Warp and Weft: Weaving a Community of Practice for Antiracism in Indiana
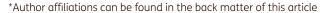
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to consider elements of our success in building authentic relationships as a team of university and community members that developed a community of practice aimed at anti-racism education and activism. Our team co-created a field trip to develop and assess anti-racism and activism in Indiana. As we consistently met, our relationships deepened, which yielded deeper conversations about race and racism. Using critical reflection as our guide, we invoke the metaphor of weaving to explain how these processes were integral to the development of relationships within our community of practice. Warp threads represent the structures we put in place to create and maintain the structure of our CoP: a) sustained commitment; b) creation of working agreements; c) purposefully getting to know one another; and d) reflection about our process. These elements supported our weft threads: the dialogue, sharing, and listening, developed through trust and open conversation, which strengthened our relationships. These processes have potential to be elements of success for those interested in creating communities of practice with similar goals.

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The purpose of this article is to consider elements of our success in building authentic relationships as a team of university and community members. These relationships served as the foundation for our community of practice to develop and assess a project we created to engage in antiracism education and activism. We draw from Bryant and Arrington (2022) who define antiracism as "actively and intentionally working to counter racism across the many levels in which it can manifest" (p. 23). Antiracism activism requires a personal commitment to raising awareness of racism, increasing knowledge and shifting mindsets, and taking action within one's sphere of influence. These actions are situated within critical consciousness. In the context of our project which focused on anti-Black racism (the systematic oppression of Black people throughout all aspects of society), critical consciousness promotes understanding of the harm that anti-Black racism causes and how individuals advance from being aware of anti-Black racism to engaging in actions to prevent and resist racial trauma (Bryant & Arrington, 2022; Mosley et al., 2021). As racism can take place across interpersonal, cultural, and institutional spheres, anti-racism activism may be enacted across those spheres.

Our research question is: How did community and university members in a midwestern city in Indiana develop authentic relationships that contribute to a community of practice to address anti-Black racism education and activism? We came to this question after spending 18 months, beginning in the fall of 2020, co-constructing a multi-day field trip throughout our state to a) increase awareness of Black Americans' experiences confronting racism in a in Indiana; b) promote racial justice activism; and c) determine which assessment tools best engage participants and measure the impact of the field trip experience towards those ends. In reflecting on the success of our team, we asked ourselves about the elements of our success and engaged in critical reflection about our process to unpack those elements. Our pursuit of this project and inquiry were informed by the context of our city, university, and community.

CONTEXT

Black people have a rich history in Muncie, Indiana, dating back to 1845 (Lassiter et al., 2004). By the early 1900s, the Black community was one of the largest in the state for a city its size (Thornbrough, 2000). Black people contributed to all aspects of Muncie life as professional, service, and factory laborers, and in religious and social spheres.

Muncie was also rife with deeply embedded prejudice and discrimination, which has been attributed to southern Whites who brought their racist sentiments with them when they migrated North in search of jobs (Goodall & Mitchell, 1976), as well as the original state constitution which reflected highly racist policies. Muncie was chosen in 1929 as the site for the Middletown Studies because the researchers considered it to be similar to many other midwestern communities (Lynd & Lynd, 1929). Despite the presence of a thriving Black community, the Lynds intentionally excluded Blacks from their study of "average" citizens (Lassiter et al., 2004).

From the presence of the Klu Klux Klan starting in the 1920s race riots at a local high school in the 1960s (Lassiter et al., 2004), racial tension became a part of this "average" community's history. While many community leaders have advanced efforts to address inequities in the public and private sectors (Lassiter et al., 2004), contemporary race relations continue to reveal "longstanding bitter conflict and visible signs of unity" (Gibson, 2015, para. 1).

In the fall of 2020, our team formed to address anti-Black racism. Some of us participated in protests that summer, ignited by the police murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor that occurred that year. Although chants of "Black Lives Matter" became mainstream, our community partners are long-time social activists who understand that anti-Black racism is a persistent and insidious challenge in our community and nation which must be dismantled. Therefore, while our group was not specifically formed in response to those murders, calls to be an antiracist in 2020 were further inspiration to act against racism within our locus of control. Next, we introduce our team followed by an explanation of our project.

