

# **Exploring the Experiences of Faculty who Practice Anti-Racist Pedagogy in a College Setting**

**by  
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## **Abstract**

Diversity is a word we are hearing more and more often in Canada. Racism is on the rise; all you need to do is turn on the news or open social media and it is impossible not to see a headline about systemic racism, racial inequity, or senseless racially motivated violence. If you are tired of hearing about racism, imagine how tired people are of experiencing it. This research report explores the experiences of three college faculty who practice anti-racist pedagogy using a phased interview approach (O'Leary, 2017). Learning about what motivates and sustains these faculty in their efforts may earnestly encourage other instructors to become allies of anti-racist work. I identified three themes using qualitative thematic analysis: critical and self-reflection, creating a personal framework for anti-racist education, and unpacking our biases. The participants shared stories of incorporating anti-racist content into their teaching practice. Through their interviews, it became clearer that sustaining antiracist pedagogical practices requires self-reflection with the intention of improving their practice. Participants also provided recommendations to support other faculty around diversity. These recommendations include providing open-minded, safe spaces where faculty can question, support, and encourage each other to acknowledge their personal biases to disrupt the status quo of the system of oppression in post-secondary education.

**Keywords:** Racism; Anti-racist Pedagogy; Pedagogical Experiences; Critical and Self-reflection

## **Dedication**

I would like to thank Michelle Pidgeon for her countless hours of dialogue, patience, and support through this transformational journey. You are a phenomenal educator who leads by example. Thank you to all my instructors in the M. Ed. Program: Tina Fraser, Daniel Laitsch, Gillian Judson, and Becky Cox, as well as Grace Dyck. Each one of you affected my learning and my life over the past two years, be it a compassionate heart, an understanding ear, or encouragement and feedback. I successfully achieved my masters because of your support. Thank you all for believing in me.

To my family and friends, thank you for cheerleading me on, bringing me food, listening to my ramblings, checking in with me when I went silent, and continuing to invite me out even though you knew that I probably would not come. I could not have made this journey without you. And Brandon, thank you for watching over me. How I wish you were here to celebrate this with me.

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# Introduction

Why is it so complicated to talk about race and racism? Maybe because we currently live in a reactionary judgmental society, and sometimes we do not know what to say - so we say nothing. No one wants to be negatively affected (social media smear, job reprimand, or loss) for saying something politically incorrect. However, to discuss race and racism, we need to come from a place of honesty. Honesty about our biases and assumptions, and about our fears of loss of power and about making mistakes. In her book *WAYI WAH!* Chrona (2022) says it kindly, "As educators, we know that not knowing something is not a problem; it is not wanting to learn that is a barrier" (p. 13). We need to acknowledge that there are going to be times when we are going to mess up and say or do something wrong when discussing racism. Arneback and Jamte (2021), Ash et al. (2020), Harbin et al. (2019), Kishimoto (2018), Brookfield (2017), Smith et al. (2017), and Phillips et al. (2019) all identify that anti-racism is a difficult topic to teach. All say that a primary part of this process is providing a safe, non-judgmental environment where sitting with our uncomfortableness, reflection and contemplation are accepted.

As a lifelong learner, I have always appreciated thought-provoking questions. In this situation I ponder, what does the word racist mean to you? How would you react if someone said you were racist? Would you immediately think "not me, I'm not racist. I have lots of coloured friends" or "my daughter is married to an Indigenous guy." Or maybe it causes you to feel that intense emotional state that triggers your heart rate and your adrenaline levels to increase. Or maybe you pause and feel shame in being recognized? How do we discuss race and racism and whether you are racist?

Growing up, the adults in our lives often recommended that we not discuss certain topics if we wanted to be viewed as a 'nice person.' Religion, abortion, and politics were taboo topics, but race was seldom on that list. In fact, many of us were taught that if we had nothing nice to say, say nothing. But this contradicts the literature. In a Ted-Ed talk, Taryn Coe says that if you, as a white educator, remain quiet or neutral about racism, then you are not staying neutral at all. Your silence is helping to perpetuate racism (TED-Ed Educator Talks, 2021). Arneback and Jamte (2021) state that many teachers and school administrators are unclear about acting on or addressing racial oppression and discrimination.

Canada and the rest of the world has begun to reopen after slightly more than a year-long, hard-fought battle with COVID-19. At the Tokyo 2020 Summer Olympics, a South Korean broadcaster MBC used images to correspond to each country in the opening ceremony. Italy was a pizza. Norway was a Salmon. Haiti's image was unrest and uprising, the image of fire billowing black smoke and four men posing in the forefront as their athletes entered the stadium. Their on-screen greeting read, "the political situation is fogged by the assassination of the President" (O'Kane, 2021, p. 4). The sporting director for Germany's Cycling Federation, Patrick Moster, was sent home for racist comments during a time trial race when he spurred on his rider to catch up to the Algerian racer saying, "get the camel drivers" (Brito, 2021, p. 3). The entire world was represented; and the only race anyone should have been worried about was the one where the fastest person wins. It appears that those in academia are not the only ones who are perplexed.

As an adult, I had never considered myself to be racist; I did not consider myself to be part of the problem. I did nothing intentionally hurtful or mean to someone else because of the colour of their skin or because I felt superior. It never occurred to me I might have some biases or dismissive attitudes regarding ethnicity, so when someone I respected, kindly suggested I should check my privilege, I was shocked. I did not even know what that meant. After some investigating, I clearly understood that it was a suggestion for me to pause and consider how the advantages I've had in my life could contribute to my opinions and actions. I also discovered how the lack of disadvantages, in certain areas, could keep me from fully understanding the struggles that face others (Oluo, 2019).

I am an instructor at a post-secondary institution in Northern BC that serves 22 First Nations communities. Our current strategic plan states that 20% of our student body self-identifies as Indigenous, and they expected this number to increase as we make efforts to rectify historical injustices (CNC, 2021). In my nine years as a faculty member at the College of New Caledonia, the number of international students has grown exponentially each year. Today, approximately 50% of our student population consists of international students (FACNC, 2021). Although this number decreased during COVID, if history is any indicator, it will not be long before we return to pre-covid levels with a diverse international student body. With the potential for significant enrollment over the next few semesters, it is imperative that faculty place increased



emphasis on cultural safety for our students, increased awareness and practice of anti-racist pedagogy.

