert" who had insider-knowledge or first-hand experience regarding a topic, concept, etc. For example, these early career teachers were experts on *their* experience going through the teacher education program, while I was learning from them, having completed a program elsewhere.

This vignette provides a glimpse into a conversation we had while reflecting on what a guest speaker who identified as Mexican American and Latina shared with us about her experiences as a bilingual (Spanish/English) speaker in public school in a Midwestern metropolitan area. This excerpt offers a taste of our scheduled focus group conversations and the patterns that arose through our collaboration. In these collaborative meetings, participants had the opportunity to use the dialogic space (see chapter 3) in various ways, such as: asking questions, proposing ideas, sharing reflections, admitting challenges, and more. Regardless of what was articulated, the space remained open to whatever racial literacies learning was being pursued. While Trustin was absent during this particular exchange, each meeting proceeded in a similar manner with free exchange between participants responding to topics such as race/ism, representation, perspective, authenticity, our upbringing, and more. As the year progressed, we learned from various resources, whether chosen independently (i.e., podcasts, social media pages) or collaboratively (i.e., book, article) to grow our racial awareness and, ultimately, develop our racial literacies.

This participatory action research study involved focus group conversations, individual interviews, text communications, and a writing collaboration of three early career teachers (one first-year teacher, two second-year teachers) and a doctoral student, all of whom taught in various contexts. Each of the teachers were engaged in collaboration from the spring of 2021 through the summer of 2022 and expressed experiencing development in their racial literacies throughout this time period. Themes from the data are partitioned into two grand categories: participating in the collaboration and learning from each other within the collaboration. This first category – participating in the collaboration – focuses on how we entered into this collaboration, what experiences and teaching contexts we brought with us, how we cultivated reflective spaces

for growth, and centered race/ism in our conversations to build racial awareness. The second category – learning through collaboration – focuses on what commitments and actions emerged from the learning. This includes the goals and values we entered with, the position of sharing and vulnerability we took on, the desire to learn from a wide variety of resources, and the commitment to applying our learning in classroom spaces. Each of these components between the two categories ultimately contributed to the support, consistency, and accountability we found necessary for building our racial literacies.

Part 1: Participating In Collaboration

In this first category, I highlight three findings related to how we entered into this collaboration. Considering that we did not enter as blank slates or as uniform beings, we were all able to engage with what background experiences and knowledge we had. In other words, our differences and similarities did not prevent us from collaborating and learning together, but instead provided much needed support. This dynamic positioned us to engage in reflection on race/ism regardless of what experiences we had. In doing so, we were all able to grow. While these findings do not operate independently from the dynamics offered in the findings for "Part 2," these three findings point specifically to our entrance into collaboration: (1) each participant's background influenced their entry into the collaboration, (2) the reflective environment supported the growth process, and (3) the participants grew in confidence and racial awareness.

Prior Experiences and Teaching Contexts Provided a Starting Point

Each participant came to the collaboration from different places on their journey toward racial literacies, with an assemblage of various experiences, support systems, and teaching contexts. Thus, we each entered the collaboration at a unique point in our racial literacies

development, but these uniquenesses provided a foundation upon which we built our community of support.

First, ***participants' prior experiences and upbringing determined how they entered into this collaboration and influenced their journey*** for teaching for social and racial justice. These participants brought their prior experiences, from childhood to early adulthood, as well as their educational upbringings. When I asked them about their earliest conceptions of race, Rylie cited an interaction she had with an adopted, biracial relative as being one of her first memories of race. Along with that, she remembered a young Black girl being singled out in her social studies classes. She described her upbringing as being very Catholic and "white…it just seemed like everybody was really the same…we all had a mom and a dad, we were all white, most of us blond hair and blue eyes" (Rylie, Interview 1). Thus, Rylie entered with the acknowledgement that her experiences seemed very limited, in terms of racial diversity. Rylie's open acknowledgement not only informed the rest of the group about the perspective(s) Rylie brought to the group but invited the collaborators to offer what experiences and insights they could to build on the limitations of Rylie's experiences.

Joey recalled growing up in the suburbs of Chicago, in a "very diverse high school" (Joey, Interview 1), but the majority of the classes she took had mostly, if not all, white students. Later on in her life, she realized that she never saw the challenges or racism that her friends of color experienced in high school. In college, she developed friendships with people who she realized "were pretty racist…so I think that's really when I started to think about race, because … they would talk about people of color in negative ways" (Joey, Interview 1). The juxtaposition of Joey's early experiences with her college experiences got Joey thinking about race in a deeper way. Attending school with a high level of racial diversity, yet attending classes

with predominantly white students, limited her experiences and racial awareness before coming to college. However, the knowledge she had when entering college certainly informed her growing understanding of race/ism, and spurred her towards certain spaces (i.e., friendships with like-minded folks). Joey's experiences with racial diversity in a more urban setting positioned her as one who could offer assistance for others who did not share those experiences.

Trustin characterized his upbringing as being somewhat similar to Rylie's, growing up in a religious home and community. He also had an adopted older sibling who identified as Black. When I asked him about his awareness of race or racism in his upbringing he said: "I always saw my family with like, you know, Black friends or Asian or Native people, … so I kind of didn't think racism was still a thing. I always viewed it as something from the past" (Trustin, Interview 1). He recalled becoming more aware of race and racism once he started searching for a college, immediately following the 2015 protests on the University of Missouri campus. Looking back, he said the following:

> the way I viewed it for so long was from such a privileged mindset that I didn't realize [racism] was an issue because it never affected me, and I was never taught any differently… because everyone from my area all had the same beliefs and same views, and if they didn't, they didn't express them very loudly (Trustin, Interview 1).

Here Trustin shows how his thinking has changed from early on. Like for Rylie and Joey, the experiences he gained in college built upon the limited racial awareness he gained during his childhood. These experiences then informed how he entered into collaboration. Trustin's experiences with racial diversity in rural and familiar settings, and later collegial settings, positioned him as holding a slightly different combination of experiences and insights.

From brief excerpts such as these, found in both interviews and focus group conversations, we grew to understand that our experiences shared similarities and differences. All three of them cited courses they took in their teacher education programs as disrupting some of the beliefs and stereotypes they remembered from their upbringing, which then set them on a trajectory to learn more about race and racism, beyond "Black and white" (Rylie, Interview 1). While each cited some experience with racial diversity in formal educational or familial settings, the intensity or depth of these experiences varied. As such, the variance in our experiences was not necessarily quantifiable regarding how educational these interactions or experiences were for these teachers. Having understood the prior experiences that each of us entered with, we were cognizant of where each of us might have some more (or less) insight to share regarding topics. For example, we understood that Trustin naturally had more insights into what racism looked like around his rural upbringing, while Joey naturally had more insights into what racism looked like in her more urban educational upbringing. We understood that all of our experiences, while all still filtered through our white perspectives and Eurocentric schooling, could help point out holes in our individual and/or collective racial awareness. Thus, considering our backgrounds and the courses we took in our teacher education programs, we each came into the collaboration from a slightly different position, thus creating a foundation upon which trust and support was built.

Second, ***participants' support systems and teaching contexts impacted their participation in the group***. First, Joey and Trustin began their second year of full-time teaching employment in the same school as their first year. They each had established relationships with their supervisors and various school staff, as well as a grade level of students and their families. Perhaps most notable was their established relationship with each other. Having shared similar

values in teaching for social justice, they often conferred with each other when needing support in their daily tasks. They recalled their administrators praising them and giving them more responsibility after their first year. This praise only increased when the administration, whose professional development focus had been on Black excellence, found out about this collaborative group for racial literacies development. Needless to say, Trustin and Joey received daily support from each other and from their school administration, which, along with their growing racial awareness, provided the additional sense of security and confidence they needed to engage in conversations about race/ism and social injustices in their classrooms.

Rylie began her first year of full-time teaching employment in a school district and city completely new to her. She did not have established relationships with any of the school staff, students, or administrators. She recalled simply following the curriculum suggested to her by her fellow team teachers, none of whom were explicitly supporting social justice efforts. While she suggested that her school staff were supportive of her, she did not yet have close relationships with them or knowledge of the school staff's position toward teaching for social justice. When asked in the midst of the attack on critical race theory in late 2021, her administrator said that they rather believed in and supported culturally responsive teaching because it was more inclusive of all experiences, but shied away from making any distinctions about race/ism. Thus, unlike Trustin and Joey, Rylie did not have any immediate support or comradery in her school context, which created a sense of insecurity for her. She was left not knowing what she could talk about with her students without getting backlash from parents or administration. Such insecurity slightly inhibited her attempts to integrate more racial justice-focused material in the classroom. Regardless of the varying levels of support from their colleagues and administration,

their participation in this collaboration was an indication that the support they were getting was not the support they believed they needed to develop their racial literacies.

Aside from the amount of support each teacher received, they represented varied contexts regarding student and family demographics. Trustin and Joey taught in a racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse context. They reported having only one student in their grade level who was white. They most often described working with students who identified as African American, Ethiopian, Afghan, Navajo, and a blend of other identities. Joey recalled a general feeling of support from families when discussing race and racism:

> Last year, I was definitely more hesitant to talk about things because you don't really know how administrators … and parents are going to take it, but after … you get to know your administrators, I feel like... and it's easier at our school because our students are mostly … students of color. I feel like parents are not really going to get upset about talking about racism … I mean, it's just hard like you don't know when a parent's gonna complain about something…something you think is small that they don't think is so small. (2.1.22)

Here Joey felt a greater sense of support from administrators and parents than in the first year, considering that she had a whole year to get to know the administration and she had a better sense of the communities and families that make up the school. She perceived this administrative and parental support as a source of encouragement for experimenting more with how she taught and spoke with students around race/ism.

Rylie reported teaching in a predominantly white institution, with only a handful of students who identified as Indian, Vietnamese, and African American. In addition, the families represented in Joey and Trustin's classrooms were very supportive of the teachers teaching

beyond the given curriculum toward more culturally responsive and racially literate content. Both teachers also recalled conversations around race, ethnicity, and Indigeneity arising more naturally in their classrooms due to the diverse experiences of the student population. Rylie perceived that her students' families were not generally receptive to her venturing beyond the given curriculum in her teaching. Early on, she explained her misgivings related to engage in this way in her classroom:

> How far should I go with the challenging conversations that I think should be addressed? … I don't know how far I should go. Because I feel like they're still... I don't want to scare them ... but I want to address things that they've heard of, and I just, I don't know how much they've heard or how much they've experienced? … I'm gonna have kids that have different experiences and different things that some families are okay, maybe talking about this at home, and others are like, "Absolutely not." And I feel like in the younger elementary still even going through, I feel like their parents are still really protective over them, and what they learn about and what they hear. (5.13.21).

Here Rylie elaborated on her concerns regarding this work of implementing her new racial literacies learning, primarily because she did not yet know what experiences she could build on as a way to make connections in the classroom, and she was concerned about parent backlash. Considering that the majority of her students identified as white, she also found it difficult to broach such topics because of the students' limited knowledge on race and racism.

In summary, with the availability of support, context, and personal rationales in mind, each of us began this work at different entry points but with the ability to help point out and start to fill some of the holes we each had in our racial awareness, as well as the common goal of moving toward greater racial literacies development. Put another way, Joey and Trustin were

looking to put gasoline on a fire that had already been ignited in them, while Rylie was looking to start the fire. From a mother's and teacher instructor's perspective, I was looking to learn more about the flame itself and how to help myself, and others like me, sustain it.

Considering the support we each had (or did not have), the contexts we lived in, and the levels of understanding we each entered with, we would each develop at different speeds and directions. Knowing this, we were not only learning how to start but how to encourage and support each other to keep developing our racial literacies. While some racial literacy scholarship suggests ways to think of racial literacies development as progressing on a sort of unidirectional continuum or spectrum, the data in this section points rather to us existing as points on a graph whose position can shift up or down, right or left, at any moment. I agree with Rolon-Dow and colleagues' (2020) suggestion that the outcome of engaging with race and racism "will vary in depth, speed, and clarity" (p. 14) rather than on a clean continuum. Instead, I think of development as occurring in a living array. The array of human experience warrants greater variance and flexibility than existing at a single point on a single line. Rather, the experiences (and lack thereof) with racial diversity and the supports (or lack thereof), in addition to levels of commitment, capacities for reflection, and other factors discussed in the coming sections, point to how the status of our racial literacies development was fluid. For example, Joey experienced a high level of support from her administration for enacting her new racial literacies learning, which scholars suggest is vital for early career teachers (i.e., Pearce, 2014), plus she reported having a degree of experiences with high levels of racial diversity in her high school, and having interracial marriages in her family. In contrast, Rylie experienced a low level of support, having limited experience with racial diversity in school and in her family. While these juxtapositions placed Joey and Rylie at very different points within a metaphorical array, each could share their

experiences with the other to help move each other to a more informed place, thus affecting each other's position in this living array of racial awareness. The depth of racial awareness we had when entering determined how and where we started to develop, but working with each other affected how we moved within that array. Perhaps having a mix of "depths" in the group provided for a more supportive and contributive collaboration than if we entered with more similar experiences.

Cultivating Reflective Spaces Supported the Growth Process

Anyone should be able to enter into reflective habits, regardless of past experiences or support. The level or degree to which they do, may depend on other factors, but evidence shows here that all collaborators engaged in and built capacity for critical reflections which fueled their growth. Establishing goals and values, cultivating a community of sharing, asking questions, and consulting various resources positioned us to create habits of reflection, both independently and collaboratively. By starting with reflections on our backgrounds and teaching contexts, as discussed earlier, we quickly adopted habits of reflection. Primarily, engaging in reflection took two forms: reflecting on our own biases and reflecting on how our prior learning connected to new learning. To aid in the interpretation of the findings from this point forward, I utilize Miller and colleagues' (2020) model of praxis for transformative change alongside Sealey-Ruiz's (2022) racial literacies development model to trace how engaging in multiple types of reflection in our collaboration led to transformative change.[11] While Sealey-Ruiz's model is powerful for guiding teachers toward attending to multiple components when engaged in their own racial literacies development, each component has not yet been fully outlined or nuanced. This lack of

[11] To aid in the ease of reading, I recommend having an image of Miller and colleagues' (2020) chart and Sealey-Ruiz's (2022) graphic displayed alongside the findings (See Appendix). Doing so may assist in identification of the fluidity of moving among the various components of both models.

nuance within the *critical reflection* segment, in particular, required us to lean on an additional heuristic or model to examine the types of critical reflection we engaged in. Miller and colleagues' (2020) model of praxis for critical counter-narrative (see chapter 2) enables a deeper analysis of the reflection with which we engaged.

First, ***asking reflective questions invited collaborators to reflect on their own biases and establish a habit of reflection, both independently and collectively***. Adopting a habit of reflecting on our own biases pushed us toward greater learning. As facilitator and collaborator, I aimed to cultivate a dialogical space in which teachers learned from and with each other. The ways I knew to do that were through providing opportunities for the teachers to get to know each other a bit better (i.e., "how is everything going for you all?") and providing multiple opportunities for them to share (i.e., "Rylie, would you like to add anything to that?"). In the beginning, I asked questions to invite collaborators to reflect on something specific with the group. For example, within the first couple meetings, I asked reflective questions such as "why do you want to be part of this group?" (4.2.21) or "what does it mean for us [as white educators] to bring ethnic and Indigenous histories and knowledges" (4.29.21) into our teaching? Following these initial reflective exercises and during our collaborative book chapter writing experience, I asked them to draft a positionality statement (7.14.21) to encourage reflection on the biases we brought to writing about racial literacies development. Having such discussions about identity and positionality as we launched this collaborative project created a reflective foundation from which we sought to build.

After these first meetings, I asked reflective questions regularly via text messages to continue cultivating these reflective habits. Sent at the start of the 2021-2022 school year, these

individual “check-in” text messages provided more opportunity to hone our reflection skills on an individual basis. In the beginning, I asked each of them the following questions:

> 1. Did anything bubble to the surface for you based on the learning and discussing we’ve been doing around racial literacies and culturally responsive teaching? (Any surprises, challenges, checks on bias…?) and
> 2. Has our learning changed your approach to teaching or does it seem to just be the same as before so far? (8.20.21).

For example, in response to the two questions listed in the preceding block quote, Joey shared the following:

> 1. Some things that I noticed in my classroom around racial literacies and culturally responsive teaching had to do a lot with the ethnicities of my students. I have one student who moved here recently from Ethiopia. He speaks Aramaic and he can’t speak much English. I’ve been putting the directions on my slides in both English and Aramaic and every time he sees the directions in Amaraic he smiles so big! Other students think it is so cool to see Amaraic on the board too, because even though they don’t really speak it, many are Ethiopian and recognize it! …
> 2. So far I’ve definitely had our learning at the back of my mind and I think it has definitely affected some of the content I taught this week, but I do think it will surface more as we dive deeper in science and literacy! (Text, 8.20.21).

Joey easily recalled ways in which she implemented her new learning about language and student perspective, and explained how she hoped to dive deeper into implementing her new racial literacies knowledge, just after completing our summer guest speaker series of meetings and having cultivated a habit of reflection. Joey’s responses implied that she engaged in some

reflective skepticism before arriving at her *reflection-based action* of putting directions on the slides in English and Aramaic. She also indicated a degree of *reflection-on action* by sharing how our learning had affected the way she taught. These questions prompted Joey to engage in not only *internalizing* what she had learned but *creative problem-solving* as well to help welcome a student.

A few weeks later, I adapted the questions slightly and added "how do you feel like your relationships are developing with your students? And why do you think that is?" (9.3.21). To this Trustin responded:

> We had a discussion about identity and what makes up a person. This allowed us to all connect a bit more and I was able to discuss how a person's culture doesn't always mean where they're from. I had all of my kids find someone that shared something from their identity and I can already see my scholars getting a lot closer to each other! (Text, 9.3.21).

Trustin's response showed how he implemented insights (*reflection-based action*) from our conversations with each other and guest speakers. Because we had talked so much about relationships with students as being a priority in teaching, this question helped capture some of the daily implementation that Trustin infused into his classroom. As time progressed, I continued editing the questions to encourage them to engage in reflection on a variety of topics related to race and racial literacies in their teaching (i.e., "any updates? Have you tried anything new or even that you perceived as a risk that got you out of your comfort zone?", 10.8.21). Asking such questions regularly provided collaborators with consistent opportunities to reflect on their learning in context, which provided accountability throughout the learning process.

Having encouraged and engaged in both group and individual reflections from the beginning, I continued asking reflective questions in group settings after the school year was well underway to further hone reflective skills and learning. At times, we processed our reflections collaboratively, such as regarding collective frustrations we all experienced or conversations about race in our contexts. Other times, we reflected independently, but in the group setting, regarding what we saw happening around us – classroom incidents, professional development, or within ourselves. At times, reflection prompted a proposed action (*reflection-based action).*

In the second half of the 2021-2022 school year, I asked "do you all perceive that your students function a specific way around race? …how does race influence the way that they act or speak or function?" (2.1.22). In response, Trustin reflected on memories he had of a student wearing a George Floyd sweatshirt with images of numerous individuals who had been killed from police brutality. While he recalled learning from that student's example, he specifically shared that "I don't think they've had to experience as much of the world where it's made them take a stance yet" (3.2.22). He implied that his students may not have understood yet what their role was in combatting or reacting to racism. Here Trustin allowed himself to sit in the *reflective skepticism* of what this student wearing a George Floyd sweatshirt meant for him and the rest of the students. Joey added "I think race means different things to a lot of our students…For the ones that …haven't had to experience much racism yet, I think it definitely means something different to them at this point in their life" (3.2.22). Here too, Joey engaged in *reflective skepticism*, suggesting that perhaps her students had varying levels of knowledge of race and racism. Posing and responding to questions such as these provided collaborators multiple opportunities to reflect on how race functions, and how they and their students seem to

understand racism, in their respective contexts, as well as identify any assumptions they may have been making. Doing so peeked their awareness of their students' lives as intersecting in various ways with race and racism.