OUR TEAM

Our interracial team consists of seven people: three community members and four university faculty members (See Table 1). Community members include one white man, Jason, who is a co-facilitator of RACE Muncie, a city-wide, interracial group that dialogues about race; and two Black women: WaTasha is the Chief Executive Officer of the region's YWCA, a member of the school board, and Chair of the Martin Luther King Dream Team (MLKDT), a local non-profit that advances civil rights education in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr; Yvonne is the Vice-Chair of MLKDT. Faculty members include one white woman, Beth, who is an Associate Professor of Communication Studies, Assistant Secretary of MLKDT, and a member of RACE; and three Black women: Dorshele, an Associate Teaching Professor of History; Kiesha, a Professor of Criminal Justice and Criminology and Director of the African American Studies Program; and Kendra, an Associate Professor of Educational Leadership, an Associate Dean in the Teachers College, and a member of MLKDT. To include diverse perspectives, we recruited individuals across the spectrum of diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. Unfortunately, challenges such as increased work and family commitments in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, made it difficult for several individuals to participate, even when the group adjusted to try to respond to their needs. We recognize that the outcomes of our project, particularly the dialogue and reflection, may have differed if those individuals were

NAME	RACE/GENDER	OCCUPATION/ACTIVITIES	# YEARS LIVING/WORKING IN MUNCIE
Community Members			
Jason	White Male	Co-facilitator of RACE	30+
WaTasha	Black Female	CEO of regional YWCA; Chair of MLKDT	30+
Yvonne	Black Female	Vice-Chair of MLKDT	30+
University Faculty Members			
Beth	White Female	Associate Professor of Communication Studies; Assistant Secretary of MLKDT; Member of RACE	30+
Dorshele	Black Female	Associate Teaching Professor of History	15+
Kiesha	Black Female	Associate Professor of Criminal Justice and Criminology; Director of African American Studies Program	15+
Kendra	Black Female	Associate Professor of Educational Leadership; Associate Dean in the Teachers College; Member of MLKDT	7

Table 1 Participant Characteristics.

Note: Our submission to the Institutional Review Board included approval to use our names without pseudonyms.

able to participate. It is likely that perspectives that emerge from intersectional experiences of race, gender, class, and other social identities would broaden our awareness and understanding of the diverse experiences within Black cultures, which would in turn, challenge our thinking about what anti-Black racism activism looks like and who benefits.

OUR PROJECT

Our group began to meet in August 2020 after Kendra and Kiesha convened leaders from the university and city to collaborate in cross-racial dialogue about how to develop anti-racism activism. This led to a community-engaged project that included discussions about race; the creation of a four-day field trip to examine historic sites of Black Americans' resistance to racism in four Indiana cities; and exploration of meaningful assessments of the trip experience. We realized that despite the segregation and inequities in our state's history, many people were not aware of our history and erroneously assumed that racism only happened in the Jim Crow South. We believed one way to address this problem while facilitating opportunities to develop anti-racism activism among participants, was to coordinate a field trip to address these issues.

We met 14 times via Zoom between August 2020 and December 2021. Kendra and Kiesha met before and after meetings to plan and debrief. The main focus of our project was to create a field trip that could be a model for future experiences. In order to do that, we divided our meetings between discussions and activities to build relationships, choose sites and learn about the history of Blacks in Indiana, plan the logistics of the field trip, and create assessments to determine which ones would be the most impactful to measure or describe our learning and application about anti-Black racism and activism. We chose to visit Muncie, Gary, Indianapolis, and Lyles Station because of their rich legacies of Black resistance and survival in the face of racial oppression. We divided planning for each city (see Appendix A). The specific itinerary for each city was different, however each included

visits to multiple sites such as schools, museums, churches, parks, and abandoned lots that once were the sites of Black businesses or homes. Each site also included conversations with Black and White community members who live in and are knowledgeable about the city's Black history.

Our trip was originally planned for Summer 2021, however, due to COVID-related concerns, we postponed the trip until May 2022. Over four days and three nights, we visited Muncie, Gary, Indianapolis, and Lyles Station. We developed a field guide that included historical background about each of the cities with photographs. We also included a variety of assessments, including a survey and reflective journaling prompts. As our group met consistently over time to collaboratively plan and learn from each other, we developed a community of practice.

COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

A community of practice (CoP) is a group of people who come together to focus on a shared concern, interest or passion, and learn how to do it better (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). All members participate equally regardless of educational background or role within the institution hosting the CoP. Participants bring their own goals and help to shape the meetings; everyone in the CoP has knowledge to share; and at the same time, everyone is in need of learning (Wenger et al., 2002).

The CoP is based on an open, democratic way of working and learning. Individuals bring many identities and ways of knowing to the conversation, and each person's knowledge is valuable. Because systems are so complex and interrelated, combining knowledge provides a more complete understanding of the world in which we live and helps grow the ability to accomplish change. All individuals who participate in the CoP do so as volunteers and choose to participate in the CoP based on the topic. The facilitator's role is to participate in discussion, both contributing to and learning from the group (Li et al., 2009).

CoPs occur within higher education in a variety of contexts. For example, Pierszalowski et al. (2021) asserted that a CoP for the coordination of undergraduate research supported opportunities for identifying successes and strategies to overcome challenges. Some CoPs become spaces for scholar activists and practitioners to engage in critical inquiry, reflexivity, and data analysis for social justice aims. For example, the New Mexico Statewide Race, Gender, Class Data Policy Consortium sought to attain intersectional social justice goals (López et al., 2019). Our team and project are unique because we integrated community members and university faculty from the beginning, thereby avoiding negative tendencies for universities to thrust their vision of projects onto community members, which often strengthens rather than dismantles the "town and gown divide." We purposefully created and committed to an ongoing structure to move past that barrier.

The development of trusting personal relationships among members is a key element of CoPs. Wenger et al. (2002) refer to this as "coalescing." Coalescing occurs when members

> build relationships, trust, and an awareness of their common interests and needs [which] often takes time for a community to develop to the point that people genuinely trust each other, share knowledge that is truly useful, and believe the community provides enough value that it has a good chance to survive. (p. 82)

Trust is further developed as CoP members have honest conversations about complicated or uncomfortable topics and situations that arise; in short, by talking about "real problems they face" (p. 89).

Because the purpose of our community of practice is to analyze racism and provide spaces to reflect and develop anti-racist activism, our CoP is undergirded by critical theory that centers an analysis of power and oppression. Cooper et al. (2010) explained the "most transformative communities of practice are those that help learners gain awareness of such inequities and then support them in drawing on their new knowledge, relationships, and identities to make their communities, institutions, and social systems more democratic and socially just" (p. 767). In our case, we aim to contribute to a more democratic and racially just society through anti-racism. This critical lens informed our approach to critically reflecting on our success in creating authentic relationships as a CoP.

CRITICAL REFLECTION

The process of reflection as a part of community-engaged projects "deepens learning, provides knowledge for future action, attends to the collaborative evolution of the partnership, and provides a space for unexpected insights and new questions" (Pigza, 2016, p. 104). Reflection affords the opportunity to examine our experiences rather than only living them; allowing for learning through experience. This can happen individually or collectively within a group (Amulya, n.d.). When all partners engage in ongoing reflection in an equitable process, everyone has potential for self-discovery, learning, and the discovery of new insights and possibilities.

Critical reflection occurs when practitioners seek to discover the underlying assumptions that guide their actions (Brookfield, 1998). Brookfield (1998) identified four lenses through which critically reflective practitioners can see their practice. The first lens is our autobiography as a learner. People see through this lens when elements of other people's stories resonate with their own experiences. Second, the lens which helps people see through their learners' eyes requires that we listen to our learners to discover whether they are "interpreting our actions in the way we mean them" (p. 199). Although this was conceived in the context of a classroom of teachers and students, in the context of our CoP, we were all learners from each other. The third lens is our colleagues' perceptions and experiences, which we learn from engaging in critical conversations about experiences we have similarly faced. Fourth, the lens of theoretical literature means referring to theory and research to help identify our practice in the context of extant research. Our critical reflection informed our individual and collective reflection about our processes and yielded the metaphor of weaving to explain the development of our relationships as a CoP.