My role as a researcher for this project was initially to search and examine literature, collect, and analyze data, and complete a report. However, it has since become a personal journey, one where I have spent some emotionally draining time contemplating my whiteness, while examining my pedagogical approach and actions. This is just the beginning of a new journey of critical self-reflection; I know this will be meaningful, challenging, and life changing. It will require courage and a level of vulnerability. Inoue (2017) suggests that "when it comes to race, racism, and anti-racist work, it is important that everyone feels safe, but equally important that many also feel uncomfortable. It's only through discomfort, perhaps pain and suffering, that we grow, develop, and change for the better" (p. xviii).

By design, this research focused on the individual experiences of faculty who frame their curriculum using an anti-racist pedagogical approach. While there are clear theoretical influences of anti-racism within the research, this project focuses on the practice of anti-racism pedagogy with reference to scholarly works by Kishimoto (2018), Brookfield (2017), Chrona (2022), Henry and Tater (2009), Sensoy and DiAngelo (2014), Blakeney (2005) and others. If you are keen on allyship, then it would be amiss not to at least mention the theoretical approaches.

Within this research project, I acknowledge that systemic racism, or any form of discrimination, are not independent concepts - they are all essentially linked. The literature of Chrona (2022), Smith et al. (2017), Harbin et al. (2019), Ash et al. (2020), Blakeney (2005), and Arneback and Jamte (2021) aligns on various concepts including the difficulty of addressing race in the classroom, the complexity of the concept of racism itself, and awareness of a level of self doubt when confronted with this topic. The literature review focuses on the three fundamental areas of: Racism and Post-secondary Education, Anti-Racism framework for Teaching, and Critically Reflective Practices. The methodology section provides an overview of the research purpose and questions, along with the research design phased interview approach (O'Leary, 2017), including participant recruitment, data collection, ethics, and analysis. Through the interviews combined with the extensive readings, within the discussion I make recommendations

for the reader about what motivates and sustains anti-racist pedagogical practices and encourages other instructors to become engaged allies in this work.

*In a racist society it is not enough to be non-racist. We must be anti-racist.*

*—Angela Davis—*

## Literature Review

Considering the substantial amount of relevant work that has been published on anti-racist pedagogy, I intentionally narrowed the scope of this literature review. I chose to include relevant recent content about racism, cultural competence, power, privilege, critical self-reflection, and microaggressions from a faculty perspective. To align with this research, I have categorized the literature into the same three overarching themes: Racism and Post-secondary Education, Anti-Racism Framework for Teaching, and Critically Reflective Practice.

### Racism and Post-secondary Education

The very concept of "not racist" is flawed. As we mature, we have the potential to realize that we are either being racist or anti-racist. To be anti-racist is to admit when we have, or are, being racist, check ourselves and commit to striving to be anti-racist (Kendi, 2020). In other words, when people say they are "not racist," or "colour blind," this is most likely inaccurate. I repeatedly read in the literature that racism, although it can be unlearned, is often a result of our childhood environment. Satzewich (2011) stated social circumstances underpin discriminatory behaviour. Group pressures form stereotypes, prejudices, and attitudes. Socialization is influenced by our families, peers and the media, and it begins at a very young age. This encouraged me to reflect on my experiences growing up in Northern BC. Racism was common, yet often subconscious and silent. I remember hearing a discussion at my grandmother's dinner table about how "those Indian kids had raided her garden again," and I did not understand why they never got in trouble for stealing her food. As I ate my dinner and listened to the adult conversation, I quickly learned that the adults had an underlying assumption nothing would be done about the raids on the garden, because the parents were always drunk. I am not positive how old I was when I realized those kids were probably hungry, because what kid steals vegetables? In the words of Brookfield (2017), "racism is a set of learned behaviours and attitudes picked up in daily interactions, and because racist perceptions and practices have been learned, it's important to show that they can be challenged, and that new behaviours and attitudes can also be learned" (p. 223).

It is important to consider how fluid language can be and how it can affect the dynamics of cultural safety in our instructional practices. I have included recent definitions of three important concepts: power, privilege, and ally/allyship as a precursor to the racism section of this literature review. The Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion (CCDI, 2022) define power as

unequally distributed access to privileges such as information, opportunity, and resources, and the ability to influence decisions, rules, standards, and policies to benefit oneself or one's social group. Power, and the level of power possessed by any individual or group, affects their ability to live comfortable, safe lives. Power is relational, and it works between individuals, cultures, institutions, and social groups (p.16).

Similarly, they define privilege as unearned access, benefits, and opportunities possessed by members of a social group with a high level of power. Privilege occurs when structures and institutions have been historically designed for the benefit of, or to be accessed by a particular group (p.16). Any discussion of power and privilege related to racism must come with an understanding of allyship. Rooted in the term alliance, an ally is an individual in a position of privilege who makes consistent efforts to understand, uplift, and support equity-deserving groups. An ally is not a member of the group but seeks to end oppression (Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion [CCDI], 2022).

Power hierarchies are often reproduced in Eurocentric educational institutions (Mohanty, 1990, as cited in Deckers, 2014, p.63). Mohanty (1990) explains that classrooms should be understood as "political and cultural sites." Most Canadian post secondary institutions are structured in a way that proves the Eurocentrism that Mohanty analyzed. Here, the power rests primarily at the top with the president and dissipates linearly. An ongoing theme in my literature review revealed that there are many power balance biases inherent in most institutions, and that instructors can use critically reflective practice to become aware of these balances (Arneback & Jamte, 2021; Brookfield, 2017; Deckers, 2014; Kishimoto, 2018).

Carol Bainbridge (2022) does an excellent job of using plain language to help us understand race and social construct. "Race is a concept that exists not in objective reality, but because of human interaction. It exists because humans agree that it exists" (para. 1). Race is not biological. It is a social construct. When social constructs lead us

to attribute meaning to people's identities, this can lead to unconscious bias, stereotypes, racism, and racial discrimination (CCDI, 2022, p.48).

