

**CARE AND UNCARING
WHITE SUPREMACY, DIVERSITY WORK
AND ANTIRACIST PEDAGOGIES**

by

Nathan Eli Thayer

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Geography

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AND ANTIRACIST PEDAGOGIES**

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ABSTRACT

Care is foundational to the way we reproduce and transform the world around us. Today, in a time marked by widespread calls for racial and social justice, and simultaneous backlash against these calls, it is imperative that we understand the ways that care circulates and operates within racialized struggle. In this dissertation I engage in this through three separate scales. First, nationally, using the events surrounding the actions and trial of Kyle Rittenhouse to think through care's sticky entanglements with the production of white supremacy. Second, I focus in on the university through diversity, equity, and inclusion work to think through how care is operationalized in these efforts, and how scale and nonperformative actions leave us with an uneven caringscape. Finally, in the classroom where I think through care as a means of safely engaging with discomfort as antiracist practice. In all, in this dissertation I argue that we need to make care messy and multiple, widening our approach to capture the totality of relations and systems produced.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION: CARING, UNCARING, AND RACIALIZED STRUGGLE

In the wake of the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis Police officers, we have seen a national resurgence of Black Lives Matter and antiracist protest movements. A response to police violence, the ongoing protests across the United States against systemic racism have, although always an issue among BIPOC communities, renewed a national conversation about race, equity, and violence. Bringing it back to the forefront of (often white) media and political discourse. At the same time, we have seen a rise in far right, often white supremacist backlash counter-protesting against movements reaching for social and racial justice (Carless 2021; Young et al. 2022). As Black communities took to the streets calling for justice and equity, a rise in conversations around white allyship and how it could (or should) be practiced took hold (Owens, 2020; Tomkins, 2020). Beyond national discourses and protests, these calls for justice have begun to be taken up in the academy with new energy. Research has shown, however, that institutions of higher education remain spaces heavily permeated by white privilege, legacies of racism, and structural oppression (Ahmed, 2017; Alderman and Rueben, 2020; Inwood and Martin, 2008). Universities have taken numerous actions in the past towards countering racial disparities, including affirmative action, diversity education and the establishment of diversity offices. There is much evidence that often these efforts are ineffective and performative (cf.

Ahmed 2017). Despite these difficulties, movements towards producing more diverse, equitable, and inclusive spaces have trickled down into the classroom (Alderman et al. 2018). However, like the backlash to the social and racial justice movements we have seen growing backlash against educational projects which shed light on the United State's ongoing entanglements with the legacies of racism and enslavement. Critical Race Theory, the 1619 project, and other approaches which seek to center discussions of race in classrooms have been increasingly attacked at school board meetings, and through state legislatures. Simultaneously, the COVID-19 pandemic has increased calls for care in geography.

It is in this broad context – the conversations, politics, and actions swirling around issues of race and racism and how they intersect with concerns of care – that this dissertation is sited. In what follows, I approach three different arenas in which this struggle is playing out. First, in Chapter 2, I turn my attention to national (USA) scale politics through a careful examination of the various forms of care and support afforded to Kyle Rittenhouse before, during, and following his criminal trial. Here, I turn away from normative framings of care as a universal good to tangle the intersections of care and white supremacy through the actions and assertions of care supporters of Kyle Rittenhouse provided. Here, I ask how do caring acts feed into wider racialized politics, and what does this process produce (**RQ1**)? Ultimately, I argue that care is a part of the ongoing reproduction of white supremacy in the United States (**contribution 1**). This finding builds on the existing geographic literature on care by examining further the intersections between care and systems of violence (See:

Bartos 2020), and adds to calls for care researchers to more thoroughly investigate care's entanglements with race and racism (Raghuram 2019).

Second, in Chapter 3 I scale to the university. In this chapter I rely on interview data from individuals engaged in diversity, equity, and inclusion (henceforth DEI) work at the University of Delaware. Asking how care factors into institutionalized and grassroots DEI efforts in the university, and what spatial patterns appear from this process (**RQ2**)? I make three arguments. First, that diversity equity and inclusion work is care work, as affirmed by respondents own understandings of the work they were doing (**contribution 2**). Second, that non-performative DEI actions, those which look like care but do not contribute to any meaningful change, are active in the production of uncaring campus space (**contribution 3**). And, finally, that DEI is a scalar process in the university, and the uncoordinated character of DEI efforts across scales produces an uneven caringscape wherein some spaces are more inclusive than others (**contribution 4**).

Finally, in Chapter 4 I scale down into the classroom. Here, I discuss findings from student journals, participant observation, and my own reflective journaling derived from an antiracist geographies course I taught in the Fall of 2021. Asking how antiracist practice scales into the classroom through teaching, and what role care plays in this process (**RQ3**)? I focus on experiences of discomfort (Eaves 2021; Eaves et al. 2023) felt by students and the instructor (me). Adding to literatures on antiracist, discomfort, and caring pedagogies I argue that discomfort, tempered with care, is a

space from which students and instructors can develop self-reflective antiracist practices, furthering antiracist praxis in the classroom (**contribution 5**).

Taken together through this dissertation I contribute to literatures on care, white supremacy, DEI, and pedagogical practice. Through this work I further conversations on the interlinking of care and violence by investigating care's role in reproducing white supremacy, a violent and oppressive system, disrupting normative framings of care and pushing scholars to further engage with the way care can produce harmful processes. Further, through my work with DEI workers I contribute to literature on diversity work by engaging it with literatures on care, arguing that DEI practices, while caring, are uneven at best. Finally, I bring existing work on care and discomfort into conversation with literature on engaged and antiracist pedagogy, suggesting the coupling of care and discomfort as a means of furthering antiracist practices and politics in the classroom. Taken together, through this dissertation I trouble care (See Naylor et al. 2020. Care is often talked about as a transformative good, yet it can often produce very uncaring results. It is messy, and fraught with complications produced by intersecting power relations falling along the boundaries of difference. It is a practice that allows us to productively engage in discomfoting moments, but only if we remain vigilant and attentive in our approaches. As scholars, we need to more vigorously take up the work of examining the tensions between caring and uncaring to better understand the dynamics of power at play within caring relations, and to further our understandings of what is produced, both transformative and harmful, through care.

The rest of the introduction proceeds as follows. First, I dive into the theoretical framework that threads throughout this dissertation, focusing on feminist and geographic scholarship on care. Next I outline my methods, methodology, and positionality as it relates to this study. Following, I discuss the structure the dissertation takes before finally concluding.

Theoretical Framework

In this dissertation I heavily engage with theorizations of care in order to **1)** think through the reproduction of white supremacy through caring actions (Chapter 2); **2)** trace care's role in the academy through diversity, equity, and inclusion (henceforth DEI) work (Chapter 3); and **3)** tangle with the messiness of crafting spaces where students can safely experience discomfort in the care-full classroom as an avenue for furthering antiracist praxis (Chapter 4). Situated within the relational (Lawson, 2007; 2009; Massey, 2004) and moral (McEwan and Goodman, 2010; Popke, 2006) turns in geography, care as a focus of geographic inquiry emerged from feminist scholarship concerned with the practice of care and developing an ethical stance centered on wellbeing (Held, 2006; Lawson, 2007; 2009; Tronto, 1993). Conradson (2011) notes that early geographic engagements with care focused primarily on medical and health geographies. However, today scholars have expanded geographic approaches to care to focus on issues (to name a few) such as children's caring labor (Bartos, 2012), mentoring and teaching in academia (Mountz et al. 2015; Newstead, 2009; Puāwai Collective, 2018), welfare (McDowell, 2004), sexual violence (Bartos, 2020), and issues of urban justice (Williams, 2017).

In an often cited phrase, Tronto broadly defines care (citing Fisher and Tronto, 1991) as “a species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our ‘world’ so that we can live in it as well as possible (1993: 103).” Situating care as a species activity, as the totality of practices that build livable worlds, points to what Lawson describes as the “centrality of care work and care relations to our lives and societies (2007: 3).” Further, care is not simply the act of caring about something or someone, nor is it simply the provision and receipt of help. Care is action and orientation. It appears in single moments and as ongoing processes. Care is both relation and ethic (Lawson, 2007; Massey, 2004; Tronto, 1993). Additionally, care is not universal in its meaning and practice (Tronto, 1993). Care is inherently geographic as it is always situated within the political and cultural contexts of the places and scalar networks within and through it is performed (McEwan and Goodman, 2010). Care is not, however, always universally good. The interdependency and attentiveness to the needs of others that undergirds care can also produce harm, oppression, and systemic violence against “othered” people (Narayan, 1995; Raghuram 2019). Narayan (1995: 134) argues that the violent practices of colonization were made “morally palatable by the rhetoric of responsibility and care for enslaved and colonized Others.” Similarly, Raghuram (2019: 629) notes that “colonial ‘caring’ encounters have shaped transnational hierarchies but also ordered postcolonial racialized violence.” Care is always already shot through with racialized and gendered difference and power relations (Raghuram, 2019), and as such attention must always be paid to the ways that care is influenced by colonialism and white supremacy, and

its potential for harm. While care is theorized as a process through which worlds are repaired, sustained, and maintained, attention needs to be paid to whose world is being repaired and sustained, and who defines what constitutes care (Bartos, 2019; Narayan, 1995; Naylor et al. 2020). In this dissertation I sit with these tensions, thinking through how care can reproduce a system of violence and oppression, namely white supremacy (Chapter 2). Further, in chapter 3 I trace how DEI practices in the university can produce uneven caringscapes across campuses, and, how nonperformative DEI actions, which on the surface look like care, can produce uncaring campus spaces.

Despite these tensions, care is situated as practices and orientations towards crafting practices, spaces, and relations centered on repairing, maintaining, and sustaining ourselves and others (Harcourt and Bauhardt, 2019). Underscoring this is a recognition of the interdependent connections that make life possible (Bartos, 2012; Lawson, 2007; Tronto, 1993). Tronto (1993: 134) notes that “caring is by its very nature a challenge to the notion that individuals are entirely autonomous and self-supporting.” It takes networks of support and care to make the so-called “self-made man.” Care is underscored by a relational sense of self (Smith, 1998). From our position as workers, roles as scholars, within our families, to our position as economic agents, relational care extends interconnecting networks of support which sustain and shape our lives (Bartos, 2012; Dombroski et al., 2018; Green and Lawson, 2011; Smith, 1998; Tronto, 1993). Further, beyond disrupting the autonomous individual, care points our attention

to the wide array of responsibilities we hold towards near and distant others (Lawson, 2007; Massey, 2004; McEwan and Goodman, 2010).

Feminist scholars have long argued that care is not just a relation of sustenance and maintenance, but that it is also always political and embedded in systems of power and difference (Bartos, 2020; Held, 2006; Lawson, 2007; Tronto, 1993). From the standpoint that an ethics of care directs us towards crafting practices, relations, and spaces around mutual wellbeing, and a recognition of the ways care and care work connects disparate peoples and places, feminist scholars have asserted that an ethic of care holds the radical political potential to transform social relations (Conradson, 2011; Held, 2011; Lawson, 2007; McEwan and Goodman, 2010; Tronto, 1993). As Conradson argues, care as a practice can transform “the character of social geographies across a range of registers and scales... facilitating new ways of being together (2011: 545). Further, focusing on care provides a lens to view patterns of power and difference across scales. For example: Who cares, and who is cared for? What spaces are crafted around care, and who do they care for? Which caretakers are valued? What forms of care are made visible and are celebrated, and which are vilified? Finally, how does care fall (or, shrink from) along gendered and racialized lines? Each of these questions involve both sets of actions and practices, as well as the patterns of how power is delineated in society (Bartos, 2019; Raghuram, 2019; Tronto, 1993).

As such, care is presented within geographic scholarship as a (if not increasingly problematized [Raghruam, 2019]) transformative ethic, an object of study, and a

heuristic for scrutinizing power and politics. It is from this point that this study takes root. Reading the actions of individuals and groups, in varied spaces and contexts around race and racism, as well as working with and for the Black Lives Matter movement through care pays attention to activities, grounded in a pursuit of justice, that support and sustain the movement across scales. Further, it provides a starting point from which to view the ways in which individuals and groups work to produce spaces and systems which push against the uncaring and violent processes of whiteness and structural racism which underpin US society (Bonds, 2019; Bonds and Inwood, 2015; Kobayashi and Peake, 2000). Additionally, Bartos (2020) notes that there has been relatively little theorization connecting care to violence within geographic research (see: Till, 2012 for an example of care applied to violence). In the context of this study, I am looking at both moments of physical violence by state (police) and non-state actors (e.g. Proud Boys) at protests, as well as the everyday, structural forms of violence embedded in our communities and institutions. To read antiracist work, and the backlash or resistance against it, through care can lay bare those moments of violence that disrupt the care-full work performed in moments of protests. A significant contribution of this project is to further the engagement between violence and care in geography through a conversation around non-performative forms of support (such as Love's [2019] coconspiratorship) as a caring practice aimed at confronting the ongoing violences of police brutality against Black bodies and structural racism, as well as the ways violence disrupts those forms of support.

While feminist literature on care provides an analytical lens to view antiracist struggle in this project, there is a tension that exists in this application. Raghuram (2019) notes that much of the scholarship on care and care ethics have paid more attention to gendered relations than to other intersectional identities such as race. Further, much of the scholarship on care has been theorized through white women's bodies¹. Graham (2007: 204) notes that while feminist scholarship emphasizes "relationship-based ethics and the importance of interdependency, this approach seems inadequate to address Black women's concerns and needs." Theorizations and applications of care that are not grounded in intersecting histories of oppression, violence, and difference miss the ways that race shapes care, and how care becomes racialized (Bartos, 2020; Graham, 2007; Raghuram, 2019). Following Crenshaw (1989; 1991), Raghuram (2019) calls for geographers to take an intersectional approach to care, paying attention to the ways different markers of difference reshape care. Further, while analyzing care requires locating it within its place specific contexts Raghuram (2019: 629) argues it also requires "dislocating from the normative white body through which much care is theorized." As such, when reading through care in this study it is as important to focus on what actions are being taken as who is taking them, and how those actions are shaped by historical legacies of oppression and uneven power relations. Adding intersectionality to the lens of care in this study is not offered as a

¹ Further compounding this, this framework and study will be deployed by a cisgendered, white man.

panacea; it is a step. As a white man applying care as a lens to study antiracist politics I will need to sit with and continually grapple with this tension.

At present, scholarship on care helps us to understand the various ways caring relations are put to work to sustain lives, build more livable worlds, and produce the spaces which we inhabit. However, more work needs to be done tangling with power and violence within the literature on care. We need to make care messy in our approach to fully capture what, and for whom, is being produced through caring relations. I engage with this direction by **1)** grappling with care's role in the reproduction of white supremacy, and **2)** thinking through the ways that caring practices, some of which are nonperformative (Ahmed 2006), can produce uneven caring spaces in higher education. Further, we need to think more deeply on care's transformative potential to be used as a means for furthering antiracist politics, demonstrated here through engaging discomfort and care within the classroom.

Methodology, Positionality, Methods

In this dissertation I focus on caring practices as they relate to struggles over race and racism in the United States. Specifically, in this study I look at how care is part of the many processes that reproduce white supremacy, thus connecting it to systems of violence and harm; care's role in DEI work in higher education, and how nonperformative (Ahmed 2006) approaches and the scalar processes of DEI produce uneven caringscapes, and uncaring spaces within the university; and, the way that care and discomfort can be practiced in tandem towards furthering antiracist politics. Data for this study was collected over 2021 and into the spring semester of 2022. Data

collection took place across three different scales and sites. First, nationally through social media coverage and news media writing detailing the events surrounding Kyle Rittenhouse before, during, and after his criminal trial. Second, within the context of a single university, the University of Delaware, working with individuals engaged in DEI work. And finally, within a single classroom where a course on antiracist geographies that I designed and taught took place. This final site employed multiple data collection methods, namely reflective student journals, participant observations, and autoethnographic journalling conducted by myself. Throughout this section I will first describe my approach to the research process, detailing my positionality. Following this I will outline each method used in this study.

Methodology, positionality

The research design and practice for this project is informed by feminist methodologies in geography, centered on a recognition of the power dynamics, situated knowledges, and the subject positions of researchers and participants inherent in the research process (Heller et al., 2011; Hiemstra and Billo, 2017; Kohl and McCutcheon, 2015). Central to this is the recognition that all knowledge production is situated and shaped by researcher's own subject positions (Hiemstra and Billo, 2017). Kohl and McCutcheon note that simply acknowledging one's own positionality only "brush[es] the surface (2015: 747)" of the complex ways identity and power relations shape research. Feminist scholars, while acknowledging reflexivity's enduring contribution to feminist methodologies have critiqued the limits of the practice. Thinking about one's own identity in relation to their research and making one's

positionality known does not end with total transparency in research (Hiemstra and Billo, 2017; Rose, 1997). Vasudevan (2021: 29), writing in *Feminist Geographies Unbound*, critiques reflexivity performed in “apolitical contexts,” noting when divorced from “transformative political praxis (Kobyashi, 2003) reflexive writing operates as a self-indulgent confessional about one’s own privileges.” Reflexivity, here, cannot simply be a statement of my own bodily privileges as a white, cisgendered, settler, male, first generation student from a rural lower middle-class background diagnosed with a non-visible disability. Further, as someone who studied DEI efforts at the university where I am enrolled it needs to be stated that I was an active participant in the University of Delaware’s Antiracism Initiative, and received funding (\$4000) from the initiative for this project. Finally, within the classroom component I was the instructor and course designer, and as such wielded considerable power and privilege in the classroom.

In performing fieldwork with students, the unevenness of power between student participants and my role as both a researcher and an educator was particular concern in regards to ethically teaching and researching with students. Classrooms are brimming with power relations between students and teachers (hooks, 1994) which further compound the already uneven relationship between researcher and participant. The course and methods were designed to disconnect student performance from research participation to reduce exploitative recruitment and lessen the uneven power dynamic between me as researcher/instructor and my student/participants. Grades and evaluations were not tied to activities directly involved in data collection.

Additionally, student journaling exercises and surveys were submitted anonymously to further distance research participation from grading and classroom dynamics.

My roles as an instructor and a member of an antiracist initiative, coupled with my own political orientations (which did not align with the supporters of Kyle Rittenhouse) and my own subject positions created by the intersections of power and difference were animated in this project. I cannot divorce myself from these processes, turning myself into the ideal and mythical objective researcher. Instead, I practiced daily journaling to reflect on what I was reading, my interactions with research participants, and my own feelings of discomfort while performing this research. Journaling, for me, acted as a sounding board from which I could not only reflect and think on my work, but also as a site for examining my practices and, hopefully, changing them to produce not only better results, but better relations between me and the research participants detailed in this dissertation. Further, in the final component of this project, the classroom, I inserted myself into the research process to more directly tangle with my positionality and discomforts as a researcher/instructor.

Research, undertaken reflexively, is a transformative process. Through this project I deepened my understanding of the weight white supremacy holds, something I had long been shielded from as a white man. I developed new teaching practices and learned what techniques I already practiced that caused harm or disengagement.

Finally, while I have engaged in DEI practices in the past, I now plan on deepening my engagement with issues of DEI in my teaching, service, and research. In all, I want to say that I became an antiracist – a good practitioner of actions and relations which

deconstruct racist structures around us. But antiracism is a process, not an end point (Kendi 2019). Instead, what I have learned is how much further I need to go.

Method – Chapter 2: The Case of Kyle Rittenhouse

The first component of this dissertation uses the events surrounding Kenosha shooter Kyle Rittenhouse, before, during, and after his trial as a case study for thinking through how we care for white supremacy, and how caring relations are part and parcel of the ongoing production of white supremacy. Data for this chapter was collected using publicly available social media posts, particularly from twitter, news sources and editorials, and websites dedicated to supporting Kyle Rittenhouse. On social media sites, sources were searched for using trending, popular hashtags such as #KyleRittenhouse and #FreeKyle. News sources were selected based on their coverage of Kyle Rittenhouse, as were websites. Much of the news reporting found came from right leaning and far-right news sources, espousing support for Kyle Rittenhouse. Websites were found through social media posts, newspaper coverage, and searching online for sites relevant to Kyle Rittenhouse. The websites focused on in this chapter were those which were directly tied to supporting Rittenhouse, financially or otherwise. Once collected, data was coded for themes regarding care, types of support, who was supporting (i.e. politician), Black Lives Matter, and anti-Black Lives Matter sentiment. Once coded, I performed discourse analysis, placing the tweets, editorials, website comments, and website content within the context of the renewed Black Lives Matter protests, and the events in Kenosha, WI.

The themes that arose from this analysis showed that care for Kyle Rittenhouse came in the forms of financial support, discursive support defending his character and constructing him as the model citizen, and finally political support. Each of these forms of support existed within a wider anti-Black backlash ongoing in the United States. Ultimately, through the case study of Kyle Rittenhouse, I argue that care in this instance was not just about supporting Rittenhouse, but also about continuing to produce a world shaped by white supremacy.

Method – Chapter 3: Caring and Uncaring in the Academy

The second component of this research used the University of Delaware as a case study to think through the ways care and diversity, equity, and inclusion work are intertwined. Data was collected using semi-structured interviews with individuals on campus engaged in DEI work. At the start, purposive sampling of individuals who were visibly searchable as doing DEI work was used to reach out to potential participants. Following this, I used snowball sampling, drawing on recommendations from participants interviewed in the first round of sampling. In total **35** interviews were conducted.

Because interview participants were being asked to comment on work being done at the university that employs them, maintaining confidentiality was paramount.

Participants were often critical of the university's efforts and approached, particularly those used by upper administration, leaving participants in a precarious position. In order to protect confidentiality all identifying characteristics – names, gender, race, age, position – were omitted from reporting in chapter 3. Further, colleagues

mentioned by respondents were also anonymized to reduce the risk of identifying what units respondents worked in.

Interviews were conducted primarily over zoom, with just a couple being done in person. I only recorded the audio from these interviews as a further method of ensuring confidentiality. Once recordings were transcribed, they were coded along these initial themes: care, barrier, success, grassroots, institutional. Further codes emerged from this initial round of coding, including: uncaring, scale, key figure, lip service. Once coded, data was analyzed for themes resulting in three findings: **1)** that DEI workers described their efforts as care work; **2)** that nonperformative actions by upper administration, often in the form of lip service, produced uncaring spaces on campus; and **3)** that DEI is a scalar process which can produce an uneven caringscape.