Second**, *cultivating reflective spaces afforded us opportunities to identify our learning and make connections***. Having cultivated reflective habits from the beginning of our collaboration enabled us to reflect on and identify our new learning. We made connections between our prior experiences, beliefs, and thoughts and the current experiences, resource information, and student experiences that came later. This practice of reflecting on what we were learning and what we still needed to unlearn defined our racial literacies development.

So often, our reflections were prompted by discussions about a guest speaker or resource. For example, when talking about a guest speaker's experience working with pen pals across Alaskan and Kenyan contexts, Trustin mentioned "it made me think" (7.7.21). Within the same conversation, Joey identified learning "a lot from his stories and I kind of understand more about why culture is so important when we're teaching" (7.7.21). Rylie added "one of the things he said that stuck with me was the 'richness of diversity'...made me think about…" (7.7.21). Throughout the project, collaborators would bring up a topic that related to a resource, guest speaker, or classroom experience that prompted the following reactions from either the one who shared or others in the group:

- "It made me think…" (Rylie, 6.9.21)
- "It makes me take a step back and think about…" (Trustin, 4.29.21)
- "Something I think about more now too is" (Joey, 9.20.21)
- "I've never thought about it" (Trustin, 2.1.22; Rylie, 4.12.22)
- "I didn't even think about it…" (Rylie, 2.1.22)

- “I didn’t think about it until it was…and then I really thought about it” (Joey, 2.1.22)
- “I have realized” (Joey, 7.14.21)
- “I never thought that it would” (Mary, 3.2.22)

These excerpts illustrate how the collaborators were engaged in *analyzing prior assumptions*, gaining *contextual awareness*, and engaging in *reflective skepticism*. Engaging in this way and cultivating reflective spaces moved us from solely building *metacognitive awareness* toward *ideological becoming* and *internalization*. Consistent reflection helped us hone our abilities to identify exactly what we thought we were learning and how that learning challenged us to do things differently.

In summary, having learned about how important reflection is for racial literacies development (Sealey-Ruiz, 2020), we cultivated habits of personal and collective reflection spanning from reflecting on prior assumptions, to being skeptical of what we were seeing, to reflecting on our *reflection-based actions.* Considering we each learned differently and came with varying levels of awareness and understanding, we engaged in reflection inspired from various sources (i.e., guest speakers, incidents) and avenues (i.e., text messaging, group conversations). We aimed to instill reflection as a powerful habit toward building racial literacies with the more ultimate goal of turning this reflection into praxis (reflection + action) (Freire, 1970). Even within the first couple months of our collaboration, Joey highlighted the power of adopting a habit of reflection in helping her grow:

> I think it’s definitely making me self reflect more and think about more of my priorities when it comes to teaching and [society]…I feel like it’s making my thinking a lot deeper than this past year. Even though I was [already] trying to teach all this culturally relevant material, I don’t think it was as deep and meaningful as it will be this next year because

> of what we've talked about and because of how much more I've learned and thought about all these topics" (7.14.21).

Even before the eight summer sessions came to an end, Joey felt the importance and impact of cultivating such a habit of reflection on her teaching. For sustained engagement in various types of reflection, we hoped to also produce long-lasting reflective skills that would span beyond the time frame of our collaboration.

Through this ongoing and multi-faceted reflective engagement, we focused on Sealey-Ruiz's (2020) idea of *interruption*, specifically working to interrupt racism at the personal level. This closely relates to *archaeology of self* – reflecting on the deeply embedded "beliefs, biases, and ideas that shape how we engage in the work" (p. 6). Realizing that we still had much to learn and were working to correct these beliefs, I believe we also tried to make space for *critical humility* in acknowledging the "limits" (p. 6) of our understandings and working toward greater racial literacies development. Perhaps more generally, we engaged in *critical reflection* by "thinking through the various layers of our identities and how our privileged and marginalized statuses affect the work" (p. 6). Relating this to Miller and colleagues' (2020) model, it was with humility that we attempted to engage in this critical reflection and archeology of self. This finding presents evidence of collaborators' engaging in archeology of the self in the forms of *assumption analysis* and *contextual awareness*. Upon building this foundation, we were then better able to engage in more transformative endeavors, such as reflecting in order to act and reflection on actions. While establishing *metacognitive awareness* and *ideological becoming* through more fundamental reflective actions was vital for moving up the ladder, we could have pushed further earlier in the process. Perhaps I, like Rylie, felt unsure about "how far I should go" in the kinds of questions I asked the collaborators.

Centering Race/ism Developed Collaborators' Confidence and Racial Awareness

From our various starting points and upon the level of trust and support we built together, we were able to engage in conversations about race and racism. These conversations then deepened our awareness of such racism and racial injustice, although awareness varied across the group. While our collective conversations often touched on many experiences and thoughts apart from race/ism, centering a focus on race/ism developed our racial awareness and our confidence in having future conversations about it with our students as well as people beyond the classroom in ways that we would not have developed on our own. This is where we built greater *contextual awareness* and engaged in more *reflective skepticism*, both contributing to how we were *internalizing* what we were learning. Without internalizing our learning and growing the commitment to *interrupt* racist practices and systems, our actions would have existed as "shallow performativity" (Phillips, 2020).

First, ***by continually centering race/ism in our conversations, we gained practice talking about race, racism, and racial injustice***. These conversations took many forms and afforded variety within the topic. Centering race/ism led to the following practices: identifying racist or problematic incidents, whether personal or societal; articulating changes we saw as necessary; navigating incidents in school and life; and teaching and talking about race/ism with students and others. This frequent practice of talking about race/ism helped us develop greater confidence for engaging in conversations around related topics outside of our collective.

Providing a focus on race, racism, and racial injustice invited collaborators to practice identifying racist and problematic incidents as well as needs for change. These steps of gaining *contextual awareness* and *reflective skepticism* prepared us to engage in *creative problem-solving* in our lives and classrooms. For example, Joey and Trustin grew to notice and critique a

lack of depth and follow through in their professional development focused on Black Excellence. They expressed that the focus was continually on bias, but it went no further. Instead, Trustin noted "yeah, let's talk about how to deconstruct those biases, or how to actually address them in a classroom setting" (10.19.21). In addition, Joey stated that "you're dealing with more than just [race]...it needs to dive deeper than just race because every conversation is just 'Black and white' when we do these PD's" (10.19.21). The two agreed that bias is very important to talk about in professional development settings, but the lack of depth was disappointing to them because they thought it did little to address racism and warranted a change. They remained skeptical of the professional development's stalling at a focus on bias, instead of venturing into the "what now?" This skepticism allowed them to imagine what the sessions could look like to push towards that next step. Rylie then added that she struggled to understand the tension she felt when calling on one of her two Black students while being observed by a Black administrator (10.19.21). She questioned how the Black administrator would perceive this move, despite the fact that the student's name was next on the list to be called. In this exchange, Trustin and Joey's identification of a need for change in their professional development instruction led Rylie to consider and question a recent experience of her own.

Similarly, all three talked about problems resulting from segregated school settings in their current and past teaching experiences (2.1.22), the importance of talking about race/ism in schools (6.9.21), and the inequality inherent in certain grading systems (4.12.22), among other topics. Talking about such race/ism-related topics helped collaborators grow more accustomed to identifying racialized or racist incidents and dynamics but also start imagining what solutions could be implemented to disrupt such racist practices.

Centering race/ism in our conversations invited collaborators to share how they navigated a variety of situations, including but not limited to the following: disagreements they had with others, students using racial slurs, attempts to disrupt stereotypes, exposing students to race and difference, being called a racist, and assigning students to next year's classrooms. For one, Joey and Trustin explained their various convictions regarding whether they required their students to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance (2.1.22). They had learned from their students why several of them do not stand and why a few kneel, one even putting his fist in the air, thus providing context and insight for Rylie and I, considering we taught in very different contexts. In addition, considering Rylie taught in a predominantly white context, Joey and I shared from our experiences teaching about race and racism in our contexts. I tried to offer support to Rylie by acknowledging that "sometimes it's easier to have these conversations with students who experience [racism] daily" and Joey added: "it is 100% different when [the students] have the background and the experience…and there's a lot less fear over parent thought" (4.12.22). Sharing these experiences with each other provided opportunities for those listening to learn more about race within a context different from their own, while also prompting us to consider the contexts in which these conversations and experiences were occurring and pushing us to consider possible solutions.

While there is ample evidence to suggest that centering race/ism in our conversations provided us with practice talking about it, our views and perspectives were limited to what we saw around us. Our uber focus on our own teaching and living contexts naturally limited the scope of our conversations to the racism and racial injustice we saw around us or that which we learned about through other resources. Secondly, there were numerous times we could have learned more if we had pushed further, but did not, either because we did not realize we needed

to push further or because we chose not to because we did not think we had the language to do so. As Reid famously stated, “the chain is only as strong as its weakest link” (1786), I think we were limited to going as far as the “most racially aware” person was able to go.

Second, ***engaging in frequent conversations about race/ism across multiple contexts developed a greater racial awareness and understanding***. While our experiences represented a limited number of contexts, centering race/ism in conversations within a group of four people provided a greater variety of contexts to learn from than if we operated on our own. Ultimately, learning across contexts showed us how race/ism function(ed) in a variety of ways. For one, engaging in such frequent conversations across multiple contexts afforded us the opportunity to better understand and define race, racism, and racial literacies. For example, Rylie shared that she had a student who missed a whole day to get her hair done. This was new to her, so she asked the group one day: “Is it normal to miss a full day of school?” (10.19.21). By asking, Rylie opened this topic for conversation, hoping Joey, Trustin, and I could shed some light on related experiences we had in our contexts. We each weighed in with various pieces of information we had learned about the diversity of grooming habits within and across people groups and cultures. The *reflective skepticism* Rylie engaged in prompted us all to learn something unique from each other, particularly about how systems are not set up to naturally accommodate for such practices. Thus, this context created an opportunity for us to grow our understanding of the manifestations of racism.

On another occasion, to assess our racial understanding, I asked what they thought about the six principles of racial literacy I listed for them (see Table 2). Rylie reacted to one in particular:

> I think a big one for me is number two. It's not just a historical problem, but a contemporary one…that's been something that has really stood out to me because, growing up, I was always taught that's history, and now I'm starting to recognize the impacts of it (4.12.22).

Rylie here highlighted a principle about racism that stood out to her because she recalled being taught to think that racism was a historical problem, not also a contemporary one. Trustin reacted to a different one: "recognizing the impact racism has at the individual, institutional, and societal levels…it's made me think a lot about that…[and] how our society is just set up wrong" (4.12.22). This particular principle invited Trustin to reflect on the systemic and institutional nature of racism. Throughout our conversations, we grew more and more apt to attribute racial and racist problems that came to mind to components included in these principles (i.e., grading as reinforcing institutional racism).

In addition to discussing how we understood race and racism in relation to principles of racial literacy, each collaborator talked about how they learned so much about race and racism from various sources. Having such frequent conversations led to our collective and individual accountability and growth. Our learning resulted in a change in our thinking and a developing desire to learn more. Learning came from many sources: students, teachers, and resources. For example, while reading the book *Blended* (Draper, 2020) with her students, Joey recalled

> I feel like I've been hearing a lot more of their thoughts and experiences with racism…we talked about how the girls at Target, and her dad's telling her about how sometimes there's going to be people who are following them in the store because of their skin color…so many of my students [say]... "Oh I've experienced that" or "my

dad's told me that before"... 11 year olds have already experienced that racism in society (10.19.21).

Here Joey learned about race and racism through the eyes of her students, who shared their very real experiences with her. Just as we learned from our guest speakers and from various written and spoken publications, we learned about race and racism from the experiences our students shared with us, thus building our *contextual awareness*. This learning also contributed to a strengthened commitment to finding our role and responsibility (4.12.22) in disrupting race/ism and fighting against its effects on people around us as well as strengthening our commitment (*interruption*) to talking about race/ism with others (2.1.22).

Third, ***by working as unique individuals within a collaborative group, growth in racial awareness and understanding varied from collaborator to collaborator***. Throughout the process, whether in individual interviews or in group meetings, I asked each collaborator how they understood racial literacies, how they conceptualized race, and how participating in this group impacted them and their teaching. Just as each collaborator entered at a different point within the living array of racial awareness and racial literacies, they moved to different "points" as they grew, but never landed on the same point. After engaging in collaboration for a period of time, the collaborators did not magically converge at one "point" but rather they leveraged their similarities and differences to arrive at unique positions within that array of development. The following excerpts show the uniqueness in how racial awareness and understanding developed across the group.

Joey: "Use what you learn." Joey developed an understanding of race and racial literacies as something to learn and grow through practice. Participation in this group provided that practice and accountability for her. Only after having a few meetings, Joey identified how

participation in the group pushed her to "look at new podcasts and read new books" (7.2.21) which resulted in her deepening understanding of the "differences between culturally relevant teaching, multicultural teaching, and culturally responsive teaching" (7.2.21). Her participation in the group conditioned her to "pay more attention" (6.30.22) to race, bias, and Indigeneity. More specifically, she felt like her role as a collaborator encouraged her to "think about race more in a way that I didn't before" (6.30.22) and taught her how to process "biases that are happening and things that are being neglected to be taught in the classrooms" (6.30.22). This developing awareness extended to her role as a teacher and as a member of society.

When asked how she understood her own race and identity in the first interview, she cited factors such as her own white privilege, the negative perceptions espoused by her college acquaintances, and her growing knowledge of how racism functions in her students' interactions as contributing to those perceptions. After completing a whole year in collaboration, she claimed

> race has influenced me more since we started this group than it had ever before. So even though [race] did have an impact on me, I just feel like now I understand race a lot better. And I understand how it affects people's experience, specifically, how it shapes the kids' experience (6.30.22).

Joey explained how attending to race through this collaboration developed her understanding of her students' experiences, even within a year's time. By the time of the second interview, she claimed to have developed a much better understanding of race and how it functioned in peoples' lives. These questions about race and identity and multiple opportunities to reflect prompted Joey to consider the *assumptions* she had previously held, the ways in which she built greater *contextual awareness,* and the habit of engaging in *reflective skepticism*. Inviting Joey to reflect

in this way laid the foundation for a deeper commitment to *interrupt* racist practices in her daily life and teaching practices.

Finally, her understanding of racial literacy began as "just being knowledgeable about people that are different than me…so knowledgeable that I'm able to teach about" (7.2.21). This understanding grew to incorporate the use of knowledge about "other identities and races and ethnicities" (7.2.21) not only in her teaching but also to "educate other people and to continue to educate myself…being able to use what you know to make education more equitable" (6.30.22). She concluded by stating that "you continue to build your racial literacy as you use what you learn" (6.30.22). This final statement seems to encapsulate her growth in understanding racial literacies as cutting across all areas of life, not just the classroom.

Joey's racial literacies development highlights the power of praxis (Freire, 1970). In other words, the pairing of learning and *reflection-on-action* practice played a key role in her developing understanding of race and how it functioned in her own life and the lives of those around her. Focused learning on race/ism coupled with the implementation of that learning propelled her development forward.

Rylie: "More that is below the surface." Rylie's awareness and understanding developed despite challenges and insecurities. Throughout the collaboration, she continued looking for opportunities to learn – "to expand my horizon" (6.28.21) – evidenced by her explaining and processing her thinking aloud with us. Within just the first few weeks, she described how participating in the collaboration impacted her:

> I think about it often, because there's just random things throughout the day that pop up that I'm like… 'that was probably not very appropriate,' or, … 'Oh, that would be something good to share' … I honestly feel like… I'm just so … naive to *so* much stuff

> that I don't even know… what's appropriate to say, and what's not…And I'm learning so much. It's just overwhelming (Interview 1, 6.28.21).

Rylie expressed feeling overwhelming and having very little knowledge of what to focus on to develop her racial literacies. While she felt unsure of her role in the beginning, her continued participation developed in her a more nuanced awareness and confidence – *metacognitive awareness* and *ideological becoming*. By constructing and building upon these foundations by the end of the project, she reported gaining confidence in talking with people about race and difference rather than simply avoiding it out of fear of saying "the wrong thing" (6.16.22).

Perhaps more importantly, she described experiencing growth in her out-of-school awareness and reflection. Regarding the podcasts she listened to about crime, she stated "I've started to notice that more and more people who are murdered are people … in the minority… to me, that shows racism" (6.16.22). She explained further through the use of a hypothetical situation, acknowledging that if a "little white, blond haired, blue-eyed" (6.16.22) girl was murdered, her family would likely have the power and ability to access the resources needed to find her. Rylie's *contextual awareness* of systemic racism grew, enabling her to better understand the patterns that she saw or heard in her daily life.

Her understanding of racial identities and literacies also shifted. At the end of the collaboration, she identified that "there's so much more that is below the surface" (6.16.22). Specifically, she referred to recognizing that Indigenous people could be "blended into society and you would never know that is their culture" but that "on the inside they have deep culture…stuff that they value that you don't know" (6.16.22). Similarly, she nuanced her understanding of racial literacies as "learning and sharing anything and everything accurate about different cultures" (6.29.21). Her understanding and acknowledgement of racial identity

and literacies grew beyond phenotypic or outward expressions to center the learning about different cultures, not only identities.

Rylie's racial literacies development pointed her to the realization that race and racism is a deeply embedded and complex reality. By consistently participating with the group, her idea of the reach of race/ism grew exponentially. She grew to understand that racism is not only systemic, but that there were numerous factors involved in creating and sustaining that dynamic than she initially realized. She established a much more nuanced and expansive understanding of race/ism than before. Rylie provided a key reminder that this groundwork of *contextual awareness* needs to occur before being expected to act. While they can go hand-in-hand, without learning about what created the problem in the first place (racism, white supremacy, settler colonialism), Rylie would not be able to systematically act to *interrupt* such racist practices. Without the foundational racial awareness, her acts would be performative.

Trustin: "You have to face the truth." Trustin's focus on relationship and activism directed his growth in racial awareness and understanding which, in turn, developed his confidence. With a focus on creating a supportive classroom environment, Trustin acknowledged early on how the collaboration impacted him:

> I feel like I am much more aware of how I am perceiving my students and I am able to actively change my thinking!...I think that I have definitely started a lot stronger considering everything we've discussed this summer. I've been able to help some other teachers as well and I already have great relationships with my kids and families (8.20.21).

He engaged regularly in *reflection-based action* and *reflection-on-action* which enabled him to see how his own learning and racial literacies development was directly and positively impacting

his relationships with students. But beyond relationships, he acknowledged that this collaborative process "made me more aware of how other people act in this society" (6.30.22) and compelled him to commit his support towards people and companies who are willing and open to engaging in a "genuine discussion" (6.30.22) around race/ism and social justice. More generally, he recognized the process as giving him greater "confidence, competence, and maturity in regard to the topics" (6.30.22). He claimed that participation in the group had "given me the tools … to talk about race more confidently with my kids" (6.30.22) and in his conversations with white people. This growing confidence pushed him to set even more goals. Here Trustin explained how his learning through experiences with his students prompted him to act out of a deepening *critical love* for others. He also recognized how having these foundations of racial *awareness* and *internalization* led him to engage more regularly in *creative problem-solving* and *transformative practices*.