The CCDI (2022) refers to racism as a belief that one group is superior to another, whether through individual action or institutional practice which treats people differently because of their colour or ethnicity. This distinction is often used to justify discrimination.

Individual racism is learned from and influenced by systemic racism and is rooted in the unequal distribution of power between one group of people and another. "Institutional racism includes policies, practices, and dynamics embedded in established institutions that result in disadvantage or advancement of specific groups of people... these systemic practices normalize racism and may not be obvious" (CCDI, 2022, p. 50). Similarly, the literature of Ash et al. (2020), Arneback and Jamte (2021), Harbin et al. (2019), and Philips et al. (2019) provide insight into the systemic racism often found in post-secondary academia practices.

Arneback and Jamete (2021) approached systematic racism from the Swedish perspective. They interviewed 27 teachers at Swedish post-secondary schools and reported that micro aggressions can be systematically improved through changes in the institutions as a whole. They offer insights into how instructors might integrate anti-racism in their actions in teaching their specific curriculum. Ash et al. (2020) report that there is a "culture of whiteness" that dominates North American colleges and universities. They also explored how institutions attempted to come to terms with improving racial consciousness. They discovered that, when it is time to enact policies supporting anti-racism, institutional leaders were often hesitant because it may jeopardize their power or privilege.

Sensoy and DiAngelo's (2017) research focuses on diversity in higher education and includes faculty hiring processes. They provide constructive alternatives for university hiring committees to level the ethnic diversity playing field. They were impacted by recent current events including the 2016 election in the United States. "Racism has been and will continue to be a central issue in higher education. It is no longer justifiable for academia to remain racially illiterate" (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017, p. 558). They analyzed a typical faculty hiring scenario to "identify the most common

practice" (p.557). They discussed how Canadian post-secondary hiring committees claim to want more diversity within their faculty, yet the hiring processes continue to benefit white prospects. Sensoy and DiAngelo's research highlights that institutional racism exists when policies or programs appear racially neutral, but either intentionally or unintentionally put minority group members at a disadvantage, "we are up against historic and current differentials in power, privilege, and access that are manifesting concretely... interrupting these processes requires that we reconsider a multitude of common-sense practices" (p. 577).

Kendi (2020) discussed micro racism, which impacts many people through normalized racism. Kendi states that "one who is supporting a racist policy through their actions, interaction or expressing a racist idea. A racist idea is any that suggests one racial group is inferior or superior to another racial group in any way" (01:57).

Stephen Brookfield (2017) asserts that:

The terms racist and racism are used to describe systems and structures that teach and reproduce beliefs and behaviors designed to keep a racially expressive system intact. By this definition, a racist is someone who has learned these beliefs and behaviors while being immersed, without realizing it, in the ideology of white supremacy. Racism thus becomes a way of thinking and behaving that we learn every day without being aware that this process of informal education and socialization is happening. (p. 210)

Structural racism points to the bigger picture of history, society, culture, institutions, and the economy. Racialized people have been historically left out of the development of society and its systems, resulting in disadvantages, barriers, and biases. Systemic racism is at the root of large-scale discrepancies of racialized people in many areas including income and wealth, health outcomes, homelessness, unemployment, and involvement with the justice system (CCDI, 2022).

For the purposes of this project, I focus on post-secondary educational settings therefore institutional racism and how individual faculty members are using an anti-racist pedagogical practice to push back on the systemic and societal racism.

## **Anti-Racism and Post Secondary Education**

Anti-racism is an active and consistent process of identifying and eliminating individual, institutional, and systemic racism (CRRF Glossary of Terms, 2021). An older resource defined antiracist pedagogy as a concept within a critical theory framework and suggested that it can counteract the persistence and impact of racism practice, as its focus is on promoting social justice (Blakeney, 2005). On the other hand, many scholars view it as an ongoing process, in fact, the Canadian Race Relations Foundation says that anti-racism is an active and consistent process of identifying and eliminating individual, institutional, and systemic racism (CRRF Glossary of Terms, 2021). Racism is on the rise; all you need to do is turn on the news or open social media and it is impossible not to see a headline about institutional racism, racial inequity, diversity, or senseless racially motivated violence. Many academic scholars have iterated in various ways that it is time to stop tiptoeing around and start teaching about respecting dignity, human value, and worth by incorporating an anti-racist framework and pedagogy into college classrooms.

Kishimoto (2018) advises that there are three components of anti-racist pedagogy:

1. incorporating the topics of race and inequality in course content
2. teaching from an anti-racist pedagogical approach, and
3. anti-racist organizing within the campus and linking the efforts to the surrounding community.

Anti-racist pedagogy is not just about integrating race and inequality subject material into courses and curriculum. "It is also about how one teaches, even in courses where race is not the subject matter. It is an organizing effort for institutional and social change that is much broader than teaching in the classroom" (Kishimoto, 2018, p. 540).

## **Critical Reflective Practice**

Fook and Gardner (2007) theorize the process and contribute towards careful documentation of how critical reflective practice can be implemented into professional practice. The goal of their research is to provide a better understanding of the learning

and the changes that transpire when practicing critical reflection. There are a few different terms connected with the concept of critical reflection that are often used interchangeably and may lead to confusion. Although each is connected to critical reflection, I want it to be clear about what each term means and how they are interrelated. The related terms include reflection, reflexivity, and reflective practice.

Bolton and Delderfield (2018) define reflection as “in-depth focused attention.” The term ‘reflection’ has been used to imply positive change in practice, however one can argue that while reflecting is a positive act, it does not necessary include the analytical element necessary in ‘critical reflection.’

Harbin et al. (2019) asserts that reflexivity is “broadly understood as the ability to consider one’s own feelings, reactions, and motives and how they affect behaviours” (p.13). This is supported by Bolton and Delderfield (2018) as they suggest that reflexivity is self-reflection that focuses on actions, thoughts, hopes, fears, and values with the aim of gaining a more accurate and deeper understanding into one’s own assumptions and perspectives. Therefore, reflexivity is being mindful of who we are as a whole person; not just as a creator and facilitator of pedagogy, and how this impacts the way we think and conduct ourselves. Additionally, being reflexive is an important aspect of being reflective because we need to be thoughtful of how we may be susceptible to certain biases or assumptions we make about the world and people in it (Beres & Fook, 2019).