Method – Chapter 4: Discomfort in the Care-Full Classroom

The final component of this dissertation is focused on experiences within a higher education geography classroom. The course was one I designed and instructed, and was focused on introducing students to geographic approaches to race and racism, antiracist thought, and building critical reflective practices. Because the students taking the course were also research participants, care was taken to have an ongoing dialogue about research ethics, power relations in the classroom, and the research process to work towards building student understanding of what data was being collected, how it would be used, and to remind them that they could withdraw at any time. Three data methods were used in this chapter. The first relied on collecting weekly reflective student journals. In these journals students were asked to reflect on

the concepts they had learned that week, thinking through how they found them useful, and to reflect on challenges and discomforts they experienced in class. Journals were collected digitally through the education management software Canvas, and all personally identifying information was automatically removed to keep the responses anonymous to me. Students created pseudonyms for their journal entries so I could track individual journals over the course of the semester. In total, **8** students engaged in the research project, submitting journals over the course of 12 weeks. Journals were coded for themes regarding challenges to preexisting beliefs, discomfort, and comfort. Second, participant observation was used in this study. Each day, following class, I journalled on observations I had made in the classroom, noting interactions between students, interactions between students and me, moments of discomfort, and conversations held in class. In addition to observation journaling, I also spent an hour after each class reflecting on my own experiences in the classroom, focusing on discomforts and comforts I experienced while teaching. This reflective journaling proved to be more than a research method, as it helped me to track what was and was not working in the classroom, leading to (hopefully) better teaching practices. Data from all three methods are present in Chapter 4. Across all three methods a theme emerged; that discomfort in the classroom created a space for students and myself to critically think about our own beliefs and practices. Further, that care is a necessity in the classroom if discomfort is to be embraced as a productive tool. Ultimately, in this chapter, I argue that coupling care and discomfort in the classroom can further the building of reflective antiracist practices for students and instructors.

Dissertation Outline

This dissertation is structured as a series of three papers. Care, as an object of study and theoretical approach threads through each of these three chapters. Each chapter, however, has its own subset of literatures they engage in. Chapter 2 brings care into conversation with geographic approaches to racism and white supremacy. Chapter 3 focuses on the literature on diversity work, performativity, scale, and care at the university. Finally, Chapter 4 represents a conversation between various literatures on caring, discomfoting, critical, and antiracist pedagogies. The chapters are represent three different scales, moving from the national (Chapter 2), to the university (Chapter 3), and finally down to a single classroom (Chapter 4).

Chapter 2 is a case study of the events, energies, and actions taken surrounding Kyle Rittenhouse's actions in Kenosha, WI. In this chapter I situate various forms of support Rittenhouse received within the broader backlash against the ongoing protests for social and racial justice that unfolded following the murder of George Floyd, what Carol Anderson (2016) refers to as white rage. Drawing on social media posts, website information and comments, and editorials written by prominent conservative media hosts and politicians I traced various forms of support for Rittenhouse which constituted different processes of care. Ultimately I argue that care in this case is not so much about Rittenhouse. Instead, care was situated within wider anti-Black backlash. Care here, I argue, is part of the process through which the ongoing production of white supremacy continues.

Chapter 3 is another case study, this time looking at DEI efforts at the University of Delaware. Here, the actions and understandings of DEI practitioners was used to think through care's entanglement with the production of more equitable and inclusive campus spaces. Respondents yielded three different results. First, I found that many DEI practitioners placed care as central to the work they were doing. Put otherwise, I argue that DEI work should be thought of as care work. Second, consistent with other studies on DEI efforts (Ahmed 2017), respondents were frustrated with upper administration efforts aimed at DEI. Pointing to issues of lip service and a lack of commitment, respondents questioned the university's DEI efforts. Further, this lack of commitment and nonperformative action (Ahmed 2006) was described as an uncaring practice, leading me to argue that DEI work, while situated in care, can also produce uncaring campus space. Finally, many respondents noted that different units, different departments, different labs, and different colleges seemed to be doing better or worse at enacting change. In addition, participants noted that they experienced different barriers to their work as they moved up in scale at the university. From this I argue that DEI is a scalar process within the university, and that the uncoordinated character of efforts across scales leaves us with an uneven caringscape.

Chapter 4 focuses in on the geography classroom. Thinking through caring, discomfort, and antiracist pedagogies I talk through student experiences in a classroom that was designed to be a care-full, antiracist space. In this chapter I detail practices co-developed by students and myself in the classroom, and critically reflect on student journals and my own experiences. For students and myself, moments of discomfort

became moments of self-reflection. Students reported how their understandings and habits were challenged by course content and the discussions we had in class. I, on the other hand, experienced discomfort in a way that made me rethink my teaching practices. Ultimately in this chapter I urge educators to temper discomfort with caring practices to further antiracist practices.

Finally, I end this dissertation with a summary of my findings and major contributions to the various literatures engaged in this work. In addition to the findings detailed in this and the following chapters, I ultimately urge scholars to more closely examine the tensions that exist between caring and uncaring. Care does not have a set destination, and is not always transformative. Actions that read as care can have uncaring results (Chapter 3). Care, while usually thought of as a normative good, can reproduce systems of violence and oppression (Chapter 2). Finally, I conclude with a discussion of future directions for this research.

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Chapter 2

CARING FOR WHITE SUPREMACY: THE CASE OF KYLE RITTENHOUSE

Abstract: In August of 2020, then 17-year-old Kyle Rittenhouse shot three white men in Kenosha, Wisconsin during protests that followed the police murder of Jacob Blake. After the shooting, myriad forms of care unfolded in support of Kyle Rittenhouse. In recent years, scholarship on care and care ethics has sought to “trouble” care, pushing beyond the traditional boundaries of care, considering forms of care that lie outside of traditional caring relationships, and bringing into view care which does not result in a universal good. In this paper I add to this recent engagement by calling for greater attention to the ways in which care (re)produces systems of violence. Namely, using the events surrounding the trial of Kyle Rittenhouse, I document the networks of support and resource flows that cared for Kyle Rittenhouse before, during, and following his trial. Ultimately, I argue that care, while often framed as a transformative force, plays a role in the ongoing production of white supremacy.

Keywords: care, race, Black Lives Matter, white supremacy

Introduction

On August 23, 2020, Jacob Blake, a Black man, was tased and shot seven times by a Kenosha police officer, resulting in his death. What unfurled after Blake’s death was four days of protests and unrest where supporters of racial justice took to the streets to decry police brutality. On August 25, 2020, responding to growing unrest and protest in Kenosha, Wisconsin and calls for protection of property by right-wing groups (see: Herzig 2021) 17-year-old Kyle Rittenhouse, a white teenager, crossed

state lines to the site of protest armed with a semi-automatic rifle. Claiming to be motivated by protecting businesses and property in Kenosha from protestors, Rittenhouse would go on to shoot three white protestors in Kenosha, killing two of them. Response to the actions of Rittenhouse and the consequences he faced (or lack thereof) became widespread and vociferous, repeating longstanding tropes about race relations in the U.S. Many on the American left decried the double standard applied by the police and judicial systems, and the underlying racism that produces them, and those on the right positioned Rittenhouse as a good all-American boy, and a defender and symbol of property rights and gun rights. However, what emerged in this case is a spectacle of care that worked to maintain a virtuous image of Rittenhouse while also upholding white supremacy. On the right support and care for Rittenhouse came via in two major forms, financial and discursive, but in this individualized care, a larger scale caring for white supremacy was made possible.

Care and care ethics have received growing attention by geographers in recent years. Coming out of feminist scholarship (see: Tronto, 1993), and articulated through relational and moral geographies, care is (to name a few areas) used as a lens by geographers to consider issues of scale, space and place, ethics, pedagogy, memory work, and labor. Recent scholarship works to trouble care, pushing care beyond its traditional boundaries to reconceive what constitutes care (Naylor et al., 2020), questioning the eurocentric framings of care (Raghuram 2016), and pushing against currents that position care as a universal good (Bartos, 2018; 2020). In this paper, I complicate care by reading the events surrounding the trial of Kyle Rittenhouse

through the lens of care. In doing so, I position relations of care within white supremacy, calling on scholars to more closely consider the ways that care can be a product of and productive of systems of violence and oppression.

It is in this troubling space of care, where racism, care, and violence entwine that this intervention sits. Drawing on Bartos' (2018) nontraditional caring agencies, and Naylor et al.'s (2020) call for antiessentialist approaches to care, I consider the diverse forms of care employed in defense of Kyle Rittenhouse which attempted to maintain his image and world as well as feed into larger white nationalists discourses. This means sitting in the resource flow (Askins et al. 2011) of caring relations, capturing the movement of financial support, vocal support on social media, and the framing of Kyle Rittenhouse and his actions by conservative media and prominent politicians. This approach uses care as a lens for viewing multitude forms of support and defense which ultimately feed into the ongoing production of white supremacy. Here, I not only ask how care was provisioned for Kyle Rittenhouse, but also what/whose world is being repaired (Tronto, 1993)?

This paper begins with a discussion of the literatures on care, broadly defining care and setting out the need for taking up an anti-essentialist approach to care in order to capture nontraditional forms of care. The discussion of care continues, bringing care into conversation with whiteness and white supremacy. Following these discussions, the Kenosha protest and Kyle Rittenhouse's actions are described within the context of white rage and backlash, situating the care provided to Kyle Rittenhouse within the ongoing production of white supremacy. Next, I turn to individualized forms of care

for Kyle Rittenhouse, focusing on financial and discursive forms of support. Following, I turn to broader discourses of care within conservative media. In this section, I move away from looking at care in this context as solely repairing Rittenhouse's personal world, but as a process and set of actions and practices which continue to care for a world of white supremacy. Ultimately, I argue that care, as seen here, is both shaped by and productive of white supremacy. This intervention joins with recent scholarship that seeks to "trouble" care (see: Bartos 2018; 2020) by examining its role in the (re)production of white supremacy. Approaching care in this manner opens avenues for geographers to capture a wide array of practices, actions, and energies which support, maintain, and produce white supremacy.

Care

Growing out of feminist thought, care is positioned as all of the actions, activities, and relations that maintain, sustain, repair, and produce livable worlds (Tronto 1993). While early engagements in Geography centered on medical and health geographies (Conradson 2011), today care is used as a lens to analyze topics, for example, ranging from mentoring in academia (Puāwai Collective 2018), urban justice (Williams 2017), sexual violence (Bartos 2020), intersectional approaches (Raghuram 2019), and memory work and archives (Hariharan 2021). Care is often framed as a normative "good" (Bartos 2018; Raghuram 2016) and linked to traditional sites and forms of care. In taking an anti-essentialist approach to care in this article I approach care as multiple to capture the many forms that care can take, and the many outcomes it can produce. Further, care in this case is situated within the context of the

ongoing maintenance of white supremacy, opening up space to think ways in which care can be productive of systems of violence. Here, my aim is to not only think through how caring practices are shaped by whiteness and violence, but also how those practices help to constitute white supremacy.

Care is both ethic and sets of processes and practices that are always geographical and situated within local contexts, practices, and epistemologies (Raghuram 2016; 2019). Defined as a “species activity” (Tronto 1993, 103), care is positioned as central to individual life and society (Lawson 2007). Further, care is fundamentally grounded in a relational ontology (Lawson 2007; 2009; Massey 2004). The centrality and relationality of care draw our attention to the interconnectedness that makes life possible, and highlights relations of responsibility (Lawson 2007; Massey 2004; McEwan and Goodman 2010). Further, feminist scholars are clear to note that care is embedded in systems of power, and is always already political (Tronto, 1993). Conradson (2011, 545) argues that care can transform “the character of social geographies” and thus is “facilitating new ways of being together.” As such, care is presented as a potentially transformative ethic that is oriented towards producing wellbeing for others and ourselves (Conradson 2011; Held 2011; Lawson 2007; McEwan and Goodman 2010). As situated in the literature care is positioned as both a window into further understanding the politics and uneven power relations that shape the work put into building livable worlds, and as an ethical practice of personal and social transformation.

In recent years, scholars sought to open up care, capturing nontraditional sites and forms of care (Bartos, 2019; Naylor et al. 2020). Raghuram (2016), in arguing for a decentering of Eurocentric approaches calls on feminist geographers to understand the “multiplicity of care” to capture the diversity of practices, geohistories, and epistemologies from which care arises. This requires opening up what constitutes care well beyond the traditional sites and relations of care (Bartos 2018; Raghuram 2016) Drawing on Raghuram, Bartos (2018) deploys the concept of caring agencies to draw attention to the political ramifications brought about by a diversity of caring actors. Deploying this framework alongside Raghuram’s recognition for a multiplicity of care, Bartos’ demonstrates the numerous nontraditional caring practices that came into being during the criminal case against Brock Turner; care which was found in such spaces as court documents, letters, and legislation (Bartos 2018). Similarly, Naylor et al. (2020) call on scholars to take up an antiessentialist approach to care. Reading care in a neonatal intensive care unit Naylor et al. (2020) deploy this antiessentialist framing to make care multiple, and in doing so highlight the diversity of care and caregivers operating within the same care space. From capitalist to noncapitalist practices, to human and nonhuman caregivers an antiessentialist approach to care reveals the mesh of care that undergird social and political relations. In this case, opening up care in this way captures the multiple forms of that care takes, ranging between financial support, political statements, social media and media coverage. Using this framework also brings attention to the multiple outcomes of care that unfurled in support of Rittenhouse; namely, individualized care afforded Kyle

Rittenhouse, and the discourses and actions which fed into the ongoing maintenance of white supremacist systems.

The approaches used by Raghuram (2016), Bartos (2019) and Naylor et al. (2020) all work to complicate care, making care messy by multiplying forms and sources of care. Further, they illustrate that care can have multiple outcomes shaped by power relations, not all of which are “good.” Here, I focus on the events surrounding Kyle Rittenhouse following his actions at the Kenosha protests which resulted in the death of two protestors, and the injury of a third. I look at the collective care that was employed in Kyle Rittenhouse’s defense; namely, care as practiced through crowdsourced criminal defense funding, vocal support on social media, and the rehabbing of Kyle Rittenhouse’s image by conservative media and political sources. These caring practices are situated within the backlash to the racial justice protest movements (e.g., Black Lives Matter) of 2020. Viewing care within this context shows the way in which care is operationalized in projects to maintain white supremacy.

These are forms of care which are heavily set within (but not limited to) the context of right-wing politics in the United States, and, more specifically, within the backlash against racial justice and safeguarding of white supremacy. Further, it is care which is situated alongside acts of violence – the killing of two protestors, and the wounding of a third. As care deployed within/as politics and alongside violence, it is important to keep in view the ways in which care is heavily shaped by the contours of uneven power relations (Raghuram 2016). Further, relations of care can produce harm,

oppression, and violence alongside repairing and sustaining some people's worlds (Bartos, 2019; Narayan, 1995; Raghuram 2019). Questions of how care is provisioned, for whom, and by whom are underscored by the unevenness of power relations. Inevitably in the case of Kyle Rittenhouse, care (re)produces a world of white supremacy.

Race, Care, and White Supremacy

Set within the context of white backlash to widespread calls for racial justice, it is impossible to disentangle the events surrounding, and actions taken by Kyle Rittenhouse from the ongoing production of whiteness and white supremacy in the United States (Ahmed 2006; 2012; Kobayashi and Peake 2000). Grounded in the ongoing production of colonialism, masculinities, and capitalism (Dwyer and Jones 2000; Vasudevan 2021), whiteness is theorized as a "location of structural advantage (Frankenberg 1993, 1). It is a position that is constructed historically and continually performed in the everyday actions and beliefs of people, institutions, and the state that concentrates privilege and power towards those with white bodies (Ahmed 2012; Anderson 2016; DiAngelo 2011; 2018; Lipsitz 2006) and upholds white supremacy. Whiteness operates as a set of assumed knowledges and norms, woven and institutionalized in American society "rendering whiteness almost invisible, yet always present and powerful (Joshi et al. 2015, 302). Beyond ordering power and privilege in society, whiteness, race, and white supremacy work to reshape relations of

care, producing both caring (for white bodies) and uncaring practices (Bartos 2018; Neeley and Lopez 2021; Raghuram 2019).

Raghuram (2019) notes that much of the literature on care privileges gender as an analytic, leaving much room for growth for approaches to care and race within geography. Scholars note that contemporary care ethics and practices are shaped by and grounded in the legacies of colonialism, racism, and racial capitalism (Neeley and Lopez 2021; Narayan 1995; Raghuram 2019). While care and the ethics of care are situated as key sites for transformative struggle, positioned within the legacies of colonialism and white supremacy care becomes intimately entangled with the ongoing production of multiple forms of violences. Using newspaper coverage, webpages, and social media content surrounding the events in Kenosha and what followed, I argue that Kyle Rittenhouse was cared for in ways that sought to maintain and repair his world—and thus a world for people like him.² Embedded in political praxis against racial justice, these forms of care build into wider white supremacist discourses and processes in the U.S.

² While this study focuses on the diverse caring strategies deployed in support of Kyle Rittenhouse it needs to be said that they were not without countering forms of protest and actions taken by companies, organizations, politicians, and supporters of the movement for racial justice. The social media outcry against Kyle Rittenhouse during his criminal trial was as loud and widespread as those extending care to him. Organizations like GoFundMe disallowed fundraising for his defense, and Democratic lawmakers voiced their support for the racial justice movements and Kyle Rittenhouse's victims.

While whiteness brings to view the ways in which white bodies are set apart as the norm, a focus on white supremacy is needed to understand how structural advantage and disadvantage are continually (re)produced in society (Bonds and Inwood 2016; Pulido 2015). Bonds and Inwood (2016) note that white supremacy is the “defining logic of both racism and privilege as they are culturally and materially produced (720).” It is the politics, the beliefs, and the actions (state sanctioned and otherwise) which produce the privilege and the normative structures that constitute whiteness. It is also representative of a fear and anxiety of losing structural positions that, as Pulido (2015) argues, “fuels larger right-wing activism and politics (812)” (See also: Anderson 2016). This racial animus was highly visible during the summer of 2020, as activists took to the streets to protest police brutality and racial injustices following the murder of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery, many others mobilized (many on the political right) to delegitimize the movement and demonize protestors. While white supremacy is not only a facet of the American right (it is foundational to all of U.S. society), it was the animating politics and rage (Anderson 2016) that undergirded the backlash to the 2020 racial justice protests movements, fueling arguments about what protests were legitimate and whose lives matter (e.g., Blue Lives Matter). This was acutely seen in the case of Kyle Rittenhouse, as Rittenhouse’s actions and innocence were entwined with broader discourses of anti-black violence, policing, and second amendment rights. In the myriad caring actions directed at Rittenhouse, we see him become a model for white values and white privilege which is perceived to be under threat by growing calls for

racial justice in the United States. It is in the various ways Rittenhouse was supported following the Kenosha protests that care was constituted for him individually, as well as for white supremacy more broadly. Viewing care within this context opens a way for understanding how caring actions and practices are not only shaped by white supremacy, but in turn can also be productive of it.

2020 Protest, Kenosha, White Rage

Kyle Rittenhouse's actions, and the groundswell of support for him in his criminal trial are set within the widespread movement for racial justice that unfolded in 2020 following the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery. Throughout 2020, protestors took to the streets calling for racial justice, and against police brutality and white supremacy in the United States. At the same time, politicians, political groups, and counter-protestors on the political right mobilized in a unified backlash against these calls. Couched in the language of protecting police, this counter-movement worked to delegitimize the aims of those arguing for racial justice. In response to the 2020-2021 protest movement the slogan "Blue Lives Matter" rose to prominence among those seeking to discredit the Black Lives Matter movements. Blue Lives Matter serves as a focal point for obscuring calls for racial justice, instead inserting a need to protect and support police officers as more important than valuing the lives of Black and brown individuals. This backlash joins with a wider movement against racial justice that links together policing, the teaching of Critical Race Theory in K-12 schools (of which no evidence exists), and discussions of threats to property

and (white) rights, mirroring the history of white backlash against racial progress in the United States detailed in Carol Anderson's *White Rage* (2016).

On August 23, 2020, Jacob Blake, a Black man, was tased and shot 7 times by police officers in Kenosha, Wisconsin, resulting in his death. Four days of protest unfolded in the wake of Blake's death during which protestors clashed with police, and the National Guard was mobilized. Further, right-wing and white supremacist militia groups were actively patrolling the streets during each night of the protest, many armed. On the third night of the unrest, 17-year-old Kyle Rittenhouse crossed state lines armed with a semi-automatic rifle, joining with militia groups stating they were in Kenosha to protect businesses. Rittenhouse, in an interview conducted by the conservative website *The Daily Caller*, cast his intentions that night as one of protection. Reporting from Kenosha that night shows Rittenhouse stating:

...so, people are getting injured, and our job is to protect this business... and part of my job is to also help people. If there is somebody hurt, I'm running into harms way. That's why I have my rifle – because I can protect myself, obviously. But I also have my med kit (NBC Chicago 2021, para 8).

Despite arguing that he was playing the role of “defender” at the protest, by the end of the night Rittenhouse had shot three white people: Joseph Rosenbaum, Anthony Huber, and Gaige Grosskreutz. Rosenbaum and Huber both died as a result of the shootings. After Grosskreutz was shot Rittenhouse surrendered himself to police, who did not arrest him (falling in line with the racialized double standard that underscores U.S. policing), although he was later charged and jailed. The killings garnered widespread reaction, with those on the political left decrying Rittenhouse's actions,

and those on the right providing support and resources for Rittenhouse's defense and post-trial life. While the three men Rittenhouse shot were white, these shootings became embroiled in national political discourses on policing and racial justice, as well as white privilege.

Anderson (2016) notes that throughout U.S. history whenever Black people made any advances (or here, called for justice) they were met with strong currents of backlash. This backlash is against "[B]lackness that refuses to accept subjugation, to give up (Anderson 2016)." This rage is not only about maintaining systems of power and oppression, but also about gaining a "moral high ground (Anderson 2016,)." Within the context of the 2020 racial justice protest movements, the events in Kenosha, and the intervening time between Rittenhouse's actions in Kenosha and his life after acquittal at his trial we can see the politics of rage Anderson (2016) describes manifest within politicians' posturing, legal strategies to suppress the right to protest, and widespread support (physical and vocal) amongst U.S. citizens who ascribe to right wing politics. Reaction to the protests that took place across 2020 often worked to delegitimize the movements and protestors, casting them as looters, arsonists, or rioters. This rage was not only reaction, however, but was mired in the ongoing production of the whiteness that orders power and privilege in U.S. society. In the case of Kyle Rittenhouse, what unfurled were diverse forms of caring that sought to repair and maintain Kyle's world, while also protective of white supremacy.

Caring for Kyle, Individualized Support

While Kyle Rittenhouse was not originally arrested by Kenosha police officers the night he shot three protestors, he eventually was charged with five felonies and two misdemeanors on August 25, 2020 (Bosman 2021).³ Rittenhouse's bail was set at \$2 million. The bail combined with the looming legal fees to support his defense at trial created a major financial need for Rittenhouse and his family. Tronto (1993) reminds us that care is centered on acts and relations that repair, maintain, continue, and build livable worlds for those in receipt of care. Atkinson et al. (2011, 567) further ask us to envision care as a "resource flow" to draw attention to the ways in which care as "responsibility and care as emotion travel" are made real by relations both proximate and distant. When put to work, care involves the circulation of energies, vocal support, and resources both emotional and material aimed at repairing and sustaining. It was this resource flow, the movement of financial capital from individuals and organizations across the United States which constitutes the first form of care I will attend to.

³ The charges levied against Kyle Rittenhouse are as follows: count 1, first-degree reckless homicide, use of a dangerous weapon; count 2, first-degree recklessly endangering safety, use of a dangerous weapon; count 3, first-degree recklessly endangering safety, use of a dangerous weapon; count 4, first-degree intentional homicide, use of a dangerous weapon; count 5, attempted first-degree intentional homicide, use of a dangerous weapon; count 6, possession of a dangerous weapon by a person under 18; and, count 7, failure to comply with an emergency order from state or local government (Richmond 2021).