WEAVING

We invoke the concept of weaving as a metaphor to explain our processes for relationship-building. The fibers of a woven basket are tightly bound together, which creates a firm structure that allows very little, if anything, to break the material apart. Therefore, we describe our process of relationship-building as warp and weft threads in weaving. The term 'weaving' is used to describe relational approaches to systems change (Milligan et al., 2022). Social network analysis theorists describe weaving as the connections made between diverse individuals and groups. Network weaving brings people together for collaboration on projects that strengthen their community (Krebs & Holley, 2006). Our use of the term 'weaving' to describe the development of relationships within our CoP builds upon Milligan et al.'s (2022) discussion of prioritizing relationships in the process of change. They explained,

> Relationships are the essence and fabric of collective impact. What's critical for those who facilitate collective impact efforts is to support relationship development in ways that build true

empathy and compassion so that authentic connections happen, particularly between diverse participants. These deeper connections can form new avenues for innovation to address the social problem at hand. (paragraph 3)

We take this concept a step further by applying the metaphor of textile weaving to our discussion of elements of our success. Interestingly, Brown et al. (2018) invoked communities of practice as a framework to understand how Chumash basket weavers persevered during and after colonization in southern California. The Chumash weavers, who were primarily women, have long been recognized as highly skilled weavers who produced beautiful and expertly woven baskets. The baskets were highly sought after for economic trade and to be used for their own domestic purposes. The authors pointed out similarities between basket weaving and communities of practice in that basket weavers must understand their landscape, be highly skilled in the technical aspects of basket weaving, and mentor others. Therefore, as with a community-engaged community of practice, basket weaving "embodies historically-constituted traditions, routines, and social networks" that offer insight into sociopolitical concepts such as "identity negotiation, community formation, and cultural resiliency" (p. 144). The authors found that Chumash basket styles and patterns reflect the existence of communities tightly woven together to create and respond to changing sociopolitical contexts. Next, we explain our process for analyzing our reflections which yielded a weaving metaphor.

METHODS

Our project was approved by the university's Institutional Review Board. We agreed to record our meetings via Zoom. Meetings were automatically transcribed by Zoom software or through Otter. Kendra and her graduate assistant verified meeting recordings and transcriptions. The recordings and transcriptions were uploaded into a folder in Google Drive for all group members to listen and confirm accuracy. Since we wondered about how our relationships were established, we analyzed meeting notes and transcriptions by asking "What elements and experiences formed and deepened our relationship?" We called a group meeting to discuss the manuscript's purpose and process, and to share initial reflections about the meaning of authentic relationships by reflecting on our collaborative experiences. Kendra wrote analytic memos (Miles et al., 2020) as she confirmed transcriptions and reviewed meeting notes while keeping their comments from the earlier meeting in mind. The entire group discussed findings and reflections as the manuscript was developed. Transcriptions are presented verbatim, minus language irregularities (such as umm.. or

repetitive words such as I-I), and dialogues are presented with minor editing for brevity.

FINDINGS

We present our findings about our processes to create trusting relationships within our CoP, using the metaphors of warp and weft threads in weaving. Warp threads are strung vertically and are stationary. They provide support for the weft by holding tension as the weaving process occurs. Weft threads are threaded horizontally between the warp threads. As they are threaded over and under the warp, they create patterns and structure in the weave (The Weaving Loom, n.d.; Treasurie, n.d.). Warp threads represent the elements we put in place to create and maintain the structure of our CoP. These elements supported our weft threads: the dialogue, sharing, and listening, developed through trust and open conversation, which strengthened our relationships as we discussed the impact of racism on ourselves and our society.

WARP THREADS
Warp threads that created a structural foundation for our CoP included: a) sustained commitment; b) creation of working agreements; c) purposefully getting to know one another; and d) reflection on our process.