Reflective practice is more focused on professional practice and the discovery of getting to know your true self in order to identify how to be more effective in our pedagogy. Beres and Fook (2019), imply that it is based on the idea that there “is often a large gap between what professionals say they do and what they actually do” (p. 10). Thus, reflective practice is seen as a way of reducing the gap by examining the theories that are being applied to guide us. A strong point of reflective practice is the emphasis that is placed on improvement of practice.

The concept of critical reflection is connected to many adult learning processes including critically reflective writing, critically reflective essays, and examples of critically reflection. What I am focussing on is critical reflection that becomes transformational. In order to address our assumptions and biases and move towards anti-racist pedagogy there needs to be a change. It is a process of "unsettling and examining deeply hidden



assumptions to bring about social change" (Fook & Gardner, 2007, p. 16). These assumptions may be individually held or collectively common, but through this process enhanced guidelines for action can improve practice and develop a more ethical and compassionate pedagogical perspective (Beres & Fook, 2019). Brookfield (1995) asserts that the focus on power is what makes reflection critical (p. 8).

Brookfield (2017) suggests that critical reflection goes well beyond changing how you instruct and involves changing how you think about how you instruct. It involves reflections on a regular basis, not just on what happened and how it might have been different, but also on how to make things better for others, and how to change the students' experiences. Critical reflection will often bring up realizations about power dynamics, fear of making mistakes, and concerns about having made the wrong decisions. Brookfield (2017) further defines critical reflection as the sustained and intentional process of identifying and checking the accuracy and validity of our teaching assumptions. Brookfield also discusses how the dominant ideology of a society will impact both the teaching practice and the experience of the student.

Transformative learning has many similarities to reflexivity, such as a learning process of making meaning of our own experiences. Merriam and Bierema (2014) document transformative learning and how it involves an enhanced level of awareness of our beliefs and feelings, a critique of our assumptions, an assessment of alternative perspectives, a decision to refute our old views or to make a combination of old and new, an ability to take action based on this new standpoint, and a desire to fit the new perspective into the broader context of our lives. In *Unsettling the Settler Within*, Paulette Regan (2010) agrees with Paulo Freire and other scholars that education is not only about transferring knowledge but also about transformative experiential learning that may empower people to make a change in the world. When there is a failure to link knowledge and critical reflection to action, the opportunity to bring about meaningful change is lost. Much of the literature supports the need for faculty to possess a certain degree of cultural competence, awareness of their social position, and their privilege. Understanding how culture influences people's thoughts and learning will assist with critical self-reflection (Arneback & Jamte, 2021; Clarke et al., 2016; Kishimoto, 2018; National Association of Social Workers, 2015).

Overall, this literature review covered resources about anti-racism frameworks and perspectives and confirms that racism is overtly and covertly present in post-secondary settings. It guides faculty to practice anti-racist teaching, promote cultural safety, and identify their power, privilege, and bias. Finally, self-reflection in various forms is present in much of the literature. Concepts, such as subconscious microaggressions and institutional bias, informed many of the approaches covered in this literature review.

# Methodology

## Research Purpose and Questions

The purpose of my research project was to explore the individual experiences of faculty who instruct using anti-racist pedagogy. As I learned about and discovered my privilege, I was compelled to understand better what motivated and sustained faculty who practice antiracist pedagogy and was hopeful to use this data to encourage other instructors to become allies in this work.

My research question was "What are the experiences of faculty who practice anti-racist pedagogy in a college setting?" Additionally, what motivates and sustains them in their practice.

## Context of Study

This research project was conducted at The College of New Caledonia (CNC), a post-secondary institution in Northern British Columbia. I am a white settler, living, learning, and working with gratitude, on the unceded territory of the Lheidli T'enneh. The College of New Caledonia has over 600 employees spread across six campuses; this includes approximately 400 faculty members.

The College works closely with the Indigenous peoples in this region and serves 22 First Nations and Indigenous communities. While 20% of our student body self-identify as Indigenous, just under 50% of students are international. The student population at CNC is diverse with students from China, India, Nigeria, South Korea, and Vietnam (Deuth, 2019).

Established in 1969, the College of New Caledonia offers over 50 programs in health sciences, trades and technologies, social services, business, and university studies that provide access to lifelong learning and fulfill students' academic and personal goals (CNC, 2021).

## **Research Design**

The methodology for this research project was an exploratory qualitative study that included collecting and retelling the participants' experiences. I used a phased interview approach to a narrative research design. Creswell (2015) explains that researchers who use a Narrative Design, "describe the lives of individuals, collect and tell stories about people's lives and write narratives of individual experiences" (p. 504), and "narrative research is qualitative and a viable way to study teachers, students, and educators in educational settings" (p. 519).

The interview questions were semi-structured and designed to allow for self-reflection prior to each meeting. I completed a thematic analysis once I had completed the interviews and gathered all the data.

## **Participant Recruitment**

With the assistance of the Centre for Teaching and Learning they performed the initial recruitment through institutional reputation. Next, we used snowball sampling to recruit other participants. To qualify to participate in this study, all faculty interviewed had to confirm that they practice anti-racist pedagogy to some degree. I recruited and interviewed three female faculty members who have been teaching using an anti-racist pedagogical approach for three or more years: with an average teaching time at CNC of 14.3 years. All three taught in the School of University Studies & Career Access (SUSCA) Department. In the findings section I refer to the participants as P-1, P-2, and P-3 and refrained from describing too much of their backgrounds and life experiences to protect and respect their confidentiality.

## **Interview Protocol**

I conducted two semi-structured one-on-one interviews with three participants, exploring their experiences as faculty practicing anti-racist pedagogy in a college setting. I focused on instructor pedagogy and the participants' experiences of creating an anti-racist classroom to better understand what motivates and sustains anti-racist

pedagogical practices. The desired outcome was to provide information that would encourage other instructors to become engaged allies in this work.