With bail set at \$2 million Rittenhouse's legal team had an initial hurdle to overcome in preparing for his criminal trial. Plans to crowdsource funds for bail hit an initial snag when GoFundMe, a popular crowdfunding site, disallowed any campaigns to raise money for Rittenhouse's defense claiming it violated their rules about funding trial defense for those alleged to have committed violent crimes. In response Lin Wood, one of Rittenhouse's initial lawyers, mobilized his co-founded organization Fight Back Foundation (a conservative legal group) to raise funds (Hauer and Brophy, 2020). Fight Back's involvement is more than just a professionalized form a care between lawyer and defendant. The language used across the website draws heavily on mainstreamed discourses used by the American political right and position it as an organization focused on conservative values, and anti-leftist rhetoric, placing this movement of capital within the broader political discourses and counter-discourses driving U.S. racialized politics. The fund quickly reached the \$2 million mark, aided by small donations from individuals siding with Rittenhouse's defense and primarily through large donations by two high profile donors: Mike Lindell the CEO of My Pillow, and actor Ricky Schroder (Heilman 2020).⁴ Schroder claims to have donated hundreds of thousands of dollars towards Rittenhouse's defense, taking issue with how

⁴ It must be noted that Lin Wood and Kyle Rittenhouse are now litigating against each other, each side claiming they have rights to the \$2 million bail fund that was returned following Rittenhouse's acquittal.

media sources were representing him. When asked about the support in a NY Post interview Schroder noted:

This was Kyle's life being destroyed... This is his freedom at risk. It infuriated me to see an innocent 17-year old young man being tried and found guilty before trial... It made me mad... This boy is innocent and will be proven innocent. I did what any father should've done, and that's get a kid out of jail that doesn't deserve to be there (D'Zurilla 2020, para 2, 4).

Here, the motivation for supporting Kyle Rittenhouse is couched in caring language.

Schroder was incensed by the way Rittenhouse was being portrayed in (non-conservative) media, offering instead to position Rittenhouse as an innocent youth, as someone whose guilt had been pre-determined, and whose innocence Schroder presupposes. Care here takes on a material form, that of finance, as well as an affective one of support for Rittenhouse. This care is doubly productive, providing both repair for Kyle's image (emotional), and repair for Kyle's way of life (financial).

The Fight Back Foundation was not the only source of financial support that manifested following Rittenhouse's arrest. Republicans United, a conservative organization focused on college campuses (running with the tag line on their website of "Spreading America First across college campuses"), pledged to donate half of all its donations gathered in the fall semester of 2020 to Rittenhouse's criminal defense. Statements by the group worked to situate Rittenhouse's life as in peril while simultaneously working to demonize the three men Rittenhouse shot. A tweet from a chapter based at Arizona State University (@ASU_CRU; not verified by Twitter) offered:

Half of all funds collected this semester for Republicans United will be donated to 17 year-old Kyle Rittenhouse legal defense fund. He does not deserve to have his entire life destroyed because of the actions of violent anarchists during a lawless riot.

In this tweet Republicans United at ASU posted a longer text image that detailed character flaws of the three victims of Kyle Rittenhouse's shootings. The image casts Rosenbaum, Huber, and Grosskreutz as pursuing Rittenhouse violently, chasing him and attempting to harm him. Further, each of Rittenhouse's victims were presented with criminal pasts, and the entire protest in Kenosha was cast as a riot by the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. In all, the organization raised \$11,000 for Rittenhouse's defense through their network of donors. Here we see caring practices emerge through the movement of financial support through a political network, entwining the caring practices with a wider politics working against racial justice. Care also emerges through the way the organization and its on-campus chapters spoke about Rittenhouse, his victims, and the BLM movement as a whole. While Rittenhouse was portrayed as a victim, the lives of the three men Rittenhouse shot were devalued, reduced to statements about criminality and violent intent. The treatment of Joseph Rosenbaum, Anthony Huber, and Gaige Grosskreutz, all of whom are white men, in these individualized statements (as well as in conservative media, which will be shown later) is best understood within the context of their support of BLM as seen through Robin DiAngelo's conceptualization of white fragility (DiAngelo 2018). DiAngelo notes that when white people cross the lines of racial solidarity to push against racism and white supremacy it triggers a "range of defensive moves (DiAngelo 2018, 103)." These defensive moves, DiAngelo notes, result in

behaviors to counteract perceived threats to white privilege and white racial identities, which in turn “reinstate white racial equilibrium (DiAngelo 2018, 103).” In the case of Rosenbaum, Huber, and Grosskreutz, backlash and negative statements were not necessarily grounded in their criminal records or actions at the protest. Instead, it was their support of BLM and racial justice which fueled negative descriptions and comments. In addition to attacking Rittenhouse’s victims these statements delegitimized the protest itself, adding to the positioning of Rittenhouse’s presence and his actions during the protest as legitimate. Care in the form of support here is aimed at repairing Kyle Rittenhouse’s image, offering him as the ‘true victim’ and as deserving of continuing his life as it existed prior to the Kenosha shootings. Further, care here is connected to a wider politics of backlash to BLM. Joseph Rosenbaum, Anthony Huber, and Gaige Grosskreutz’s support of the protest movements, and calls for racial justice more broadly represent a push against whiteness and anti-black violence, questioning the legitimacy of a system of privilege produced through white supremacy. While care here is individualized and targeted at Kyle Rittenhouse, it also represents a broader caring for the underlying white supremacy that shapes U.S. society.

The Christian crowdfunding site GiveSendGo was also used to support Rittenhouse. Using a crowdfunding page set up by the Friends of the Rittenhouse Family, supporters raised \$650,000. On the crowdfunding page they state:

Kyle Rittenhouse just defended himself from a brutal attack by multiple members of the far-leftist group ANTIFA - the experience was undoubtedly a brutal one, as he was forced to take two lives to

defend his own. Now, Kyle is being unfairly charged with murder 1, by a DA who seems determined only to capitalize on the political angle of the situation. The situation was clearly self-defense, and Kyle and his family will undoubtedly need money to pay for the legal fees. Let's give back to someone who bravely tried to defend his community.

Again, a statement of care was used to frame Kyle's situation as one that was fundamentally unfair. In this positioning, he was attacked by members of ANTIFA (of which no real evidence exists), a perpetual scapegoat used by the American right to defame BLM protests following the murder of George Floyd. His experience was described as "brutal," and he was therefore *forced* to take lives. Further, Rittenhouse is cast as a hero besieged by politically ambitious prosecutors. The messages left by anonymous donors to the campaign echoed similar caring messages:

I pray that Kyle and his attorneys will bring down liars who defamed and his character be they someone like Whoppi [sic] Goldberg or a politician or sports commentator. It is time that someone speaks out for the common person who cannot afford to defend themselves from Character assassination. May Blessings pour down on Kyle and his family and may truth and justice prevail.

This donation is made on behalf of Karen Benoit (retired VP Fidelity Investments) as her Christmas present. May Kyle Rittenhouse enjoy lunch on her.

You are a hero of mine. Thank you so much for your courage and love of your country...

Will continue to pray for you and your family. Please stay strong and live your life.

Kyle & family.....Our hearts go out to you! We are standing with you! You have stood up for what is truly right! You have shown grace and dignity in a time of great testing of ones [sic] soul. Kyle, you are a good and decent young man and I know that you will do so much good in your life. God bless and keep you all!

With many of the small donations that came in to the GiveSendGo campaign came statements of caring affirmation. Again, as with other examples detailed here, material

forms of care (in the form of finance) were coupled with attempts to position Rittenhouse as a decent, deserving, and heroic figure beset by those who wish to defame his character. In these messages we also see an extension of care towards Rittenhouse’s family. Payments from the fund were paid out to his mother, and many messages focused on the difficulties his family faced as a result of the criminal trial and media coverage of his actions.

Finally, finances were also raised through Free Kyle USA and Milo LLC, a website and organization (respectively) both established by Kyle’s mother and legal team to help pay for his legal battle. The site sets a cast of enemies – “Big Tech, corrupt media, and dishonest politicians and prosecutors” – posed to “censor and ruin the life of Kyle Rittenhouse (Guarino 2022, para 3).” The website itself draws on familiar conservative discourses in the United States, drawing on imagery of fire, devastation, and livelihoods lost as a result of the Kenosha protests and positioning Rittenhouse’s case as one of self-defense – going on to quote James Monroe in saying “The right of self-defense never ceases. It is among the most sacred, and alike necessary to nations and individuals.” Further, entrenching Rittenhouse’s case within political currents, a video on the website stated

A 17-year-old American citizen is being sacrificed by politicians...
But it’s not Kyle Rittenhouse they are after. Their endgame is to strip away the constitutional right of all citizens to defend our communities, our personal property, our lives and the lives of our loved ones. This is the moment when the home of the brave rise to defend the land of the free (Guarino 2020, para 19).

Here, care extended by family and his legal team is swept up in the political moment which witnessed widespread backlash on the right against the protests movements that

unfurled in the wake of George Floyd's murder. Language such as 'rioters,' or that which casts protestors as violent and destructive against private property serves the purposes of delegitimizing calls for racial justice, and portraying Rittenhouse as a good patriotic American citizen. Further, invoking images of constitutional rights and patriotism links the success of Kyle Rittenhouse to a broader conservative movement. They speak to the inability to disentangle the myriad forms of support Rittenhouse received from the currents of white rage mobilized to shore up whiteness and white supremacy (Anderson 2016). Beyond simply taking in donations, Free Kyle USA worked with retailers to sell branded merchandise with the #FreeKyle message that spread throughout social media before and after Rittenhouse's acquittal. Apparel such as shirts, hats, and mugs were branded with the logo Free Kyle, and many adorned with slogans such as "Self-defense is a right, not a privilege (Guarino 2020)."

Again, in the purchasing of Free Kyle merchandise we see similar forms of care arise as from the earlier examples. Material care again flowed towards the Rittenhouse family in the form of financial support, shoring up his legal defense fund. Less material forms of care, a political and emotional support of Rittenhouse is exemplified in the wearing of Free Kyle branded merchandise, which included things like clothing apparel. Similar to public statements made by high profile donors, or those made on the GiveSendGo campaign site, the merchandise represents an everyday form of emotional care adorned on the bodies of supporters. Both a statement of care and one of political beliefs, this fuels a politics of care which attends to Rittenhouse's immediate needs as well as those of the broader political movement,

situated within the currents of white supremacy, responding to the 2020-2021 racial justice protest movements. Ultimately, this politics of care works towards the (re)production of white supremacy in U.S. society.

Beyond financial support, Rittenhouse received other individualized forms of care by right leaning politicians and political groups. In statements made by politicians we see attempts to repair and defend Rittenhouse's image that are steeped in white privilege and the maintenance of white supremacy. Further, many politicians worked to raise Rittenhouse's celebrity, serving as a caring act which built a new livable world for Rittenhouse. Politicians Madison Cawthorn, Matt Gaetz, and Paul Gosar all mused on giving Rittenhouse a capitol internship. Speaking about Rittenhouse's criminal trial Gaetz noted:

He deserves a 'not guilty' verdict, and I sure hope he gets it, because you know what, Kyle Rittenhouse would probably make a pretty good congressional intern... We may reach out to him to him to see if he'd be interested in *helping the country* in additional ways. (Joseph 2021, para 4, author emphasis)

Responding to Gaetz's offer, Representative Paul Gosar tweeted post-trial:

Justice was served for #KyleRittenhouse and he is fully exonerated. As I said last year, obviously self-defense. I will arm wrestle @mattgaetz to get dibs for Kyle as an intern. (@DrPaulGosar 2021)

In this exchange, not only was Rittenhouse defended, but his political future was widened. Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene practiced a similar form of care when she submitted a House bill to award Rittenhouse a congressional gold medal for protecting "the community of Kenosha, Wisconsin, during a Black Lives Matter (BLM) riot." (Alfaro 2021, para 2). Greene makes use of language which casts racial protests in a negative, violent light in contrast to Rittenhouse's actions. Greene's

statements and goal of awarding Rittenhouse a Congressional medal echo the care performed by Gaetz and Gosar in that they provide affirmative statements of Rittenhouse's character while offering tangible political outcomes and thus repairing his world, while maintaining theirs. Finally, a month after Rittenhouse's acquittal he was invited to participate in Turning Point USA's (a conservative political organization) AmericaFest in 2021. At the event, Rittenhouse entered to standing applause and a theme song featuring his name. Charlie Kirk, the founder of Turning Point USA told Rittenhouse on stage that "you are a hero to millions, it's an honor to be able to have you (Yang 2021, para 4)." Rittenhouse was asked about his role in the Kenosha shootings, a discussion that was framed along 2nd amendment rights and self-defense. By elevating Rittenhouse's image - through congressional medals, promises of internships, and prominent speaking roles - care is practiced as image repair. Further, this form of care positions Rittenhouse to remain a prominent figure within conservative politics, elevating his standing in a way that can be continually used in the service of white supremacy. Care in this instance cannot be disentangled from the broader politics of racial justice backlash. Here, care is about world building, not specifically about Rittenhouse's life as it existed prior to the Kenosha shootings. Possibility of careers and celebrity status abound from these forms of care, producing possible futures for Rittenhouse. Further, a narrative is produced here which frames Rittenhouse and his actions as a fight for the 2nd amendment and as against the violence many conservatives ascribed to the BLM movements, obscuring the cries for racial justice that fueled the protest movements of 2020-2021.

Beyond offering more tangible (i.e., promise of work, speaking positions) forms of care, politicians also practiced a form of care (seen in media sources) which sought to offer emotional support and repair for Rittenhouse's image. Former president Donald Trump met with Kyle Rittenhouse following his trial, stating that he is "a really nice young man (Hassan 2021, para 1)." Continuing "He should have never been put through that. That was prosecutorial misconduct and it's happening all over the United States with the Democrats (Hassan 2021, para 6)." Following his acquittal, many politicians took to Twitter and the news media to pronounce their support of the court finding Rittenhouse not guilty. Marjorie Taylor Greene, as an example, tweeted a sentiment of care towards the Rittenhouse family, stating "May Kyle and his family now live in peace. Kyle is one of the good ones." Statements such as these perform repair for Rittenhouse's image, positioning him as acting out in self-defense and not deserving on prosecutorial and media treatment.

Others more closely entwined the Rittenhouse case with anti-BLM messaging. One prominent politician, Florida Governor and possible Presidential candidate Ron DeSantis, weighed in on the Rittenhouse case noting that "Kyle Rittenhouse did what we should want citizens to do in such a situation: step forward to defend the community against mob violence (Smith 2021, para 8)." Blake Masters, a Senate candidate from Arizona, noted that Rittenhouse was a good guy, continuing:

While so many of our leaders were just cowering to the BLM mob, Kyle was just trying to help. He showed up at a riot and he was trying to help protect local businesses, he was trying to give medical aid. Anyone who won't stand up and defend Kyle right now is someone that won't stand up and defend you (Joseph 2021, para 7).

Another senate hopeful, Mark McCloskey echoed a similar narrative

Liberals want to defund the police and prevent you from defending yourself, your family, your home, and your businesses. I will never stand for that. I stood for Kyle Rittenhouse and his right to self-defense.⁵

Statements like these from DeSantis, Masters, and McCloskey demonstrate how deeply entwined the care for Kyle Rittenhouse was with anti-racial justice politics in the United States. Obscuring the causes for protests, statements that contrast Kyle Rittenhouse and his actions against what was described as “BLM violence”, riots, looters, and arsonists demonstrate how deeply mired care in this case was in the racial politics in the United States. While much of the discussion from politicians in this case may amount to political posturing, they also afford a form of care backed by political authority. Again, care here is seen as both repair and world building, and again it is not only Rittenhouse’s personal world and future which is repaired, maintained, and constructed. Care here is a vehicle through which white backlash operates. It becomes a relation through which support is afforded, and whiteness and white supremacy are reproduced. It demonstrates care’s potential to be caught up in systems of violence, and to produce fundamentally uncaring outcomes (Bartos 2019). Here, care is a worldbuilding activity which begs the question *what and whose world is being built?*

⁵ Prior to his political life, Mark McCloskey received widespread media attention after he and his wife threatened protestors at a BLM protest with rifles.

Caring for White Supremacy: Rittenhouse as the Model Citizen

Financial and political support for Kyle Rittenhouse and his family were significant sites where care was practiced, as it provided the foundation from which his legal ‘peril’ could be countered. However, it was not the only site from which care arose. Following the Kenosha shootings discourses appeared on social media and conservative news media that were put to work to counter other media coverage and narratives used by politicians and activists who linked Rittenhouse’s actions to the broader struggle for racial justice and in service of white supremacist narratives. The statements and practices discussed here afforded Rittenhouse care in attempting to repair Rittenhouse’s image. However, care here was not simply about Rittenhouse. Linked to broader politics, care in the form of social and conservative media narratives made use of Rittenhouse’s circumstances to further an agenda which pushed back against racial justice and was fueled and shaped by white supremacy. In caring for Rittenhouse, as the following examples show, a wider process of (re)producing white supremacy is practiced.

When the story about the Kenosha shootings broke, supporters and detractors of Kyle Rittenhouse took to social media to weigh in on the case. Many of Rittenhouse’s supporters sought to elevate Rittenhouse’s image while also attacking racial justice protestors. Twitter user @70sdelreyyy stated “I’m sick of the woke bullshit, criminals made into “heroes” and self-defense made into a crime” shared with an image of Rittenhouse that included the text: “in a world of George Floyds Be a

Kyle Rittenhouse.” Many shared similar sentiments when discussing the Rittenhouse case:

He deserves a medal when he acquitted (@SeanCra57756411)

Kyle Rittenhouse showed more guts than many in our country have!!
(@ShotGun_Bonnie 2021)

Statements such as these (which there are numerous examples) present Rittenhouse as a hero, as deserving of protection, and as acting appropriately at the Kenosha protests. Messages which compared Rittenhouse to George Floyd demonstrate the entanglement of the Rittenhouse case with anti-Black politics. Care in this case is about repairing Rittenhouse’s image to control widespread narratives of white supporters. It is also an assertion of the privileges afforded by whiteness in U.S. society, and representative of white backlash to racial justice (Anderson 2016; DiAngelo 2018). Access to self-defense and the protection of property are placed above the demands of racial justice movements, and in effect work to counteract them. BLM and the three white men who Rittenhouse shot signal a challenge to white values and white privilege and holding him as a heroic example is meant to undercut such a challenge. Care here moves beyond Rittenhouse as it becomes entangled in racialized politics informed by white supremacy, where Rittenhouse, the target of care, becomes a stand-in for white values and privilege.

These same narratives were regularly circulated by prominent voices in conservative media. Conservative news hosts and commentators sought to elevate Rittenhouse’s image practicing care through repair and defense, again using

Rittenhouse as a stand-in for a racialized, anti-Black political agenda. Fox News host Greg Gutfeld argued that Rittenhouse's actions were correct, stating "He did the right thing. He did what the government should have done, which was to make sure these dirtbags – these violent, disgusting dirtbags – weren't roaming the streets (Ecarma 2021, para 2)." Fox News contributor Lawrence Jones linked Rittenhouse's innocence to the murder of George Floyd, arguing"

I have a problem with the inconsistency that I see from the left and people that claim... to fight for the rights of people. If you agree that the state shouldn't have the knee on someone's neck and kill them, then how could you support the state intentionally targeting a young man that it shows in the video, that it's self defense?
(Ecarma 2021, para 3)

Self-defense was regularly put on stage and echoed in conservative media, linking the Rittenhouse case to wider debates around the 2nd Amendment and cementing his case as a vehicle for wider politics. Further, many linked Rittenhouse to political discourses that sought to further white nationalist talking points. Prominent Conservative media host, Tucker Carlson, went further by using his platform often to use Rittenhouse's character to defend American values. In his rise to become a preeminent voice in conservative politics, Carlson has long made use of white nationalist fears and rhetoric to drive his ratings and fill out his programming. Carlson's programming fuels and was fueled by white fear of a changing society (Confessore 2022a; 2022b). Regularly leveraging great replacement theory (the notion that what Carlson calls legacy Americans, coded language for white Americans, are being purposefully replaced by democrat friendly immigrants) fears of critical race theory in schools, violence at protests, and perceived discrimination against whites, Carlson's coverage mainstreams

white nationalist ideals and talking points. In Carlson's coverage, Kyle Rittenhouse became a stand in for an imagined ideal U.S. citizen. Often framing Rittenhouse as a good kid, Carlson's statements and coverage of Rittenhouse were put to work as part of Carlson's wider push to cement and legitimize white nationalist and white supremacist ideals and narratives. In commentary given before a long form interview with Rittenhouse, Carlson stated:

...Kyle Rittenhouse struck us as bright, decent, sincere, dutiful and hardworking, exactly the kind of person you'd want many more of in your country. He is not especially political. He never wanted to be the symbol of anything. Kyle Rittenhouse just wanted to keep violent lunatics from setting fire to cars. In the America he grew up in, that was considered virtuous... A lot of the things he assumed were true about this country turned out not to be true at all. So in that way, he speaks for many of us (Carlson 2021, para 5, author emphasis).

Here, Rittenhouse is presented as the type of American citizen that is desirable (in contrast to the men he attacked and the protestors at Kenosha), and as someone who represents the views and values of many U.S. citizens. While just a small sampling of the many hours of conservative media coverage of Kyle Rittenhouse, and of social media support for him, these examples of care were widespread and point to the emergent network of caring actors that mobilized through shared discourses to extend care towards Kyle by portraying him as a good, innocent, and deserving kid. However, care here extends beyond Rittenhouse. Caring statements made towards Rittenhouse were heavily steeped in the discourse of backlash against the protest movement that began in the summer of 2020 following the murder of George Floyd. Media statements attesting to Rittenhouse's character and innocence were often linked to the

perceived dangers posed by racial justice protestors. As seen before, Rittenhouse's victims were actively attacked in the media as criminals in an attempt to devalue their lives while supporting Rittenhouse. Again, this represents not just individualized care for Rittenhouse, but also a part of a wider current of politics shaped by whiteness and white supremacy. Through attacks made on media discourse, efforts to defame the racial justice movement and its supporters, and through elevating Rittenhouse as the ideal American citizen care here was directed more broadly at maintaining the system of white supremacy which produces white privilege in the United States. Rittenhouse benefitted from statements like those made by Tucker Carlson, but in many ways he became a stand-in for white fear and the defense white privilege.

Care is described as the actions and relations that build livable worlds (Tronto, 1993). In this case, we can see two worlds being constructed as a result of care. The first, a repair of Rittenhouse's personal world. Second, we can see the ways that care is shaped by the patterns of privilege and power afforded through whiteness and the care and feeding of white supremacy. Despite being involved in the murder of two protestors, and the injuring of a third, Rittenhouse did not receive the backlash, criticism, or criminalization in conservative media coverage as protestors for racial justice did, illuminating the white privilege Rittenhouse was afforded within the context of white rage and backlash against racial justice (Anderson 2016). Whiteness, however, does not exist on its own merits (Ahmed 2007). Ahmed (2007, 150) writes that "whiteness could be described as an ongoing and unfinished history, which orients bodies in specific directions, affecting how they take up space." Whiteness is

something which shapes experience and material impacts, but which is also reproduced and maintained through actions and caring relations (Ahmed 2007; Rosenberg 2017). Viewing the way that white privilege (Pulido 2000) operates in the case of Kyle Rittenhouse illuminates the numerous ways that social media and conservative coverage of Rittenhouse act as the daily performance of white supremacy. Caring actions and practices are part of the daily processes which produce the systems and worlds within which we live. Here, the world which is produced and maintained is one grounded in white supremacy.