Finally, Trustin understood racial literacies in terms of Stevenson's (2014) text: "read, recast, and resolve racially stressful encounters or narratives" (6.29.21). He also understood racial literacies to mirror equity: "understanding everyone and meeting them where they are" (6.29.21). He recognized that racial literacies "comes with a certain understanding that in America, we're not equal, not everyone is equal. You can't just gloss over those facts. So in order to be racially literate, you have to face the truth" (6.29.21). Thus, Trustin's beginning definition revolved around showing people respect by aiming to understand where people are coming from and "being able to adjust your approach, or your mindset about them, based on what you know" (6.29.21). By the end, he understood racial literacies as all the above, but added the following: "being able to understand where you are on the spectrum of society …kind of finding yourself, and then understanding how race plays into that" (6.30.22). His understanding

of race and racial literacies extended to a specific attention to how race functions in society, and him personally, thus exhibiting a deepening *contextual awareness* and heightened sense of *reflective skepticism* that positioned him for acting to interrupt racists practices.

Trustin's racial literacies development strengthened his commitment to not only come to terms with the realization that all is not equal in the United States, but that he had a responsibility (*interruption*) to learn more about this dynamic of racism. His development sparked a closer look at how race functions in society, his classroom, and his daily life. This growing curiosity and commitment directed his role as an activist to expand, including attention to intersections of race with other identity markers. Trustin's development highlights the importance of how building *contextual awareness* formed the foundation for internalizing racial literacies learning, which primed him for more appropriate actions to interrupt racism.

Summary: Collaboration toward racial literacies development instilled a deeper commitment *(interruption)* in all three of them to learning more about race/ism, but this commitment showed up in slightly different ways in each of them because of their individual goals and priorities and their positions in their racial literacies development journey. Rylie's commitment to learning drove her specifically to ask questions and seek resources in order to gain a greater understanding of race/ism's far-reaching and intersectional nature before attempting to act on such information. Joey's commitment to developing her teaching practice involved working with her existing knowledge and experimenting with it in the classroom. By putting her prior knowledge and growing knowledge into her teaching practice, she learned even more about how race/ism functioned in the lives of her students and their families. Trustin's commitment to action, within the classroom and beyond, grew as a result of his learning about

the effects and nature of race/ism within both realms which built on his previous experiences. For each, their priorities and commitments pushed their learning in certain directions.

In summary, centering conversations around race and racism developed our racial literacies. In this theme, I highlighted the importance of frequency, context, and individuality. By frequently engaging in conversations around race, we held each other accountable for practicing and articulating our developing understandings with each other, although there were areas we could have certainly developed further. This frequency contributed to and was a symptom of a commitment we made to each other, ourselves, and our students. This commitment to *interrupt* (Sealey-Ruiz, 2020) racism in its many forms required that we develop a language for communicating about it, whether it was within the confines of our group or in public spaces. Often the commitment to learn dies quickly when no practice is required nor skill developed. We needed to both learn by building our *contextual awareness* and practicing how to articulate, in order to then implement this stance of interruption in our lives.

Secondly, each of our contexts played into how we articulated these understandings, whether we were reflecting on our own contexts or on what others shared. Understanding race as a construct requires acknowledging that race/ism may function and look differently in various contexts (Oto et al., 2021). Thus, learning about race and racism in our four contexts led not only to a more nuanced racial literacies knowledge base, but also a greater foundation from which we knew to act.

Also, while we were working together in collaboration, we understood that we were each operating with a unique set of experiences and understandings. These uniquenesses fueled our growth, albeit in various directions and focal areas. As I mentioned earlier, I consider racial literacies development to exist within an array. We each committed to interrupting racism,

claiming to all move the same direction (towards greater knowledge and racially just action), but our various contexts, experiences, and various other factors determined at what point within that array we began. Rylie, Trustin, and Joey all started at various points. By the end of the collaboration, they ended up with varying levels of racial awareness and understanding, and yet racial literacies development was evident in all three of them.

Part 2: Learning Through Collaboration

This collaboration was intended for designing and engaging in a dialogical, teacher-led model of professional development with a focus on teachers' racial literacies development. Operating in this way pushed participants to develop their racial literacies by not only building their knowledge base but applying what they learned in their classrooms and their daily lives. The following four themes – related to establishing goals and values, sharing and vulnerability, resource consulting, and applying our learning – characterized the majority of our time together and fueled our individual and collective learning. Thus, our learning was accomplished through multiple modes/avenues, working cooperatively and simultaneously in contributing to our learning.

Goals and Values Drove Collaboration

Establishing common goals and values impacted the trajectory of our collaboration. We used the initial and subsequent articulations of our individual and collective goals as a launchpad and foundation for our learning together. Engaging in this together strengthened our sense of accountability, trust, and support with each other.

First, the ***educators established a baseline for their participation in the collaboration by discussing their personal rationales*** for their involvement. The first meeting consisted of each member sharing their "why". For example, Trustin shared that he wanted to participate in this

research in order to "better train young teachers to push limits…the personal limits of their comfort zone, and to shed light on issues that are not readily apparent to undergrad students" (4.2.21). Joey and Rylie shared similar rationales for participation as being related to improving their teaching practice and to addressing content and ideologies that were absent in their undergraduate education. While one rationale for my participation was to conduct a dissertation study, my ultimate rationale was to develop in ways that would impact my own learning trajectory, as well as those of my own children and teacher education students. In subsequent meetings, as evidenced in Part 1 of this chapter, collaborators used these rationales as a lens from which they shared what had been occurring in their learning and their classrooms. Sharing such beginning rationales served as entry points for each member and led to refining specific goals and expressing values. We aimed to collaborate in ways that contributed to accomplishing these goals.

Second, ***each collaborator got the opportunity to share and continually refine their individual goal for participating*** in this project with our guest speakers during the summer of 2021. During each meeting, we introduced ourselves to the guest speakers, then I shared the group's overall goal of developing "our racial literacy in order to then teach in more culturally responsive, culturally relevant, and racially literate ways, specifically focusing on integrating ethnic and Indigenous backgrounds and histories" (6.23.21). Each of the remaining three members would then share their individual goals. These were goals that we each continued to revisit and refine as we progressed through the year. As we learned more, the language we used to describe our goals changed. For example, only two weeks after the previous quote, I expressed the group's goal with slightly different language based on discussions held and learning gained in that span of time:

> We're really trying to learn for ourselves…reflect on our own implicit bias [and] how we were brought up in order to correct some of these things, and then bring our new knowledge into the classroom to … more authentically integrate Indigenous, racial, and ethnic histories (7.7.21).

This second articulation showed a greater attention to the role of our upbringing and our implicit biases in directing our learning, having discussed how both influence our implementation of racial literacies. Secondly, having had conversations about authenticity and perspective, the term authenticity was included as an indicator of how important it became to our learning. The changes from the first to the second articulation of this overall goal indicated an expansion of *ideological becoming* and *internalization* of what we were learning. After engaging together in reflection on our *assumptions* and building our *contextual awareness* (including terminology) prompted the inclusion of additional elements as factors working in our goal.

Trustin's goal adaptations highlighted a growing understanding of how he wanted his learning to impact his students and his classroom environment. In the beginning, he explained his goal was to generally "integrate indigenous studies into our science curriculum" (6.23.21) with the specific intention to focus on cultures and groups Indigenous to Colorado. About two weeks later, he articulated the following to another guest speaker: "my goal is to just create a more culturally responsive classroom where my students feel comfortable and respected in my class" (7.21.21). He added that, considering most of his students identified as being members of historically marginalized groups, he wants to "make them feel comfortable in my class, as like a white male teacher" (7.21.21) and planned to engage in sharing stories with each other as a way to accomplish this goal. In two weeks, he adapted his goal from simply integrating content into the curriculum to a more holistic view of upholding students' cultures and stories in his

classroom. His expanded *contextual awareness* prompted him to include additional attention to the students he was working with. One week later, he added nuance in a third articulation of his goal:

> So I've not been exposed to as much diversity in my life … So my whole goal is to make my kids feel as comfortable as possible in my classroom, as someone who does not look like them. I want to be able to empathize with them and understand where they're coming from and what their situations are like. So understanding their individual cultures as fifth graders ... create a classroom that feels safe for them, and that they can be respected. So my focus… is on storytelling, just trying to increase our cultural awareness in our classroom (7.28.21).

Here, Trustin placed emphasis on how his goal was driven by his growing awareness of his own positionality, in relation to his students. Secondly, he provided evidence of a developing understanding that culturally responsive and racially literate teaching required more than content integration. It involved relationship building and sharing. Trustin, like myself in the previous example, was able to take what he learned through listening to guest speakers and reflecting on his own assumptions and upbringing to expand his view of what he was wanting to accomplish in his classroom to interrupt racist practices.

Thus, continuing our learning and revising these goals throughout the course of the year kept us focused on our goals but also on how we were growing within those goals. As we learned more, the articulation of these goals shifted to include a more expansive and contextualized view of racism and reflected a deeper internalization of the learning.

Third***, the shared values and attention to perspective-taking, authenticity, and representation created motivation for collaborating together.*** As the facilitator, I never asked

specific questions using the term "perspective", but much of our conversation revolved around how we were learning from each other's perspectives as well as those we came in contact with, such as guest speakers, students, fellow teachers, parents, and more. Establishing a common interest in valuing perspectives led to learning more about the importance of authentic representations. At the onset of this project, I asked for us all to think about what it meant "for us [as white educators] to try to bring ethnic and Indigneous histories and knowledges…ways of thinking, ways of doing things, ways of being in the world" (4.29.21) into the classroom. Discussion surrounded how we could invite other perspectives into the classroom. Joey mentioned inviting a Navajo person to speak to her classroom "all about the Navajo Nation and his reservation" (4.29.21), noting that it "was really authentic coming from him" (4.29.21). Even though this incident occurred before our collaboration officially began, this provided an example of Joey's *reflection-based action*. Her learning about Native cultures and traditions prompted her to invite a guest speaker to share his perspective. Trustin immediately expressed how important Joey's action was to him because it involved having "someone from the culture come in and talk rather than just trying to teach about that culture from an outside perspective" (4.29.21). Trustin then exhibited an example of *reflection-on-action*, explaining why he thought Joey's invitation to the guest speaker was important.

Within the same conversation, Rylie emphasized how valuable it would be for us to be learning from each other's perspectives as well, considering the diverse teaching contexts in which we all found ourselves (i.e., urban vs. suburban, postsecondary vs. primary). Here, Rylie took up this shared experience of Trustin's and Joey's regarding perspectives in the classroom as reason for further engagement together, specifically to expand her/our *contextual awareness.* From early on in the project, we established the importance of perspective and authenticity was

established as a common value and guiding mantra for the conversations that followed, including how we selected resources to consult. Collaborating and motivating each other to engage in this way not only expanded our awareness but addressed assumptions we once held, both of which contributed to our *internalization* of this motive/goal.

In addition, one way in which we hoped to implement our learning about authenticity and the importance of perspectives was through representations in literature. We searched for representations to bring to each of our classroom spaces and held each other accountable for doing so. For example, Joey recommended the book *If You Come to Earth* (Blackall, 2020) to Rylie to use in her classroom to represent multiple family compositions, and Rylie later discussed using it as a mentor text in her classroom (9.19.21). Joey completed a read-aloud of *Blended* (Draper, 2020) and completed a book study of *Tristan Strong Punches a Hole in the Sk*y (Mbalia, 2020) instead of *Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief* (Riordan, 2009) in order to uphold representations of Black and African bodies, mythologies, and perspectives in her classroom. Beyond this, we each shared more literary recommendations with each other to encourage the infusion of our perspective-learning in our classroom contexts, and continued sharing perspectives we learned about through our colleagues, students, parents, and resources. By engaging in *reflection-based actions* – utilizing new resources based on our developing awareness and learning regarding perspectives and authenticity – we had multiple opportunities to reflect on those actions and continue the cycle through designing and creating new ideas.

Throughout our conversations with each other and with our guest speakers, we held to the understanding that "any story you hear represents that individual's perspective, and could be representative of the larger group, but isn't necessarily so" (6.9.21). Acknowledging the need to hold perspectives as unique contributed to our continued collaboration toward racial literacies

development. This motivation to implement new materials in our classrooms resulted from internalizing what we were learning about the importance of perspective. In other words, this is *agency*, building into *advocacy*, building into a foundational sense of *efficacy* (Miller et al., 2020).

Fourth**, *the trajectory for our collaboration was directed by our collective identification and critique of personal and systemic areas for growth*.** In our first group meeting, I asked the team why they wanted to be a part of this project of establishing a model for developing racial literacies. Answers to this question involved each identifying areas for growth both personally and systemically as reasons, which set the trajectory for our collaboration. Rylie focused mostly on her personal areas for growth as fueling her participation. Rylie identified being overwhelmed (6.23.21) by the prospect of developing her racial literacies on her own and expressed not knowing where to start (4.2.21) or "how far [she] can go talking about this kind of stuff" (5.13.21) in her classroom. She identified these as her areas for growth and committed to this collaboration because "I want to do this to better myself for the sake of the students…I want to explore truth, and truth is not just black and white" (4.2.21). Wanting to do better and teaching truth drove Rylie's involvement. Rylie was aware of the need to disrupt problematic assumptions she previously held, and she acknowledged that learning more about it (gaining *contextual awareness*) would prepare her to know how to act to *interrupt* racist practices. She knew she had more learning to do before being able to act appropriately.

Trustin and Joey identified their own personal areas for growth as the collaboration progressed, such as when they claimed that their listening to podcasts helped "us realize a lot of shortcomings in our own teaching" (6.23.21). However, they initially cited systemic areas for growth within teacher education programs as being the primary reason for their participation.

Trustin hoped that his participation would help encourage teacher education programs to "better train young teachers to push limits…the personal limits of their comfort zone, and to shed light on issues that are not readily apparent to undergrad students" (4.2.21). Similarly, Joey noted that these programs "are not preparing teachers to be the best teachers they can be to be those teachers for students of color" (4.2.21). Their desire to improve teacher education initially drove their involvement. They were aware of issues within the context of teacher education and were beginning to engage in *creative problem-solving* to address those issues, but engaged in this collaboration because they felt they still needed to grow if they were to affect real and lasting change.

As we continued to meet, members acknowledged additional areas for growth as fuel for sustained collaboration: the need to educate ourselves (6.9.21), the lack of conversation around race in schools (6.9.21), racist school policies on grading (4.12.22) and grooming (10.19.21), the critique of teacher bias coming through actions (5.13.21), the problematic use of religion as a weapon for sustaining white supremacy (7.21.21), the pitfalls of professional development (10.19.21), the persistence of school segregation (2.1.22), and the lack of teachers of color in schools (4.29.21). Understanding the problems and the related needs (*contextual awareness*) fueled the trajectory of our collaboration, setting a precedence for continued identification and nuancing of such problems. We began our collaboration by identifying both personal and systemic issues related to race, racism, and racial literacies, and this identification developed throughout the process, thus pointing us in directions we felt compelled to go. Identifying and discussing a greater variety of issues, both personal and systemic, expanded our *metacognitive awareness and ideological becoming*. This widening of our awareness contributed to our *awakening* and building *agency* (Miller et al., 2020).

In summary, this finding suggests the importance of identifying and establishing both individual and shared goals for driving the collaboration towards racial literacies development. Maya Angelou once said "Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better." This sentiment seems resonant with what drove the collaborators to identify and address their areas for growth. Consistent with theorizations of racial literacies, identifying personal areas for growth and reasons for participating in this collaboration served as evidence that each member joined the group at a unique place in their racial literacies development journey. Secondly, how these goals and reasons shifted and developed as time went on provided evidence of each member growing at a different pace and perhaps along a slightly different pathway (and at various stages along the ladder). Throughout this process, we refined our individual and collective goals and attended to the language we used to describe such goals based on our learning. This continual shaping and refining of our goals and understandings contributed to our developing up the model of praxis but it also influenced how we engaged together toward racial literacies development, thus resonating with Sealey-Ruiz's (2020) *archaeology of the self*. Our identification of systemic reasons as fuel for our participation resonates with Sealey-Ruiz's (2020) concept of *interruption*, and our acknowledgement and commitment to address our personal areas for growth resonates with her concept of *critical humility*, the desire to continue learning beyond the limitations we currently see.

In addition to these three concepts of racial literacies development, this collaboration established the importance of active listening – listening to each other, guest speakers, students, parents, and more. Beyond acknowledging that this is situated within Sealey-Ruiz's (2020) concept of *critical humility*, establishing a norm of listening-to-*learn* led to learning-to-*see* the

importance and uniqueness of perspectives, which supported us in resisting essentialist narratives.

Sharing and Vulnerability Created Foundations for Generative Change

Adopting a culture of sharing and vulnerability afforded opportunities to learn from and support each other, and thus develop our racial literacies. Sharing fostered rapport, provided an avenue for learning, and not only allowed for, but expressly encouraged vulnerability with the intention of leading from "voice to agency" (Miller et al., 2020, p. 290).

First, beginning our collaborations ***by sharing our rationales for why we taught established rapport and built initial understandings of each other as members in the group***. During our first meeting together, I asked the collaborators to share an artifact that explained the reason why they worked in education. I shared a picture of my children to explain that my children were the inspiration for my engagement in teacher education and in education research. Trustin and Rylie both shared their rationale for teaching as tied to teachers they have worked with who made a tremendous impact on them. Joey shared a video of her students singing her dog happy birthday to show how inspired she is to work with such caring students: "they're the reason I do what I do" (4.2.21). While this discussion regarding our unique rationales for teaching is largely limited to this first collaborative conversation, beginning this way started the process of both establishing rapport with each other and building initial understandings of each person's perspective and values as members working collaboratively. While the importance of relationship is not necessarily named in Sealey-Ruiz's model or Miller and colleagues' model, wanting to establish a specifically collaborative and participatory environment for growth warranted our making space for this step in the process as a way of building the *contextual awareness* within the group. In this step, we essentially shared what prompted our commitment

to interrupting racist practices in our teaching and in our daily lives. Naturally, as we continued on in the process, these rationales became more nuanced, thus adding even more context to our understanding of each member in the group.

Second, ***story-sharing with each other became a normal avenue for our learning***. By our fourth meeting together, we recognized how much we were learning through stories, whether through podcasts, articles, students, parents, or our guest speakers. Rylie noted that her students were "learning just talking to each other, and we're learning just listening to each other" (6.16.21). Most often, we shared stories about experiences we had with our students or school staff, with few occasions in which we shared stories from out-of-school contexts. We often engaged in story-sharing for two purposes: to share a story and explain how we processed it, or to share a story then ask for other's input or advice. For example, Rylie shared her experience reading *If You Come To Earth* (Blackall, 2020) with her students and concluded with her reasoning for reading this text about different family compositions: "I just want them to know that this is life, everybody is different, you know, and just have that kind of in their mind" (9.19.21). By teaching with this text in her classroom, Rylie was engaged in *reflection based action*, incorporating what she had already learned in our collaboration. Joey shared about her experience reading *Blended* (Draper, 2020) with her students stating that she came away from the experience being so disheartened that her students had already encountered and endured so many racist experiences by the time they were in fifth grade (10.19.21). Here, Joey recounted a book that she read in the classroom (*reflection-based action*) in ways that showed her learning more about the *context* in which she and her students find themselves. These two examples were shared in the form of a story as well as how they processed what happened.

Trustin shared about his students engaged in a Zoom call with a school in China, during which the students in China were all seated respectfully in a large gymnasium while his own students were "scattered coming in and coming out" (7.7.21). He reflected on this with some concern:

> I'm wondering, now looking back, because it felt very weird to me that we didn't have the kids in a room…and I'm wondering now…how they [in China] perceived it, because it was so different from how they have school…and then our kids were disrespectful, putting things in the chat that are inappropriate that pop up on their screen on the other end. (7.7.21).