Sustained Commitment
First, we established a consistent, sustained commitment to showing up, connected by a common purpose rooted in the project process and outcomes. This is a fundamental characteristic of a CoP. We established a commitment to regularly coming together as a group by being clear about the purpose and outcome of the project. Each semester, we determined which time and day worked best for all. To include everyone, a mutually agreeable day and time was essential. Kendra and Kiesha also demonstrated commitment by planning organized meetings so people's time would not be wasted. These structural building blocks were important because they created the space and commitment for our work to occur. Regular meetings aided in team members forging connections and committing to being present regularly, which was one key ingredient to building trust. Our ease with one another increased over time, underscoring that to create relationships and stay connected, members have to show up consistently and invest in getting to know one another.

Ground Rules
Early in our process, we established a series of ground rules, also referred to as working or community agreements, for working together. Kendra introduced this discussion by asking group members to identify behaviors and principles that are important for them

to stay invested in this process and will increase their confidence that our CoP will be an emotionally safe space for honest conversations. This was particularly true given our topic of anti-racism and our desire to maintain equal power relations between university and community members. Our ground rules included:

- Stay committed and be fully present.
- Share your truths; Avoid speaking on behalf of others.
- Listen to understand; Avoid interrupting others.
- Speak respectfully when acknowledging a hurt or disagreement.
- Hold each other accountable to our ground rules.

Ground rules were an important warp thread because the rules were co-created with all voices included and because we were collectively accountable to the ground rules.

Purposefully Getting to Know One Another

Another practice that became a warp thread for our CoP was our purposeful incorporation of opportunities to learn about each other into our meetings. One way we did this was through check-in questions. For example, to begin the February 2021 meeting, Kendra's check-in question was, "If you had a word to describe something you're trying to achieve in 2021, what would it be? WaTasha said "Intentional," and Yvonne and Kiesha responded, "Peaceful."

Beth responded, "I hate to be the downer here. I'm just trying to survive." In that moment, someone could have tried to pressure Beth to fake being happy or find a positive word to avoid the discomfort of addressing her feelings of exhaustion. Instead, the group honored her by acknowledging and accepting where she was emotionally at that time. Group members responded with statements such as "Surviving. Yeah," and "Heard that."

Jason chose the word "resilient" after which Kendra responded, "I love that." In response to Kendra saying that her word is "schedule," Yvonne said, "Good work." As each person responded, the group did not sit quietly. Instead, there was laughter, affirmation, and a response acknowledging each person's intentions and state of mind.

The fact that several people had pre-existing relationships further developed our bonds. In fact, all of us knew at least one other person prior to our project and Kiesha knew everyone. Beth knew everyone in the group except Kendra, and all of the community members knew each other. In this regard, Kiesha and Beth served as bridges for several of us to connect with each other.

Reflection About Our Process

For the group meetings to be productive, a considerable amount of research and planning was required. Agendas, objectives, and outcomes needed to be established. In a co-constructed project, where community members and university members have equal participation in all aspects of the project, Kendra and Kiesha recognized their privilege as university researchers, to spend time during their workday to plan and create meeting goals. In that regard, planning the project was integrated into their job, as opposed to being outside the scope of their employment, as was the case for community members. At the same time, as a co-constructed project, where equal participation in decision-making is essential, they could not get ahead of the input, desires, and ideas of community partners. Therefore, they set aside time in meetings to collectively assess the level of integration of community members' needs in meetings, activities, and materials through check-ins and the use of a tool to assess the balance of community and university members in project development.

CHECK-IN ABOUT COMMUNITY NEEDS

One example of our reflection about the extent to which community members' needs were centered was the multiple check-ins about how information was shared. University team members were accustomed to using the learning platform, Canvas, for teaching, so housing materials on Canvas seemed obvious to them. However, during a planning session in February 2021, Kendra and Kiesha discussed community members were probably not accessing materials in Canvas as often as they had anticipated. They also realized that sometimes it was easy for university members to overshadow or dominate talk time of the community members, so wanted to change that practice. They added a question to the meeting agenda and purposefully asked to hear the voices of community members first.

Kendra asked, "We want to know from you all, starting with our community partners, what is the best way for you to consistently engage in the learning required for this project?" WaTasha responded that Canvas is really difficult for her to navigate. Kiesha offered Google Drive as an alternative and Jason agreed saying that he uses Google Drive for all of his collaborations. Yvonne answered that although she didn't know about Canvas, she would go with whatever the group decided.