Others in conservative media did not attempt to care for Rittenhouse by defending and elevating his image. Instead, Rittenhouse was used for attacks on media coverage and political narratives that cast Rittenhouse's actions in a negative light. For example, I draw at length from a piece published by conservative political commentator Andrew Sullivan. Writing in an article posted on substack (and picked up by Fox News) Sullivan took aim at the media coverage of Rittenhouse. Pointing to a litany of accused "fake news" discourses circulating in what was dubbed the mainstream media Sullivan tried to discredit reporting on the Rittenhouse shootings, noting:

...And these mass deceptions have consequences. We are seeing this now in the Rittenhouse case - a gruesome story of a reckless teen with a rifle in the wake of the police shooting of Jacob Blake in Kenosha. The impression many got from much of the media was that a far-right vigilante, in the middle of race riots, had gone looking for trouble far from home and injured one man, and killed two, in a shooting spree (Sullivan 2021 para 3).

Sullivan continues, taking issue with reporting that featured Rittenhouse's race while not mentioning the people he shot were white.

But notice how the narrative – embedded in a deeper one that the Blake shooting was just as clear-cut as the Floyd murder, that thousands of b[B]lack men were being gunned down by cops every year, and that “white supremacy” was rampant in every cranny in America – effectively excluded the possibility that Rittenhouse was a naïve, dangerous fool in the midst of indefensible mayhem, who, in the end, shot assailants in self-defense (Sullivan 2021 para 6).

Here care is firmly settled in a backlash to racial justice grounded in white fragility (DiAngelo 2018). Rittenhouse is cared for by an attempt to disrupt media coverage of the events, and discourses that link it to racial injustice. Further, a wider argument pushing against the recognition that white supremacy undergirds U.S. society is made at the same time. Caring acts that push discourses seen here deeply interweave Rittenhouse's case with a broader politics informed by white supremacy. Caring statements made on Rittenhouse's behalf perform the work of attempting to repair and elevate his image, however the main target of statements such as these is delegitimizing the wider Black Lives Matter and racial justice movements in the United States. Rittenhouse, again, is a vehicle through which the status quo (white supremacy) is maintained, as his perceived innocence and image become the backbone of an argument which reduces the racial justice movement to one of violence and “mayhem.” This argument was echoed by another author, Bari Weiss (and many other conservative media members), who pointed to the media painting Rittenhouse as a

“racist vigilante.” Weiss connects coverage of Rittenhouse to other “politically convenient narratives,” arguing:

This wasn't a disinformation campaign waged by Reddit trolls or anonymous Twitter accounts. It was one pushed by the mainstream media and sitting members of Congress for the sake of an expedient political narrative – a narrative that asked people to believe, among other unrealities, that blocks of burning buildings constituted peaceful protests (Weiss 2021 para 4).

These caring acts take aim at broader discussions of white supremacy and police violence in the U.S. – producing both care for Rittenhouse while simultaneously feeding into the politics of backlash against the racial justice movement and Black Lives Matter. Casting the protests primarily about violence, and not police shootings, Rittenhouse's circumstances became a rallying point for furthering a political movement which was situated within the perpetuation of a white supremacist society. Care for Rittenhouse in this form is situated in the broader movement to discredit the racial justice movements that heavily mobilized in the summer of 2020, informed by currents of racism and white privilege. Again, the ways in which care works in the ongoing production of white supremacy in the United States is visible in the statements made in social and conservative media. Situating this care within an understanding of whiteness points to the way in which care for Kyle – in the support of numerous defenses of his character, and in the criticism of media narratives – shores up and maintain white supremacy (Ahmed 2006; Pulido 2000). It is difficult to sever the caring practices shown here from the context in which they take place. Following the murder of George Floyd protests multiplied across the country,

continuing throughout 2020-2021, through which calls against police brutality and for racial justice were loudly articulated. At the same time, conservative politicians and media quickly mobilized to discredit BLM and racial justice protestors as violent, arsonists, and looters. This counternarrative speaks to the whiteness which protects the lives of police officers and white men at the expense of those with Black or brown bodies.

The myriad forms of care performed on Rittenhouse's behalf were caught in the current of these politics. Care here provided financial and emotional support for Rittenhouse, elevating his legal prospects and repairing his damaged image. However, these forms of care were often attached to statements which obscured the racial politics undergirding Rittenhouse's actions (i.e., right to self-defense) or directly attacked his victims and racial justice protestors; a context in which care is situated within the ongoing production of whiteness. When asking what world is being built in the case of Kyle Rittenhouse, the answer becomes the world undergirded by white supremacy which legitimates anti-Black violence and racially informed vigilante actions. Care here attends to the maintenance of white supremacy, with Kyle serving as both a target of care and as a stand-in for white privilege. Contrasted with how racial justice protestors were presented in individualized and media accounts, Rittenhouse's privilege as a white man and the whiteness that attends to that are protected and cared for. Positioning Rittenhouse as a "good kid" and deserving of defense is about keeping his life intact. Further, it is about keeping the boundaries of

race intact. This is care which is both racially informed, and a component of reproducing a racist society.

Conclusion

A great deal of care went into the defense of Kyle Rittenhouse. Following the Kenosha shootings, support in the form of finances, image repair, and attacks on Rittenhouse's detractors proliferated. Adopting an anti-essentialist framework which views nontraditional forms of care reveals emergent networks of distant and disconnected caregivers coalescing around Rittenhouse and racialized politics. Care for Rittenhouse took the support of individualized actions directly aimed at defending and repairing Rittenhouse's world. However, care did not stop with Rittenhouse. Rittenhouse, particularly within media discourse, became a vehicle through which care for the underlying system of white supremacy was performed.

Care is described as a transformational ethic (Lawson 2007). Care is a catalyst for change through the repairing and building of new livable worlds. However, care can also be the avenue through which unjust systems persist. In recent years, scholars seek to trouble care, pushing it beyond its traditional boundaries and focusing on practices which produce uncaring outcomes (Bartos 2018; Naylor et al. 2020; Raghuram 2016). In describing the myriad forms of care practiced in defense of Kyle Rittenhouse, in this article I linked care to the ongoing production of white supremacy. Each instance of care for Kyle Rittenhouse also serves as an act to reaffirm or reinstate currents of privilege and power afforded under white supremacy. As such, care is

aimed at both repairing Rittenhouse's personal world, while simultaneously feeding into broader processes which sustain and (re)produce white supremacy; inevitably linking care to violence (Bartos 2018). Linking care to the production of white supremacy opens avenues for new directions in care scholarship. What ways do caring relations sustain oppressive and violent systems? How might we rethink the ethics of care to capture the ways in which systems are maintained, as opposed to focusing on its transformative potential? How does care feed into politics that extend well beyond the intended target of care? Further, approaching care in this way opens up a methodological avenue for geographers to capture a wide array of politically driven practices and actions which (re)produce white supremacy and other systems of violence and oppression. Recent work in geography urges scholars to more vigorously focus on issues of white supremacy (Bonds and Inwood 2016; Pulido 2015). Here, care presents another avenue for understanding and critiquing the processes which continue to reproduce white supremacy. An anti-essentialist approach to care highlights the many relations and diverse forms of support, the small everyday actions and highly visible political practices, which continue to produce a world founded on white supremacy.

Care in form is multiple (Naylor et al. 2020), as well are its outcomes. Joining authors like Bartos (2018) in linking care to systems of violence complicates the normative view of care resulting in universal good. Care is an inflection point without a predetermined end. Care has the potentiality of transformation at the same time it can maintain white supremacy and other systems of violence. This complication opens

doors to further examine care and violence, both as a response to and a perpetrator of (Held 2006). While messy and complicated, opening care to capture systems of violence further strengthens our approach to understanding the multiple ways in which racism, violence, and oppression are maintained and produced.

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Chapter 3

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION IN THE ACADEMY: ON SCALE, CARE, AND NONPERFORMATIVITY

Abstract: The university system in the United States has long been marked by ongoing exclusionary legacies and practices. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) efforts undertaken in universities, while often ineffective, are aimed at undoing the ongoing production of exclusionary processes in campus spaces across the country. In this article I engage DEI practices with recent geographic literature on care. Drawing on semi-structured interviews conducted with faculty, students, and staff undertaking formal and grassroots DEI efforts, I think through the way care is intertwined with DEI practices and outcomes. Here, I argue that DEI is carework. Further, and contradictorily, while DEI holds the promises of provisioning care across the broad spectrum of difference, when undertaken nonperformatively it can in turn produce uncaring campus spaces. Finally, DEI is a scalar process within the university, and different levels of engagement and commitment to these goals across scales produce an uneven caringscape on university campuses. This article builds on already existing scholarship focused on DEI by engaging it with care, and thinks through the way that caring and uncaring practices are part and parcel of the (re)production of campus space.

Keywords: Care, DEI, Scale, Nonperformativity

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) work holds promise of transforming university and college campuses into more welcoming, equitable, and caring spaces. Numerous

scholars have long pointed to the benefits of creating more equitable and diverse university campuses (Smith 2015). However, DEI is also a messy, often ineffective process. There are many ways in which DEI work is engaged in institutions of higher learning. Efforts and scholarship alike often take aim at specific demographics – whether they be issues of race, gender, ability, or sexuality (to name a few). In this paper, I draw on interview data with people involved in DEI work at a research intensive university. Here I approach DEI widely, encompassing of the many intersecting differences that faculty, students, and staff experience in the university setting, ranging from (but not limited to) issues of race, gender, sexuality, ability, and amental health. Here, I adopt the usage of the terms diversity, equity, and inclusion to refer to diversity work, setting my findings and critiques within the site specific context within which diversity work is engaged.

Scholars note that a lack of commitment by university administrators or hitting barriers (what Ahmed [2017: 91] calls “brick walls”) ranging from institutional structure to campus climate often hamper and diminish the reach and impact of DEI work (Ahmed 2012; 2017). DEI work which hits these ‘brick walls,’ is often focused on the metrics of increasing diversity, or is only given lip service by administrators, representing not only a challenge to faculty, students, and staff who are dedicated to creating more equitable and inclusive environments; but also intertwining with the production of uncaring spaces on campus.

How care is woven into DEI work, and how care and DEI work in tandem to produce campus spaces is central to this article. Drawing on 35 semi-structured interviews with

faculty, staff, and undergraduate and graduate students involved in formal and grassroots DEI efforts at the University of Delaware I argue that DEI is (or, should be) care work. Further, the disaggregated and often uncoordinated character of DEI efforts performed across and at varying scales on university campuses results in the uneven production of caring spaces in the academy. Finally, DEI practices, such as statements from upper administration officials, which do not produce more diverse, equitable, and inclusive results become involved in the production of uncaring university space. Here, I first provide a brief context for issues of diversity at the University of Delaware, following which I engage with literatures focused on DEI and care. Following this I engage in a discussion of DEI practices through scale, focusing in on how scalar processes leave us with an uneven caringscape. Then, I turn to interview data wherein respondents describe DEI as care work. Finally, I focus on critiques lodged by interview respondents aimed at university actions which, for many, rang hollow as they did not move the university towards becoming a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive space. Here, I build on Ahmed's (2007) concept of nonperformativity, as applied to DEI work, arguing that nonperformative DEI actions not only serve to allow the university to say it is becoming more diverse without doing the work, but that such actions are embroiled in the production of uncaring spaces on campus.

Context

Research for this study was conducted at the University of Delaware (UD), an R1 institution located in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. Like most

universities and colleges, UD bills itself as an inclusive and welcoming campus for faculty, students, and staff of all racialized background (see: <https://www.udel.edu/about/values/>). In a recent statement made by university President Dennis Assanis (2020b: para 3), he argues that UD is a space where “every member of our community – faculty, student, and staff – is welcomed and valued at the University of Delaware (see also: Assanis 2020a).” UD administration and faculty have established diversity, equity, and inclusion committees in each of the university’s colleges, as well as founded and sustained institutional, university scale organizations such as the Center for Black Culture (see: <https://sites.udel.edu/cbc/about/#mission>) and the Center for the Study of Diversity (see: <https://www.csd.udel.edu/about-us/mission>) which perform research and community building towards a more equitable campus. Further, over the years UD has participated in a number of diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives. The 2011 Middle States Commission on Higher Education noted that UD was “not diverse in either absolute or relative terms (Read and Barrish, 2018: para 5),” trailing behind other Mid-Atlantic institutions. UD has continually fallen short of increasing recruitment and retention of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) faculty, students, and staff (Read and Barrish, 2018). In 2009, a Diversity Task Force began soliciting survey responses and suggestions from students and faculty. Survey findings showed that 54% of students did not know where to go to report discrimination on campus; 40% of BIPOC faculty indicated that racial discrimination was a problem on campus, with 43% describing feeling discomfort in their departmental climates; and, while 60% of white staff indicated feeling a sense of

belonging on campus, only 45% of staff of color reported a sense of belonging (UDaily, 2011). The task force outlined several recommendations to improve campus climate, including increasing recruitment efforts of BIPOC students, faculty, and staff, urging students and departmental leadership to create a culture of inclusivity, and training programs (UDaily, 2011). However, a 2016 policy report developed through another diversity initiative (Office of the Provost, 2016) noted that these goals remained mostly unaccomplished. When compared to other flagship universities, the gap in representation between in-state high school graduates and first year enrollment at the University of Delaware was the fifth highest in the United States (Lumpkin et al., 2021). Further, a report done by UD ADVANCE, an institute originally funded by the NSF which seeks to diversify and strengthen UD's faculty, particularly focused on women in STEM, showed that women of color faculty at UD experienced high rates of feeling isolated within the university, experience microaggressions daily, and have a harder time during tenure and promotion processes than their white colleagues. In all, as the metrics and reports show, UD has not lived up to its plans to create more diverse, equitable, and inclusive spaces.

Beyond the metrics universities use to measure diversity, UD in recent years has seen a number of racist actions committed by students and local residents. In 2014, leading up to a football game against Delaware State University (DSU), an HBCU land grant institution, UD students posted racist messages targeting DSU students on Yik Yak, an anonymous social media app (Brown, 2014). In 2015, what was believed to be a set of 3 metal nooses, were found hanging from a tree on campus. After the

university concluded they were not nooses, but instead wires left from paper lantern lights (a finding some students disputed), racist backlash and remarks again appeared on Yik Yak as students made racist jokes and mocked Black Lives Matter and BIPOC students' call for action against racism on campus (Kircher, 2015). In 2017, anti-Semitic posters were found on campus (UD Review, 2017), followed by the appearance of posters displaying the racist slogan "it's ok to be white" in 2018 (Bies and Peterson, 2018). Finally, in 2020 the Chabad Center, a Jewish cultural center, was burned down by arson (Eichmann, 2020), racist anti-Asian posters were found in apartments heavily occupied by international students (Shannon, 2020), and University Police posed with a Blue Lives Matter flag and posted it on their Instagram account (@udelpolice) and despite complaints made by students and faculty, it remains on their feed. While these examples only include reported instances of racism at UD and likely misses the extent of racist actions, it speaks to the discomfort and discrimination reported in the 2011 task force survey (UDaily, 2011).

UD's continued lack of diversity on campus, ongoing hostile climate for BIPOC students, and what has been described as mostly performative actions and statements made by university administrators regarding issues of racism on campus and across the country (Assanis 2020a; 2020b; UD Review 2020) points to difficulties and the ineffectiveness of UD's institutionalized efforts to increase diversity and combat racism. UD is not alone in its history of exclusions. The academy as whole, from universities, to disciplines, to departments are steeped in legacies of colonial, racialized, and gendered exclusions (Ahmed 2012; Alderman et al. 2021; Berg 2012;

Eaves 2020; Oswin 2020) Within this context, in August of 2020 the UD Antiracism Initiative (henceforth, UDARI) was launched by faculty, staff, and students on campus (see: <https://sites.udel.edu/antiracism-initiative/about/>). Comprised of a diverse group of 350 university faculty, students, and staff working together to push for antiracist policy (and practice) changes, UDARI was not founded as a university directed initiative, but instead was organized independently, from the “bottom up” through the collective efforts of differently positioned faculty, students, and staff (and remains so to this day). The initiative focuses on producing antiracist resources, redirecting university funds towards projects focused on antiracism, and pushing for changes to institutional policies and spaces that support and contribute to racial disparities on campus. Further, UDARI is currently structured as 25 sub-committees focused on pedagogical practices, the university’s historical racist legacies, recruitment and programming, and racial, environmental, and restorative justice (to name a few ongoing initiatives).

UD is not alone in its struggles to build more equitable and inclusive environments. Instead, it is nestled in a broader context within the academy as a whole. Diversity work is difficult and often undertaken in nonperformative ways (Ahmed, 2007) which do not realize the promise that such efforts can hold.

Diversity Work

The United States is marked by a legacy and ongoing production of structural racism and white supremacy. These processes scale down to the site of the university,

and in tandem the classroom (Harwood et al., 2018). Often, racist legacies are written into the landscape of universities through building names, and memorials (Alderman and Rueben, 2020; Inwood and Martin, 2008), structuring a sense of non-belonging that inundates multicultural spaces with white privilege. Hiring and discipline-based exclusionary practices (here, I am specifically pointing to geography) lead to underrepresentation of black scholars, particularly women, within departments (Faria et al., 2019; Mahatani, 2004). Further, despite universities being often marketed as inclusive multicultural spaces, Harwood et al. (2018) describe the daily encounters with overt racism and microaggressions students of color face on campuses, leading them to declare the white multiculturalist dream of a racially harmonious campus a fictitious entity. Finally, failures to reckon with legacies interwoven with colonialization, racism, and patriarchy, and the continued sidelining of non-white, non-male, non-Eurocentric epistemologies and peoples today continues to produce white supremacy which privileges white academics and their research within academic disciplines like geography (Eaves, 2020; Faria and Mollet, 2020; Oswin, 2020). In short, academia, like many institutions, is a space thoroughly engaged in the ongoing production of whiteness and white supremacy. Adding to the oppression and racialized difference baked into university and college campus, the pressures and demands of universities lead them to be precarious, anxiety inducing institutions (Askins and Blazek, 2017; Berg et al., 2016; Ivancheva et al., 2019; Puāwai Collective, 2018). Feminist scholars have pointed to the distinct lack of supportive, caring processes in the neoliberal academic institution, calling for an implementation

of an ethic of care in the interactions between campus community members, administrations, spaces, and policies (Adams-Hutcheson and Johnston, 2019; Askins and Blazek, 2017; Corbera et al., 2020; Dombroski et al., 2018; Puāwai Collective, 2018). Further, scholars have engaged in collective network building and shifts in mentoring and teaching practices as a means of pushing against the uncaring neoliberal university to produce more supportive, inclusive, diverse spaces (Adams-Hutcheson and Johnston, 2019; Al-Saleh and Noterman, 2021; Dombroski et al., 2018). However, these efforts still rely on the individual (or small collective) to put these practices into place, demonstrating the ongoing relinquishment of those responsibilities by the university. Further, in line with the previous discussion on care, these calls for care in the university are not explicitly naming or targeting anti-black discrimination and violence in the university. Here, applying a lens of care to diversity within universities presents a contribution to the literature on care and academia by reframing DEI efforts as care work, showing how nonperformative approaches to DEI (what many respondents described as lip service from upper administration) produces uncaring results, and how the scalar process of DEI work in the university can lead to an uneven provisioning of care across campus.

Traditionally white, settler-colonial universities, it seems, are not very good or truly committed to producing caring, inclusive, and diverse campuses and relations they market themselves to be (Ahmed, 2017; Zambrana, 2018). In *Living a Feminist Life*, Sara Ahmed discusses this process at length, comparing doing diversity work in institutions of higher learning as hitting “a brick wall (2017: 96).” While Ahmed

(2017) is writing specifically about universities in the UK, this work is applicable to white, settler-colonial institutions like the University of Delaware. University administration regularly appoint diversity workers, praise ongoing diversity efforts, publish statements in support of diversity and equity, and establish offices and initiatives to produce more inclusive campuses, yet rarely make real systemic changes towards tackling racial inequalities on campus (Cole and Harper, 2017; Zambrana, 2018). Further, Ahmed notes that efforts to transform universities are often “used by institutions as evidence they have been transformed (2017: 103),” with little change occurring.

The production of guidance documents, policy recommendations, and other diversity, equity, and inclusion documents are often used by administrations as signifiers that the university is improving inclusion on campus without committing to shifting university practices or building systems which will increase diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Ahmed (2007) describes this as *nonperformativity*. Performativity, as Butler (1993: 2) notes, is the “reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names.” It is a repetition of norms, discourses, and practices which bring into being the realities they describe. In describing institutional practices around DEI in the academy as nonperformatives, Ahmed (2006: 104) notes that DEI language and documents used by the university are speech acts which do not produce the outcome they name. Instead, “they read as if they are performatives, and this reading generates its own effects.” Nonperformatives produce nothing. They are not a failure of intent or action, but instead are “actually what the speech act is doing (Ahmed, 2006: 105).”

Nonperformatives work by not producing that which they name, allowing universities to maintain current practices while signaling transformative aims

Diversity and diversity efforts, in this sense, become a currency to market the university's inclusivity (Zambrana, 2018). As Zambrana (2018: 7) describes this practice, noting, "although universities employ the language of 'diversity' and 'inclusion,' this type of 'race talk' does not disrupt the reproduction of Whiteness and leaves institutional structures of inequality unchanged. Further, Ahmed (2006) writes that "the politics of diversity and equality has become about image management: diversity and equality work is about generating the right image and correcting the wrong one (118)." Iverson (2007), using discourse analysis and Critical Race Theory as a lens, highlights how university diversity plans can, while well intentioned, further strengthen racial inequalities on campus. Particularly, Iverson (2007) highlights how discourses and action plans often use white student experiences as the backdrop to measure the success and experiences of students of color, situating them as outsiders to the university. Cole and Harper (2017), in reviewing statements released by university presidents in response to racist incidents on campus, found that while the incidents and their perpetrators were often named and disavowed, little attention was paid to how their respective universities could work against the systemic and institutional climates that support and produce white supremacy.

As such, DEI work is a fraught process, holding the potential to either be transformative, or to maintain existing systems when undertaken nonperformatively. There is much room to improve the way universities go about performing DEI work.

One potential avenue is to consider the ways DEI can be put to work building and maintaining systems of care.