Here, Trustin's reflecting on this *reflection based action* showed him the importance of "doing it in a way that's respectful and culturally responsive" (7.7.21). By continuing to "wonder" about it, he invited input from the group members, and indicated his desire to do it differently the next time.

Finally, as a facilitator, I shared and ended many stories by asking for their thoughts to encourage further conversation. For example, I related an experience having received pushback after posting something on Facebook about critical race theory. Having mentioned that I got frustrated by the comments on social media, I asked the group for their thoughts on the situation and invited them to share: "I don't know if you've read stuff that makes you upset, frustrated, mad, [or ask] how can you be so disrespectful?" (7.21.21). I created the post initially because of what I had learned previously, then *reflection on this action* with the group in order to learn from their perspectives. Thus, sharing multiple stories in each meeting gave us each a chance to process the experience with what we already knew or compare it to what we had seen in our own contexts. Doing this pushed us to think differently. Engaging in *reflection based action* and

reflection on action pushed us to help each other think of solutions or to add new perspectives. In addition, learning from each other's experiences across our various contexts helped us gain understanding of how race, racism, and societal and classroom dynamics played out differently.

Third, ***the collaborative space we created invited us to be vulnerable with one another, which led to individual and collective growth.*** Expressions of vulnerability existed in the forms of voicing concerns regarding teaching about race or upsetting a student's parents. In most of our exchanges, these concerns related to school-related challenges, with occasional concerns regarding non-school related challenges. This vulnerability and honesty originated from the components we were still becoming aware of and seemed to serve a few purposes. First, it allowed us to practice putting these concerns into words, which was helpful for identifying any deeper inclinations (*assumption analysis*). Sometimes we simply learned how to express something by stumbling through our first attempt, and sometimes to voice a concern. Following a discussion about how we have so much to learn and unlearn, considering our largely Eurocentric educational upbringings, Rylie expressed what she had been thinking: "It's just so overwhelming. I feel like…I don't know anything…I don't want to say something and be wrong, or ask and look stupid" (6.23.21). Rylie positioned herself here as needing a lot of support in knowing what to do and how to do it. Her participation in the group indicated her commitment to developing her racial literacies, but she recognized that she had much to learn and needed guidance. Trustin also expressed an incident in his class. He asked a student to complete his math work and the student said "you're just racist against Black people" (2.1.22) and Trustin recounted to the group his thoughts: "I'm like, no,...that is not…You're not gonna do this to me right now because…because it gets so scary whenever you're a white person and you get called racist" (2.1.22). After telling us about his conversation with the student's mother, he shared "it's

interesting how, when [being called a racist] is prompted, we tiptoe around it" (2.1.22). In sharing this example, Trustin was laying bare the work of some of his previously unquestioned assumptions about being called a racist, and essentially acknowledged that this thinking is problematic. These two examples exhibit the practice we engaged in of attempting to put into words the concerns we had. Sharing in this way provided us the opportunity to practice communicating about incidents that teachers often shy away from in order to move beyond thinking, to internalizing then acting on that learning.

In addition, sharing in vulnerability offered a chance for others in the group to support the concerned member, thus building rapport with one another. Members shared feeling ignorant about differences in students' grooming habits (i.e., missing school for hair appointments) or mixed messages they have been told about showing any affection with students (i.e., college law course taught teachers not to touch students). Support also came from members after hearing other concerns about teaching. For example, beginning her first year of teaching, Rylie characterized her feelings this way: "it just seems like a big mountain that I don't even know where to start" (6.23.21). Trustin offered some support by sharing from his experience, stating:

> there's only so much you can do in this school year, and you're gonna do stuff that doesn't work, and you're going to try stuff that takes a long time for you to do and you're gonna realize it's terrible, and it sucks, and that the kids aren't learning anything (6.23.21).

Here Trustin provided support for Rylie by suggesting that she adapt her expectations in order to give herself more grace throughout the learning process, which would also set her up for greater success. He added that after starting his second year, he understood that those first-year goals were "unrealistic" and that he should have focused more on building relationships with his

students. Sharing in this way often opened up a pathway for those listening to then offer support, support that these collaborators were not necessarily receiving elsewhere.

Finally, it offered those listening the opportunity to learn from what a member was sharing. While much of this learning was likely going on in the members' minds and not documented in the data, there is evidence of members' listening that prompted a change in thought. For example, Joey had prompted a discussion about her insecurity when it comes to talking to her students about why they needed to respect their fellow classmates, such as when some students protested violence to those who identify as Black, Indigenous, or people of color in this country by choosing to sit or kneel during the Pledge of Allegiance (2.1.22). She explained her struggle with not knowing how to encourage them to respect one another, whether they were sitting or standing, when the mantra "treat others as you would want to be treated" often received a "well, I don't care" from students. Here Joey is engaged in her own *reflective skepticism* regarding the policies upheld at the school, acknowledging that they were problematic but she was unsure what to do about it. I had asked if she had heard of the Rainbow Rule: "treat others as they want to be treated". In light of Rylie's struggle with behavioral issues in her classroom, she chimed in saying she appreciated learning about that and hoped to bring that to her classroom to change the mindset of the students in her classroom. In another example, I shared about writing a positionality statement for the first time. I described that the feedback I got made me think about how the statement communicated a white savior mentality. After each member got the chance to write their own statements, Joey shared: "I think as I was writing that, I realized part of me might still have a little bit of that mindset, and I really need to work on getting away from that" (7.14.21). These two examples offer evidence of how what one member shared influenced the thoughts or mindset of another. Together, we shared experiences along

with how we reflected on those experiences, then engaged in *creative problem-solving* with each other with the goal of moving beyond just thinking.

In summary, our individual and collective learning resulted, in part, from cultivating a norm of sharing with each other. The rapport we built in those first few meetings invited us to continue building such rapport through sharing about challenges and insecurities we experienced related to learning and teaching about rac/ism. The stories and challenges we shared with each other provided countless learning opportunities in the forms of *assumption analysis, contextual awareness, reflective skepticism, reflection-based action,* and *reflection on action*. Engaging in this way helped us engage in *creative problem-solving* both as individuals and as a collective, working toward greater racial literacies. In a way, this sharing in vulnerability resonates with Sealey-Ruiz's (2020) concept of *critical love*, in which one makes an ethical commitment to the communities in which they work (p. 6). In sharing these struggles, we committed to working with one another in community, as well as with/for the school and classroom communities in which we worked. As we learned more, this love deepened. In addition, both listening to each other and seeking input or advice relates to the concept of *critical humility*, seeking to learn more and more as we go along. Finally, by sharing things we were not used to talking about and laying our assumptions and skepticisms out in the open, we were able to practice putting such thoughts and experiences into words. Administrators and teachers often shy away from talking about race (Stevenson, 2014); thus, we needed to practice articulating what we were seeing and experiencing in order to build the confidence and literacy skills (*agency* and *efficacy*) to engage in race conversations in schools and beyond. Sharing in a group collaborative setting afforded us numerous opportunities to engage in this practice.

Consulting Resources Provided Practice in Identifying and Understanding Injustices

Consulting resources, both tangible and intangible, helped us build our understanding of the function(s) of rac/ism in and out of school settings and led to our adopting a mentality of disruption. First, by consulting multiple resources that we thought would help us develop our racial literacies (i.e., resources associated with pushing for racial and social justice), we gained practice in identifying and understanding racial and social problems**.** Through reading articles and books, listening to podcasts and guest speakers, and sharing experiences, we not only gained practice in identifying problems, both current and historical, but embraced a more disruptive stance toward our teaching and learning. Consulting a variety of resources, created predominantly by members of historically marginalized communities, injected the much needed perspectives we were in need of seeing and hearing in order to understand racial injustices (*contextual awareness*) to then act on such learning.

First, ***consulting resources offered practice in identifying and understanding some of the racial injustices of today***. Coming into this collaboration, all collaborators had varying levels of understanding of the racism of today, but consulting resources filled gaps in our knowledge and deepened our understanding of injustices and dynamics. Collaborators often mentioned consulting a resource and sharing how it helped them see an issue they had previously not seen, thus engaging in *contextual awareness* and *reflective skepticism*. For example, Trustin mentioned an article about "teaching for Native peoples" (6.9.21) helped him see the importance of acknowledging "the fact that the school is probably built on Native land" (6.9.21) as part of being a culturally responsive and racially literate educator. Similarly, Rylie mentioned listening to a podcast in which the speaker was questioning how educational schools actually were. She interpreted this podcast as stating that school

> is just feeding kids information, and then feeding it back, instead of really doing work to change the world…I thought [that] was super powerful, and it made me think a lot … maybe school doesn't have as much education in it as we think" (5.13.21).

Rylie agreed with the speaker in this podcast, taking on a new level of *skepticism* about the promises of education. In these two examples, the resources helped Trustin and Rylie identify, for themselves, issues that existed before they realized it. Such identification positioned them to then act on such awareness.

Collaborators also mentioned how consulting a resource deepened their understanding about certain issues or dynamics. For example, in our discussion about Brown's (2017) article "Why We Can't Wait," Joey stated:

> I feel like it was a good guide for anyone who's going to be leading teachers to look at because it talked about how race is in every aspect of education, whether we're talking about it or not. And I feel like principals and teachers are so afraid to talk about it…But it's like an elephant in the room…us not talking about it isn't helping us close those achievement gaps. (6.9.21).

Reading this article deepened Joey's understanding regarding the absence of race-conversations in schools and strengthened her conviction (*internalization*) that, in order to address the problem, it needed to be discussed in school spaces. Similarly, the group engaged in discussions about a video that highlighted the "origins of race" (3.2.22), which nuanced prior knowledge and understandings of each member in the group to provide more *contextual awareness* to then inform actions.

This learning and sharing *(ideological becoming)* often motivated collaborators to recommend resources to each other, whether for specific reasons or not. Knowing that Rylie

taught in early childhood, Joey recommended a "racial literacy curriculum" that she found (6.9.21). Joey also recommended a Facebook group called "Teaching on Days After" because it had been very helpful for her own learning and racial literacies development (6.9.21). Mary, Trustin, and Rylie also made podcast and picturebook suggestions to the group, considering the personal growth they (or their students) had gained as a result of consulting these resources. In this way, consulting and recommending resources offered us opportunities to practice identifying issues and deepened our understanding about current and past issues. This learning contributed to our *ideological becoming, internalization,* and *creative problem solving* and essentially prepared us to do more to disrupt racist practices.

Second, ***learning appropriate terminology aided in this practice of identification, understanding, and disrupting.*** Considering the term *literacy* in racial literacies, we attended to what terminology we needed to learn and use, as part of our development. Knowing the appropriate terminology helped us understand racial dynamics with greater nuance and helped us put our developing racial literacies to work in our speech. First, learning terms and distinguishing between varieties of the term built our understanding. I shared learning from Gilio-Whitaker and Dunbar-Ortiz's (2016) *All The Real Indians Died Off* and from a guest speaker's visit that the use of "tribal" (7.7.21), when used to describe Indigenous people, is problematic because that term exists as a result of colonizing influence. I also shared that learning terms such as white privilege, white fragility, and white rage and how they functioned in history and policymaking "informed the way that I understood racism and how it's been reinforced for decades, centuries…which I may not have understood without knowing those terms…they've kinda helped piece together some things" (4.12.22). Sharing these areas of more personal development provided examples of *reflective skepticism* I was engaged in, which led to me *internalizing*

certain realities. In response to this, Rylie adds that learning new terminology through this collaboration "really helped me and helps me realize how much I actually don't know…helped me figure it out" (4.12.22). Learning new terms and deepening our understanding of terms we already knew helped build our understanding of racial injustices and related issues (*contextual awareness*) so that we could then act on our *internalized* learning.

In addition, learning and practicing with each other helped us know how to use them appropriately and connect them to our prior discussions. This practice often took the form of sharing how we were processing or understanding terms in relation to one another (i.e., culturally responsive teaching versus multicultural education), then allowing the conversation to snowball, inviting others to participate. For example, Trustin became intrigued early on with the distinction between multicultural education and culturally responsive teaching. Upon learning from author and scholar Zaretta Hammond through a podcast interview, he explained his understanding of the two terms, suggesting that culturally responsive teaching was more focused on teaching to the "whole" child (6.16.21). I then shared that I had heard many people conflate the two concepts because of overlapping components. To connect it to our focus on racial literacies, I added that we could think of our work in the following way: "we're developing racial literacy in order to become culturally responsive teachers" (6.16.21). Trustin then connected culturally responsive teaching to the curricular changes Joey made in her language arts class. To ensure I understood what he was explaining, I reframed the two concepts: "culturally responsive teaching is your disposition, multicultural education is the content you teach" (6.16.21). This engagement in *reflective skepticism* and *reflection-based* use of the terms snowballed into greater learning throughout future meetings, adding nuance and depth to our understanding of multicultural education and culturally responsive teaching, in relation to racial literacies development. This

continued practice led us further and further toward making transformative and generative changes.

Rylie provided another example of this practice in terminology through the use of an analogy to compare culturally responsive teaching and racial literacies. She shared her thinking about literacy and writing as involving phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension as building blocks that make up the whole. She related this concept to racial literacy serving as a "building block" (9.19.21) underneath the umbrella of culturally responsive teaching. Rylie stated:

> I think I see it kind of as … maybe building blocks up into the big thing. So like literacy, … would be the umbrella term, and underneath it would be… some of the science of reading, so phonics, and all of that stuff, but it also has comprehension, and vocabulary, and writing, and all of those things under the umbrella. And [likewise] culturally responsive teaching is the umbrella. And one of those things underneath the umbrella would be … critical race theory and all of that. And I also can see it, where it's like building blocks. So all of those pieces that are under the umbrella build up to create literacy or build up to create, you know, culturally responsive teaching. (9.19.21).

Here, Rylie drew the connection between how she understood literacy and its contributing components to culturally responsive teaching as including and being supported by critical race theory, racial literacy, and other theories of race. Here Rylie illustrates engagement in both *reflective skepticism* and *reflection-based action*. She explained her initial and developing understandings of the term, and then applied and connected it to other terms. In similar ways, we all learned about and practiced applying terms relating to culture, race, Indigeneity, and ethnicity through resources and discussion with one another.

Third, ***consulting resources provided a platform from which we could make connections to historical and current events***, as well as other resources. Having gained knowledge through various resources, we were better prepared to make connections to subsequent resources or discussions. From the beginning, we mentioned numerous pieces of state and federal legislation that affected schools and the teaching about race, racism, and enslavement. We discussed racist legislation in Florida (4.2.21), Georgia (6.9.21), Arizona (6.23.21), Texas (10.19.21), as well as the standing issues involving opportunity gaps, while also recognizing positive legislation in South Dakota (7.7.21). Having knowledge of these current events and enduring dynamics (*contextual awareness*), we were poised for deeper understanding as we read portions of Love's (2019) *We Want to Do More Than Survive*, such as in the quote: "the U.S. has a long history of passing laws that protect whites when they kill, torture, and displace dark people" (p. 26). For example, Rylie connected her prior learning to Love's quote "how do you matter to a country that measures your knowledge against a gap it created" (p. 2) and went a step further to relate to findings published in the "Nation's Report Card" as published in a phonics instruction guide she consults (4.12.22). She explained:

> It's just wild to me that like the gaps in … reading is a huge thing…The United States currently has one of the lowest literacy rates in the developed world. According to the Nation's Report Card "34% of fourth graders cannot read and 68% are below proficient, an astounding 68% of eighth graders test below the level in reading"... "test below grade level in reading, these statistics continue on through the adult population, fully 48% of adults are not proficient in reading." That makes me think about how many of those in comparison to the population is Black or brown students (4.12.22).

Reading Love's text, prompted Rylie to ask questions about what she read in other resources. Rylie's developing *contextual awareness* provided a foundation upon which she engaged in *reflective skepticism* before *internalizing* this new-to-her knowledge. Her connections then deepened and nuanced her prior understanding of the nature and extent of race/ism.

Similarly, Joey connected her reading about the concept of white rage (4.12.22) in Love's book to our discussion (6.23.21) about the news related to finding burial sites at the Indigenous boarding schools. She understood the boarding schools as an example of white rage: "we are mad at the fact that the Indigenous people had a different culture than…them. And so they take it out by trying to make them like [the colonizers] are" (4.12.22). In both examples, the learning was founded on resources previously consulted and topics previously discussed. Similar connections were made to numerous past, current, and ongoing events (*contextual awareness*) and dynamics such as the process of naturalization, standing for the Pledge of Allegiance in schools, labeling and integration practices of "diverse" picturebooks, income gaps, and student protests. These examples both show how continuing to build *contextual awareness* fed into *reflective skepticism*.

In summary, establishing a habit of consulting various resources aimed at highlighting social and racial injustices provided countless opportunities for us to deepen our understanding of the world around us and work to apply this new learning. In other words, our *contextual awareness* and *reflective skepticism* contributed to *internalization* and *creative problem-solvin*g, and thereby agency, advocacy, and building efficacy in interrupting racist practices. Consistent with scholarship on racial literacies, we found this learning to be unending. Racial literacies can not be finite, but rather require an ongoing journey toward greater knowledge and understanding. For this aspect of our learning together, I find two components of Sealey-Ruiz's (2020) racial

literacies development framework to relate most closely. First, this habit of resource consulting cultivated a stronger sense of *interruption* (p. 6). At this point, we were committed to learning more about racism and inequality, to then begin the active work of interrupting racism and inequality. Secondly, this resource diving enabled us to make connections across current and historical events, thus, relating to Sealey-Ruiz's (2020) idea of *historical literacy*. In this component of racial literacies development, one develops a "rich and contextual awareness of the historical forces" (p. 6) that shape community and society. While there was much more we needed to learn, consulting resources and employing appropriate terminology provided a foundation for developing a richer awareness of such forces. Likewise, such practice provided motivation for applying our new learning in our teaching and various living contexts, which all served to develop greater *efficacy* and *generativity* in enacting this learning in our classrooms (Miller et al., 2020).

Application Fueled Further Learning

Applying our new racial literacies knowledge in our classrooms and daily lives not only provided practice in and cementing our learning, but it kept the learning cycle going, fueling further individual and collective learning. This application took place through creating ideas for the classroom, sharing stories about implementing our ideas and plans, and relationship building with each other and with students.

First, ***we created a culture of accountability and motivation by sharing our developing classroom ideas and plans***. Throughout the project, collaborators shared their developing ideas and plans with the group *(reflection-based action)*. By doing this, we provided opportunities to build on each other's ideas and/or to consider applying them in our own contexts *(reflection on action)*. Some of these ideas came from resources we consulted, such as the guest speakers with

whom we spoke. For example, Trustin shared that our growing emphasis on storytelling and his recent learning about culturally responsive teaching inspired him to adapt the structure of his morning meeting time to allow for more concentrated sharing opportunities for his students (7.7.21). Instead of each student sharing for a very brief time, he decided to try having one student assigned to share a story of their choosing each day. Ultimately, his goal was "to build a classroom where they feel comfortable and safe telling their stories" (7.7.21) and grow to respect each other. Later, Joey and Rylie both appreciated the group's focus on storytelling, wanting to consider adapting their own morning meeting time to accommodate for deeper sharing experiences. In doing this, they implemented their *reflection-based actions*. They recalled what they learned about the importance of perspective and authenticity through story and were committed to implementing it for the purpose of equitable teaching.