The group's commitment to being guided by community voices was central to decision-making. As a result of our reflection and this conversation, the group transitioned to Google Drive where all of the project documents and recordings are housed. Equally important, this conversation highlighted that co-construction with community members goes beyond simply seeking input to consider. It is creating *with* them so that their voices are integrated by directly influencing project choices in conjunction with university members.

The Abacus Tool

Kiesha was part of a university team that developed a toolkit for community-engaged collaboration. One tool in this kit is the "Degree of Collaboration Abacus Tool"

(Doberneck & Dann, 2019). The abacus tool visually represents the "valence of the relationship" between community and university partners. It represents "whether, during each step of a shared project, the community or university partner has more voice in project decision-making or whether both partners share the work equally" (p. 94) in three domains: research, teaching and learning, and service and practice.

During our second meeting, Kendra asked, "What are some of the key components for community-engaged research?"

Kiesha offered, "I think that without a doubt, for me, community-engaged research is centering the community partners in a way that articulates what their wants and what their needs are." Kendra asked the community partners, "What would that respect look like…What would it feel like?

WaTasha responded, "So I think you have been doing that…I think that you have been really intentional about making sure that we're included in the conversations." She added, "Believe me, if I feel as if I'm lost or feeling – I won't feel disengaged, because I will use my words and say, 'Hey, bring me up to speed.' Or, 'You're talking too academic for me. Bring it down.' Like, I have no problem communicating that."

We used the abacus tool to assess "balance" and deepened our commitment to ongoing evaluation of our roles and responsibilities. Another key aspect of our process was a Scope of Work for Community Engagement (Appendix A), which included our co-constructed purpose statement, roles and responsibilities, and agreements about project dissemination. We were purposeful about our commitment to equal value – that academic faculty did not have more "right" or ownership over our data and products. We agreed that the first manuscript would include all project members and we will always provide a credit statement acknowledging all project members, even in products (i.e., papers or presentations) in which other team members do not participate.

The warp threads described above provided the foundation for the weft threads of trust, deep listening, and empathy as evidenced in the dialogues below. These warp and weft threads strengthened our relationships as a CoP.

WEFT THREADS

In the fall of 2021, as we began to focus on the qualitative assessments we might use for our field trip, we turned to *The racial healing handbook* (Singh, 2019). While we developed relationships throughout the previous months, our engagement with the book content wove us together more deeply. Each conversation served as an additional weft thread that wove us together. The tightening of our relationships was an outgrowth of our dialogues that became more frequent and were increasingly based on trust and vulnerability as we probed book content. This

weaving influenced how we relate to each other and how we seek to understand and open our hearts to each other's reflections, by listening and asking questions.

One conversation, in particular, exemplifies this process. We discussed how white and Black people learn about racism. Our dialogue revealed the importance of listening to understand other people's perspectives, which is one of our ground rules. We agreed to read a chapter of the text and discuss a significant passage or reflection prompt. On this particular day, we started with a smaller group due to some conflicting appointments. Beth, Kendra, and Dorshele shared their impressions of the book.

Beth said that she was challenged by some of the questions, even though she has taught in this area for a while. She acknowledged that she is still learning about racism, which yielded further exploration and expressions of vulnerability.

Dorshele said she was compelled to apologize to her white colleague friends because she wrongly assumed that as allies, they would automatically understand race and racial oppression in multiple contexts and know how to support her. For example, she explained how she was surprised by the lack of response from her white colleagues about the January 6 capitol riot. But, she reflected, "I realized everybody needs a moment to kind of step back and be like, 'What the heck is going on?' You know, and I never thought about your process [and made judgments about a perceived lack of interest]. So like I said, I owe people some apologies because I made some assumptions."

Beth responded that she is still learning and that she appreciates Dorshele as a friend and a colleague. Further, she expressed, "Not only that, that you feel comfortable talking about the issue and about some of the issues that are dealt with in this particular chapter. Specifically, about that process. But you know, those are the moments when I deserve to be called out. I'll be very frank."

Beth explained how the capitol riot left her in shock. She continued, "I appreciate that grace, but I also realize that I need to be called out. I am learning. I mean, I, as some of my responses to the questions in chapter one kind of indicate, I was not challenged to recognize race early in my life simply because I grew up in a sundown town."