Care

Care has garnered growing interest within Geography in the last ten years. Situated within the relational (Lawson, 2007; 2009; Massey, 2004) and moral (McEwan and Goodman, 2010; Popke, 2006) turns in geography, care as a focus of geographic inquiry emerged from feminist scholarship concerned with the practice of care and developing an ethical stance centered on wellbeing (Held, 2006; Lawson, 2007; 2009; Tronto, 1993). In an often-cited phrase, Tronto (1993: 103) defines care as ““a species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our ‘world’ so that we can live in it as well as possible (1993: 103).” Situating care as a species activity, as the totality of practices that build livable worlds, points to what Lawson describes as the “centrality of care work and care relations to our lives and societies (2007: 3).” Further, care is not simply the act of caring about something or someone, nor is it simply the provision and receipt of help. It is an orientation and bundles of practices aimed towards crafting practices, spaces, and relations centered on repairing, maintaining, and sustaining ourselves and others (Bauhardt and Harcourt, 2019). Further, care holds the radical political potential to transform social relations and the spaces we inhabit (Conradson, 2011; Held, 2006; Lawson, 2007; McEwan and Goodman, 2010; Tronto, 1993). As Conradson argues, care as a practice can transform “the character of social geographies across a range of registers and scales... facilitating new ways of being together” (2011: 545). Similarly, DEI holds the

potential to bring about revolutionary changes to the institutions we engage with daily.

In this study participants centered care in their approach to what an idealized DEI process would, and should, look like.

These theorizations of care are salient when thinking about DEI work. DEI practices are, at least in theory, aimed at producing and maintaining more equitable and inclusive processes, policies, and spaces across university campuses. How care is embedded within DEI practices, and how those actions affect the processes ordering space at different scales within the university remain central to the argument made here. DEI work is care work, when it works towards its purported goals. Yet, the disaggregated character of DEI work, as shown here through interview responses, as practiced through scale leaves us with an uneven provisioning of care across university space. Further complicating this are actions taken by administrators at the university level which are nonperformative. DEI statements and initiatives that are not linked to systemic restructuring of university practices and spaces are not only nonperformative (Ahmed, 2007), they actively produce uncaring space within the university. Despite care often being framed as a transformative normative good, it needs to be noted that practices and processes that look like care on the surface hold the potential of producing uncaring results (Bartos 2020; Narayan 1995; Raghuram 2019). Within the university context, Bartos (2021) notes that caring practices within the academy hold the potential to both transform and maintain the lives of students, faculty, staff, and alumnae, as well as the potential to extend caring relations to some at the exclusion of others. Further, drawing on the concept of false hope (Duncan-

Andrade 2009), Bartos (2021) argues that through framing their practices as care enables universities to claim that caring relations are being practiced “even if recipients do not necessarily feel cared for (315).” This false care parallels Ahmed’s (2017) argument that in many instances DEI work is carried out in a manner in which the university is able to say it is working towards more diverse, equitable, and inclusionary campuses without actually committing to change. Here, viewing DEI through care illustrates the contradictory ways in which diversity work is involved in the production of both caring and uncaring spaces.



Figure 1 Fig 1: Nonperformative DEI statement, University of Delaware, Morris Library (photo credit, Nathan Thayer)

DEI is a form of care, but can also produce uncaring results. Here, I show that those involved with DEI efforts often center care within their work, and believe it is vital. However, DEI practices that are done nonperformatively, and my respondents note through their frustrations, becomes embroiled in producing uncaring spaces across campus. There is also an issue of scale at play here. As I will show in this paper, scalar disconnects and the often uncoordinated efforts across campus, while holding the potential to be transformative, leave us with a landscape in which care is unevenly provisioned across different scales within the university.

Method

In thinking through the messy entanglements of care and DEI I focused on the experiences of individuals at the University of Delaware performing diversity work. A total of 35 semi-structured interviews were conducted to support this study. Each interview lasted on average 1 hour, and focused on the work participants had done towards DEI efforts on campus, their experiences doing that work, their understandings of DEI practices at UD, and the ways in which they approached DEI work. Due to ongoing uncertainties caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, all but two interviews were conducted remotely using the video chat software Zoom.

As a white, cis-gendered, heterosexual, settler man, the university spaces I inhabit were designed to support and provision care for me. While being a first-generation student and experiencing difficulties from a non-visible disability have thrown up some barriers in my graduate career, I have been well sheltered by the whiteness of the university. These privileges and power relations are at work within the research

process presented here. In addition to reflexively journaling after each interview to better reflect on my practices and how I related to the diverse group of participants I worked with, I also endeavored to ensure confidentiality among my participants and kept in check their level of comfort with questions they were being asked. Participants in this study are situated in a precarious position, as often they were lodging critiques at the institution where they were employed. As such, all participant names, affiliations, and job titles have been removed to protect their identity. In this paper interview respondents will be noted with an alphabetical signifier, represented the order in which the interview was conducted (i.e. Interview A). Further, it needs to be stated that I have worked on a sub-committee of UDARI, and received funding for this project (\$4000) from the organization.

A number of critiques of the University of Delaware are present in this paper. Practices, and lack of actions taken by the university that slowed down, shut down, or ignored DEI efforts are implicated in the uneven provisioning of care, and the production of uncaring spaces. It needs to be stated that the critique of diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts engaged here is aimed at campus administrations, not the efforts of the individuals performing this work.

Scale

When thinking about care and DEI in the academy it is important to note at which scale caregiving is taking place. Care is a scalar process (McEwan and Goodman, 2010). It is situated in particular points in space and moves across scales. Similarly, DEI is an assemblage of numerous connected and discontinuous activities taking place

at different scales within the university. From advising relations, to department and college levels, and at the site of the university as a whole, DEI activities proliferate at different levels of a nested hierarchy of university scales.

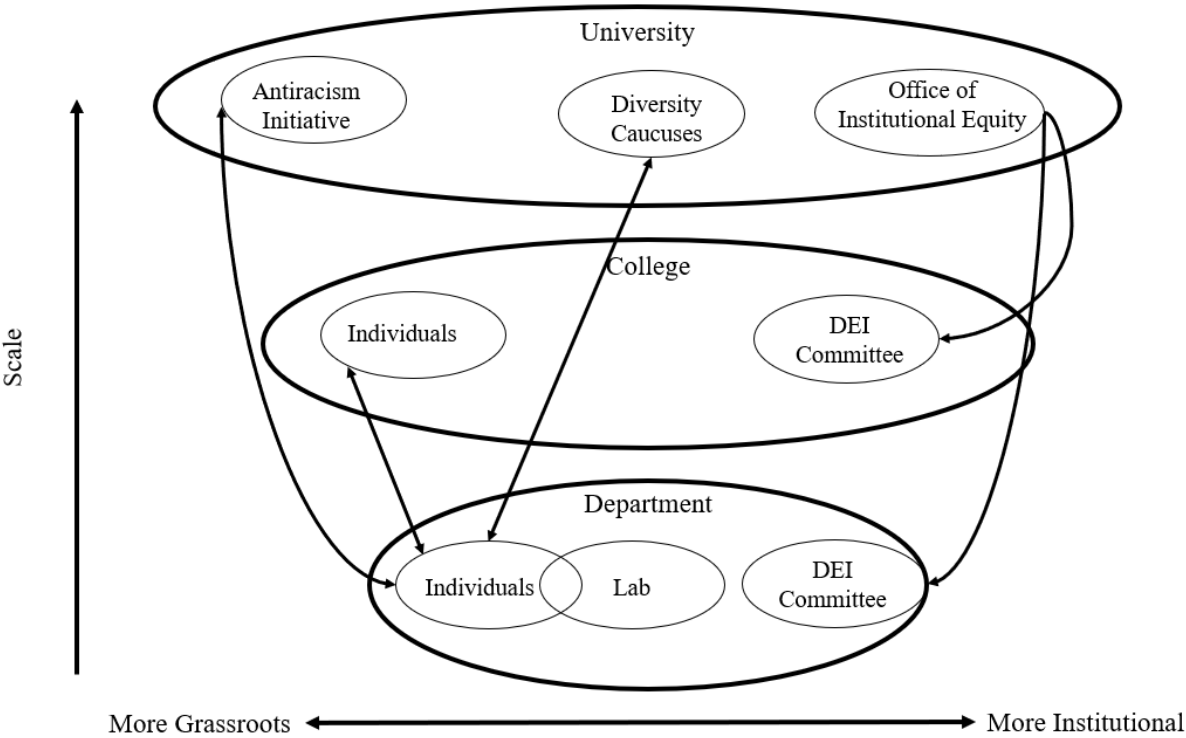


Figure 2 Fig. 2: Scale and DEI

The university is not a monolith. Instead, it is a collection of administrative structures, institutional entities, and collectives of individuals sited within different scales in the university. Similarly, DEI work is not unidirectional, nor undertaken under a single effort. DEI practices are disaggregated and take place at different scales within the

university (see fig. 2). Some activities are campus wide, affecting policy and practice across university space as an aggregate whole. Other activities take place within single colleges, departments, labs, and classrooms and have more limited reach in terms of what spaces on campus they are affecting. Participants readily identified clusters of people and activity (which many described as ‘pockets’) within each scale wherein DEI efforts were taking place. Institutional embeddedness is important to think about when thinking about DEI efforts, as not every activity is generated out of official structures. Some activities, like the university’s Antiracism Initiative, are grassroots in origin, but operate at the scale of the entire university. Other grassroots activities take place at smaller scales, such as within individual labs. Similarly, institutionally embedded efforts, like college DEI committees or institutions like the Office of Institutional Equity (the university’s central DEI office), move between scales. Offices like the Office of Institutional Equity are situated at the university level, yet often engage in efforts that focus on a single department. Here we can see ideas, energies, and actions moving from a university scale space into smaller scales. Viewed in this way DEI work becomes multiscalar. The scale and the level of institutional embeddedness of DEI work affects the reach each effort has, and how much power individuals have to affect change. One respondent discussed this as orbits within the university.

I think about orbits. So, in my lab I can enact change. I can set policies. I have the power to intervene when there is a situation, or someone has said something that is inappropriate. That to me is where I recognize my power and

I feel like I can use it in an effective way. And then at the department level it's a little bit broader but I still feel like we have the ability to be nimble, we don't have levels of approval or administrative red tape to get through. (Interview D)

At smaller scales, many respondents felt as though they had more power to enact change. Working within individual classrooms, labs, and departments policies were easier to enact, and cultures seemingly were easier to affect. Respondents noted that as you moved up in scale for DEI efforts the work became less likely to enact change due to hitting more barriers And what many described as nonperformative (Ahmed 2006) lip service given to DEI efforts by university administration.

I think its barriers to change. I think when you're looking at an individual department or unit with an individual supervisor who has relative autonomy over their team, that means they have the ability to make unilateral decisions and say alright we are doing this now, or we are participating in this project, or we are going to engage in this educational experience as a team or as a unit. (Interview E)

Smaller scale efforts, like those taking place within departments or individual labs, benefitted from having more autonomous control over their spaces. Fewer people and steps were involved in the decision-making chain, allowing individuals and departments to, as respondent D noted, act more nimbly. Here we are seeing an issue of scale, wherein efforts that involve operating either at higher scales in the university, or those which interact between scales, are faced with more institutional structures and

policies which inhibit the ability to enact change. However, smaller scale activities are also more limited in their reach. A DEI effort within a single department may do the work of changing ideas about diversity in science, or change advising practices, but those impacts are limited to the boundaries of the scale and space where they take place. Some respondents discussed this issue through the idea of pockets of care.

I think it depends on how you define the university. Absolutely there are pockets where it has happened. There are departments, there are units, there are offices that have taken it upon themselves to learn to change policies and practices and to engage in the necessary outreach and personal and professional development in order to convey that message and to do that work.

(Interview E)

The level of prioritization of DEI efforts was not consistent across campus. Instead, the amount and perceived effectiveness of DEI efforts was situated in particular spaces and scales within the university, and embedded within webs of interpersonal relations. Many respondents noted that there were pockets of care where DEI work was being done. Spaces within different scales in the university where networks of individuals worked in concert to develop practices, push for policy changes, and provided programming and messaging towards DEI aims. While university wide initiatives, such as the UD Antiracism Initiative, and formal offices, centers, and committees focused on DEI issues exist and do important work, many more activities happen at only at college, departmental, advising, and classroom levels.

I think that there is a lot of departments, and I think it comes from a grassroots level, that are doing really great. Anytime we talk about DEI work and how we can improve we almost always talk about what is {department name} doing.

(Interview W)

Many participants noted that some departments and some colleges were “better” at performing DEI work. When asked where they found success in their DEI work, most participants pointed to smaller scale activities. Efforts to increase awareness within, and change departmental practices were one area many found success. Others found success in institutionalizing practices within the college level. One particular example occurred within the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, where a group of students, faculty, and staff started a grassroots DEI committee which eventually was granted funding and institutionalized by the college. Importantly, the discussions of the benefits of working at smaller scales and of pockets suggests an unevenness to the provisioning of care within the university. Those pockets are often isolated, discontinuous spaces which do not reach uniformly across university space. If we think DEI as a process through which care is performed, as is discussed in the next section, we can see unevenness emerge from respondent observations. DEI becomes involved in the production of caring spaces within the university, and as efforts as not uniform across campus, the production of those caring spaces are similarly uneven. Not all spaces across campus become as inclusive or as caring as others. One notable aspect that drives this unevenness is the importance of “key figures.”

I think it's just strategic buy in. So that we'll often if we have something we really want to do we may start with a dean or an associate dean we have a good relationship with and pilot something. And then that gives us an idea of how to get more deans involved and then we may offer something for all the deans. And then that might go well enough that we go ok we want to roll this out to the chairs. So, I think that's what it is. We are pretty strategic when we, anything we want to do we sit and think through what's the best way to get through the system. (Interview K)

“Key figures” – individuals uniquely positioned within the university – were often important allies for faculty, staff, and students involved in DEI work. These key figures were often situated within positions of power in the university hierarchy. This, however, was not always the case. Most participants noted that staff members who were officially dedicated to DEI efforts were instrumental in getting their efforts started (though, rarely with the power to sustain them). However, uniquely positioned individuals became, for many respondents, important and often necessary resources for getting DEI efforts approved and enacted. Most participants noted they had the most success when they were able to leverage personal relationships they had with key figures on campus, such as deans or department chairs. These relations often fell outside of the bounds of their official positions, and allowed participants to get conversations and efforts started within departmental and college level scales. However, there is precarity produced by the necessity of “key figures” within the university.

I'm going to wait out my current dean's level of administration hope that, I don't know, [Administrative Member] takes over the whole ship and we can move this further. (Interview A)

In spaces where participants had a dean or department chair who was not as concerned with DEI efforts, roadblocks proliferated. Many noted that if the priorities of key figures within the spaces they occupy were not focused on DEI work, funding and support rarely flowed towards their efforts. If you had a dean who was interested in DEI, then it was much easier to get those efforts moving, the opposite remaining true as well. While an unsurprising finding, this highlights the lack of embeddedness in the culture of university campuses that DEI occupies. Further, it strengthens the idea that caring, diverse, equitable, and inclusive spaces are not evenly produced across campus.

Thinking through scale makes visible the disaggregated character of DEI efforts within the university. DEI is not a monolithic process. It takes place at and through a variety of scales in the university, from the intimate space of a lab to campus wide efforts. DEI is a collection of different efforts, energies, and individual actions situated at a variety of scales across campus. It is not, however, evenly practiced. In some spaces, across different scales, DEI is more vigorously performed, and changes to policies, practices, and even cultures are enacted. It is clear that there is an unevenness to how DEI is practiced across the university. Whether its owing to the relative autonomy of working through grassroots efforts at small and large scales, being located within a pocket of caring relations, hitting barriers and challenges presented by

working through larger scales, or relying on key figures, the way DEI was practiced at this site leaves us with some spaces which are more diverse, more equitable, and more inclusive. This unevenness in how DEI is practiced and approached has an effect on the way care is produced within the academy.

Caring and Uncaring in the Academy

While not without its problems, DEI work and efforts present ample opportunity to care for diverse populations in the university. In the following section I follow DEI work along the contours of care through DEI worker experiences. Interview respondents, while lodging critiques at university level efforts, often expressed how care and caring were woven into the work they were doing. At the same time, however, many noted that common university approaches to DEI efforts were uncaring. Many argued that care is, or at least should be, the foundation of DEI efforts within the university.

I feel there some needs that are not being met and as a person I want to meet those needs in almost a caregiver way. A nurturing way because you want these people to succeed. You want them to be successful in their careers. You want them to be whole people and have their needs met, and I think it partly comes from that. (Interview O)

I also think there is a very radical level of care and kindness that in my opinion that DEI work needs to flourish. (Interview CC)

Respondents often noted that the traditional way universities go about performing DEI work and measuring success – those metric-based benchmarks for retention and recruitment – were not enough. DEI requires approaching issues by centering a “whole person” approach. Retention and recruitment are important aspects of DEI work. You cannot perform DEI without attending to the lack of diversity on campuses. However, there are many activities and ethical approaches that are not captured by the metrics often used in universities to measure success. Respondents, in calling for a whole human approach, noted there was a need to build systems and practices focused on nurturing, wellbeing, and maintaining levels of comfort and kindness for intersectional differences. Interview results suggest a need for DEI work to be situated within an ethic of care . Respondents argue that DEI is not only care work, but care and caring are central to the work they do.

If you're not caring, you might look at this blueprint or look at the goals and action items and they're just a list of words that you want to check off. And it shouldn't just be a list of words with check boxes. It should be something that you're feeling, you're feeling and its going, if you're feeling it you're going to embrace it more. And it's going to become a lifestyle, habitual behavioral change. That you're not only are going to follow these rules and guidelines you're not only going to endorse them, but they are going to become a part of your life. (Interview M)

Care, for many, signaled commitment. Frustration was felt with broad university approaches to DEI which did not center care in their approach, as they were

nonperformative (Ahmed, 2007). Instead, care, for many, opens avenues for weaving DEI into everyday practice in university spaces.

Vital. It's the lifeline. I don't know if you can talk about diversity equity and inclusion without talking about caring for people, and I think in a way that allows you to celebrate those cultures and those races, and gender-nonconforming people. And I think also beyond just this week we are going to focus in, but to kind of bake that into our everyday so it's not surprising to people. So, I think care is vital, and if you are baking that into the everyday and people can see themselves reflected back. That's care. (Interview AA)

There is an everyday aspect to caring as DEI work. Interview participants expressed frustration with DEI efforts on campus that act as one-time moments of concern, hitting those brick walls and barriers described by Ahmed (2017). Instead, many respondents noted that DEI work not only needs to be baked into the culture of campus spaces, but that it takes place in more mundane, everyday spaces. While formal DEI committees are the most visible form of diversity work undertaken at universities, when asked about the forms DEI work takes participants often pointed to small scale, everyday, grassroots efforts they were involved in. Respondents described DEI work as happening through pushing back against colleagues and administrators through email exchanges; shifting teaching practices to make space for underrepresented minority students; crafting advising relations which directly addressed power relations that fall along the contours of difference; starting book clubs and holding conversations in order to acknowledge structural inequities within

departments, disciplines, and colleges; and, leveraging personal relationships with key individuals (such as department chairs and deans) to shift priorities towards DEI within institutional policies (to name a small sample of the total activities undertaken). Here, we see a shift in focus within DEI work away from recruitment and retention efforts, an arena respondents noted held the universities focus (even though it was not practiced effectively). Instead, participants were adopting and cultivating practices that worked towards building a culture which promotes and builds more inclusive spaces on campus. Centering care within DEI work pushes against the nonperformative character of university DEI efforts. Inclusion and equity require support. They require broad, transformative cultural change. For many respondents, care is an essential element of producing diverse, equitable, and inclusive spaces on campus. Further, for many centering care within the work they were doing at smaller scales within the university is what carved out those pockets of support. That commitment to supporting, nurturing, and helping to repair the worlds of those who experience oppression and disadvantage in the university was sorely lacking from the broad university scale. A lack of commitment, and priorities focused on measurable outcomes, for many, got in the way of the care work they envisioned needed to be done.

Care, priorities, and the problem with metrics

Participants centered care within the work they did towards creating more diverse, equitable, and inclusive spaces on campus, suggesting that DEI work is care work. Nurturing, support, kindness, comfort, concern, and acknowledgment of existing

disparities on campus were key themes participants noted when describing what was at the basis of successfully doing DEI work. Acknowledging care's role in DEI work opens up avenues for reimagining how we craft equitable and inclusive spaces. What moral responsibilities and ethical approaches should be adopted when performing DEI? A particular concern amongst participants were the metrics used to measure success in DEI work. Many pointed to the difficulty in getting the university to commit to any program or effort if it could not be quantified and measured.

Because they kept stressing, the board of trustees, not Assanis, but the board kept stressing metrics. We want numbers, we want quantifiable numbers for all your justice, social justice dei initiatives. And at one point you know I raised my little zoom hand and I said you can measure things qualitatively too. It's not as easy but you can, and that's more meaningful. (Interview G)

In stressing efforts that can be easily measured, as participant G noted, delegitimizes other efforts that do not fall into the realm of numbers and quantifiable metrics. This is not to say that quantitative measures are not useful. Noting disparities in the recruitment and retention of diverse faculty and students points to underlying issues. However, interview participants noted that the attention given to metrics driven change was accompanied by a lack of commitment to efforts that were centered on a sense of belonging and comfort within the university. This suggests a new set of metrics and commitments are necessary for DEI work. While a number of participants noted their involvement in faculty hiring committees and official university and college level DEI committees as where their DEI work was sited, most participants

work happened at smaller, grassroots scales. Some participants started initiatives focused on acknowledging existing disparities on campus through activities such as book clubs, faculty discussion groups, and activities which eventually became formalized such as diversity health theater (performances done by students to talk about disparities in how people of color are treated by health professionals when compared to white clientele, <https://sites.udel.edu/healthcaretheatre/>). One notable activity, an effort done by UDARI, focused on conducting a historical project which laid bare the legacies of dispossession and enslavement (<https://sites.udel.edu/udari-legacies/>) connected to the University of Delaware. Each of these activities, and many others, focused on acknowledging existing structural issues on campus (and, through how we train and prepare our students for life after graduation). Acknowledgment was key for many participants as a baseline for DEI work. Here again a question of metrics is at play. How do you measure acknowledgement and its impact was a concern for many participants, and, again, there was a consensus that university officials placed less focus on such activities due to the difficulty in measuring success (as well as the potential for casting the university in a negative light). How you measure the impact and reach of small scale activities such as a book club focused on diversity issues in the academy was a question which remained unanswered by many participants. Yet, there was a consensus that such activities are important for shifting the culture of the university towards a more caring and inclusive space.

The focus on metrics and the acknowledgement of care's role in DEI work suggests a need for care ethics to be a part of how we go about building inclusive campuses.

Feminist scholars have long called for care ethics to be embedded in disciplinary practices (Lawson, 2007). It also suggests there is a need to refocus the responsibilities of the university towards caring for its faculty, students, and staff rather than on the priorities universities set for themselves

I think that the administrative structure and the aggregate whole has been designed to promote and produce academic capital. And the academic capital is, you think it might be money but its not, its prestige. And then money plays a significant role as well because you can't operate the university and increase your ranking without money. So, I think those are the, I think that the university will care for you until that caring starts to take away from those two priorities.

I think the biggest roadblock was in translating messages to the dean. When we first started the committee we had a different dean, and then when we when our new dean came there was a pause of momentum because we have to figure out how he works and operates, what his priorities are. He has to figure out the college and transition to the role. And after that transition happened and once he was more settled in it was a lot of repeating the same sort of messaging until he finally acted on it. (Interview S)

A lack of commitment to DEI initiatives was one roadblock numerous participants pointed to when discussing why DEI efforts on campus tend to fail. Tronto (2011) notes that commitment to change is necessary for institutions to become a caring entity. The priorities of the provost, president, deans, and department chairs created

barriers for DEI initiatives on campus. Fundraising, increasing student enrollment, and the building of prestige were often noted as being placed far above efforts to build a more inclusive and equitable campus. As one participant stated above, if efforts to care took away from these priorities, then caring practices ceased. The trouble with university priorities did not only exist at administrative levels. University priorities trickle down into the everyday practices of faculty and staff.