The semi-structured interviews included experiences, beliefs, and applied pedagogy. I used the ZOOM platform and had two, approximately 60-minute interviews with each participant. In the first interview, I established a relationship and learned about each participant's background and teaching philosophy. In the second interview, I focused more on the actual pedagogy of anti-racism and how it was incorporated into the curricula. I provided the questions and the approximate time commitment in advance in the Letter of Invitation (see Appendix A for the interview protocol and Appendix B for the letter of invitation).

My goal during the interviews was to gather as much information as possible with open-ended questions and active listening. I conducted semi-structured interviews to prepare participants for a deep exploration of the questions provided. I feel this process delivered resounding reflective responses and plenty of data for my research. With prior consent from each participant, I recorded the interviews for accuracy when transcribing.

## **Analysis**

Once I had completed all the interviews, I began a qualitative data analysis to help me understand and interpret all the participants' experiences (data). To help with organizing, I edited the transcripts and added field notes. Next, I read the interviews many times, documented broad themes, similarities, and contrasts. I highlighted interconnecting themes and, as things became clearer, I used a colour coding process to triangulate the themes.

## **Ethics**

This study was considered minimal risk. The information discussed was similar to or the same as a regular workday. All input was anonymous to ensure participants' confidentiality, and all information shared during the interviews remains private and confidential. To ensure accurate representation of each participant's story, I transcribed the interviews, and the resulting transcripts were void of any information that would identify the participants. I am the only individual who knows the names of the

participants. This study was reviewed by the SFU Office of Research Ethics and College of New Caledonia Research Ethics Board.

## **Data Management**

Confidential information was and will continue to be protected from loss, unauthorized access, and damage at all times. All data used during this study is stored on a password protected external hard drive used only on my personal computer in my locked office. All video recordings, transcripts, and other data related to this research study are all on the password-protected external hard drive in my locked home office. The video recordings were destroyed after completing the transcripts, and the transcripts and any other related materials will be destroyed after five years of completing my masters.

## Findings

I've always had a social justice lens, but this experience surprised me because it became emotionally charged and inspired me to learn more about what is happening in the institution where I work. The goal was to understand what motivates and sustains faculty that practice anti-racist pedagogy and to encourage others to practice allyship in their practice.

When I decided to attend university, I asked myself if I was too old, if I was smart enough, if I could commit to the schedule, and if I had what I needed to make it work? I never once considered the cost of tuition or books, if I was going to be the only white student, or if the history and background in the curriculum were going to be honest and truthful, especially when discussing my people. I considered none of this because I was unaware of my privilege.

Realizing I was the recipient of white privilege (McIntosh, 1989) and that I had benefited from this on more than one occasion without even knowing it, I got a heavy feeling inside. The effect that this had on me emotionally was distressing. I had feelings of shame and guilt, and even though none of this was intentional, a pressure built up behind my eyes and they started to leak. I have spent the last two and a half years learning to understand my feelings and emotions, and I knew I had to do something. That was the pivotal moment I decided on the topic for this research project.

## Journey to Anti-Racist Practices

All three participants stated they were constantly increasing their knowledge about anti-racism. P-3, for example, said that "it was a long journey towards antiracist pedagogy. It's not something I decided one day. I educated myself specifically for the classes I was teaching and I was able to cross boundaries through different classes. The content I bring in from wherever, so it started being easy to learn and grow. Learning new content had value for me." P-2 acknowledged that they had grown up with some racist ideologies, but recently started challenging their own beliefs to transform their own pedagogy. "I'm not gonna lie, it took about five years to let go of power in the classroom. I took time to reflect and decided to develop expectations with the students. I've learned to let [cell phones] go because it's not about me." P-1 stated that their practice "took a

few years...the [research] intimidated me because I don't have anything huge. Looking at the truth and reconciliation subject area and seeing what I can do there."

As they discussed their backgrounds, participants shared they had upbringings that influenced their decisions now as adults to take on an anti-racist pedagogical practice. As P-2 explained,

I was raised in a very racist house. I had to challenge my value and belief systems and still am, it took probably about 6 years, I committed to doing better in my heart. Next, I followed through with actions and started learning beside my students on issues, starting with residential school. This led me to learn about propaganda, and why it's important for students to understand the whole story, because when I started introducing this, there was so much misunderstanding, arguments, and students would argue. I could no longer be like "I'm not the right colour so it's not my problem". It is my problem because I'm an instructor and I want to do my job. I'm a teacher and racism is everywhere.

Similarly, P-1 acknowledged also having grown up in British Columbia in a relatively racist household. "My background is that my family ran a small institution home to over thirty women. At that time the government considered this a group home. I worked in the group home and there were diverse backgrounds and exceptionalities, including cognitive disabilities. I am a Caucasian female with numerous different cultures within the family and close group of friends. The root of my teaching framework comes from my background. My community of faith is truly diverse. I believe that there is a great need to see people just as people contributing to a diverse society."

When asked what motivated this participant to take up an anti-racist approach, she stated it started first with her faith and being exposed to multiple cultures from early on. "I came from a family that has a certain degree of racism. The diversity in my family has helped too. Talking to people helps a lot with anti-racism P-1. She further explained,

One of the things that impacted me when I was in my 20s, I hadn't learned at school about the internment camps in BC. I was floored when I read a children's book talking about living in the camps. So, I started exploring it. I've taken courses where racism has been addressed and I'm finding that the information is out there about inputting one's own point of view, analyzing where we are at as a society. I started to realize that this needs to be added into my curriculum.



## Teaching Anti-Racist Framework

All three participants talked about how they started taking up an anti-racist framework in their teaching practices. As P-1 explained, "I have witnessed racial injustice and reflected upon it in order to start teaching from an anti-racist perspective. This led towards my journey."

"It's a matter of just starting. When I started, one of the things I did was to change the fake names of people in the coursework and case studies." P-1

"I teach about propaganda to give a background understanding of why the racism is so ingrained." P-2

P-3 acknowledged that workshops and professional development played a roll in helping them teach anti-racist content in their daily practice.