In addition, by talking frequently about our goals and ideas for the coming school year, we cultivated a sense of collaborative responsibility and accountability to each other from which we built these ideas and implemented them. We got the opportunity to engage in discussing and building on these ideas for a total of nine meetings before the academic year started. While various ideas came up over the course of the project, Trustin primarily focused on adapting his science curriculum and morning meeting. Joey primarily focused on adapting her science curriculum, and continued adapting her recent language arts curriculum adaptations. Rylie primarily focused on using diverse picturebooks to develop her students' social skills and awareness. By sharing developing and new ideas so frequently, we motivated each other to continue building on them and bringing more ideas back to the group to share. In creating and developing these ideas, we provided each other with an opportunity to provide additional input, to borrow ideas for their own contexts, to pull/pool insight from consulted resources, and to build

rapport and accountability with each other. Engaging in this way consistently pushed us to keep moving towards deeper racial literacies development and more equitable teaching practices.

Second, ***by sharing implementation stories, collaborators implicitly showed their racial literacies development***. Sharing our teaching stories provided a foundation for building future experiences to be better or to reflect advancing racial literacies development. Almost every time an implementation story – a story in which a collaborator recounted how implementing a new and resource-informed strategy or lesson manifested in the classroom – was told, the person telling the story would include an explanation of "why" they acted in that way. In highlighting their "why," the collaborators showed evidence of the status of their racial literacies development or general learning *(reflection-based action* and *reflection on action)*. While engaging in *reflective skepticism* also provided some evidence of development, taking action provided a greater indication that growth had occurred. Implementing their learning in certain ways showed others in the group how the collaborator interpreted and enacted what they were learning and showed their evolving commitment to their students.

Being motivated by the students' positive uptake of having the Navajo speaker come the previous year, Joey taught with the book *Code Talkers* (Bruchac, 2006) and stated that "all of my kids were super engaged in that book,...I think us being honest with them about what Native Americans have really been through…got all of them kind of hooked" (6.9.21). She indicated her *why* in these two cases as stemming from her developing priority of authenticity and honesty in the classroom. By the next spring, Joey shared about how her current students reacted to *Code Talkers* in conjunction with connecting the science curriculum more explicitly to Indigenous people and traditions. This time, she added a discussion with her students about the boarding schools where Native Americans were "sent to assimilate them" (4.12.22). She recalled the

students recognizing that such treatment was wrong and that the idea that they might not be able to speak Navajo (and other languages) really angered many of them. She noted:

> it's been really cool to hear how important they realize these aspects of their culture are to them and how important they think it is that other cultures get to keep their culture too, and how wrong they think it is that our country would try to take that away from them (4.12.22).

Here Joey explained what she learned about the students' values and commitments to their, and others', cultures as a result of implementing certain resources in her teaching. Through the changes she made in these three incidents, Joey indicated a growing commitment to bringing in authentic representations of various people groups and histories, as well as a commitment to being honest about historical atrocities with her students. As a result of seeing the strong and positive reactions from the students, her commitment grew to include even more information. Participating in this collaborative with a focus on what we could do to transform our teaching practices made Joey, and the others, amenable to making a deeper commitment to implementing those changes.

In addition, collaborators shared implementation struggles, which showed their interest in pushing toward a certain goal. Trustin expressed some frustration at not being able to complete the integration of science curriculum with the focus on Indigenous peoples as he had planned. He mentioned that he and Joey engaged in planning with two other educators, but because all four educators were trying to plan from the same curriculum, "no one's planning anything" (10.19.21). Rylie also expressed some frustration with not knowing how to have certain conversations about differences with her students because her group of students is "non-diverse" and predominately white (9.19.21). She recalls having to "filter" many things for them because

they did not seem to have the life experience yet to understand certain things about race or differences. In both Trustin and Rylie's challenges, their frustration came from facing demographic or scheduling challenges while wanting to prioritize certain conversations and topics in their classrooms. Such frustrations voiced in the collaborative provided more support and motivation to engage in *creative problem-solving* together to push through these barriers.

Finally, sharing implementation stories from prior experiences showed how the collaborators' development had progressed and influenced future implementation. One example is shown above in Joey's growth over the year regarding conversations about Indigenous groups, but Trustin and Rylie also cited examples that inspired them to make changes in their teaching. First, Rylie recalled a moment during two weeks of substitute teaching in which a student said that she could not play the game with a dice, because it was against her religion (6.9.21). In thinking about this, Rylie examined assumptions she held about western and non-western religion in schools. This *assumption analysis* led to *reflective skepticism* which prepared her to engage in *reflection-based action*. Rylie hoped she could work against ways in which American culture was so "normalized" in schools.

In a second example, reflecting on his first year of teaching, Trustin recalled having interactions with parents who spoke only Spanish. By translating his communications to the parents into Spanish, he learned how valuable such an effort was for those parents. Having personally engaged in analyzing his *assumptions* and in learning more about his *context*, he was preparing for action. His second year, he committed to asking each student for their parents preferred language of communication. These prior experiences grew the collaborator's commitment to pushing against the normalization of certain ways of doing things inside and outside the classroom. Engaging in this cycle of *assumption analysis* and building *context* then

reflection based action repeatedly helped actually make the process more habitual, resulting in more seamless movement through the learning experiences.

Third, ***cultivating relationships with students provided further indication of and motivation for racial literacies development.*** Learning more about student struggles and successes, in light of our collaborative learning, motivated collaborators to invest more in building student relationships. First, collaborators' prior experiences with students, from the 2020-2021 academic year, provided initial motivation for participating in our collaboration. Early on, Trustin shared how his students' experiences led him to change his perspective (4.29.21). While students were engaged in virtual learning during the spring of 2021, one of Trustin's students was expected to complete house work all day long instead of participating in her class Zoom calls. However, learning more about this situation helped Trustin develop a deeper understanding of how much educational expectations can vary for those whose parents are born in the United States and those born in another country. Here again, examining assumptions and learning about the context led to his action. In addition, Joey acknowledged wanting to make room for her students to conduct their own personal research. She shared how a new Afghan refugee joined the class as a student and started sharing information about her family with Joey and her classmates. This prompted Joey to plan a time for her students to engage in this researching and sharing:

> I think that it's really cool if they want to do research on it, since that is such a big current event going on right now…especially if it has something to do with their culture…and getting to learn about the other cultures too…super beneficial for them…understanding what king of things are happening around the world (9.20.21).

Here, Joey shared about how her students' experiences prompted her to create space for the students to share with each other about their cultures and current events important to them. Her reflection led to action. Realizing the consequences of their understandings and actions, collaborators embraced a stronger desire to learn more about how they can bring positive change in students' lives through their own racial literacies development.

In addition, opening up with their students fueled a desire to do even more. Trustin shared a particularly moving experience he had with the whole class, in which he talked about his foster brother's experiences (3.2.22). This invited the students to express how brave they thought Trustin's brother was. Trustin recalled his thoughts:

> I think that opened up a new little gate for one of my students, because then [the student said] "I am in the foster system right now." And I didn't even know that…I just stopped the class… "[I want] to remind you all that our friend right here is sharing a really heavy thing with us right now. So I want you to be respectful of that…this is not easy to share, and the fact that he feels comfortable enough in this classroom to share that with you is really huge"…I think it was the quietest my class has ever been (3.2.22).

Here, Trustin navigated a situation in which he encouraged his students to recognize the weight and value of what their classmate was sharing with all of them. Trustin explained that "this was probably the coolest moment I've had with my kids this year, and it was just really nice because it felt more like a big family rather than just a class" (3.2.22). Having such special conversations with students, which often resulted from the teacher first sharing of themselves with the students, fueled a desire to learn more and provide space for more teacher-student conversations.

By the end of the collaboration, Joey felt very similar about her own learning in the group and how it affected her interactions with students:

> I feel like, by trying to build our racial literacies and become more anti-racist teachers, I think that eventually…we're getting to a point where we are making a bigger impact that these kids will remember and grow up…to make even bigger change that … starts to get rid of institutionalized and societal racism (4.12.22).

Joey summarized it well in stating that their racial literacies development and learning positioned them to provide more lasting positive influence in their students' lives. Engaging experiences with students, whether prior to our group's beginning or during the project, fed the collaborators' desire to go further, learn more, and engage with students at a deeper level. This cycle of learning, reflecting, and acting led to deeper commitments, not only to interrupting racist practices, but to their students (*critical love*).

In summary, this finding confirms that racial literacies development is an ongoing project. Our racial literacies were developed through sharing ideas and implementation stories with each other and by enacting the learning we were currently gaining. Through sharing ideas and implementation stories, we provided opportunities for others to learn through our experiences. We also learned through the *reflection-based actions* we took, specifically when cultivating relationships with students *(critical love)*. Taking part in this cycle of learning and applying fueled a stronger desire to work even harder on our own development and, by default, the development of our students. Sealey-Ruiz's (2020) components of racial literacies development that seem to relate most closely to this finding are *archaeology of the self*, *critical humility*, and *critical love*. Through our sharing and learning, we were able to identify and disrupt biases we currently held *(assumption analysis* and *reflective skepticism)*. Noticing that these deeply embedded beliefs directed how we engaged with students and their parents was part of the work of developing our racial literacies. After identifying that some of these beliefs were

problematic, both *critical love* and *critical humility* positioned us well for further learning. Through our learning, we identified areas we needed to improve and our love for teaching students grew even stronger. Often, when working alone, teachers can stall out when trying to push their individual development forward. However, engaging in collaboration with these three components of racial literacies development pushed us to do more.

Conclusion

Themes for our collaborative work were naturally organized into a focus on participation in the collaboration and learning as a possibility of participating in collaboration. Three particular aspects of our work with each other fueled our participation. First, we sought to build a supportive environment, which included sharing our prior teaching experiences and contexts as a starting point from which to learn. Second, we continued building this supportive environment through accountability. To do this, we cultivated open and reflective spaces. Third, we centered race and racism in our discussions to build our racial literacies, awareness, and confidence. Each of the three methodological strategies proved to be integral in our collaboration towards racial literacies development.

As a result of engaging in this way, we were then able to engage in learning through multiple avenues. First, our individual and collective goals and values drove our learning trajectory. Second, through our sharing and vulnerability, we created opportunities for learning, support, and transformation. Third, we gained practice identifying and understanding injustices through consulting numerous and diverse resources. Finally, our desire to implement our learning in our classrooms and in our daily lives motivated us to continue learning and moving toward transformational teaching practices.

Throughout our collaboration, these methodological strategies and learning opportunities were interwoven in such a way that they could not be effective on their own. Sealey-Ruiz's (2020) components of racial literacies development were evident throughout our collaboration, across methodological strategies and learning opportunities. For example *critical reflection* took place as a result of both the participatory aspects and in the learning. In other words, the participatory aspects set the foundation to engage in learning, by way of *archaeology of the self, critical reflection*, *critical humility*, *historical literacy, critical love*, and through commitments of *interruption*.

Similarly, using Miller and colleagues' model as an additional lens through which we interpreted the data showed how making space for reflective and critical conversations laid the foundations for engaging in *assumption analysis*, *contextual awareness*, and *reflective skepticism*. These three contributed to continuing the *awakening* process that began before our collaboration, the *ideological becoming*, as well as the process of *internalizing* our new learning. As we progressed through the collaboration, elements of this becoming and awakening continued through the *assumptions* we had previously left un-analyzed. However, we also continued to work up the ladder through *reflective skepticism* and *reflection-based action*, with *reflection-on action* to engage in *problem solving* towards interrupting racist practices. Engaging in this continuous cycle of analyzing assumptions, gaining context, and reflecting and acting produced a greater sense of *efficacy* in each of us. Also, by engaging in this cycle on a regular basis, we were gaining a keener sensitivity to race and racism around us. This heightened sensitivity then made progressing through this continuous cycle toward action easier and less intimidating, and ultimately more prepared and equipped for enacting this learning in our teaching and daily lives.

These findings illustrate how important the foundational work of examining our assumptions (archaeology of self), gaining contextual awareness (historical literacy), and instilling habits of reflective skepticism, reflection-based actions, and reflection on actions (critical reflection) were for these collaborators movements toward more effective action for interrupting racist practices and systems. While the work of archaeology of the self, historical literacy, and critical reflection never end, these elements must be practiced in order for action to result. However, part of engaging in this work in collaboration that was integral to our growth was the environment we established. We came to the group because of a lack of external support in this particular area of development, so establishing trust and rapport for and with each other was vital. Continuing our learning together was fueled through the consistency in which we engaged in reflection. This consistency provided an element of accountability. As white educators, we are not often held accountable for our ignorance by those around us, so we needed to intentionally create a more accountable space. Not only is racial literacies development a journey, but continuing intentionally in that journey towards enacting antiracist practices requires support and accountability, two components that were absent in both Sealey-Ruiz's and Miller and colleagues' models. With proper support, consistency, and accountability, one can engage in racial literacies development in ways that sensitize them to the manifestations of the constructions of race around them, and in turn, expedite the reflection + action process.

Chapter 5: Discussion

In this chapter, I highlight three grand themes that encapsulate the findings discussed in the previous chapter as components of conducting and participating in a racial literacies collaborative. Second, I discuss how the data presented in these grand themes relates to scholarship on racial literacies and racial literacies development. Third, I outline a number of implications, starting with implications related to collaboratives followed by implications related to research. Throughout the implications, I note a few limitations we experienced in our collaborative work toward racial literacies development.

Discussion of Themes and Findings

This qualitative research study investigated how early career teachers engaged in racial literacies development through collaboration. Utilizing a participatory action research approach, I examined the nature of the collaboration as well as the learning that occurred from February of 2021 through July of 2022. The following research question guided this study: How do white early career teachers engage in racial literacies development in a collaborative group? I consider such a collaboration to consist of two main components, as outlined in the previous chapter: (1) the nature of participating in a collaborative group and (2) the learning possibilities that came from such participation (see Figure 1). However, from this combination of collaborative participation and the learning possibilities that arose out of that came a number of themes within each of the two categories. We found seven findings – (1) prior experiences and teaching contexts, (2) reflective spaces, (3) centering race and racism, (4) goals and values, (5) sharing and vulnerability, (6) resource consulting, and (7) application. Across these seven findings, I found that racial literacies development consisted of three main themes – knowledge, processes, and commitment – which all point to racial literacies development as being a fluid and ongoing journey (see Figure 1). In the following sections, I put these three themes in conversation with

the data and theory, while support, accountability, and consistency are blended in as the lifeblood of the development.

Figure 1

Composition of Racial Literacies Development

Racial Literacies Development Consists of a Knowledge Set

Racial literacy is most often associated with acquiring or having a specific knowledge set related to race and racism. While racial literacies development requires more than a knowledge base, historical and contemporary knowledge of race/ism must provide a baseline for any attempt at moving toward greater racial literacies development. In this study, attention to developing a knowledge set came through a number of our project's components: consulting resources, acquiring related terminology and language, and practicing how to identify race/ism and connect it to our own contexts. First, consulting resources offered us multiple opportunities to practice identifying and connecting instances of race/ism that either we, students, authors, guest speakers,

or colleagues had experienced. These resources consisted of scholarly articles, podcasts, books, guest speakers, and videos (see Appendix L).

We attempted to select a variety of resources to provide us with an array of contexts from which we could learn in order to give us a wider and more nuanced understanding of race/ism as well as racial and racialized identities. Scholars caution against limiting race conversations and racial literacy to a matter of Black or white racial experiences (e.g., Grayson, 2017). Thus, in order to understand white supremacy's reach, we needed to consult resources that spoke to white supremacy's racializing agenda across multiple ethnic and Indigenous groups, both historical and contemporary. Rodriguez and Swalwell (2021) discussed how important it is for teachers to understand racism in its historical and contemporary forms, and across a range of contexts and groups. Secondly, Hawkman (2019) discussed how exposure to anti-racist content does not guarantee an educator's ability to enact such anti-racism in their teaching. Thus, Hawkman (2022) exhorted educators to "interact with materials that provide examples of anti-racist praxis" (p. 174). In light of these and similar works focused on teachers developing their racial literacies and becoming anti-racist educators, we attempted to give special attention to the sources we chose. Finally, Sealey-Ruiz's (2020) racial literacies development framework speaks to the importance of developing *historical literacy*. In order to develop this "rich and contextual awareness of the historical forces" (p. 6) that shape our society and experiences, resource consulting is warranted.

Second, by continuously and consistently centering race/ism in our conversations, while also learning through various outside resources, we developed a more informed language set to use when discussing race/ism and racial injustices in conversation with each other and those outside the collaborative. For example, we learned the sociopolitical implications of using words

such as *tribal* to describe Native and Indigenous groups. We also learned that specificity is preferred when referring to someone who identifies as Indigenous. Similarly, we learned to question how the language we were so accustomed to using when discussing race and racism, in effect, communicated deficit messages about our students or other historically marginalized individuals and communities. Developing this language for communicating in more racially literate ways parallels Stevenson's (2014) theorization of racial literacy. He used the phrase "read, recast, and resolve" (p. 18) to describe how one should approach and "resolve racially stressful situations " (p. 18). Learning how to resolve such situations with our students, school staff, colleagues, and friends requires that we learn how to use language appropriately. Pushing each other to practice expressing how we experienced situations and what we learned from it helped us build the related vocabulary. While gaining a specific, yet nuanced knowledge set regarding racial literacies provided a baseline from which we developed greater understanding of race/ism and communication skills.

Racial Literacies Development Gained Through Process

For many, the hardest part of engaging in racial literacies development is starting. Yet, scholarship, and for many of us, conviction pushes us to realize that it is past time that we start. Gary Howard's (1999) book title – *We Can't Teach What We Don't Know* – summarizes a common experience among white teachers teaching diverse populations. Secondly, Rich Milner's (2010) work – *Start Where You Are, But Don't Stay There* – speaks to educators who may think they have done enough toward addressing racial injustice simply by starting. But Milner pushed the idea that this learning is very much a process, and is never quite complete. Understanding that race is a construct that changes over time, ebbing and flowing with certain sociopolitical agendas constantly at work, warrants our continued search for deeper learning and

understanding. For us, this process involved attending to how we entered the collaboration, cultivated habits of reflection and sharing, refined our goals and understanding, built relationships for accountability and motivation, and engaged in classroom implementation to test our learning.

Just as Milner's book title suggests, we must start the process *and* keep going. This learning is a never ending process, which, in our project, required that we attended to how our learning invited us to refine our learning and teaching goals. As we entered the collaboration, with the experiences we brought with us as well as our values, we understood our goals for learning and teaching in one way. But, by engaging in multiple learning opportunities, we grew to see how our current understandings were not only incomplete, but often skewed toward deficit or racist narratives we grew up hearing.

As part of this process, we established norms of engagement by building relationships with one another. Through building relationships, we also built rapport, which provided an avenue for engaging in vulnerability and accountability. We shared our experiences, challenges, insecurities, and missteps along the way. Sharing these pushed us to be both supportive and accountable to each other for moving us all toward our collective goal of doing better and being better for all of our students. Being part of an affinity group, all identifying as white and coming from fairly insulated backgrounds, we understood the need to be willing to hold each other accountable for the ways in which we engaged with each other (Michael and Conger, 2009) and worked to learn about the effects of whiteness and white supremacy on not only our collaborative space but society as well.

Throughout the process, we cultivated habits of reflection, whether this was reflecting on our own implicit biases, classroom experiences, out-of-school experiences, questions, resources,

or backgrounds. Establishing reflection as a norm, invited us to practice looking inward, determining what it was that needed to be unearthed, unlearned, changed, and implemented. Sealey-Ruiz (2020) called this *critical reflection* – examining the layers of our identities and determining how our positions in society affect our learning and implementation of racial literacies. Ender (2022) considered critical reflection as the accounting of "personal and professional experiences with race and racism" (p. 150) which leads teachers to consider the "roles of race and racism" with education and their lives. He claimed that by utilizing Smyth's (1989) four step concept of critical reflection – creating personal narratives, using narratives to examine themselves, confronting forces that reinforce inequalities, and providing examples of self-governance – teachers can "use the power of their words to reconstruct teacher development actively" (p. 151). We utilized a similar process by first sharing our backgrounds, working to identify biases we held/hold, and considering our own positionalities, all of which mimic Sealey-Ruiz's (2020) *archeology of the self*. Following this, we examined how we could collectively push each other toward greater racial literacies.