DEI at UD feels like it is viewed as an additional workload as opposed to being part of the fabric of what we are doing. (Interview W)

Another roadblock participants noted were incentives for faculty and staff to engage in service and DEI work. Again, an issue of metrics appears. The metrics used to measure success, many noted, were placed on activities which fed into the university's aim to acquire funding, publish, and maintain daily UD operations. Prioritization of these aims and a lack of incentives and rewards for performing DEI work, participants noted, worked against current efforts. As noted above, instead of being woven into the fabric of university life, DEI became something to do on the side; something that was not a part of how a university functions. Here, again, priorities decenter DEI work from the central workings of the university.

Prioritization also fed into another roadblock participants pointed to; funding. Many participants noted that the way the university funded DEI work (or, more aptly, did not) left many efforts in a precarious space. A lack of direct funds to efforts ran into problems at departmental, college, and university levels for formalized and grassroots efforts alike.

But to be honest I have not been as active in figuring out what the committee should do and how they should do it this semester. So, this is partly I'm trying to figure out how to do administrative stuff with no funding or structure. It's possible, this comes from somewhere, but I'm kind of operating in a little bit, I'm flailing a little. (Interview Q)

We really try to do it all in terms of getting our name out there as a diversity caucus and trying to do what the university in some, in the case of our caucus, has taken away from us. We lost a few years ago there was a staff member exclusively for I think it was for sexual minorities, and I don't know if that person lost their position because of the pandemic or if it was before, but we don't have a person. (Interview U)

A lack of funding – for staff, for trainings, and for different initiatives – left DEI care work precarious within the university. This respondent, lamenting the loss of a staff member who worked closely on LGBTQIA+ issues in the university, noted that without that staff support many of the LGBTQIA+ community's efforts on campus had been hampered. Participants often worried about how sustainable their individual and group efforts would be without consistent funding and support from the university and different colleges across campus. Some efforts, like UD's ADVANCE program and faculty training sessions, were successfully funded through small university grants and external funding. Many, however, were not. Whether it was the loss of staff due to funding crises created by the COVID-19 pandemic, or a general lack of funds flowing to diversity efforts on campus, participants expressed frustrations with the uncertainty

of the work they were doing. They again pointed to a lack of prioritization from the university and college levels to perform and support DEI work on campus.

Nonperformativity as uncaring practice

One scale at which participants noted particular frustration was at the university level. Nearly all interview participants (save for two) believed that as an aggregate whole the university was not committed to, and not particularly effective at performing DEI work. A lack of commitment to change, lack of priorities, and lip service often featured as central themes within these conversations.

Where like UD does a lot of things where they on the surface they say statements and it sounds good but the work is not, additional work needs to go along with it and resources and money don't follow. And that's a big problem. It doesn't come out as authentic. And people can see right through it. Like if you send out a statement or if you do, oh we're going to have a multicultural center, people see right through it if it's not followed up with authenticity. And I think that's the big thing, we have to be authentic. And we have to make bold moves that show we really care about these things. (Interview M)

It's one thing for the administration to have their form letter prepared for their statement on a particular issue, but its another to really practice what they preach. (Interview U)

And so a lot of times I think there is a lot of talk and action doesn't balance the talk. So now we put out statements, Juneteenth is now a university holiday and all of these things to like show we are progressive and trying to promote

diversity equity and inclusion on campus, but when you don't see the president's name on the list of lead allies or most people in the president's office or most leaders of the colleges on those lists you kind of question like how much support is there once you go above a certain level, and how much do they think about it. (Interview X)

At the university scale, affecting all of campus, there was a general consensus that the university was not truly or fully committed to DEI work. Most expressed frustrations that university officials, such as the president, only put out statements in support of DEI efforts or condemning bigoted, racist, and violent instances without creating any material forms of support or change to go along with them. Further, a disengagement with existing efforts was a source of frustration for respondents. In the quote above (Interview X), the respondent noted a lack of engagement from UD administration with the university's LEAD Ally program, a certificate program to train individuals on issues of diversity equity and inclusion. This disengagement also feeds into the way in which DEI efforts are materially supported.

I have watched the university grab the nearest person and shove them in some DEI role and they give them nothing and it's frustrating. It's totally a CYA approach to diversity and inclusion. We've got this person here in this office that doesn't really have any power that is there to issue statements when something bad happens on campus. But other than that, we're not really invested in changing this place. (Interview A)

The vast majority of respondents in this study expressed frustration with university

actions which, to them, rang hollow. Lip service paid to issues of diversity, or the creation of positions or initiatives that received little to no material support signaled to participants in this study that the university was not committed to making any sort of real, structural changes which would bring about more inclusive environments.

Actions such as these are nonperformatives (Ahmed 2006). They name one thing, a university that is committed to producing more diverse equitable and inclusive spaces, yet that reality never comes to fruition. Ahmed (2017) has extensively written about universities appropriating the labor that goes into diversity work, and the use of diversity statements to obscure a lack of willingness to affect any form of change. Actions such as these serve the purpose to create the veneer of an institution that cares about diversity; to have something to point to, to say we are doing the work without any real commitment. The frustration participants felt from these nonperformative actions was palpable. Some noted that the lack of commitment from the university caused them to disengage from university scale efforts, as they did not believe their work would truly be valued. Others noted that university structures often prevented them from performing the work they needed to do.

Even though, in an ideal world and this is probably true more broadly right, like there is an argument to be said for saying that we need to burn it all to the ground and start over because we are too deep, to try and carve our way out.

(Interview E)

Barriers presented by who has the authority to pen messages regarding events that happen on campus or in the United States (such as the murder of George Floyd),

where reporting of instances of affecting diversity on campus is sited, and how funding is allocated all produce issues for how care is provisioned through DEI work. Further, lip service paid by administrative structures on campus produces what many felt were uncaring results.

I can think of many different things but the first thing that comes to mind is the statements that they post after really awful things happen. That's the very opposite of care in my eyes. Its often a cop out, they deflect blame. So that's one thing, just how they respond to the awful things that happen on their campus and the lack of action to do anything to prevent it in the future. I don't agree with how they handle protest; I believe that there should be no room for hate on this campus. And for kids that spend thousands of dollars to go here, white extremist hateful people should not be allowed refuge here. That just fosters an uncaring learning environment. So many people are arrested on campus for that and its awful. I don't think UD is very trauma informed and they don't rule with care. They rule like a capitalistic institution which is exactly what they are. And nothing they do surprises me, but it's a bummer every time. (Interview EE)

This respondent, a student, expressed deep frustration with the university's response to a protest held by an anti-LGBTQIA+ hate group that was held on the edge of campus where a group of counter protestors, students, engaged with the hate group and many were arrested by UD police. Importantly, this respondent indicated that lip service paid by the institution did not only obscure a lack of commitment by UD

administration to commit to DEI efforts and structural change. They noted that these actions, and in particular the unwillingness of the university to tackle issues of hate, produced an uncaring environment. Nonperformatives do not only obscure the truth behind university DEI commitments. They are intertwined with the production of campus space. The frustrations noted earlier, and the anger represented in the above quote point to a process through which non-white, non-cisgendered, non-heteronormative, non-male faculty, students, and staff cannot expect support from the university, leaving us with an uncaring campus space.

This process scales into individual colleges, departments, and classrooms. While there are spaces of refuge, those pockets of care where individuals find support and DEI efforts have more traction, they are nested within a wider campus space which is fundamentally uncaring for the very people that DEI efforts are supposed to support. Coupling this with the role of key figures and smaller scale efforts, we are left with an uneven caringscape within the university. Depending on which space or scale you occupy in the university, you are likely to be provisioned a different level of care through DEI work. Whether this pulls from a lack of priorities, funding, or institutional structures, it suggests that university space is reproduced in different ways depending on where you are located. Finally, while DEI work is carework, as argued above, nonperformative DEI practices contradictorily produce uncaring results (Tronto 1993; Bartos 2017)

Conclusion

Care is messy, precarious, and uneven. Further, DEI work – that assemblage of energies, efforts, and structures existing across multiple scales in the university – is similarly messy, precarious, and uneven. In this paper I argued that DEI work needs to be thought of as care work. Further, that DEI work, when carried out carelessly can produce uncaring results. Finally, care and DEI are scalar processes operating in the university, and differing levels of care provisioning leave us with an uneven caringscape where some spaces are more inclusive than others.

What does reimagining and capturing DEI work through care do? What ethics are necessary for this work to be carried out effectively in a way which not only works towards the goals of social justice, but applies them evenly. Finally, how do we better support caring efforts on campuses, whether they are formal or grassroots level, to ensure that DEI work is sustained through time and through different scales? These questions remained unanswered. One potential is to center an ethic of care within our disciplinary practices, our department, college, and university spaces, and within our everyday actions. To sustain this, however, requires real commitment from administrative structures on campuses, and suggests we need wide levels of support – not simply relying on key figures – to get the work done.

DEI work is not without its problems, but it holds the promise of transforming campus spaces into spaces where justice is enacted. Structures and practices need to change to make this possible. Already, as evidenced here, work is being done which provides hope and promise that change is possible. While disaggregated, there are cracks within

the landscape of the university where inclusion is being worked towards, equity is possible, and diversity is celebrated and achieved.

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Chapter 4

DISCOMFORT IN THE CARE-FULL GEOGRAPHY CLASSROOM

Abstract: The higher education classroom is a dynamic, powerful space, filled with power relations and the intersections of comfort and care. In this piece, I engage with literatures on caring and discomfoting pedagogies to think through antiracist praxis in the higher education classroom. Drawing on reflective journals written by students in an antiracist geographies course, classroom observations, and self-reflective journalling done by the author I argue that discomfort is a site of noticing in the classroom. A space from which we can learn about unconscious biases and patterns of thoughts we hold, and one which we can reimagine how to change our practices as students and educators. This approach, I contend, helps us to better develop antiracist practices through teaching.

Keywords: Care Antiracism, Discomfort, Pedagogy
Introduction

The discipline of geography, to this day, remains heavily shaped by the processes of whiteness (Kinkaid et al 2022). Kinkaid et al. (2022) urge us as scholars to vigorously interrogate “how forms of exclusion are reproduced in our discipline and how we might transform ourselves, our relations, and our institutions to address these dynamics (1557).” One arena that needs more attending is the geography classroom (Kinkaid and Kritzsche 2022). The material we often introduce students to reproduces normative, primarily white representations of what constitutes geographic thought (Kinkaid and Fritzsche 2022). There is a necessity, then, for us to be explicitly

antiracist within our pedagogical practices (Alderman et al. 2021). Here, I suggest constructed classroom spaces with care so that students may more safely engage with any discomfort with new information as an avenue for building antiracist praxis in the classroom.

Classrooms are not neutral educational spaces (Friere 1970; hooks 1994; 2003). They are brimming with power relations, politics, and are shot through with historical legacies of various intersecting processes of privilege and oppression as well as exclusion. They are also spaces fraught with complex, messy emotions felt by instructors and students alike (Boler and Zemblyas 2003). Discomforts creep into the classroom and are intimately felt (Millner 2021). As such, crafting a space full of caring practices and relations becomes a necessary task for educators. Feminist scholars focused on pedagogy have called for scholars and educators to endeavor to create care-full classroom spaces where students experience nurturing relations that open space for radical re-imaginings of their world (Newstead 2009).

Crafting caring pedagogical practices presents a way to safely approach moments of discomfort in the classroom (Millner 2021). This is not to say that discomfort needs to be completely disrupted in the classroom (Boler and Zemblyas 2003). While we should not allow the harmful and disruptive aspects of discomfort to dominate classroom spaces – risking disengagement and further traumatization of students who have faced adversity, violence, and oppression in their lives – plumbing the contours of comfort and discomfort can be a powerful practice of noticing for students and instructors alike (Eaves 2021; Millner 2021). As Eaves (2021: 253) notes, discomfort

is “necessary to thinking and doing differently.” Focusing on comfort and discomfort uncovers the boundaries of access, belonging, and power relations in which we are embedded. Further, “it also reveals complicity in hegemonic forms and the maintenance of political power (Eaves 2021: 253).” Comfort and discomfort are avenues for students and instructors to intimately engage with the racialized, gendered, and colonial power relations shaping their lived experience (Boler and Zembylas 2003). As such, discomfort is a powerful pedagogical site for developing reflexive practices for students and instructors.

Navigating the tensions between care and discomfort is a tricky affair. In this paper, I reflect back on student and instructor experiences with discomfort in a higher education geography course focused on racism and antiracism, looking at practices which allow students to reflectively engage with discomfort. Ultimately, I suggest that care-fully attending to discomfort in the classroom opens the door to furthering antiracist teaching in geographic education by acting as a site of noticing; a space in which unexamined processes shaping student and instructor lived experiences can be uncovered. Further, I highlight the pitfalls of discomfort when care is not fully attended to. Carving out caring spaces where students can safely reflect on their discomfort, its sources and what they learned from it, is a powerful pedagogical tool. Additionally, reflective practice wherein instructors engage with their own discomforts, and with observed discomforts of students, provides a pedagogical practice which furthers antiracist and caring practices in the classroom.

Here, I first engage with literatures on critical, antiracist, and caring pedagogical approaches, following with a brief discussion of the methodological approach for this study. Next, I set the context for the study, describing the structure of, and general approach to teaching a course on antiracist geographies. Following this, I dive into data collected with student participants in the course on geographies of antiracism I taught in the fall of 2021, first examining student experiences with discomfort and self-reflection in the classroom, and then a reflection on my own experiences teaching the course. In all, I argue that space needs to be made for students and instructors to safely engage in discomfort through teaching practices. Discomfort in the classroom, as I argue, can be a site of noticing: a space from which we can bring into conversations our own lived experiences with the power relations, such as those resulting from the ongoing production of white supremacy, that shape our lives. Operationalizing discomfort in our teaching and learning can aid in the development of antiracist thought and praxis in geography, but, it must be tempered with care.

Antiracist Pedagogies, Discomfort, and a Care-Full Approach

The classroom is a critical site for disrupting hegemonic modes of thinking and the processes of oppression and racism (Alderman et al. 2021; Friere 1970; hooks 1994; Newstead 2009). Because the university is an institution imbued with structural oppression it is necessary for us to address it in the classroom. Classroom spaces are animated, social spaces impacted by the same social processes that affect students and instructors outside of educational settings (hooks 2003). Critical, engaged, and antiracist pedagogists have long argued for educators to develop practices which move

past passively engaging students with discussions of oppressive systems, and shift towards conversations which actively engage students in critical reflections of how those systems come into play in their daily lives (Friere 1970; hooks 2003; Love 2019).

Teaching is not a neutral process (Gannon 2020; hooks 1994; 2003). As Gannon (2020) notes:

Most essentially, *pedagogy is political*. Our pedagogy is a declaration of what we think matters. It's a living description of how we think good teaching and learning should occur, and of the moral imperative to create the type of inclusive and equitable learning spaces in which our students become critically conscious and actively engaged in their own education (22-23).

The decisions we make about how to structure our courses, the materials students interact with, and how we encourage student engagement are laden with powerful assumptions regarding political processes and knowledge production (Gannon 2020; hooks 1994). As noted in the quote above, these decisions affect not only what and how students learn. They hold the promise of developing a critically conscious approach to applying the knowledges students are exposed to.

Following the notion that the opposite of racist is to be explicitly antiracist, treating the classroom and curriculum as a politically and socially neutral is insufficient for seriously contending with white supremacy (Kendi, 2019). Alderman et al. (2021) called for an implementation of antiracist pedagogy in geographic education.

Antiracist education is not solely about teaching students the history and legacies of race. As Alderman et al. note, educators must “raise student awareness of how systems of bias are embedded within the prevailing knowledge systems and practices” that disadvantage marginalized peoples while connecting that to the “possibilities of realizing more socially just understandings and constructions of the world (2021: 188).” Antiracist education peers into the institutionalization – in states, organizations, and academic disciplines – of racism and whiteness, but requires a careful recognition and self-awareness of one’s own unique identity and subject position (Alderman et al., 2021). This reflexive approach challenge students and instructors to place themselves within the knowledge they are co-producing, and to tangle with the discomforts that accompany such an approach. For me that meant tangling with my position as a cis-gendered, white, settler, heterosexual man in the academy, and leading a course on antiracism in a discipline (geography) that is still heavily marked by whiteness (Kinkaid et al. 2022). My actions, the knowledge I bring to the classroom, and my relationships developed with students were all impacted by the intersections of various power relations falling along the curvatures of difference. This meant developing daily practice of reflective journalling to look back on interactions in the classrooms, decisions that I made, and student engagement with material and see where practices needed to shift. It also meant remaining open to share personal anecdotes with students that illustrated times that my whiteness, or how my experience as a first-gen student impacted me throughout life. This vulnerability was a discomfort in its own way, but one that made for more caring practice.

Discomforts

Discomfort is an unsettling thing. It brings attention to where the boundaries of comfort meet the processes of power and privilege (Gökariksel et al. 2021; Eaves 2021). Comfort and discomfort are fully embedded in the power relations that structure everyday life. As Gökariksel et al. (2021, 7) note, “the spaces and encounters of everyday life and work are structured to make those in power feel comfortable and the marginalized uncomfortable, all while hiding the violence of this uneven distribution of discomfort.” Being attentive to comfort and discomfort is a powerful avenue for analyzing the contours of power produced by systems of violence and oppression, such as white supremacy (Eaves 2021). Further, discomfort is a site for critical reflective praxis. Sitting with discomfort can unsettle our own understandings of our positionality and personal and political practices (Chennault 2021). It is a site of noticing. It is important to sit with feelings of discomfort, whether in our research, in the classroom, or in our everyday experiences (Boler and Zemblyas 2003; Chadwick 2021; Chennault 2021; Eaves 2021), and to use it as a space from which to reflect on the ways our privileges are constructed and interact with the world around us.

Discomfort is active in the classroom and can be a powerful site for learning, and some critical pedagogists have pushed on educators to develop a pedagogy of discomfort (Boler and Zemblyas 2003; Millner 2021). As a teaching practice, a pedagogy of discomfort makes space for engaging with discomfort in the classroom as a means of building careful reflexive practice. Zemblyas (2015) notes that such an approach is “grounded in the assumption that discomforting feelings are important in

challenging dominant beliefs, social habits and normative practices that sustain social inequities and they create openings for individual and social transformation (163).” It is an approach through which we can understand the “production of norms and differences (Boler and Zemblyas 2003, 111),” and reflect on how they interact with our own positionality.

This is not to say that as educators we need to actively make our students uncomfortable (Millner 2021). There is an ethical tightrope to walk in making space for discomfort. A pedagogy of discomfort encourages us to craft spaces where students can safely sit with and engage with feelings of discomfort (Boler and Zemblyas 2003; Millner 2021). Such an engagement, Boler and Zemblyas (2003) argue, brings attention to “the ways we enact and embody dominant values (111),” and provides an avenue for thinking through privileges and power relations one may not be aware of. In this article I engage with discomfort as a means towards furthering antiracist praxis in the geography classroom. Building on current literatures on pedagogies of discomfort I bring attention not only to student experiences, but argue that instructors need to embrace discomforting moments as a reflexive site to think through their own practices. Further, I sit with the trouble of when discomfort becomes too great in the classroom. Discomfort has been described as a necessity in challenging dominant norms, behaviors, and power relations within classroom spaces. But it is one that needs to be done care-fully (Millner 2021; Newstead 2009).

Caring Pedagogies

In recent years feminist scholars and geographers have increasingly turned their gaze towards concerns of care (Lawson 2007; Madge et al. 2009; Newstead 2009; Tronto 1993; Millner 2021). As hooks (2003) notes, “at its best, teaching is a caring profession (86).” Feminist theorizations of care situate it within the actions and relations which nurture and support individuals, and those which help to build and maintain more livable (and possibly just) worlds (Tronto 1993). Newstead (2009) urges scholars to approach classroom settings through care, noting:

Care embraces responsibility yet it usefully forces attention to the mediation and embeddedness of responsible relations in the interpersonal contact zones of the classroom. In its cautionary meaning, care also brings to questions of responsibility a carefulness; what I consider a necessary watchful attentiveness to our own presences within the classroom and the possibility that well-intentioned practices can have unanticipated and perhaps even harmful effects (80).

Our practices and positionality in the classroom produce the setting in which learning takes place, and the bundles of power relations and emotions that live and work through classroom spaces. Teaching is an intimate relation, and one which hooks (2003) notes needs to be undertaken with an ethic of love and care. Care necessitates attentiveness to student needs, and urges us to be reflexive and contemplative in the ways we relate to our students (Anderson et al 2020; hooks 2003; Newstead 2009). Care and love can be transformative (hooks 2003). Relations of care can extend

“beyond the transmission of knowledge to include nurturing relations through which students dare to imagine how to reconstruct their world in new ways (Newstead 2009, 81).” Caring pedagogies, then, are about remaining attentive to student needs, carefully examining our own practices and positionality as they relate to the production of harm and power relations within the class, and provide a space through which students can challenge normative assumptions and dream of a different world (hooks 2003; Newstead 2009). It is also a practice through which we can construct spaces where students can comfortably tangle with various discomfoting feelings (Millner 2021).

Millner (2021) posits that caring pedagogies give space for educators to make space for students to feel safe in engaging with discomfort. Educators practicing pedagogies of discomfort and care need to remain attentive to positionality in the classroom, and build practices of respect and dignity for students (Millner 2021). What discomfort can do in the classroom is bring our attention to unconscious habits, assumptions, and privileges we hold, but a care-full approach must be crafted to avoid harming and traumatizing students. Further, as I argue, instructors need to embrace discomfort themselves, practicing a radical vulnerability (hooks 1994) which leaves the door open to self transformative practices to emerge. Such an approach is reflexive, using discomfort to push on our own practices, habits, assumptions, and privileges as they are practiced in the classroom. Discomfort, when approached with care, can feed into reflective practices which further antiracist efforts in the classroom. In the section that

follows, I briefly outline my research methods as they were practiced in a classroom setting that was designed to be built care-fully.

Methods

Performing research in the is classroom tricky. Classrooms are already spaces brimming with power relations, and the research process further complicates this. Data for this study was collected from a classroom intended to be a caring and antiracist space. However, my position as the instructor in the course brings ethical concerns into play. As a white cis-gendered man teaching I held significant privilege and power in the classroom. I set the agenda for the course through the construction of a syllabus detailing what topics we were to cover, and what expectations I held for the students. I was the sole source of grades, the end product for students. While I designed each class session to be a student driven conversation and discussion of reading materials, my input and direction still held considerable sway as instructors are traditionally situated as the primary author of knowledge in the classroom. My role as a researcher-instructor could also be the source of stress for students. I had to sit with the discomfort brought into the classroom through performing research. At the beginning of the semester I had a long discussion with the students about research ethics, that participation in this study was entirely voluntary, and the difficulties presented by us engaging in research together. Each following week I reminded students that they could withdraw from the study if they were feeling uncomfortable with the process. In the end, every student (**n=8**) in the class agreed to participate in the study. In total, I collected 12 weeks of student journals from 8 participants.