I attended a workshop called Instructional Skills where I created a very short lesson for my cohort, and they provided feedback. I had a slide on the screen with a historical image of the same boy. On the left it's him in his traditional dress and on the right it's him in a more European dress. These were side-by-side images. I used the image to analyze why they're together and what it means. What can we infer from this? Another member of the cohort made the point that while it's a powerful image and it's jarring to see it if you're first nations. I felt so bad, but it wouldn't have occurred to me without this workshop. I took that to heart.

P-3 also has the students write about a children's book. "I recently changed it from Goldilocks and the Three Bears because it wasn't representative. I always had to give context to the International Students. A few students had positive feedback. The students were given the opportunity to use a story that was from their culture." P-1 stated that her primary teaching tool for anti-racist curriculum is through the Moodle discussion postings.

I tell them [the students] that they have a tremendous amount of knowledge as a collective. I often ask students to look into aspects of other cultures or share things about theirs. It's sometimes as simple as an introduction post asking to tell us about the background of their last name. I have students look at different medical approaches, different ways of being healthy based on their culture. I use a video of an Asian woman who grew up in Germany. She describes the differences in Eastern and Western views on things like time and family. It brings forward a large amount of discussion. We also use the strategy of taking a broader perspective and not just racial diversity. I go beyond an "anti-

racist curriculum" and have more of a diverse type of multicultural education. It's important to look at the many different aspects of humankind and how that impacts who we are as people and how that impacts the way we relate to others and how others relate to us. Hearing the stories from people themselves about their racist experiences gives the concept of racism a personal touch which can help us become more self-aware.

In addition, P-1 shared how these experiences helped her include more Indigenous perspectives into her teaching

.... Many years ago, we all thought we were doing such a great job and a couple of First Nations students said that racism is still prominent. One student reported having made a comment about the residential school and she was told to "just get over it." From there, I can live by an anti-racist framework both in the classroom and in the community. I attended a workshop and asked questions. The more Indigenous content I include in my classes, the more the students open up. This has changed my perspective. I am relating to the students now in different ways and that's huge. The Indigenous students are becoming more open to talking about "the rez". They also refer more to themselves as Indigenous people than they would have in the past. This changed my perspective; I'm relating in different ways now. P-1

P-1 acknowledges that students themselves provide some of the best content and seeks their permission to share such information with other students, and attributes their names when sharing that content.

For P-2, the framework for teaching anti-racist content started before she was working for CNC. While completing her master's degree to prepare to apply to work at CNC she became curious about how anti-racist is approached in other countries.

At first, I didn't want to offend anybody. I was trying to start introducing it, but I was scared. The language itself is scary because words are powerful. I didn't know where to begin. The whole concept started up being multiculturalism then it shifted.

Despite it being difficult, they all immediately started considering an anti-racist framework in their course content.

One of the ways I teach this is ... through communication, so at the beginning of the year we need to help them to understand that everyone's voice is equal. We have a classroom expectation list, so I used to call them classroom rules, then we were kind of like that doesn't really recognize adult learners. So, we call it classroom expectations now sometimes depending on who the group is we have different names for it, but it's really kind of basically it's just classroom rules ... it's where

we're really in intentionally working together to develop and build our classroom culture. P-2

The importance of self-reflection was consistently highlighted throughout all three interviews. "We have to have the critical reflection in our teaching because if we do not spend the time to critically reflect on where we are and what we're doing and where we're going...All of these little micro biases that we have inside of us if we don't acknowledge, because we all have them I told you this last week we all have them." P-2 Where P-1 acknowledged, "When I was first starting out, I was told to keep a journal to reflect on my days. Who does it really? It's about making mistakes. Critical reflection is where you grow because I think "it's ok to make a mistake because that's learning." P-2 shared an emotional example of using critical reflection as a teaching strategy within the class. The following recount of the event demonstrates P-2's dedication to using critical reflection as part of a pedagogical framework.

A few years ago we had an adult figure that came into our campus that was doing a welcome presentation for one of my groups, and it was the very first day of class... one of the students had come right out of high school, she was doodling on her hand...The guest speaker was a very stern gentleman and he snapped at her and said that this behavior was totally unacceptable for college behavior. He totally humiliated her in front of the class, she had tears in her eyes, and I did absolutely nothing. And that really bothers me to this day. Never ever again... It made me feel powerless. That I allowed it to happen in my class, I allowed someone to take over control of my class and allowed him to basically emotionally harm my students. But when I'm teaching to anti-racism this helps me to understand that even though I might not be a black or brown person or an Asian person, I am a female and that particular day I did allow another person to come in and take over. Why did I do that? Because I gave up my power to someone else....there's always the power relationships at play, whether we wish to acknowledge them or not.

Additionally, P-1 shared some incredible insight from years of experience and the ongoing importance of critical reflection and its significance in adult learning. Sadly, critical reflection is not seen as a priority by some instructors. This has the potential to perpetuate unfair classroom policies, discriminatory practices and/or microaggressions. We discussed how critical self-reflection provides an opportunity to explore mistakes "because mistakes provide learning opportunities." P-1 Increasing self-aware of our biases creates better instructors. Likewise, when the students become comfortable with critical self-reflection, they too can grow and become more aware of their biases. "Be part of a reflective journal that has questions, that there's no right or wrong answer. No

yes or no answers to it and have people doing more reflective practice. More reflection on some of these kinds of issues" P-1.

## **Recommendations for Others**

Many suggestions and recommendations shared throughout the interviews yielded the following common categories and themes them; Critical Thought, Disrupting the Power Narrative, Stay Current, Open Dialogue, Policy Reform, and Speak Up.

**Critical thought** and self-reflection were the highest priority recommendation. Earlier in this report, I discussed many of the participants' thoughts and ideas. However, the following insights deliver an important message on practicing anti-racist pedagogy. P-1 said that reflection has made a dramatic difference, "When I was first starting out, I was told to keep a journal to reflect on my days. Who does it really? It's about making mistakes. Critical reflection is where you grow because I think "it's ok to make mistakes because that's learning." P-2 said that "faculty need to be aware of and understand our own racial cultural identities and biases."