Furthermore, scholars suggest that in order to turn this critical reflection into critical pedagogy (Milner, 2012), educators must "connect praxis to the lives of students, reflect on power structures, and encourage critical thinking and political action" (Hawkman, 2022). Thus, the classroom implementation marked another component along the cycle of this process. Scholars have long claimed that our field has a wide chasm between theory and practice. Freire (1970) referred to bridging the two – theory and practice – as praxis. This praxis is often created most effectively in teacher education programs considering preservice teachers are learning in the college classrooms through their coursework (theory) while serving as interns enacting this learning (practice) in the primary or secondary classrooms. In terms of racial literacies

development and anti-racist teaching practices, Patterson (2022) suggested that preservice teachers can "reflect on their practices and research racial inequities or racial justice initiatives at their clinical placements" (p. 199). The goal of such work is to "equip preservice teachers with the tools to observe, reflect, and engage in racial justice in schools" (p. 199) and essentially help teachers "develop the skills to read racism but also do something about it" (p. 199). While Patterson was speaking specifically about preservice teachers, by learning in collaboration with early career teachers, we hoped to engage in this anti-racist praxis and racial literacies development by learning together in an out-of-school space, in order to inform action taken in-school space. According to Price-Dennis and Sealey-Ruiz (2021), the natural progression for teachings engaging in RLsD is a "(re)examination of what and how they are teaching, and a deliberate development of culturally responsive educational approaches in their classroom…[and] create a foundation for equitable practices in their classroom" (p. 22). Thus, by engaging in racial literacies development, and ultimately working toward implementing our learning in our various teaching contexts, we aimed to bring this process full circle.

Racial Literacies Development Requires Commitment

In this collaboration project, participants' prior experiences and upbringing, as well as their rationales for participating, and personal values all affected their levels of commitment to their racial literacies development. Consistent with scholarship (i.e., Stevenson, 2014, debating racial illiteracy), we attended to how our prior experiences and biases were affecting the lens through which we viewed our students and our teaching. Grayson (2018) suggested that reflection is an integral step in teaching and writing for racial literacy practice. She suggested asking such questions as "what do you bring to the classroom? What do you want to provide for your students? What do you still need to learn?" (p. 17) as providing a starting point for

educators to consider as they attend to their own development. This questioning and reflection is also an integral component of Helms' (1990) theorization of racial identity development, in which a person progresses toward greater awareness and understanding of their own and others' racial identities. Helms claimed one must engage in the "questioning of the racial realities the person has been taught to believe" (p. 58) in order to progress toward dissonance. Like in racial identity development, this questioning and reflecting on one's experiences, biases, and identity must be sustained throughout racial literacies development. We could not lose sight of where we came from, otherwise, we would lose sight of exactly where we wanted and needed to go. Engaging in continual reflection and questioning helped us do this.

The commitment for each collaborator may have varied across the time period from February of 2021 to July of 2022 due to a myriad of reasons – lack of school or personal support, being overwhelmed with teaching tasks, adrenal fatigue, discouragement, etc. – but, because we shared this commitment we continued to meet and support each other throughout the process. Katsarou et al. (2010) acknowledged that teachers need support from like-minded educators when working toward change within school settings. Similarly, Patterson (2022) suggested that "In order to act and improve practice, teachers need support to engage in critical reflection in the profession" (p. 201). Such support was found in this affinity grouping of white educators, three of whom were early career teachers in elementary contexts. Hawkman (2022) spoke specifically to the importance of establishing "racial affinity spaces for preservice teachers with shared racial identities to process their racial knowledge and reflections" (p. 171, see also Blitz & Kohl, 2012). In this group, while we were not specifically aiming to create a racial affinity group, our participation matches Blitz and Kohl's (2012) definition of affinity groups since we regularly "discussed dynamics of institutional racism, oppression, and privilege" (p. 481).

This leads to an additional consideration in this collaborative work – consistency and frequency. Rodriguez (2022) suggested that

> For individuals whose experiences are always centered and regarded as the norm, clear and continuous conversations around bias, microaggressions, and macroaggressions are essential. Simply attending to privilege, stereotypes, and discrimination in a single multicultural education class will not adequately prepare prospective teachers to engage in anti-racist and decolonial practices. (p. 84)

We began this work upon the premise that the teacher education courses these educators took did not adequately prepare them for applying the theoretical learning in their own classroom contexts. In addition, they recognized the need to continue their learning beyond their college coursework. By engaging in frequent and continuous conversations around race and racism, we were able to continue the work begun in their teacher education programs, but specifically apply them to concrete contexts, rather than the abstract contexts often drawn upon in the program.

Finally, we shared a commitment to centering race/ism as a focus for our learning, as well as a focus on attending to perspective-taking, authenticity, and representation in not only our learning but our teaching as well. Also present was an element of commitment to implementing our learning in our various teaching contexts. While the element of bridging theory and practice was mentioned earlier, this commitment to engaging in constructing and refining this *bridge* required what Sealey-Ruiz (2020) referred to as *critical humility* and *interruption*. While we came together initially under the premise of interrupting racism in our own personal minds and lives, we grew to consider what it would mean to interrupt racism on a more systemic level, starting with our classroom and moving beyond. This commitment to interrupt racism, while it may have waxed and waned throughout the process, remained in our

minds beyond the end of the project. This commitment led us to the resources we consulted and pushed us beyond our initial goals. Secondly, this commitment requires humility. We came in with limited experience and racial understanding and knew that we had much to learn. We hoped that attempting to adopt and approach this work with a humble disposition and a commitment to learn would work hand-in-hand to lead us beyond any confidence or arrogance we may have gained through the learning process. While we had reason to be more confident as we learned more, we needed to remain humble considering this was the beginning of an unending journey toward greater learning.

Racial Literacies Development as a Journey

These findings led to the realization that we could not actually attain racial literacies as an end or outcome. We gained knowledge. We engaged in a long-term process together. We committed to the work that we were doing. However, we agree that we are no closer to being *racially literate* than we were at the beginning because attaining racial literacies is unlike attaining an academic degree or completing a year of teaching. Rather, racial literacies development is something one engages in – all the while seeking knowledge, maintaining commitment, and moving through the cyclical process. While we believe we all made progress, which was evident in the ways we adapted our behavior and reactions to race/ism both inside and outside of the classroom, we could not *complete* the task. Racial literacies development is rather a lifelong commitment to engaging in the process and gaining understanding.

This fluidity was/is manifest through the knowledge sought and gained, through the commitment to learning, and throughout the process. The way we experienced fluidity was scaffolded by using Sealey-Ruiz's (2020) six components of racial literacies development. First, the commitment to *interrupting* race/ism ebbed and flowed depending on a number of factors,

including what was learned through resources, what other tasks we had ahead of us, or what happened around us. For example, the racist atrocities dealt as a result of either historical or contemporary events, such as learning about the atrocities documented at the Indigenous boarding schools, deepened our commitment to this work.

Second, excavating our own backgrounds and biases (*archaeology of the self*) occurred throughout the process, but it was not always something that was planned or included on our meeting agendas after the first few meetings. Instead, reflecting on one's background often came naturally as new learning provoked certain thoughts or feelings. Engaging in this deep dive strengthened skills required for *critical reflection*. This aspect of critical reflection existed for us as a "cyclical process of (re)examining perceptions, beliefs, and actions relating to race" (Price-Dennis & Sealey-Ruiz, 2021, p. 286). With each passing meeting, critical reflection was the normal avenue through which we engaged in conversation. Yet, this reflection was not limited to our allotted meeting time, but was instead a skill and habit that was developed across our daily lives. Critical reflection became almost involuntary. Once we turned it on, it stayed on as long as we made space for it. The need to engage in ongoing critical reflection extends to the consideration of changes in communities we have, whether resulting from a geographical move, a new group of students each year, a newly-settled refugee student, or other change. As Boutte (2021) states, racial literacy is not a prescription, but must be tailored to present circumstances and communities.

Next, *historical literacy* and *critical humility* went hand in hand, teaching us about all that we had yet to learn. Inherent in this learning was adopting a stance that what we "'assume[d] to know' about race [was] faulty and incomplete" (p. 286). We needed the historical context to understand how race/ism functions today. This search for historical literacy was/is an ongoing

process considering that each passing day adds another line to our histories. With new trends, presidential administrations, shifting social dynamics, and more, we had (will have) to continue to attend to history in the making, and always position ourselves as learners. Finally, *critical love* was cultivated continuously through the interactions we had with each other, our students (and new students every academic year), our families, and friends. Contributing to this was the empathy, compassion, perspective-taking, and understanding built through our reading, listening, and watching.

While development may seem stagnant, I understand rather that development is a fluid journey – all the while ebbing and flowing with every new experience, critical reflective thought, humbling circumstance, and more.

Limitations

The findings in this study, but perhaps more importantly, my personal experience as a white facilitator in a collaboration of white teachers, brings me to acknowledge certain limitations of using such a collaborative approach in a white affinity grouping.

First, while the relational and trust-building components of participatory action research were invaluable in forming our collaborative, maintaining this trust can present certain challenges. Maintaining trust and relationship becomes tricky when trying to make decisions about when to push the conversation in a certain direction, when to challenge what was shared, or when to remain silent and see how things unfold. For example, there were times I wanted to tread lightly with questions I asked or ways that I pushed back on some statements offered, primarily because I did not want to damage the relationships. My primary goal, in the beginning, was to encourage further conversation and investment in each other. I thought that if I pushed too hard too soon, that conversation could shut down and quickly become unproductive. Building

trust prevented me from "exposing" certain statements that I would have been challenging silently in my mind but refrain from doing out loud. In the beginning, I found myself frequently holding back a follow up question I had, yet as time progressed and as relationships got stronger, these initially unspoken follow-up questions were spoken.

Second, I must also be transparent about my own insecurities and ignorance. The previous statements about holding back might give me more credit than I am due. There were certainly moments when I questioned or became more aware of my own limited racial knowledge or understanding. I questioned whether I was the "right" person to be facilitating such a group. In other words, I wondered if this group was just a case of the ignorant leading the ignorant. Of course this motivated me to learn more on my own in order to have more knowledge to share with the group, yet there were also many constraints on my time (such as simultaneous family and doctoral program obligations). So while there were moments when I held back from saying something out loud, there were also moments when I made excuses for not going further. In my own personal research journal, I noted questioning whether we were doing enough: "Are we doing enough to address and learn about race/racism to develop our racial literacies?" (1/15/22). My own insecurities continued to come out as we progressed:

> What happens when you realize you really AREN'T prepared to notice things or respond in the moment. There are so many times when I hear or see something and want to react one way, but end up thinking through it and doing better after a moment of reflection/time (2/15/22).

I often asked myself if I was doing enough or if I should have thought this through better or done more to prepare for facilitating such a group. Yet, I continued to circle back to the fact that we EACH need to continue developing our racial literacies, myself certainly included in that. While

some conversations would have proceeded differently if one more knowledgeable than myself were directing the conversations, I am confident that we were all still accomplishing the overall goal of developing.

Third, considering that we each identified as being white and acknowledged that we each had limited racial experiences, I wondered how conversations might have changed had we always had either white collaborators with deeper understandings of race than we did or had teachers of color in our group. Of course, one of the reasons why racial affinity groupings can be successful is because members of one racial grouping might feel less inhibited or intimidated by the presence of members of other racial groupings. Yet, one pitfall of such groupings is not benefitting from the knowledge shared between or across members of various racial groupings. Racial groups are far from monolithic, yet, I am sure that our conversations exhibited only as much knowledge as we had between the four of us at any point in time. For example, we could not necessarily push each other beyond the limits of our own understanding. Whereas, perhaps a member from another racial grouping or another white person with greater racial background experiences could have pushed us in ways we did not know to go. For example, perhaps our sense of urgency to develop our racial literacies was not as heightened considering the privilege we had to just "table the conversation". Throughout the second half of the project, this continued to come back to my mind:

> We get to say "no, not today". That, in and of itself, is disturbing and wrong. Where do you divide teacher well-being and privilege of taking a break? How are we treating the well-being of scholars and teachers of color who are inundated daily with messages that are developing their own racial literacy and damaging or hurting them in various ways (2/1/22).

Secondly, I often thought about how often we might be colluding in our experiences as white teachers rather than pushing each other forward. Hurd and McIntyre's (1996) work point to how McIntyre found herself aligning and colluding in a problematic expression of whiteness/ ignorance in characterizing practices of certain Black folks. Reading this realization of hers caused me to question how we might need to attend to how many times this happens in our own conversations: "Where is collusion, and emphasizing similarity, overtaking the RLD work we are trying to work toward?" (1/17/22). As we learned more, we certainly realized that we were much more ignorant than we thought we were at the start.

Thus, while PAR and affinity groupings offer many affordances to this type of collaborative and developmental work, I wanted to point out a few areas to attend to for others who might want to pursue such collaboratives going forward and might imagine ways to counter these limitations.

Implications

The findings in this study offer important implications for engaging in racial literacies development with early career teachers, especially when done so through collaboration. Recommendations are provided for early career educators collaborating toward their own racial literacies development, staff and administrators working on teacher induction processes, and researchers conducting collaborative research.

Implications for Early Career Teachers Engaged in Collaboration

First, the findings in this study offer implications for early career teachers wanting to launch their own collaborative development groups.

Remain fluid and flexible with the group's direction. As one who started this collaboration based on an initial noticing that the teacher education program was limiting their

racial literacies focus to "Black and white," I found myself constantly shifting and re-phrasing the focus of the project as we progressed (Research journal, 6.10.21). For a time, it seemed that *my* focus – as the facilitator, university partner, and doctoral student – was to study how the collaborators experienced racial/ethnic/Indigenous literacies development, while *their* focus was centered on how they could redesign their curriculum with a lens for racial literacies development. As the facilitator, I fought the urge to step in and push them to conform to a certain focus area, but I also needed to work on refining and defining my own focus area. Even six months into the collaboration, I made a personal note to spend some time outlining exactly how I understood "racial literacies" (Research journal, 9.2.21). As time passed and with every meeting we held, we worked to refine these goals and focus areas, each of us pursuing areas we knew we needed to learn. Even though we had different goals within racial literacies development and started with a "rough" idea of our focus, we were each growing and contributing to each other's growth.

Likewise, early career teachers may become aware of their own needs or areas for improvement, but they only have an initial idea of what that growth area might entail. Only having a rough or initial idea should not deter teachers from collaborating in order to refine what that focus is and how to address it. It is vital to highlight that racial literacies development is a long road and requires learning along the way in order to then learn more, but it is equally vital to ensure the proper support and accountability are present.

Attend to self care. While commitment to growth and to the collaboration is essential, part of this commitment is attending to each other's needs and capacities. Throughout the collaboration, there were times I struggled to be "with it" and to put as much into this project as I had intended (Research journal, 9.2.21). In addition, conducting collaborative research with

teachers during a pandemic warranted that we attend to how we could care for each other in such a transitional and chaotic time. It is important to consider how such national events impact teacher well-being and how well-being impacts our ability to work and engage with each other.

In addition, attention to self care is not necessarily equal for all involved. For example, Rylie was carrying a heavy load considering she was engaging in this collaboration during her first year of full-time teaching. Because of this, we had conversations about tailoring her role in the collaboration as a space and time for her to learn and absorb what she could from resources and each other's stories. Perhaps expecting the input from each teacher to be equal was unrealistic and disrespectful to Rylie. Trustin and Joey had greater capacity to contribute in collaboration considering they had spent a whole year already building their confidence in teaching and in managing the workload. Thus, for those looking to create similar collaborative development groups, be sure to invite the first-year teachers to participate by attending and contributing according to their ability. While those more experienced teachers might have more capacity, it is important to include check-in points to reevaluate everyone's commitment and capacity..

While self care and "taking a step back" or "taking a breather" may be important, it is also important to acknowledge the "privilege" some have of being able to put such a thing as racial literacies development "on hold." Members of historically marginalized communities are not able to put their racial literacies development on the shelf simply because they are busy or are "not in the mood." It is rather a daily reality. During this study, there were times when we slowed down or moved on to "tackle" other things like a writing project, acting as if we had the luxury to table race or racism for a more convenient time. Such an attitude reinforces the privilege we have as white folks who don't have to daily reckon with the reality of white

supremacy in either its institutionalized or individualized forms. Thus, it is important to ask how one balances their own well-being with the "privilege" to take a break.

There is power in numbers. Teachers are better together. As the saying goes – one fish is not going to do anything to move a boat, but a whole school of fish can move the boat (personal communication with Brianne Pitts, 7.20.22). Working independently towards greater racial literacies is not going to get us to where we need to be, but working together can provide a greater chance of us growing stronger, diving deeper, and implementing more effectively. Of course, an important consideration in working together is finding like-minded people also committed to the work – swimming "upstream" together. It may be hard for teachers to keep each other accountable, considering they are not paid for the time spent in collaboration and motivation to invest time in learning is often limited to personal reasons or commitments.

In addition, we gained a wider scope of learning about race/ism through continually sharing about our past and recent classroom experiences. This allowed us to build off of more than just our own immediate contexts and imagine other strategies, books, and resources to use in our own context. Yet we would issue a caution to others wanting to engage in this collaborative learning environment focused on developing racial literacies, as we learned more, we realized how much *more* we still needed to learn. This was humbling and empowering work.

Turn learning into action. After listening to a sermon on the radio after picking up my children from daycare, I was struck with the mention of the need to be not only a "hearer" but a "do-er" (Research journal, 2.1.22). Likewise, a large purpose of engaging in participatory *action* research is to move beyond hearing to acting. This is a large critique in research right now as well – "what are people *doing* with what they learn about race and racism?" Engaging together towards this goal of acting upon our learning helped us build rapport with one another as well.

We fumbled through our implementation at times, but we continued to engage in sharing about these daily in-school and out-of-school experiences with race/ism. Towards the end of our time together and through practicing such implementation, we built enough context to be able to identify and understand racist comments and talk about race with students.

Engage in deep reflection. This implication refers to reflecting on one's background, identities, and biases, as well as how whiteness might be reified in conversations within a white affinity group. I believe that spending so much time reflecting on our own biases, upbringings, and miseducation created more capacity for growing our commitment and racial literacies development. The "self" had to be excavated to increase our learning and commitment productivity. Continuing to engage in reflection throughout the collaboration allowed us to refine this skill.

Secondly, as Alice McIntyre recalled from her own work in a white affinity grouping, sharing with each other can easily lead to collective blaming, shifting of blame, claiming guilt (without action), and fueling a problematic fire by adding related stories. In this participatory action research group, McIntyre found herself aligning and colluding in a problematic expression of whiteness and ignorance in characterizing practices of Black people – upholding how the white person saw it. I grew aware of how this was occurring in our own group, to some degree, questioning "where is collusion, and emphasizing similarity overtaking the racial literacies development work we are trying to work toward?" (2.1.22). This leads directly into the next point.

Carefully select your collaborators and supporters (when possible). Thankfully there is scholarship (e.g., Annamma, et al., 2017) that suggests many white people are moving from a "color-evasive" stance to a more receptive stance regarding racism, but such efforts are often

examples of shallow performativity (e.g., Phillips, 2020) and do not lead to lasting shifts toward antiracism. Therefore, allies must take care in choosing those supports, because each can influence their development. For example, in our collaboration, we each came with various levels of commitments and experiences on which we sought to build. This variety helped push us all in different ways, but we wonder how this would have been different had we also had a seasoned educator or scholar in our group. How would that have pushed us differently?