Data for this study was collected from three sources (each of which is addressed below). First, each week students engaged in reflective journalling, wherein they looked back on their experiences in class, ranging from their experiences with materials they encountered and relations within the classroom space. Second, participant observation was conducted in the classroom, wherein I would mark down conversations between students, and myself and students. Finally, each day I performed my own reflective journalling detailing my experiences within the classroom.

Data was collected from students primarily through weekly reflective journals. In order to decrease the possibility of student engagement affecting grading practices, all journals entries were anonymous to me. Students developed pseudonyms on their own, and never attached their real names to student journals. Journals were submitted electronically through canvas, an online education management system. The submission portal was set up to not record any identifying information from the journal entries, and, successfully, to this day their anonymity is preserved.

Students were given prompts for each journal entry. The first was for them to reflect on one or two key concepts we had discussed in class, what they learned from those discussions, and how they found those concepts useful. Then, and this was kept standard week after week, students were asked about challenges they faced in class that week, and any discomforts they may have felt. I then asked each student to reflect on if they learned anything from those challenges and discomforts. Finally, students were given space to provide commentary on my teaching practices each week. Journal

entries were coded for themes of discomfort, change, and challenge to held knowledge.

In addition to student journals, I also engaged in observations in the classroom and reflexive journalling. At the end of each class I would spend about an hour jotting down interactions and discussions I observed in the classroom space, noting important conversations, moments of discomfort felt by students and myself, and reflections on my interactions with students. Following this I journalled on my own reflections and experiences in the classroom. This reflexive journalling proved, much like the student journalling, more than just an effective method of data collection. Through this exercise I engaged in a weekly practice which revealed my own discomforts in the classroom and helped me to (hopefully) improve my approaches. As I will explain later in this piece, this space for self reflection on my discomforts in the classroom helped me to shift teaching practices, and to challenge my own ideas of how teaching and learning should be undertaken. In all, discomfort proved to be a powerful practice of reflection which, I argue, can be put to use in constructing antiracist courses.

Practices: Building a Care-Full Space

In the Fall of 2021, I had the privilege of working with a group of students in a course on geographies of racism and antiracism. In the course students engaged with materials relating to antiracist and intersectional thought, and geographic approaches to race and racism (examples of materials engaged in include but are not limited to: Crenshaw 1989; Kendi 2019; Love 2019; McKittrick 2011). The classroom was intended to be an antiracist, caring space where students did not simply passively learn

about theories of race and racism, but used concepts to actively reflect on their own experiences, and to interrogate the processes shaping the communities and institutions they were embedded in.

The course was structured around daily readings, daily discussion sessions, weekly reflective journaling, and a semester long project where students collected data through semi-structured interviews with diversity equity and inclusion (DEI) workers at the university (see syllabus, *appendix a*). Daily discussions always began with a student question about our readings, which would be responded to by either myself or another student. From that point we would carry out a conversation of the readings and how they help us to explain processes we see today. The reflective journaling served as both data collection and a pedagogical tool designed to help students practice reflexive methods as they related to issues of race and racism. The DEI project centered on student groups who created their own research questions, wrote interview guides, and collected and analyzed data from DEI workers at the university. The students then practiced reporting their findings. The intent for this project was to both help students practice research design, but also to engage more directly with issues of race and representation at the institution they were embedded in. In all, the objective for this course was to broaden students' understandings of the processes of race and racism in the United States, while developing reflective, and hopefully, antiracist practices.

I designed this course as part of the data collection and observation for the dissertation project, in keeping with the overarching questions posed in the project, I developed the

course to be an antiracist geographies course. This topical focus means more than simply teaching students about the history and present of race and racism in the United States, it means structuring the course around critical geographic approaches to the production of whiteness and white supremacy, as well as literature on antiracist thought, co-conspiratorship, and social justice movements; introducing students to materials which challenge their understandings of the institutions and forms of knowledge production they are embedded in, in place; and, most critically, developing approaches and tools for students to more deeply engage in reflexive antiracist practices. . As Alderman et al. (2018) note, “anti-racist educators are obligated to raise student awareness of how systems of racial bias are embedded within the prevailing knowledge systems and practices of schools and wider institutionalized geographies that limit access to resources or opportunity for marginalized communities (188).” As a discipline, geography remains marked by whiteness and exclusion (Kinkaid et al. 2022). Towards this end, students were asked to read a series of papers reflecting on the discipline's past and current struggles with whiteness and exclusion (Faria et al. 2019; Kobayashi 2014), as well as materials taking aim at the institutionalization of exclusion within higher education more broadly (Ahmed 2017). As Alderman et al. (2018) argue, antiracist pedagogy must recognize “the role of educational institutions, practices, and practitioners in producing and reproducing racial inequality (187).” For me, this included citational practices that aimed to introduce students to more non-white, non-male authors, and being open with students about how my training is steeped in the legacies of whiteness that shape geography as

a discipline (see Appendix A). Further, it meant remaining open to discuss how racialized processes were at work in our university spaces.

The overarching research question that guided the development of the syllabus and drove our discussion-style class was: How do antiracist practices scale to the classroom through the act of teaching, and what roles does care serve? Ultimately, as data collection and the course continued, questions of how discomfort works in the classroom towards antiracist goals arose.. Through the scheduled course readings, we turned inward towards developing a practice of engaging course content in personal reflections about our own lived experiences. If antiracist pedagogy needs to be attentive to the production of knowledge, and the institutions that support a normative, white form of knowledge production, then it must focus inward on the way we as individuals embody that knowledge, and how it may disrupt our own understandings of the world and ourselves.

A major entryway in the classroom for developing antiracist praxis among my students was achieved through the weekly reflective journals that were used as part of this research project. The intent behind the journals was to not only encourage students to interact more deeply with the concepts and stories we engaged with throughout the course, but also to practice the art of intimately reflecting on how processes of race and racism had shaped their own lived experiences. Aimed at going beyond just learning about race and racism, reflective journalling presents an avenue for developing practices which challenge students to understand how they fit into broader systems of power and in/justice, and to tangle with their own positionality. As

hooks (2003) notes, “when we take the theory, the explanations, and apply them concretely to our daily lives, our experiences, we further and deepen the practice of antiracist transformation (36).” Reflexive journaling, for students and instructors alike, presents a step towards furthering antiracist goals.

The journal entries proved to be more than a method for self-reflection. Each week students felt comfortable providing feedback on how I was teaching, and in many instances pushed back on and challenged some of my practices. These journals, I suggest, became part of how I crafted caring spaces in the classroom by providing a safe format for students to lodge critique. Additionally, as I will describe in the next section, they provide an anonymous, safer space to reflect on discomfort they experienced in the classroom. Finally, after reading journal entries each week I was able to reflect back on how I constructed classroom space, taking student suggestions into account. This allowed me to change practices, to see what was and was not working, and to respond to student needs.

As part of trying to build a caring space for students, I also engaged in self reflection with them in the classroom. hooks (1994) reminds us that

When education is the practice of freedom, students are not the only ones who are asked to share, to confess. Engaged pedagogy does not seek simply to empower students. Any classroom that employs a holistic model of learning will also be a place where teachers grow, and are empowered by the process. That empowerment cannot happen if we refuse to be vulnerable while encouraging students to take risks.

Professors who expect students to share confessional narratives but who are themselves unwilling to share are exercising power in a manner that could be coercive (21).

Expecting students to become vulnerable in the classroom without practicing a similar vulnerability with them is oppressive, and fuels harmful power relations in educational spaces. Practicing vulnerability in the classroom was a necessity in crafting a care-full, antiracist space, and one I attended to through placing myself and my experiences within the concepts (e.g. whiteness) we discussed in class. Students were asked to share their own reflections with me privately through journal entries. In turn, I talked with them daily about my positionality as a white, cis-gendered, settler, heterosexual man was shaped, protected, and nurtured by systemic white supremacy in the United States. As an example, during the week we discussed policing, a conversation arose among the students about feeling comfortable with police. During this conversation I told students about how growing up in a small, rural, white town had taught me to be relatively comfortable around police, following that statement with a question of how it contrasted with the material we were discussing. Vulnerability practiced by myself and the students aided in developing a dialogic space where learning could take place.

Dialogue was central to how the classroom was constructed. There were no lectures given in this course. Instead each session centered on discussions that began with a student's question regarding the materials we had read or listened

to prior to coming to class. This was intended to place students at the front of our conversations, driving how we approached and talked about the concepts engaged throughout the semester. Beyond discussions, dialogue was also fostered through how we started each class. In an effort to remain attentive to students' needs and concerns (Newstead 2009) each class period began with a group check in to gauge the emotional state of each member (me included) of the classroom. These daily check ins soon transformed into something else. Eventually, students began using this time period to address various concerns and bring up topics for group discussion. During what we eventually began to refer as the "airing of grievances," students would use that time to comment on issues they were seeing in the news or on campus. Topics would range from issues of race and racism happening in the United States, to the university's approaches to inclusion and responses to incidents of hate on campus. This space, usually the first 5-10 minutes of class, became a site where students could make their concerns heard, and we as a class could think them through. Due to the character of the content we covered in class, this often became a pedagogical space where students could use what they had learned to discuss "real world" happenings that they found discomforting.

Creating spaces to safely reflect, and grounding classroom time in student directed dialogue helped to build a sense of a learning community (hooks 2003). This is not all to say that I perfectly succeeded in crafting a care-full, antiracist learning space. In fact, at times I failed, which will be discussed in a

later section. However, if we are going to encourage students to engage with moments of discomfort more intimately, we must be intentional and careful in co-developing spaces and practices with them.

Noticing

Again, in the class students were invited to engage anonymously with their discomfort through weekly reflective journals. While it needs to be stated that often student discomfort arose from the difficulty of the reading materials each week, many students experienced more personal discomforts that resulted in self reflection.

What challenged me this week was hearing about the history of violence towards African American women and reshaping my preceptive to include their voices and their stories. It was acknowledging a blind spot I had and analyzing my ignorance to the extent of the problem they faced. It is important to have these reflections to expand my empathy towards others. It is never pleasant to admit that you were clueless or accepting of such an obvious injustice that was in plain sight but how can we (as humans) not be willing to confront ourselves from time to time and expect problems like sexism and racism to ever go away? It is hard (if not impossible) to change someone else's opinion, but we can change ourselves.

Discomfort is noticing. It brings our attention to the boundaries of what we know. For this student, wrestling with the extent of what they did not know was not “a pleasant experience.” Yet, it productively moved them towards a realization of realities they

were not fully aware of, and the necessity of endeavoring to change one's understandings of the world. Discomfort can also be a space for noticing one's assumptions.

I think the one thing that challenged me this week was when hooks wrote that one of the main reasons why we have yet to experience a revolution of values and cultural diversity is because we have this tendency of lying and denial, I am a part of that problem. I was born into poverty but once my family moved and started to get on their feet, they always told my siblings and I, is that you just have to work hard to be successful. I was privileged enough to have parents to even have the funds to put me through school and get help to equip me to be successful, and I always had the idea that "well if my immigrant parents can do, so can I and so can everyone else". But, it is more to that, many people don't even have two parents to care for them, talk less of the funds to put them through college. Once we as a society can accept that the system is not equally distributed, the quicker we can move into a revolution of values.

This student had faced adversity growing up. Yet, through reflection and sitting with some discomfort they noticed a line of thinking that could be disruptive of more antiracist, emancipatory thinking. To acknowledge that a system that distributes privilege and power unevenly can go against commonly

held beliefs that hard work is enough to make it in life. For this student that fell into hooks (2003) discussion of denial, of not recognizing difference where it exists, and the difference it makes. Many of the students in class noticed similar shifts in thinking about what barriers exist in society, and how those barriers are not evenly distributed. In particular, one student focused in on policing.

A challenge was seeing police as the villains that they are for the first time. I think that we are trained as a society that cops are the heroes and anybody they kill or confront are bad and deserve the worst society has to offer. Prisoners must suffer to learn from their crimes and anybody who gets beaten or killed by the police probably deserved it. I also believed that most cops were good, and the “bad apples” were far and few between. That train of thinking was drilled in my head from a young age, and I never questioned it, because I thought you could only be a hero or a villain. End of story. Cops were good and want to protect me from criminals who were bad. If there were awful cops, I assumed that police forces would get rid of problematic officers who disgraced the badge. But I’ve notice that cops protect their own no matter how clearly wrong their fellow cop was and apply the use of force unevenly to different races. BLM protestors were beaten like animals for peaceful protests by the “good guys” and Trump

supporters raided the capitol with ease, beat cops with “Blue Lives Matter” flagpoles, killed a cop and then were escorted back to their hotel rooms by police after posing for selfies. A cop shot Tamir Rice, a child playing with a fake gun, in a drive by and no one got in trouble for that. Cops shoot and kill [B]black person after [B]black person with no consequences. People see them as heroes, but they see black men as criminals. And they kill criminals. This showed me that system isn’t corrupt, it was working as intended.

Here, this student was confronted with a new way of seeing a major institution shaping life in the United States, one which contradicted a lifetime of learning. Here, discomfort because a site of transformation; transformation of how one understands the coupling of powerful institutions with the processes of race and racism. Building practices which break down learned thoughts and behaviors is a necessity to antiracist practice, and discomfort opens a path towards that goal. Sitting with discomfort when reflecting on one’s own understanding of self and society is a first step in antiracist praxis. It begs us to reconsider how our lives were shaped, and what holes exist within our own knowledge. Antiracism is a process, not an end point. It requires constantly fighting against racist structures, practices, and policies as well as a turn inward towards facing how one’s own thinking and experiences have been shaped by racist formations (hooks 2003; Kendi 2019).

Student discomfort did not only stem from discussions we had in class. It scaled into the classroom from events happening in the world and institutions around us. Many such occurrences came out of our daily “airing of grievances.” Throughout the Fall 2021 semester there were multiple protests and incidences of hate at the university (Cherry 2021; Larlham 2021). In particular, students wanted to discuss an instance when students on campus had counterprotested against an anti-LGBTQIA+ hate group, which resulted in three UD students being arrested, and protests ignited by violent gendered and sexual assault on campus. For students, discomfort came from two sources. First, that incidences of violence and hate were possible on a campus they thought of as home. Second, that the university in both cases failed to act in ways the students felt necessary (See Thayer, *forthcoming*).

Instead of quickly turning to the days reading discussion, in response to these issues we instead sat with what was making us uncomfortable about the university’s response. Why did students find that lacking, and what did it tell them about the institution they were intimately embedded in? For some students it was a realization that the university they called home was not as caring or safe for all students. For others, it turned to anger, to a decision to begin engaging with the university more politically. These discomforts are moments to be seized, to sit with and be turned towards engagements that

realize the ways that race, gender, coloniality, and all axes of difference shape the institutions that in turn shape their lives.

This discussion arose multiple times throughout the semester, as students in the class engaged in a project working with diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) workers at the university. In the project, students explored their own research questions regarding DEI through conversations with DEI workers at the university. While undertaking this project, we also read through some of Sara Ahmed's (2017) work on institutional racism and barriers to diversity work. For students, as with the university responses to the protests incidents mentioned above, this became a site of discomfort as they more thoroughly questioned an institution that weighed heavily in their lives. Conversations eventually gave way from anger and discomfort to probing questions of what we can do differently, or what it would look like to be an equitable university. Discomfort gave space to reimagine a world that students wanted to live in.

These moments of discomfort also necessitated acts of care. Students needed to be given the space to express their discomfort, as it was clearly affecting their ability to engage in the classroom. Care here did not just come from me as the instructor. The class as a whole operated as a caring community through listening and remaining in dialogue with one another. This is not to say I was always successful in producing a caring space. Weekly students struggled with the level of readings they were given, with some reporting stress in their

weekly journal. Others expressed uncertainty about how to do their final project. Finally, students often felt drained by the information they were engaging with.

I was very surprised when I heard that 1 out of 3 [B]black men will go to jail at some point in their life. I can't quite remember the ratio for white men, I think it was something more like 1 in 20. Whatever the case may be, it was incredibly shocking to hear that so many [B]black men must go through something so indescribably cruel. I already knew that it's common for people of color to be targeted by the police, but it's still pretty sad to hear that so many of them are locked up, especially for the people that were falsely accused. This material is quite mentally draining for me. I am a highly sensitive and empathetic person, so this type of disturbing/violent content makes me very emotional. The documentary had lots of depressing images and videos, and sometimes seeing how horrible the world can be makes me feel hopeless that anything will ever get better. I feel like there's nothing I can do to help.

While discomfort is a powerful pedagogical approach, overbearing stress and hopelessness cross the line into allowing harmful relations to creep back into the classroom. I often tried to respond to this feedback by reducing the reading for a week, or having classroom discussions about what made the material so

challenging, academically and emotionally. While I feel that inroads were made, the regularity of this feedback suggests that I needed to further develop techniques of flexibility, attentiveness, and caring for my students to feel ready to participate in class each day. Tempering discomfort with care (Millner 2021) can make space for noticing assumptions we hold and the structures that may be invisible to us. It also can serve as a site of realizing our own habits and practices (Boler and Zemblyas 2003).

Student Practices

Something that personally challenged me this week was Kendi's definition of racism including a person who is inactive. I believe that I have been active in the fight of anti-racism in the past, but this challenged me to think about things that I do in my everyday life that potentially support racist policies etc. I will definitely be thinking about this more often!

Antiracism is a continual process of challenging racist structures in society and within ourselves. It requires constant self-reflection on our practices and daily habits, an endeavor which can be discomfoting. For students in class, many of the readings lead them to reconsider their own habits and practices, and to question exactly how engaged in combatting racism they were.

I've learned from the readings that it takes a lot to be an actual white co-conspirator in the black movement. Many white people claim to be, but are just allies in reality, which isn't bad, but actually using privilege to one's advantage and taking risks as protest is what more white people should be doing. I definitely didn't know the difference between co-conspirator and ally before this week, so those definitions have changed my mind on who I want to be. I want to be more active in movements and in everyday life, just by using my privilege when it's needed, without adopting a white savior complex.

For some students, our readings set into motion questions about their own commitment and responsibility to antiracist causes. Students, like the one quoted above, expressed a desire from moving from more passive forms of support to being active in social movements; finding a way to put their privilege to work as co-conspirators rather than just allies (Love 2019).

This reading honestly made me realize that I am not doing enough and that there is a lot to be done, especially in this institution. Since I've been in this school I think the most thing that I have done to combat UD diversity issue was educating those who are WILLING to be educated on their white privilege and how they can use it to combat racism. I am also a youth leader, so I help high school and middle school students prepare for college, I encourage people in my

community to apply to this kind of institution because many of them have told me that they feared of being excluded because it is a predominantly white institution, but the solution to that is not avoiding the institution and leaving it how it is, but instead challenge them and be put in a power of change. What better way to hold that power than being a student compared to an outsider. Though these are good works, there is a lot more that needs to be done, and this chapter definitely encouraged me to do so.

Discomfort can turn to action, to commitment. For students, noticing where they became discomforted through engaging with material that challenged their understandings was often not an end point. As shown above, for some students it urged them into wanting to change their practices, to become active. The classroom is a political space, and one in which we can foster activism and engagement with systems of power and privilege (hooks 1994; 2003; Gannon 2020). Further, discomfort, and the careful reflections that follow, can be a site for building antiracist praxis. It is a pathway for noticing our own biases, engagement, and habits which can either counteract or reproduce racism. Discomfort, when attended to care-fully, is a site for such growth for students and educators alike.

Discomfort Instructing

Students are not the only participants who experience discomforting moments in the classroom, nor should they be. Discomfort can arise from practicing vulnerability in

the classroom, challenging the hierarchy of instructor-student. It can come through interactions with students in and out of the classroom who are struggling. It can arise from our failings to remain attentive and caring in the classroom. Discomfort is a space where we can sit and grapple with our own practices in producing classroom spaces. To interrogate how we relate to students, and what we expect of them.

Here I want to sit with a particular discomfort – one that lingers with me to this day.

During one of our class sessions I had decided that as a class we would take a break from reading and discussing to watch a viewing of Ava DuVernay's *13th*. The documentary is an engaging and accessible view into how racism, enslavement, and constitutional law have shaped race relations in the United States, and, I had thought, would provide a good way to continue our conversations while giving the students a break from reading. However, one student in the class found the experience so discomfoting that we crossed into harm.

The day following the viewing was set to be a discussion of what they thought of the film, and what they had learned. Quickly, however, one student, one of the few Black students in the class, noted that they had felt uneasy since watching the film. Notably, from footage of a mourner being beaten on the way to view Emmett Till's body. They had found the footage challenging and difficult to engage with leading them to ask a powerful question: Where is the joy?

For that student viewing that film, and much of the reading we had done, was a reminder of how Black bodies have been treated since the founding of this country. It was not revelation, it was repetition. It was a failing of attentiveness to care, driven by a desire to educate on matters of race and racism that led me to let discomfort become harm. As a class we quickly decided to divert from our discussion of the movie and instead had a conversation about how students wanted to learn in the classroom, what content they wanted to be exposed to, and how we can change how they engage with content. In short, the discussion became a dialogue on my teaching practices and the students' desires. Some easy fixes were recommended, such as making all work that would show imagery optional so that students could choose whether to engage in potentially disturbing content. We also began each class by finding hopeful stories, news clippings, or articles we had encountered through the week that showed movement towards social justice, no matter how small. We also added a section on white allies and co-conspirators, and recommended engagements with the Black Joy Project (which we spent class time scrolling through together as a class). My idea with these shifts was to inject more hope and joy into the classroom. Without hope, what motivations are there to actively work against racism, ultimately building antiracist practice? I was not always successful. However, I suggest that dialogue with students about what material they want to see and have the emotional capacity to interact with, and on how students want to engage can comprise a caring practice that gets us closer to safely engaging with our discomforts.

As instructors we can learn a lot about ourselves and our practices by sitting with discomfort, and by remaining attentive to the discomfort of our students. Just as discomfort is a site of noticing for students in the classroom, it is a space from which we as instructors can reflect on our teaching practices, working towards antiracist praxis in the classroom.

Conclusion

To be discomforted is to be unsettled. This unsettling can push us towards new understandings and new practices, when attended to carefully. In the classroom, discomfort can become an important pedagogical space to think and act from (Boler and Zemblyas 2003). However, it needs to be approached with love and care, with attention and responsibility if harm is to be avoided (hooks 2003; Millner 2021; Newstead 2009).

Here, reflecting on classroom practices, my own experiences teaching a geographies of antiracism course, and student reflective journals, I trace the boundaries of discomfort and care in the classroom. I argue that discomfort is an important space for students and instructors alike in building antiracist praxis. It is a site of noticing from which we can challenge commonly held assumptions; realize unconscious patterns of thought; urge forward action and commitment; and, as instructors, respond to student needs and question our own practices in the classroom. In educational spaces discomfort must be a group project. If approached with care, it can be a space for

relations between students and educators to grow, and for learning to become transformative.