**Disrupting the power narrative** was another highly recommended concept. P-2 stated that instructors should "be aware and wary of domination or power imbalances to avoid situations where someone dominates you or your students based on a false sense that they are somehow superior. There are always power relationships at play, whether or not we acknowledge them." P-2 highly recommended that instructors be aware of their power in the classroom and break down institutional barriers through open dialogue. "There is a power structure in the classroom. We have to be very careful when we're talking about curriculum and teaching for certain topics. We need to ensure we're not putting our opinions above others because students will often side with us because of the hidden power."

**Staying current** was another common theme amongst all three participants. P-3 said, "During the pandemic, I used a Facebook group to stay current. I meet and collaborate with other instructors from all over the world. P-1 talked about the importance of focused professional development opportunities. "I've taken courses where racism has been addressed and I'm finding that the information is out there about inputting

one's own point of view, analyzing where we are at as a society. I started to realize that these need to be added into my curriculum."

All the participants covered **open dialogue** and cultural safety in some form during their interviews. P-1, for example stated that demonstrating gratitude and encouraging it in students will facilitate a safe learning environment.

The knowledge that could be out there in the world and the things that could change are phenomenal...The more indigenous content I include in my classes, the more the students open up. This has changed my perspective... One of the fundamental principles is about representation in content and curriculum and providing a broader representation than just western ideals. The content we look at will have elements of different races, lifestyles, and cultures.... Recognize and honor all cultural backgrounds and be proud of your own at the same time. P-1

In discussing professional development, P-1 mentioned **policy reform** and program reviews. "Program reviews could help. I recommend that faculty as a group book a classroom and spend a couple of days going through the learning objectives as a group and look at the resources." P-2 acknowledged the difficulty of implementing anti-racist pedagogy in a vacuum. "It can't just happen in the classroom anymore; it has to be institution wide. The whole college. I have more responsibility than I originally thought."

**Speak up** about anti-racism was an important discussion topic, all participants felt passionate about this topic despite the controversy and judgement they may receive. P-2 shared the importance of not remaining silent. "Try and engage the people who we can have this collaborative relationship with, so whether I'm talking to the student who insist she's going to open up their own childcare centre so she can have control of the types of families that she's going to accept, or whether it's at a policy level changing them to be practice. Sometimes it's uncomfortable and intense having conversations with others about racism." ... "understand that all conflict isn't bad. Sometimes the best change can happen when there is conflict."

## Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of faculty who practice antiracist pedagogy in a college setting. The findings of this research enlightened me in many ways. Each participant clearly articulated their personal strength, patience, and dedication during the interviews. The question "why is it so complicated to talk about racism" originally inspired me. I found in the interviews that everyone is, to some degree, unsure about how to approach anti-racism. The participants discussed not having enough training, being concerned that they may offend students, having difficulty starting racial dialogue and often feelings of fear and discomfort. The literature also speaks to each of these concerns, consequently showing that these themes are not unique to the CNC employees I interviewed.

Our instructors recognize that racism exists, and they are committed to doing their part to eliminate it. The findings from the interviews were encouraging and consistently supported with literature. All three of the interviewees implement critical reflection in their daily practice. As evidenced in the literature by Arneback and Jamte (2021), Blakeney (2005), Brookfield (2017), Chrona (2022), Henry and Tater (2009), Kishimoto (2018), Sensoy and DiAngelo (2014), critical and self-reflective practices are foundational to any anti-oppressive framework where change is desired and necessary. Instructors play a significant role in starting the conversation in post-secondary classrooms because the students are the knowledge seekers who pass on their learnings to others in society.

Just start! Participants had no clear starting point when they set out on this difficult journey of incorporating anti-racist pedagogy into their teaching. Over time, these instructors have done and continue to do concrete things they deem conducive to anti-racist actions. Such as

- Adjust the curriculum and teaching strategies
- Recognize and address institutional and personal biases
- Provide a culturally safe environment
- Stay up to date on current literature and issues
- Collaborate with students and colleagues

- Continue to recognize and address power imbalances
- Teach with emotion and sensitivity

## Recommendations

Through this research, I have identified the following recommendations.

I would recommend more research from educators' perspectives with a focus on understanding racism and what constitutes anti-racist pedagogy. As I mentioned at the beginning of the paper, clarity around terminology is lacking and the use is widespread. It was unclear at the beginning of my project if faculty members were or were not teaching using anti-racist pedagogy. It is blurry around the edges when discussing racism. If clear and consistent definitions or clear descriptions of terminology were created, then perhaps the ambiguity would disappear or lessen.

The recommendations that I suggest at a policy level for administrators include:

1. Get involved. Lead the change by demonstrating and showing that there is no room for racism at our institution. Walk the halls and talk to students and faculty about racism and the changes they would like to see.
2. Educate yourself. Where do you fit within the hierarchy of your institution? Learn about the different forms of racism at each level. Talk to your colleagues, listen to your colleagues.
3. Encourage and support staff collaboration through communities of practice and group opportunities.
4. Create an anti-racist policy that focuses on anti-racism. Demonstrate the importance and commitment by not combining it with other policies.

The recommendations that I suggest for post-secondary faculty who wish to engage in critically reflective practice and engage in anti-racist pedagogy practices include:

1. My main recommendation is for faculty who are even slightly inquisitive is to enroll in any opportunity for professional development training that is anti-racist focused. This is not just the employer's responsibility, it is ours, it is everyone's responsibility.
2. Educate yourself, listen and talk to your colleagues. Access credible resources, books, podcasts, or social media. Understand where you fit within the hierarchy of your institution and learn about the different forms of racism.



3. Start a journal of critical reflection – you cannot ask the students to do this until you have. Where are your biases? Prepare yourself to be uncomfortable. Be kind. Be compassionate.
4. Join or create a learning community. We know that when there is a sense of belonging and connection that we are more likely to start and continue attending an activity. We can say the same for a learning community.

Five things you can do to fight against racism.

1. Admit and accept the existence of racism.
2. Learn to identify and understand your privilege.
3. Investigate and explore your biases.
4. Reach out and learn more about other cultures.
5. Challenge the assumptions of others, do not stay silent.