Implications for Preservice Teacher Education Faculty

Second, the findings in this study offer a few implications for faculty in higher education who work with preservice teachers and undergraduate students in teacher education programs:

Highlight and exemplify the importance of knowing one's context. In this project, we found that knowing our own contexts helped us learn better how to adapt our implementation as well as learn from a greater range of contexts. Teachers must attend to their classroom context to be adequately prepared to teach their students. This idea of context includes the students' cultures, languages, histories, nationalities, and more. Such context can be embraced through the next point.

Encourage small group discussions. As in our group, teachers can maximize their learning by specifically learning from each others' experiences. This positions undergraduate students and preservice teachers as experts of *their own* experiences, thus validating what they have learned but also helping them see varied perspectives of such experiences.

Emphasize the power of story and perspective in coursework. In her book *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain*, Hammond (2012) emphasizes the power of story to transform one's thinking. We experienced this transformative power of stories in our collaboration, both by listening to stories shared through various avenues (guest speakers,

students, colleagues, authors, podcasters, etc.) and by sharing our own stories. By focusing on the power of story and perspective, undergraduate students and preservice teachers continue building awareness and commitment to their students.

Implications for School Staff Working On Teacher Induction

Third, the findings in this study offer a few implications for school staff working with early career teachers through induction programs and processes.

Invite teacher-led *participatory* development. I am certainly not an expert in professional development or in racial literacies development, but I do strongly believe that educators and schools need to look to more grassroots models of professional development such that anyone can take initiative in jumpstarting a group. Adjusting professional development expectations to position and center teachers (novice teachers included) as experts can instill greater motivation to participate and deeper learning. To support this, schools must include this teacher-led participatory development as part of their required, day-time professional development time. Such groups can provide support to both veteran teachers (for learning about new and innovative strategies) and for early career teachers (for finding their footing in their new positions). An additional consideration could be to encourage same-school or same-district groups so that teachers can continue conversations and development outside of the allotted time.

Allow teacher group independence in determining focus area. While racial literacies development was my/our goal and such development was evident throughout the process, it certainly was not all that we developed. A lot of conversation revolved around things not specifically or solely related to race, but were often tangentially related. Those tangential stories or topics should still be welcome because they help continue to build rapport amongst the group and reinforce the intersectional realities in which our students find themselves. Most topics

should be considered as intersectional, considering the multiple factors that play into social and educational dynamics experienced in daily life. For example, racial literacies include numerous topics (i.e., ability, gender, faith, etc.) that intersect with race and affect how race functions in the classrooms and in society. Encouraging this more intersectional mindset amongst the groups can motivate teachers to learn about their focus area and far beyond – seeing the forest, rather than just the trees. Finally, instilling a habit of personal and collective reflection in such groups will not only aid the learning and development process within the group during the allotted time, but will likely become a habit the teachers take with them.

Implications for Collaborative Research

The findings in this study also offer implications for those engaged in educational research in collaborative settings.

Attend to collaborator and researcher contexts. Teaching contexts are often abstract or distant to undergraduate students and preservice teachers when progressing through coursework in their teacher education programs. Even when they observe and student-teach in the classroom, they are often limited to a few days to a few weeks. For example, preservice teachers often experience temporary field contexts or an abstract context given in coursework, preventing them from digging deep enough to enact real change with students once they are given the opportunity. In this study, it was apparent how important collaborators' immediate contexts were to pushing our learning forward. In this study, the teachers had an immediate context (their own classrooms) in mind when they made plans for implementing their learning (Research journal, 10.6.21). This collaborating and coaching each other *in* and *through* experiences-in-context was vital. Secondly, attending to the variety of contexts represented within a collaborative is beneficial for widening the scope of learning for each of the collaborators. The topic of race/ism

and racial literacies was relevant in each context, but it was important to learn about how it functioned differently.

Provide space for collaborator independence, as part of collaboration. While the focus of this project was explicitly collaboration, development occurred at the individual level as well. One way to attend to this independent-collaborative duality is by encouraging different focus areas for the individuals within the collaborative group focus. Each teacher choosing a unique focus area within the larger umbrella could make collaboration more valuable to their learning and their time. We hoped to provide flexibility in the collaborators' choice of focus area and choice of how they implemented their learning. After all, this independent-collaborative strategy upholds the view that our research, as educational researchers, is also pedagogy.

As part of attending to the individual in this project, I conducted individual interviews, the first of which focused on collaborator upbringing, positionality, and bias, and the second highlighted the learning that took place throughout the collaboration. While this was beneficial at the individual level, perhaps it would have been helpful to have them share more of their educational backgrounds with each other in a group setting to better understand each other's origins.

Attend to collaborators' workload. Albeit brief, I think this is an important factor to consider when engaged in collaborative research. While we wanted to dive deeper into one particular resource (i.e., book study) throughout the school year, teacher workload warranted that we take a step back and instead engage in focusing more on sharing independent learning and classroom experiences. In addition, we wanted to engage in more frequent reflections, but teacher overload contributed to limiting the text "check-in's" to bimonthly or monthly instead of weekly. Teachers' energy and time are highly taxed, as it is. Encouraging engagement in an non-

paid, optional collaboration sometimes precludes researchers' and collaborators' ability to stick to initial participation expectations. However, attending to the needs of those in the group can contribute to greater trust and rapport among the collaborators.

Engage in collaboration throughout the process. While the findings point to how impactful it was to engage in collaboration across the summer and academic year, collaborating throughout the data analysis process was additionally impactful for the teachers. For the teachers, engaging in data analysis through open-coding while reading through the transcripts of our meetings and interviews provided an additional layer of learning and reflection. It helped them identify how they had grown as well as what areas they wish to pursue in the coming weeks. Reich (2022) suggested that this process of analyzing and discussing findings together is also part of the process of racial literacies development. Overall, the consensus from the group was that this group analysis provided greater motivation and more lasting value to what we produced together. It ultimately motivated them to move this forward in their own school contexts. Thus, if the collaborators are willing to engage in the analysis process, regardless of their possible lack of data analysis experience, engaging in collaborative data analysis is enlightening for all parties.

Implications for the Current Social, Political, and Educational Climate

In the introduction of my dissertation, I briefly alluded to the change in climate teachers have experienced in schools posing certain challenges. Especially in Missouri, where this study was based, teachers are left with a decision of whether or not to resist legislation being passed down that states they cannot speak about race and racism in the classroom. Secondly, if they choose that it is important to continue having conversations about race and racism in order to acknowledge their students' lived experiences, they are left trying to navigate how they can do so

without losing their jobs. In addition to teachers' response to the changes in the political landscape, the demographic and educational landscape have changed as well.

For example, immigration rates have doubled since 1990 which naturally increased the racial diversity in schools. By 2017, 49% of the total student population in the U.S. was coming from racially or ethnically marginalized backgrounds (de Brey et al., 2019). In addition, policies for standardization and accountability such as No Child Left Behind have driven schools to narrow their focus, thus eliminating much promotion of racial equity, diversity, and justice (Royal & Gibson, 2017). Finally, the "re-emergence of white supremacism and of intensified racial conflict" (Pei, 2017, p. 592) threatens the political and social landscape. The presidency of Donald Trump led to a resurgence of hate crimes spurred by anti-Black racism and white nationalism.

Such changes in the social, political, and educational landscape in which teachers and students currently live make it difficult to have productive conversations about race and racism, let alone engage actively in racial literacies development. While these shifts essentially call for greater attention to building such racial literacies, I would be remiss to not acknowledge how difficult it can be for teachers to pursue such development in particular contexts.

Summary

Overall, the study provides insights for teachers interested in continuing their development, teacher educators working to prepare pre-service teachers for the sociopolitical classroom, and researchers looking to engage in collaborative research for teacher development. In this study, we found racial literacies development to evolve and progress due to knowledge(s), process, commitment, and the added motivation from support, accountability, and consistency. While we all developed in what we thought were positive ways throughout the process, we also

learned and now offer to teachers some important questions and dynamics to consider as they engage in a similar collaborative process in order to move beyond shallow performativity.

Appendix

Appendix A

Data Sources and Timeline

February-March 2021: recruitment

- Individual interviews (3) *not transcribed*

April-May 2021: forming goals and planning steps, summer meetings

- Focus group conversations (3)

June-August 2021: 8 weeks

- Individual interviews (3)
- Focus group conversations (8) - including guest speakers' insights

September 2021-May 2022: instruction and discussion, implementation of new learning

- September - December 2021
    - Weekly text message reflection check ins (10-11 per person)
    - Monthly focus group conversations (3)
    - Written reflections within book chapter (3)
- January - May 2022: continued conversations
    - Focus group conversation (4) to continue discussions, including
        - Book Club - Love's *We Want to do More Than Survive*

June - July 2022: final debrief and analysis

- Final focus group conversation (2)
- Final individual interviews (3)

Personal memo's throughout

TOTALS:

- Individual interviews - 9 (only 6 transcribed)

- Focus group conversations - 20
- Text strings (brief reflections) - 30
- Written reflections - 3
- Personal memos

Appendix B

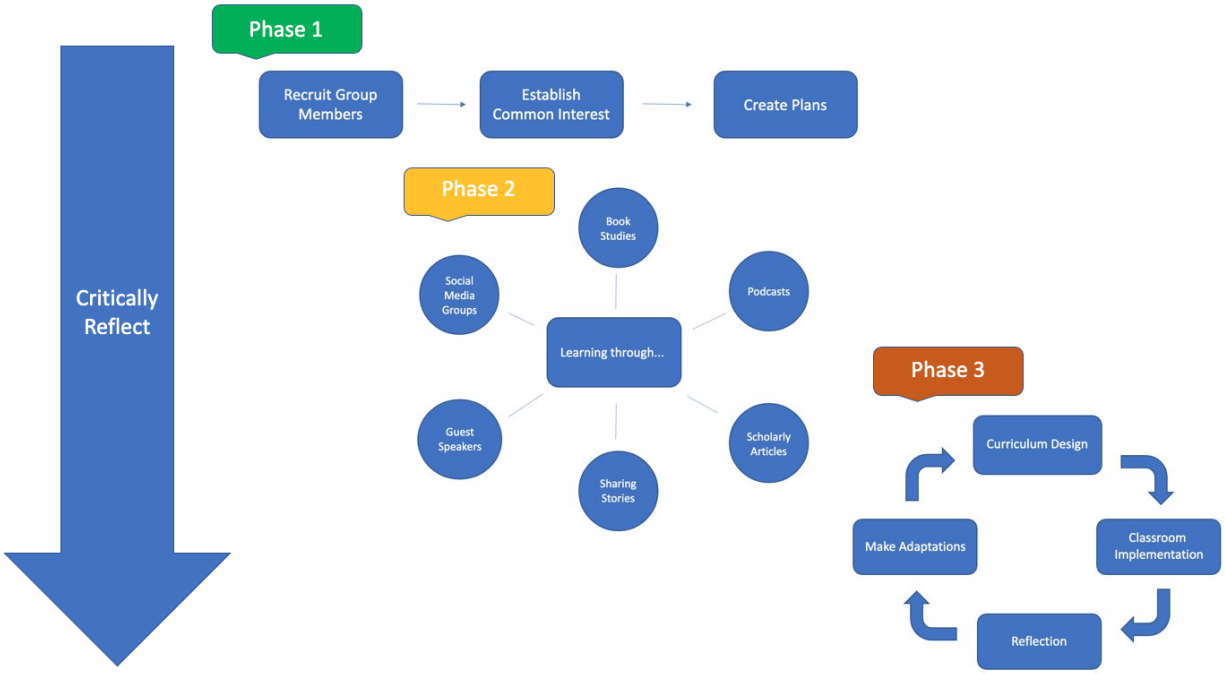
Scholars Varied Reference to Racial Literacy

Term	Scholarship
Strategy	Brown, 2017; King, 2016
Pedagogy/Instructional Tool	Brown et al 2021; Flynn et al, 2018; King 2016, Grayson, 2017; Sealey Ruiz, 2011; Skerrett, 2011,
Skill/Ability/Practice	Boutte, 2021; Brown et al 2021; Grayson, 2017, 2019; Harrelson, 2016; King, 2016; Stevenson, 2014; Price-Dennis and Sealey-Ruiz; Sealey-Ruiz, 2021; Twine, 2004, 2010
Praxis (reflection + action)	Grayson 2019; Sealey Ruiz, 2021; Twine, 2004
Process/Development	An, 2020; Boutte, 2021; Brown et al., 2021; Mosley Wetzel & Rogers, 2015; Rogers & Mosley, 2006; Price-Dennis & Sealey-Ruiz, 2021; Winans 2010
Knowledge*	An, 2020; Boutte, 2021; Winans 2010

* Much of scholarship portrays RL as a type of knowledge, but some do so more explicitly. However, further exploration in RL as knowledge is warranted for another essay.

Appendix C

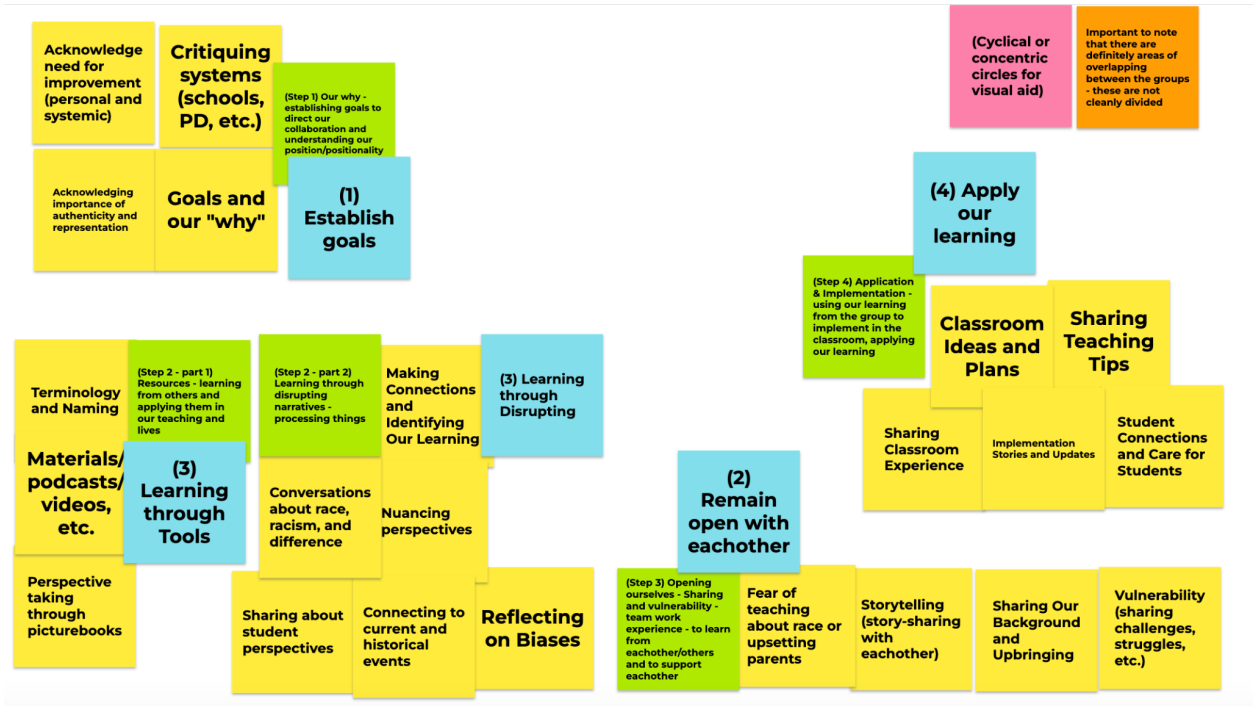
Phase Model for Collaborative Racial Literacies Development



Appendix D

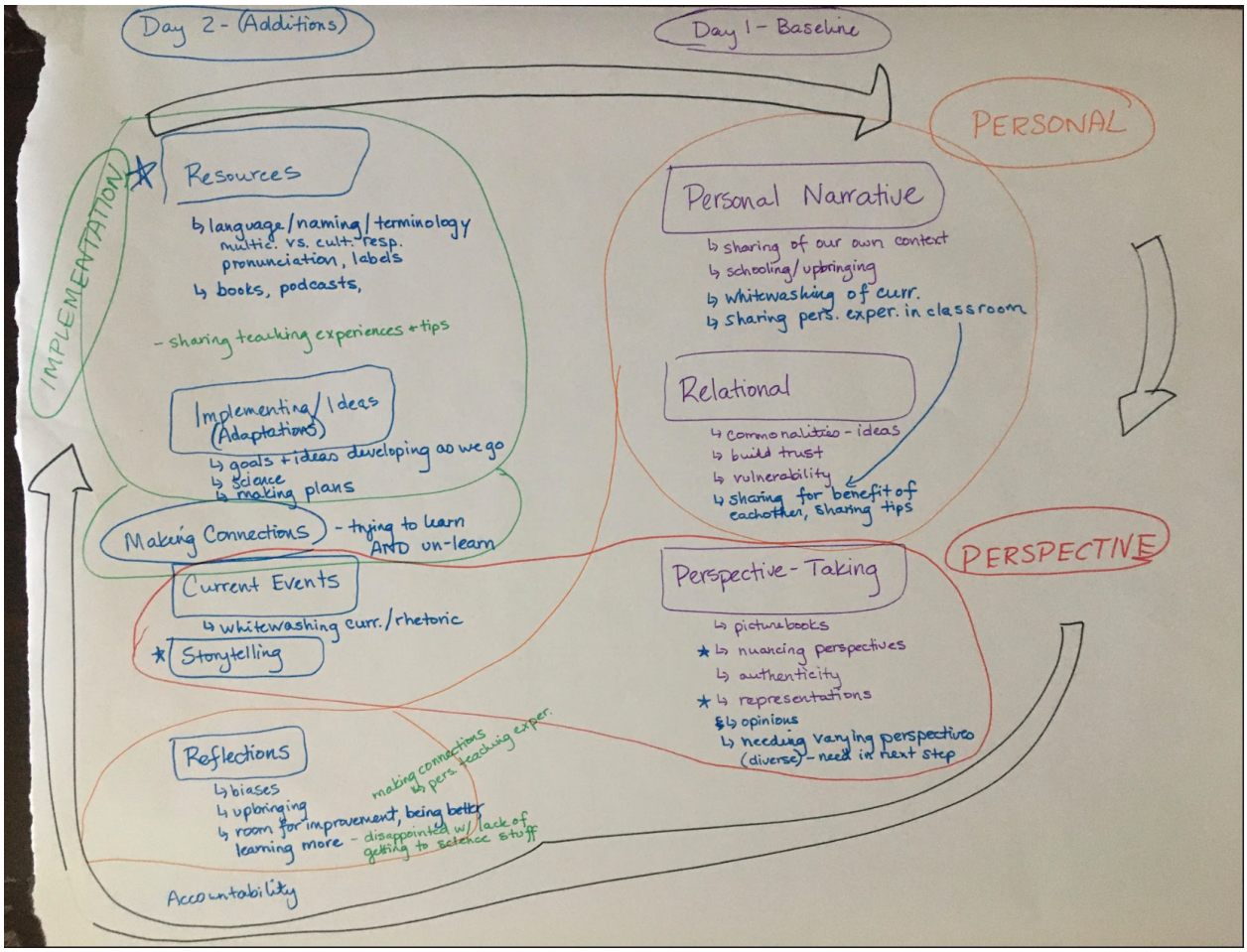
Jamboards 1 - Axial Coding

Jamboard 2 - Theming



Appendix E

Conceptual Map of Patterns and Noticings During Collaborative Data Meetings



Appendix F

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol 1: July 2021

1. Talk a bit about your own educational experiences. (curriculum, peers, school demographics, etc.)
2. How has race and identity influenced you?
3. Have you struggled with bias you might hold or have held?
4. How was your experience at Mizzou? Perhaps experiences that have led you to this work.
5. Why are you interested in being a part of this group?
6. How do you think about this group?
7. What does racial literacy mean to you?
8. What plans do you have for this group? Where do you envision this going?
9. What are your personal goals for being in this group and in your teaching?
10. Do you feel you have grown as a result of being in this group so far? If yes, in what ways?
11. What aspects of this collaboration or group has been most educational or helpful for you?