Kendra asked a question that if not for the honest conversation occurring, she probably would not have asked: "Beth, I'm still trying to understand [the process of] learning about race, because I don't remember a time when I wasn't racially conscious."

Beth indicated to go ahead, so Kendra continued, "So, to me, to hear you say that you grew up in a sundown town [and] you didn't have to think about race, that's like an oxymoron. The fact that it was a sundown town meant that race had to have been [conscious to everyone] in my thinking. So, can you talk more about that?"

Beth replied, "Sure. And I think a lot of that had to do with the fact that I was a child and a young adult in a

community where I was not confronted by obvious acts of racism. Allan Johnson calls it the 'luxury of obliviousness.' And as I was growing up, I was never confronted, at least in school, which was my major kind of area of socialization, with race." She explained how "difference" in her community was based on socioeconomic status, faith because of the Amish and Mennonites in her community, and the two Latinx families, who were referred to as Mexican. Her father worked in a factory and if he referred to a Black employee, "he always referred to them as Black, and then their name."

Kendra asked when Beth understood what a sundown town was. Beth explained that it was not until she heard an author speak about sundown towns at a conference: "And I went out and bought the book, and there's my hometown [discussed in the text]."

Kendra responded, "That answers my question, then. You didn't grow up thinking '[This is] a sundown town.'

Beth affirmed that was true: "Oh, no. And it wasn't actually until, I'm gonna guess six or seven years ago, there was a reconciliation process that was initiated."

This, and other warping and wefting conversations that involved all group members often took place in response to reflections about the text; but the space for personal sharing was established as we developed trust, relationship, and consistency in showing up. While we sometimes discussed whiteness, such as in the dialogue above, white fragility was not discussed because our white group members discussed whiteness openly. We were grateful and honored to be in a space in which people opened themselves up to others whom they were confident would respond by listening and with open hearts. These moments continue to weave us closer together, which in turn, create a culture in which we are able to express ourselves more freely and reflect critically about our processes. Ultimately, our planning meetings became a space for nourishment and rejuvenation.

Other outcomes of our field trip included a deeper understanding among us about Black history in Muncie, Gary, Indianapolis, and Lyles Station, Indiana. Additionally, we learned that dialogue and time for silent reflection were central to our individual and collective processing of what we learned. Regarding assessments, we learned that responding to a few robust journal prompts and capturing the major themes of group dialogues were more informative than answering survey questions to capture how we applied our learning to activism. These lessons will inform our planning for future field trip experiences.

CONCLUSION

To review, our research question was: How did community and university members in a midwestern city in Indiana

develop authentic relationships that contribute to a community of practice to address anti-Black racism education and activism? We developed our relationships through an intentional, sustained commitment to the process of building a structured CoP which served as warp threads to support the wefting of listening, trust, and dialogue. Our listening and honoring each other's lived experiences and stories further wove us together as we engaged in ongoing critical reflection about our process. We viewed each other as equal members who contributed a wealth of lived experience. These essential elements contributed to our development of authentic relationships.

Many people get frustrated when dialogue is the end goal of a project; or when people "book talk" themselves out of action, thinking that dialogue alone is sufficient for change. Our experiences reveal that because dialogue was central to our development of relationships, dialogue is equally important to the vision and purpose of the CoP. Dialogue alone may not be sufficient action, but dialogue that contributes to a larger goal *is* action. We witnessed how understanding each other's truths and perspectives by upholding the warp and weft of our CoP and engaging in critical reflection opened us up to navigating difficult terrain together.

Finally, the commitment to relationship building overrode other challenges – such as not being able to meet face-to-face due to COVID-related concerns. Our team was formed in August 2020, six months after the pandemic completely uprooted our way of life. As a result, some of us had not seen each other physically in person prior to our field trip in May 2022. Yet, we were woven together by and through the warp and weft of our CoP and commitment to anti-racist education and activism.

ADDITIONAL FILE

The additional file for this article can be found as follows:

- **Appendix A.** Scope of Work For Community Engagement (Abbreviated). DOI: https://doi.org/10.33596/coll.124.s1

FUNDING INFORMATION

COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

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