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## Appendix A. Interview protocol and questions

Hi Welcome... Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research study. I want to let you know I am recording this zoom meeting and before we get started, I would like to confirm that you have received and read the consent form.

If I could get you to state your name for the record and to confirm that you have read and understood the consent form.

Do you have any questions about the information on the consent form?

No—continue.

Yes – Answer questions before moving to the next question.

Are you willing to participate in this research project under the conditions described in the consent form?

No—Thank participant and end meeting.

Yes – Continue

I am going to read four statements from the consent form, would you please answer yes or no to these questions?

1. Do you agree to participate in this research and to have the interview recorded on zoom?

No – Thank participant and end meeting.

Yes – Continue

2. Do you understand that you are free to stop participating in this research at any time?

No – Thank participant and end meeting.

Yes – Continue

3. Do you acknowledge receipt of the gift of appreciation for participating in this project?

No – Thank participant and end meeting.

Yes – Continue

4. Do you wish to receive recognition for your contribution to this study and to have your identity disclosed?

No – Thank you. I have made note of this answer. Could you please provide me with a pseudonym to use instead.

Yes – Continue – Thank you I have made note of your answer

Thank you.

We can now begin the interview.

I want to use this first set of questions to start a relationship and know more about you. I am hoping to learn more about your background and philosophies.

### **Interview 1**

- Tell me a bit of your background and your story of how you got to this place?
- Let's talk about anti-racist pedagogy; what does this mean to you?
- What motivated you to take up an anti-racist pedagogical approach?

In this set of questions, I will focus more on the actual pedagogy of antiracism and how you incorporated it into your classroom and curricula.

### **Interview 2**

- Share with me the fundamental principles of your pedagogy and when you first realized there was a need to adjust your curriculum?
- How do you engage in anti-racist pedagogy in your classroom? What are some of your approaches? Can you show me some examples or artifacts?
- How do you stay current? Is there one or two major supporters or influencers for you?

NOTE: These interviews will be hosted using Zoom, a US Company, and any data you provide may be transmitted and stored in countries outside of Canada and Canada. It is important to remember that privacy laws vary in different countries and may not be the same as in Canada.

# Appendix B. Letter of Invitation

## TITLE OF MEd PROJECT

Exploring the experiences of faculty who practice anti-racist pedagogy in a college setting.

## Researcher

Cheryl MacDonald MEd Candidate, Faculty of Education

## Purpose

The purpose of this proposed research project is to explore the experiences of faculty who practice anti-racist pedagogy in a college setting to better understand what motivates and sustains anti-racist pedagogy practices to encourage other instructors to become engaged allies in this work.

You have been invited to participate in this study in your role as FACULTY at the College of New Caledonia. As FACULTY, I am interested in learning about your experiences as an instructor who practices anti-racist pedagogy and has been doing so for more than three years.

The findings of this project will be used in partial requirements for the completion of my Master of Educational Leadership. The final report and results will be presented during the 2022 Summer Institute and possibly publication opportunities.

## Study Procedures

You are being invited to participate in this study which would involve no more than three (3) **one-on-one Zoom interviews** with me. Each interview would take approximately 60-90 minutes, and with your permission, recorded for accuracy.

This is a **minimal risk study**. The stress involved in participating will be no more than the stress encountered in your daily work.

Participation in this project is entirely voluntary and will be scheduled at a convenient time for you. You have the right not to answer any question and to withdraw from the project at any time.

I want to use this first set of questions to start a relationship and know more about you. I am hoping to learn more about your background and philosophies.

## Interview 1

- Tell me a bit of your background and your story of how you got to this place?
- Let's talk about anti-racist pedagogy; what does this mean to you?
- What motivated you to take up an anti-racist pedagogical approach?

In this set of questions, I will focus more on the actual pedagogy of antiracism and how you incorporated it into your classroom and curricula.

## **Interview 2**

- Share with me the fundamental principles of your pedagogy and when you first realized there was a need to adjust your curriculum?
- How do you engage in anti-racist pedagogy in your classroom? What are some of your approaches? Can you show me some examples or artifacts?
- How do you stay current? Is there one or two major supporters or influencers for you?

The interviews will be hosted using Zoom, a US Company, and any data you provide may be transmitted and stored in countries outside of Canada and Canada. It is important to remember that privacy laws vary in different countries and may not be the same as in Canada.

## **Confidentiality**

All information gathered from the interviews will be kept confidential. Unless you indicate on the consent form that during the interview you would like your professional expertise made public, I will then identify you in my report and any other publications resulting from this research. The data will be kept in a locked office and password protected on an external hard drive. Only I, Cheryl MacDonald, as researcher along with my faculty supervisor, Dr. Michelle Pidgeon, will have access to the data. Your confidentiality will be respected during this research project and in the dissemination of its results (at no time will your name and/or affiliation) be disclosed.

## **Voluntary Participation**

You can decide to stop participating at any point in the process, for any reason. Your decision to participate (or not) will not be shared with anyone. There are no negative consequences for withdrawing your participation. You have the right not to answer any question in the interview and to withdraw from the project at any time.

## **Data Storage**

Zoom recordings, transcripts, and other information related to this research study will be kept on a **password protected** external hard drive in a locked office at my home residence. I will destroy the recordings after the completion of my Master's in Education, and the transcripts after 5 years.

The information gained from this interview will be used in an academic paper as well as a poster and speech on the findings. After I complete all of my MEd degree requirements, I will share the results with the College of New Caledonia and possibly publish the results in a journal to better help faculty who want to become engaged allies of this work and practice anti-racist pedagogy.



**Remuneration/Compensation**

Participants will receive a small gift (\$15 gift card) of appreciation from a coffee shop of their choice for participating in the study.

**Contact for information about the study**

If you have any questions about this project, please contact Cheryl MacDonald.

**Contact for concerns about the study**

If you have any concerns about your rights or treatment as a research participant, please contact SFU Research Ethics.

I will follow up to discuss this matter with you directly either by email or phone. If you have any questions about this project, please contact me by phone or by email.

Warmest regards,

**Cheryl MacDonald**  
*MEd candidate*  
*Faculty of Education*  
*Simon Fraser University*