Appendix G

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol 2: June 2022

Questions Reflecting on Interview 1:

1. Reflecting on your first interview, is there anything you would add to "how has race and identity influenced you"? (show excerpt from interview 1)
2. Reflecting on your first interview, have your personal goals for being in this group been met?
3. What does racial literac(ies) mean to you? How has it changed (from previous response), if at all? If it has changed, what do you think caused that shift?

New Questions:

4. How do you feel about this collaborative approach to developing a teacher's racial literacies?
5. Do you feel you have grown as a result of being in this group so far? If yes, in what ways?
6. What are some artifacts or "evidence" to show your learning and racial literacies development?
7. What aspects of this collaboration or group has been most educational or helpful for you?
8. What barriers have you experienced to engaging in this collaboration and your own development?
9. What was the analysis experience like for you?
10. Do you have any regrets from this year related to our work?
11. What are your next steps?

Appendix H

Methods and Methodologies Employed in Empirical Studies of Race in Education

Scholarship	Methodologies	Methods	Framework
An (2020)	Parent Research (Kabuto, 2008)	textual artifacts (i.e., social studies textbook, unit tests, study guides) and field notes on daily conversations with daughter; pattern analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994), emergent themes	critical race theory and critical race parenting
Brown et al. (2021)	Case study	interviews, written questionnaires, thematic analysis	critical race theory, decolonial theory
Colomer (2018)	multi-case study	interviews, observations, transcriptions, fieldnotes, and analytic memos; inductive and recursive coding through ATLAS.ti	racial literacy, máscaras (Montoya 1994), storytelling
Flynn et al. (2018)	(case study)	course artifacts of students, semistructured interviews with students, video recorded lessons of instructors, self-reflective memos	racial literacy as pedagogy
Grayson (2021)	multi-case study	participant-observation; discourse analysis	racial literacy

Grayson (2019)	Multi-case study (Yin), Ethnography, Critical Discourse Analysis	participant-observation, students' writing assignments (i.e., identity statements, final papers, reading responses), predetermined codes and emergent codes (Crabtree & Miller, 2001)	critical race theory, racial literacy
King (2016)	Instrumental case study (Stake, 2000)	interviews, video and audio recorded classroom observations, participant lesson plans and other instructional materials; constant comparative coding method (Huberman & Miles, 1998); within case and cross-case analysis, open coding	racial literacy, critical race theory
Laughter et al. (2021)	Summative content analysis	scholarly and empirical articles	
Mosley Wetzel & Rogers (2015)	Critical Discourse Analysis, case study	ethnographic data including classroom activities, interviews, audio and video recorded observations, journal entries, field notes, retrospective reflections, transcriptions; critical discourse analysis and segmentation of utterances and notes of nonverbal communication; textual and pattern analysis	critical literacy, racial literacy,
Nash et al. (2018)	ethnography, narrative inquiry, critical and performance ethnography, and critical race counter-storytelling	individual and small-group phenomenological interviewing , co-performative witnessing, and narrative methods; collaborative data analysis, holistic and group coding, constant comparative analysis, dialogic intersubjectivity	CRT, CWS, Black emancipatory theories, critical racial literacy

Ohito (2021)	Black feminist narrative	interviews, observation, student work, demographic survey, written reflection; narrative mode of analysis, storying with five components, member checking	theory of embodiment, assemblage, racial literacy
Radd & Grosland (2018)	Critical Discourse Analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Gee, 2011)	Minnesota Desegregation Rule as text; predetermined codes, emergent themes	CRT, Crit Consciousness, Racial Literacy
Rogers & Mosley (2006)	Critical Discourse Analysis, Case Study, Critical Ethnography	ethnographic documentation and field notes of classroom interactions (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995; Spradley, 1980); video and audio recording of lessons; developed "thick descriptions" of field notes, written student samples, interviews, researcher/teacher journal;	CRT, CWS
Rolon-Dow et al. (2020)	(case study)	course assignments, interviews with students; inductive qualitative coding (Hatch, 2002)	critical race theory, critical whiteness studies, culturally responsive pedagogy, critical multicultural education, racial literacy

Sealey-Ruiz & Greene (2011)	Mixed Methods	SAT scores, GPAs, socioeconomic status, focus groups transcripts, one-on-one interviews with staff and parents, classroom and hallway observations, surveys, and school documents (i.e., yearbooks, newspapers, curriculum plans), and documents generated by student and parent organizations; within case and across case analysis approach (Miles and Huberman 1984), pattern analysis	critical race theory, racial literacy
Skerrett (2011)	(case study)	interviews; thematic analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994), iterative reading of data, emergent themes, coding, analytic memos	racial literacy
Smith & Crowley (2018)	textual analysis	line-by-line analysis of three lesson plans	racial literacy
Twine (2004, 2010)	Ethnography, case study	interview, field notes; (unnamed analytical method)	whiteness studies, black studies, racial literacy
Vetter and Hungerford-Kressor (2014)	discourse analysis	field notes from observations, videotapes and audiotapes of classroom interactions, interviews, and artifacts of student work; analytic memos, pattern and thematic analysis, discourse analysis	racial literacy

Winans (2010)	(unnamed)	student writing	critical emotion studies, critical race theory

Appendix I

Initial Analysis Plan Sent to Collaborators for Feedback on May 5, 2022

Letter to my amazing teammates,

I have cleaned up the 22 audio transcripts we have from our various interviews and focus group meetings together. While the individual interview transcripts are not doctored in any way, I have "chunked" the focus group transcripts to not show conversations about conference presentations, meeting scheduling, and other miscellaneous things. This will hopefully help us save some time.

Trustin and Joey, how does this sound for a plan for June 13-15…

- I arrive in the afternoon on June 13. Hopefully we can get 1-2 hours of data work done by reading through some of our early transcripts and talking about things we notice. We will start a "think chart" of some kind with chart paper or whatever we have at hand. We will add to this as we go.
- June 14 will be our heavy data transcript reading and discussing day. Perhaps after grabbing some coffee and breakfast, we will then engage in several cycles where we will set a time and read transcripts (in chronological order) while jotting down any notes taht come to mind for about 45 minutes then 20-30 min discussing it, then repeat. The patterns and "noticings" that we see will be added to our large "think chart." Later that day, after a break, we can have a conversation about how it all relates to the racial literacies development theoretical framework that Sealey-Ruiz designed.
- June 15 will be time for maybe breakfast and one more conversation to sum it all up, or to finish up something that ran over from the previous day.

Rylie, while we will certainly miss your physical presence in Denver, we most certainly want your input as well! At your convenience and availability, could you …

- Take a look at the transcripts from all of our meetings as well, or as many as you have the time to look at, and feel free to add "Comments" or highlight in the Google documents so that we can share this together.
- Depending on when we meet, we will certainly check with you about your availability to meet with us in conversation via Zoom the afternoon/evening of June 14, whether you have looked through transcripts or not.
- After the Denver meetings, we will ask for any input you'd like to add.

For all three of you, I will certainly follow up with each of you soon about scheduling a 20-30 minute interview. After that interview, I would love for you to read through the transcript from your interview in Spring 2021 then read through the Summer 2022 interview and write a 1-2 page summary of what this experience has been like for you. We can talk more about this in the weeks to come. While the second interview might take place before the June 13-15 meetings, it likely won't be until after those meetings that I ask you to take a look at the transcripts. Finally, I am hoping that as you read through these transcripts you are thinking about certain "artifacts" that come to mind that would be additional "data" to show how you have developed throughout this collaboration. This could be a memory of a lesson you did, a bulletin board you designed, an activity you did with your students, a read aloud you did, a conversation you had outside of school, etc.

All of these transcripts are currently in Google Docs and I would welcome any "Comments" and highlights as you read through it. I think that will be *tremendous* help for us to have that documentation in order to refer back to it as we discuss the transcripts. Also, while we may not be doing "strict" coding, our searching for patterns is a type of "open" coding. We may

also discuss what codes we would like to use to code the transcripts, but I think that is of secondary importance at this point.

Can you respond with your thoughts about this plan? I'm certainly open to making changes but I thought this would be a good way to start the conversation.

Appendix J

Final Analysis Plan (after receiving feedback from collaborators) Sent on June 6, 2022

Analysis Sessions for June 13-15 in Denver, CO

Before we meet…

- Read through Spring 2021 files (25 pages total)
    - 4.2.21 (8)
    - 4.29.21 (7)
    - 5.13.21 (10)
- As you read each, make comments on what sticks out to you or what you have additional thoughts about. Any reactions you have?

Session 1: Monday Afternoon and Evening (1 hour) 7:00-8:00 pm

**Flight arrives at 2:41pm in Denver. Pick Mary up and spend some time catching up and eating an early dinner (Mary is paying for this one!).*

- Orientation: Briefly go over what data analysis is and what it will look like.
- Group debrief (and begin chart mapping):
    - Did you notice any patterns?
    - What stood out to you?
- Read through "Batch 1" of Session 2

Session 2: Tuesday Morning (3 hours) 8:30 am - 11:30/12:00 pm

- Read through Summer 2021 files (about 120 pages total) making comments on each document.
- In each batch, we will read through the three files, while commenting on things you notice or any reactions you have to it. We will set a timer for 45 minutes then debrief for 15 minutes or so.

During this debrief time, we will discuss any new or existing patterns as well as charting on our map.

- Batch 1: (44 p)
    - 6.9.21 (12)
    - 6.16.21 (10)
    - 6.23.21 (22)
- Batch 2: (40 p)
    - 6.28.21 (15)
    - 7.7.21 (18)
    - 7.14.21 (7)
- Batch 3: (38 p or 35 p)
    - 7.21.21 (17)
    - 7.28.21 (10)
    - 8.8.21 (11 for Rylie, 8 for Joey and Trustin)

Lunch Break

Session 3: Tuesday Afternoon (1 hour) 1:00-2:00 pm

- We will read through the **TWO** files (22 pages total) from Fall 2021, while commenting on things you notice or any reactions you have to it. We will read both then debrief for 15 minutes or so.
    - 9.19 (13) (this one is for Rylie only)
    - 9.20 Trustin and Joey (10)
    - 10.19.21 (12)

Excursion and Dinner Break

Session 4: Tuesday Evening (2 hours) 6:00 - 8:00 pm

- We will read through the **FOUR** files (58 pages total) of Spring 2022, while commenting on things you notice or any reactions you have to it. We will read two then debrief for 15 minutes or so. Then repeat after the last two.
    - 2.1.22 (23)
    - 3.2.22 (13)
    - 4.12.22 (13)
    - 5.3.22 (9)
- Zoom Call with Rylie

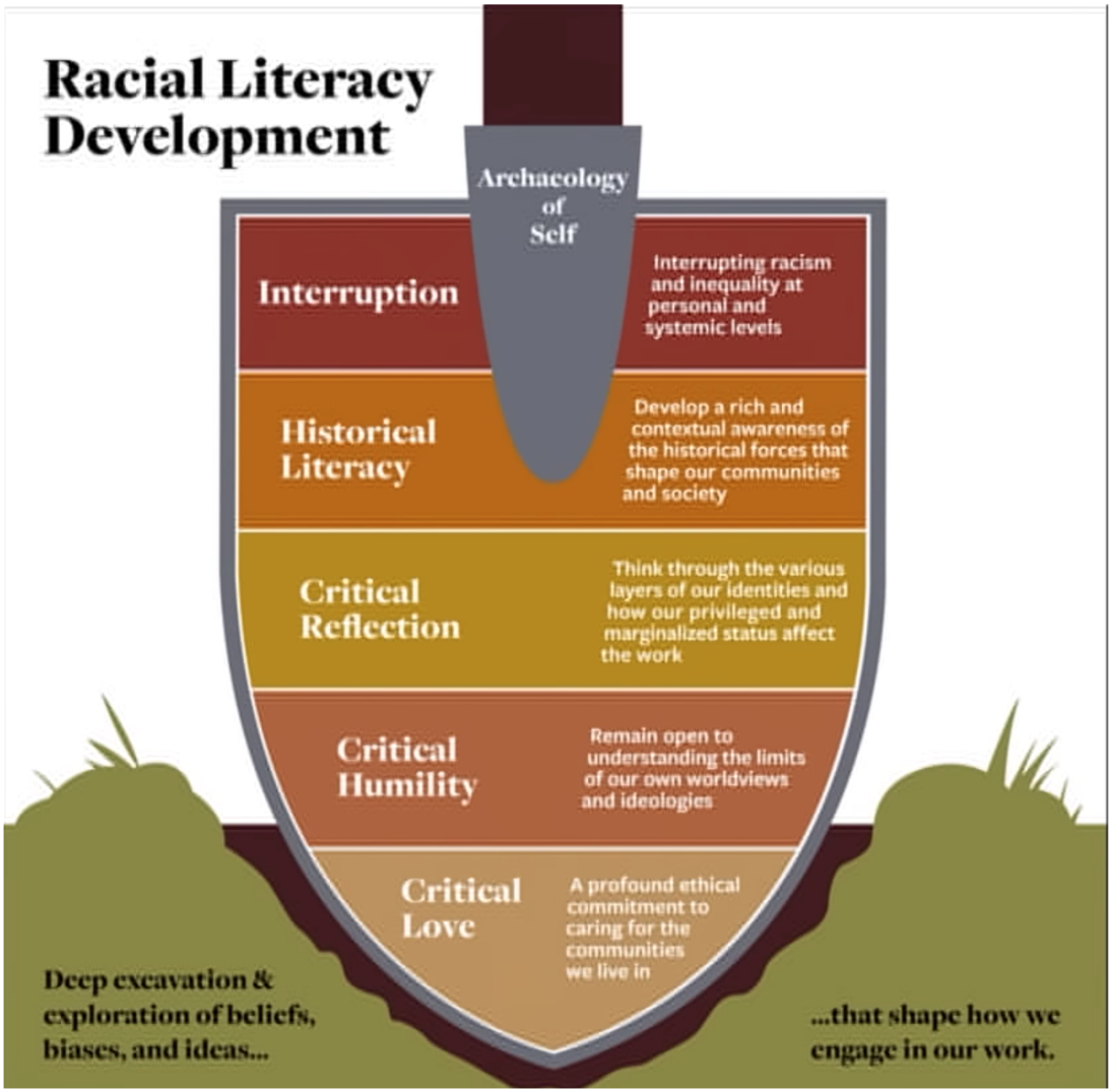
Session 5: Wednesday Morning (2 hours) 9:00-11:00 am

- We will finish up anything that ran over from Tuesday evening.
- Overlay the Racial Literacy Development Framework
    - Does it fit?
    - Is anything missing?
- Closing Discussion:
    - What's next?
    - How was the whole process for you?
    - Did you notice the growth in each other?
    - Any comments you have about how to do this in other settings as a collaborative PD model?
    - Any regrets? What could have been better? What should be done differently?
- Schedule 20-minute interview times.

**Take Mary to Denver airport by 11:30 am. Flight leaves at 1:37 pm.*

Appendix K

Sealey-Ruix's Model for Racial Literacy Development



Appendix L

Resources Consulted and Integrated Into Group Conversations

Podcasts	Book	Film	Social Media	Articles	Elementary and Young Adult Literature
All My Relations	Dunbar-Ortiz, R., & Gilio-Whitaker, D. (2016). *" All the Real Indians Died Off": And 20 Other Myths about Native Americans*. Beacon Press.	Diamond, N., Bainbridge, C., & Hayes, J. (2009). Reel Injun [film]. *Montreal: National Film Board of Canada*.	Teaching on Days After (Facebook)	Adu-Gyamfi, M., & Castro, A. J. (2022). CROSSING CULTURAL BORDERS AND EXPECTATIONS OF SCHOOLING: Learning From Immigrant Families. *Curriculum & Teaching Dialogue*, *24*.	Hall, M. (2015). *Red: A Crayon's Story*. Greenwillow Books.
Teaching While White	Hammond, Z. (2014). *Culturally responsive teaching and the brain: Promoting authentic engagement and rigor among culturally and linguistically diverse students*. Corwin Press.	(2017). Indian Horse. *Screen Siren Pictures*.	CRESST (Facebook)	Horner, M., Petrone, R., & Wynhoff Olsen, A. (2021). Who has a "place" in place-based pedagogy? Indigenizing rural English Education. *R. Petrone & A. Wynhoff Olsen, Teaching English in rural communities: Toward a critical rural English pedagogy. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield*.	Lindstrom, C. & Goade, M. (2020). *We Are Water Protectors*. Roaring Brook Press.
Dismantling Racism in Education	Au, W., Brown, A. L., & Calderón, D. (2016). *Reclaiming the multicultural roots of US curriculum:*	Spirit Game	Zinn Ed Project	Price-Dennis, D. (2016). Developing curriculum to support Black girls' literacies in digital spaces. *English Education*, *48*(4), 337-361.	Schiffer, M., & Clifton-Brown, H. (2015). *Stella Brings the Family*. Chronicle Books.

	Communities of color and official knowledge in education. Teachers College Press.				
Free Minds Free People	Ahmed, S. (2018). Being the Change: Lessons and Strategies to Teach Social Comprehension. Heinemann.	The Origin of Race in the USA, Apr 3, 2018 PBS Origins, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CVxAlmAPHec	Indian Education For All (Montana)	Brown, K. D. (2017). Why we can't wait: Advancing racial literacy and a critical sociocultural knowledge of race for teaching and curriculum. Race, Gender & Class, 24(1-2), 81-96.	Alexander, K., & Nelson, K. (2019). *The Undefeated*. Versify.
Cult of Pedagogy	Howard, G. R. (2016). *We can't teach what we don't know: White teachers, multiracial schools*. Teachers College Press.	The lie that invented racism | John Biewen, Nov 1, 2020, TED https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oIZDtqWX6Fk		Wandera, D. B. (2020). Resisting epistemic blackout: Illustrating Afrocentric methodology in a Kenyan classroom. *Reading research quarterly*, *55*(4), 643-662.	Blackall, S. (2020). *If You Come to Earth*. Chronicle Books.
	Mills, C. W. (2014). The racial contract. In *The Racial Contract*. Cornell University Press.	I Am Not Your Negro, Youtube Movies & Shows, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2PaAbmRJ9bQ			Woodson, J. (2012). *Each Kindness*. Nancy Paulsen Books
	Loewen, J. W. (2008). *Lies my teacher told me: Everything your American history textbook got wrong*. The New Press.				Draper, S. (2020). *Blended*. Atheneum Books for Young Readers.

Stevenson, H. (2014). *Promoting racial literacy in schools: Differences that make a difference*. Teachers College Press.

Noble Maillaird, K., & Martinez-Neal, J. (2019). *Fry Bread: A Native American Family Story*. Roaring Brook Press.

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Vita

Mary Adu-Gyamfi was born in rural Virginia and attended private, parochial schools in Augusta County and graduated from Grove City College in Pennsylvania with a Bachelors of Science in Elementary Education. The following August, she began three years of full-time teaching in an elementary setting. During her second year of teaching, she began pursuing a master's degree in Educational Leadership and Higher Education at Mary Baldwin University in Virginia. Having married and relocated to Iowa, she finished her Master's degree. In 2018, she began her journey in the doctoral program at University of Missouri-Columbia within the College of Education, focusing on social studies teacher education.