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Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

Care is a complex, messy process. In this dissertation, I followed how care was put to work in struggles surrounding race and racism in the United States through three separate scales: nationally, at the scale of the university, and within a single classroom. While each chapter follows its own case study, and makes individual contributions to different sets of literatures, taken as a whole through this dissertation I trouble care, pushing against normative framings that position care as a universal good. Care is as likely to be a transformative force as it is to reproduce violent systems. Care work, like DEI efforts in universities, can work towards producing spaces of belonging and support, but, when done without true commitments to change, can produce uncaring spaces. Often, care is described as a normative good; a process through which livable worlds are built and maintained, through which individuals are supported, and through which radical transformations to the ways we relate and live with one another can be achieved. However, this framing makes care singular and neat. As scholars we need to make care multiple and messy, also interrogating the unsavory aspects and outcomes of caring processes. We need to take into account the whole of what is produced through caring acts and relations, capturing how care rubs up against systems of violence and oppression. White supremacy, heteropatriarchy, colonialism, and imperialism are all systems built on care for some groups at the exclusion of others, and which continue to produce care for those same groups.

Similarly, caring acts can aid in the production of those same systems (See: Chapter 2). It is necessary, then, to always ask what and who is being cared for, and how do these forms of care impact other groups. In this dissertation I contribute to wider literatures on care by making it messy, highlighting the intertwining of caring and uncaring processes that shape the worlds in which we live. Sitting with the intersections of care/uncare not only furthers theoretical treatments of care and care ethics. If treated as a lens, a method, care in this view allows us to trace the energies, activities, and relations that build a complicated, messy world. In addition to this, each chapter contains interventions and contributions to scholarship on care, as well as literatures on white supremacy, diversity work, and pedagogical practice.

In Chapter 2, which follows the various forms of support given to Kenosha shooter Kyle Rittenhouse, I contribute to both literatures on care and geographic approaches to white supremacy by highlighting care's role in the ongoing production of white supremacy. In this chapter, I collected a wide variety of social media posts, information and comments from websites supporting Rittenhouse, articles written by conservative media, and statements made by politicians. This data painted a picture of a wide network of care which emerged in defense of Rittenhouse. Care came in the forms of individualized affective support, statements and affirmations made to defend Rittenhouse's character and public image. Further, care was seen in the resource flow (Atkinson et al. 2011) of financial support sent to aid Rittenhouse in his criminal defense. Finally, care took the form of future building, wherein politicians and political organizations worked to elevate Rittenhouse's image, positioning him as a

model citizen, to open the door for future aspirations. In this case, care was directed at Rittenhouse. This, however, cannot be divorced from the context within which care was taking place; one in which backlash against a racial and social justice movement, spurred forth by the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery, defined the actions taken by Rittenhouse and his supporters. Ultimately, in this chapter I argue that while care was being provisioned for Kyle Rittenhouse, another effect was produced. Care, in this instance, was part and parcel of the many processes which further the ongoing production of white supremacy in the United States. This contributes to the literature on care by linking care to the production of violent systems (See: Bartos 2020 for an example which traces through sexual violence), and to geographic work on white supremacy by interlinking care with the ongoing production of white supremacy.

In Chapter 3, I scale down to the university, using care to think through DEI efforts. DEI work is complex and difficult (Ahmed 2017). Existing literature focuses on the ways that universities have yet to live up to their promises of becoming more diverse, equitable, and inclusive. Ahmed (2017) in particular focuses on the ways that universities throw up road blocks to DEI work, and often appropriate the labor of DEI practitioners to say that work is being done without committing to change. In this dissertation I add to this literature through discussions of care's many roles in DEI work. First, I describe DEI as a scalar process in the university. DEI efforts move from upper administration down into the classroom, but disparate, disconnected efforts are also already underway at various scales across the university. Thinking through scale

and care, I argue that the scalar character of DEI, mixed with uncoordinated efforts across campus space, result in uneven caringscapes on campus, where some spaces are more diverse, more equitable, and more inclusive than others. Next, I draw on interview respondents descriptions of the type of work they are doing. In many instances, respondents noted that care was central to the DEI efforts they were engaged in. It was vital, as one respondent noted. Here, I argue that DEI work should be thought of as care work, which opens the door to ask what sorts of commitments and responsibilities does DEI as care entail. Finally, in this chapter, drawing on interview responses, I critique efforts taking place at the university scale. DEI practitioners at the University of Delaware pointed to feelings of frustration, even anger, with what was seen as a lack of commitment to DEI efforts on the part of the university as a whole. Many efforts taking place at this scale were seen as lip service, or what Ahmed (2006) describes as nonperformative. Frustration was not the only thing produced by these actions. Respondents noted that it cut against a sense of belonging, a sense of caring, at the university. From this I argue that nonperformative forms of care, such as DEI statements lacking any true commitment to change, produce uncaring campus spaces. In this chapter, I contribute to the wide literature on diversity in the academy by engaging it with scholarship on care, describing its scalar nature, and reframing it as care work. Further, I build on Ahmed's (2006) theory of nonperformativity, those actions and speech acts that do not produce that which they name, by arguing that nonperformative action, in a DEI context, produce uncaring space.

Finally, in Chapter 4 I turn to the classroom scale. Here I engage in literatures on discomfort, care, and critical pedagogies. Discomfort, as I note in the chapter, is a site of noticing; of examining where the boundaries of comfort intersect with hegemonic power relations (See: Eaves 2021; Eaves et al. 2023). In this chapter I join in nascent discussions of care and discomfort in the classroom (Millner 2021) by presenting an empirical investigation of student and instructor experiences with discomfort in a classroom space that was intended to be full of care. Student journal entries described moments where discomfort led students to reassess previously held ideas and beliefs about themselves and the institutions around them, as well as challenged students to make commitments to change their habits. For the instructor, discomfort became a site to reassess teaching practices to craft more care-full spaces. Adding to literatures on care-full and antiracist pedagogies, I argue in this chapter that coupling care and discomfort together so that students can safely engage in unsettling moments can help us to further antiracist practices in the classroom.

Taken together, through this dissertation I further current approaches to care in geography. While each case study represents a different aspect of how care is put to work within struggles around race and racism, ultimately this dissertation is aimed at troubling care (See: Naylor et al. 2020). The boundaries between caring and uncaring are fuzzy, and often interconnected. Caring acts can reproduce violence, just as they can help to ameliorate its effects. Efforts to care for individuals, such as through DEI work, can be transformative or can serve to maintain uncaring practices. There are tensions in caring relations that need to be teased out further; tensions which brush the

boundaries between violence and nurturing, transformation and maintenance, or even discomfort and ease. Care is a powerful process. It brings worlds into being, or helps to reproduce those which already exist, always undergirded by intersecting power relations.

As geographers, we should all be concerned with care, as it is a part of the foundation through which society, communities, institutions, and individuals are reproduced. We must also be careful in our approach to care, making sure to not always frame it as a normative good. Who is being cared for is a necessary question to ask when thinking through matters of care, but it is equally necessary for us to begin asking *what* is being cared for. What systems are we reproducing through care, even while challenging others. For the remainder of this chapter, I will turn towards discussing a few future directions for care research that have grown out of this work.

Future Directions

As noted before, care is messy and geographers need to continue to sit within the messiness of care. In this dissertation I highlighted how care can become embroiled in the production of violent systems (i.e. white supremacy). This work joins with Bartos' (2020) detailing of how Brock Turner, and in turn sexual violence, was cared for during the case of Jane Doe v Turner. There is much work to continue probing the intersections of care and violence in geographic research. How care operates as a form of violence is an important question that needs to be addressed further.

Simultaneously, we also need to think through the ways care can counteract violence (See: Till 2021 for an example of this). While I focused here on how far-right

supporters of Kyle Rittenhouse cared for him, and in effect reproduced white supremacy, questions remain on how care within social movements can work against structural violence, and acute moments of violence in protest. How is care networked and operationalized towards social justice, and in protests, and what effects does this produce is a productive avenue for care research moving forward.

Further, there is much more to be done thinking through care in DEI efforts, and in the university context more broadly. In this dissertation I sat with questions of how care is scaled within the university context, highlighting the unevenness of care provisioning it produces. There is space in this work to reach into further scales. The academy does not stop at the university. It is networked through professional organizations, publishing, and funding agencies. How care as DEI moves between institutions, crossing the boundaries of numerous scales, is a question I plan to pursue in future research. Further, how do different institutional contexts, such as the difference between work done at an R1 university and that done at a community college, shape caring relations as they relate to producing more equitable, inclusive spaces? Finally, while my research and the existing literature on DEI work point to the ineffectiveness, and often unwillingness, of universities to perform truly transformative DEI efforts, there is ample room for further investigations into care within the institution. What does a caring institution look like, and what work must be done to produce caring institutional relations represents a field for further engaging scholarship on care and DEI.

Additionally, while I thought through the usefulness of coupling care and discomfort in the classroom towards antiracist aims, there is more work to be done in classroom spaces regarding care. What practices can we adopt to begin creating caring collectives, involving students and instructors as co-producers of care, and how do we put this work into action towards producing more just futures? Further, it is always important to remember that student experiences do not end at the classroom door, nor does the “real world” fail to enter classroom spaces. How do we turn our courses into experimental spaces that reach out and affect the world outside of the classroom? Finally, I urge scholars to widen our approaches to care in order to capture its messiness. With every question of care we ask we need to attend to the unintended and unexpected consequences caring relations can bring into being. Care is a productive process, but it is bound up in historical legacies of enslavement and colonialism, and thoroughly interconnected with power relations and violence. Care can be transformative, and it is imperative that we adopt an ethic of care that is focused on producing more just and livable worlds for all people. However, we must not lose sight of the totality that caring relations produce.

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Appendix A

GEOG 467: GEOGRAPHIES OF EQUITY, INCLUSION, DIVERSITY, AND ANTIRACISM SYLLBUS (FALL 2021)

Instructor: Nathan Thayer (he/him), nthayer@udel.edu

Office Hours: TBD

Days/Time: T/TR, 9:30-10:45

Location: Pearson Hall 218

Course Syllabus

Course Description:

Historical legacies and present day realities of racism, whiteness, and white supremacy continue to shape the geographies in which we live. In this course we will learn geographic approaches for thinking through issues of race and racism, as well as antiracism and struggles for racial justice within the context of the United States. We will learn about the ways in which race and racism manifest, the processes and politics that fuel them, and the continual activism, work, and struggle towards racial justice and equality. As part of this process, we will be engaging in original research on grassroots antiracist efforts towards equity and inclusion within the University of Delaware.

Learning Objectives:

1. Be able to identify and critique spatial processes of race, racism, and white supremacy.
2. Develop and deploy a geographical lens to issues of race, racism, and white supremacy.
3. Learn how to collect, analyze, and report on qualitative data (original research).
4. Develop practices of critical self-reflection to think through one's positionality.

Assigned Readings:

There are no required books for this course. Assigned readings will be provided on the course canvas site. Readings will be due on the days indicated in the class schedule below.

Additionally, for most days there are supplemental, recommended readings. These are not essential for our discussions in class but will provide further depth on the topics of each day. Recommended readings can be found on canvas.

Assignments:

Discussion Sessions: 10%

Each week you will work in small groups to discuss readings from the week. At the beginning of each week you will be given three questions to think through prior to the discussion. Discussions will follow a think-pair-share model, meaning you will discuss the prompts (you are not limited to staying on just those topics) and then share a takeaway from your conversation with the group at large.

Reflexive Journaling: 20%

In this class you will be tasked with writing a weekly journal reflection based off the content discussed each week in class. You will be provided a prompt at the beginning of the week to get your writing started. Journal entries should include a brief discussion of the topics covered that week, how they challenged you (or not), and a reflection where you apply the concepts to your own life (or, at least what you have observed).

Small Group Project: Annotated Bibliography 30%

Working in groups, students will create an annotated bibliography focused on their topic area for the final research project. Each student is responsible for creating detailed annotations for three academic articles. As a group you will meet in class with the instructor to begin identifying relevant papers, and an example bibliography will be provided on canvas. In addition to the bibliography, the group (as a whole) will produce and hand in a short slideshow presentation that summarizes and synthesizes the ideas presented in the entire bibliography. You will not be responsible for presenting the presentation in class. Think of this as a more streamlined literature review that will prepare you for your final research project. Grading for this assignment is as follows:

1. Annotated bibliography (individually graded) 20%
2. Summary slide show (group graded) 10%

Antiracism in the Academy Group Project: 40%

In this class each of us will be performing original research on current efforts to combat racism and push the University of Delaware towards creating an inclusive, equitable campus. Working in groups, in this project you will interview current members of the University of Delaware Antiracism Initiative to glean the needs, challenges, and successes experienced during this project. Groups will choose from a list of subcommittees to recruit participants for semi-structured interviews, which will provide the data for your project.

Students will be broken into groups of (3), and will work together to write research questions, interview guides, and collect and analyze data. Data will be presented to the class as a presentation in the final week (final grade), with each student responsible for 1/3 of the material presented. Deliverables due for this project are:

1. Research questions (10%)
2. Mid-project update (short writeup, 2-3 pages) (15%)
3. Final presentation (15%)

Course Policies:

You are expected to do all readings prior to class on discussion days.

Respect: The classroom is a respectful space. We all bring a wealth of experiences and opinions to share, and as such it is expected that all of us give our full attention to whomever is speaking at the time – whether it is the instructor, a guest speaker, or a fellow student – by being present, listening, and not engaging in distracting behavior. Students will be given the chance to express their own opinions and understanding of course content freely.

Hateful, racist, and bigoted language will not be tolerated.

Lectures: Students are expected to attend all lectures and discussions. That being said, life can often get in the way and you may need to miss a day of class. Reach out to me via email or at my office hours to let me know.

Office Hours: **TBD***

Communication: Communication outside of class should be done through the message function on Canvas. Any communications sent via email may not be responded to quickly. All messages will be responded to within 24 hours of receiving them. Likely, you will get a response sooner than that, but you should be prepared to that it may take up to 24 hours to receive a response. Before you ask any questions regarding to the format of the class, expectations, due dates, and assignment details, make sure you thoroughly read through the syllabus and assignment instructions.

Academic Dishonesty: All students are bound to uphold the University’s Code of Conduct. Any instances of cheating, plagiarism, or other violations outline in the Code of Conduct will be taken seriously, will result in an automatic F (0 points) for the assignment, and will be reported.

Grades: Final grades will be based on the scale below

93% +	A	83-86.9%	B	73-76.9%	C	63-66.9%	D
90-92.9%	A -	80-82.9%	B -	70-72.9%	C-	60-62.9%	D -
87-89.9	B +	77-79.9%	C +	67-69.9%	D +	Below 60%	F

Support Resources:

Being a student at a university involves more than going to class, doing assignments, and getting grades. You are living, breathing members of a university community. Life can throw curveballs your way, and those complications can disrupt your studies, and/or simply cause distress. I am invested in your success in this class, and want to give some resources that you may need to support your studies here at UD.

1. If you need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability, please reach out to the UD Office of Disability Support Services to establish necessary accommodations you qualify for. See the Office of Disability Support Services’ [website](#) for more information.

	Tuesday	Constructing Race: Discussion: Di'Angelo (2018) and Veninga (2009) Group Work: Project 1
		Reading: Di'Angelo (2018) Racism and White Supremacy (in <i>White Fragility</i>) Veninga (2009) Fitting in: the embodied politics of race in Seattle's desegregated schools Recommended: Roberts (2011) Chapter 1 – The invention of race (in <i>Fatal Invention</i>)
Week 2	Thursday	Race and its Intersections: Discussion: Crenshaw (1989) and McKittrick (2006)
		Reading: Crenshaw (1989) Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex McKittrick (2006) The Last Place They Thought of: Black Women's Geographies (in <i>Demonic Grounds</i>) Recommended: Bailey (2014) Engendering space: Ballroom culture and the spatial practice of possibility in Detroit Crenshaw (2016) The urgency of intersectionality (TED talk)
	Tuesday	Geographies of Whiteness and Microaggressions: Discussion Joshi et al. (2015), Dwyer & Jones (2000) Group Work Project 1
		Reading: Joshi et al. (2015) Visceral Geographies of Whiteness and Invisible Microaggressions Dwyer & Jones (2000) White socio-spatial epistemology Recommended: hooks (2003) What Happens When White People Change? (<i>Teaching Community</i>)
Week 3	Thursday	Whiteness: Discussion: Kobayashi and Peake (2000) and Hoelscher (2008)
		Reading: Kobayashi and Peake (2000) Racism out of Place Hoelscher (2008) Making Place, Making Race: Performances of Whiteness in the Jim Crow South Recommended: Bonds & Inwood (2016) Beyond white privilege: Geographies of white supremacy and settler colonialism
Week 4	Tuesday	Race, Space, and Place: Discussion of McKittrick (2011) and Shabazz (2009) Group Work Project 1
		Reading: McKittrick (2011) On plantations, prisons, and a Black sense of place Shabazz (2009) "So high you can't get above it, so low you can't get under"

		it”
	Thursday	<p>Landscape and Memory: Discussion of Hannah (2008) and McFarland et al., (2019)</p> <p>Reading: Hanna (2008) A Slavery Museum? Race Memory and Landscape McFarland et al., (2019) "Take 'Em Down Hillsborough!": Race, Space, and the 2017 Struggle of Confederate Iconography...</p> <p>Recommended: Carter et al. (2014) The House That Story Built: The place of slaver in plantation museum narratives</p>
Week 5	Tuesday	<p>Doing Research: Discussion of Monk and Bedford (2016), and Dunn (2016) Group Work: Begin Project 2</p> <p>Reading: Monk and Bedford (2016) Writing a compelling research proposal (to page 106) Dunn (2016) Interviews</p>
	Thursday	<p>Interviewing: Group Activity: practicing interviewing Discussion of Dowling (2016) and Whitson (2017)</p> <p>Reading: Dowling (2016) Power, Subjectivity, and Ethics in Qualitative Research Whitson (2017) Painting Pictures of Ourselves: Researcher Subjectivity in the Practice of Feminist Reflexivity</p>
Week 6	Tuesday	<p>Film Viewing: 13th Project 1 Due</p> <p>Reading: Alexander (2012) Introduction (in <i>New Jim Crow</i>) Recommended Viewing: The Prison in 12 Landscapes</p>
	Thursday	<p>Discussion of 13th, Alexander 2012, Wacquant (2002), and Gilmore (2007) Group work: project 2 research</p> <p>Reading: Gilmore (2007) Introduction (in <i>Golden Gulag</i>) Wacquant (2002) From Slavery to Mass Incarceration</p>
Week 7	Tuesday	<p>Institutions, Inclusion, and the academy: Discussion of Kobayashi (2014), Faria et al (2019), and Ahmed (2017) Group Work: project 2 research Project 2 Research Questions Due</p>

		<p>Reading: Kobayashi (2014) The Dialectic of Race in Geography Faria et al. (2019) A Long Way to Go: Collective Paths to Racial Justice in Geography Ahmed (2017) Chapter 4 (in <i>Living a Feminist Life</i>)</p>
	Thursday	<p>Institutions: Discussion of Ahmed (2017) and Roberts (2011) Group meetings with instructor</p> <p>Reading: Roberts (2011) Medical Stereotyping (in <i>Fatal Invention</i>) Ahmed (2017) Chapter 6 (in <i>Living a Feminist Life</i>) Recommended: Dosemagen (2021) Science Needs to Face Up to Its Racist History</p>
Week 8	Tuesday	<p>Analyzing Data: Discussion of Cope (2016) and Cope (2010) Group Activity: Playing with data Group WorkL project 2 research</p> <p>Reading: Cope (2016) Organizing and Analyzing Qualitative Data Cope (2010) Coding Transcripts and Diaries</p>
	Thursday	<p>Environmental Racism: Discussion of Pulido (2000) and Wright (2018)</p> <p>Reading: Pulido (2000) Rethinking Environmental Racism Wright (2018) As Above, So Below: Anti-Black Violence as Environmental Racism Recommended: Holifield (2001) Defining Environmental Justice and Environmental Racism</p>
Week 9	Tuesday	<p>Racial Capitalism: Discussion of Bledsoe & Wright (2018) and Pulido (2016) Group Work: Project 2 research</p> <p>Reading: Bledsoe & Wright (2018) The anti-Blackness of global capital Pulido (2016) Flint, Environmental Racism, and Racial Capitalism Recommended: Ott (2014) Slaves: The capital that made capitalism</p>
	Thursday	<p>Wealth, Dispossession, Reparations: Discussion of Inwood et al. (2020), Coates (2014), and Ramirez (2020) Group Activity: Mapping Inequality</p>

		<p>Reading: Inwood et al. (2020) Racial Capital, Abolition, and a Geographical Argument for Reparations</p> <p>Coates (2014) The case for reparations</p> <p>Ramirez (2020) Take the houses back/take the land back: Black and Indigenous urban futures in Oakland</p> <p>Recommended: Lee (2019) A vast wealth gap... (1619 project)</p>
Week 10	Tuesday	<p>Seeds: Discussion of Carney (2013) and Reese (2019) Group Work: Project 2</p> <p>Mid-Term Project Report Due</p>
		<p>Reading: Carney (2013) Seeds of Memory Reese (2019) Introduction-Chapter 1 (in <i>Black Food Geographies</i>)</p> <p>Recommended: Harris (2011) Introduction-Chapter 2:Sea Changes (in <i>High on the Hog</i>)</p>
	Thursday	<p>The Food System: Discussion of Ramirez (2015) and Slocum (2007)</p>
		<p>Reading: Ramirez (2015) The Elusive Inclusive: Black Food Geographies and Racialized Food Spaces Slocum (2007) Whiteness, space and alternative food practice</p> <p>Recommended: McCutcheon (2015) Food, faith, and the everyday struggle for black urban community.</p>
Week 11	Tuesday	<p>Rights, Politics, and White Rage: Discussion: Nagel et al. (2015), Combahee River Collective Statement Group Work: Project 2</p> <p>Reading: Nagel et al. (2015) The Legacies of the U.S. Civil Rights Act, fifty years on Anderson (2016) How to Unelect a Black President & Afterword (in <i>White Rage</i>)</p> <p>Recommended: The Combahee River Collective Statement (1977)</p>
	Thursday	<p>Politics, organizing, and Resistance: Discussion of Keegan (2021), Joseph (2020), and Resistance (2021)</p>

		<p>Reading: Keegan (2021) "Black Workers Matter": Black labor geographies and uneven redevelopment in post-Katrina New Orleans</p> <p>Tyner (2007) Urban Revolutions and the Spaces of Black Radicalism (in <i>Black Geographies and the Politics of Place</i>)</p> <p>Resistance (2021) Geechee World Order (podcast)</p> <p>Recommended: Joseph (2020) What Black Joy Means, and why it's more important than ever.</p> <p>The Black Joy Project</p>
Week 12	Tuesday	<p>#BlackLivesMatter, digital activism and</p> <p>Discussion of Taylor (2016) and Garza (2017)</p> <p>Group Work: Project 2 research</p> <p>Reading: Taylor (2016) Black Lives Matter: A Movement, Not a Moment (in <i>From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation</i>)</p> <p>Garza (2017) "Not just what we dismantle but also what we hope to build"</p>
	Thursday	<p>Allies, Advocates, and co-conspirator:</p> <p>Short video: Bettina Love on allies v. co-conspirators</p> <p>Discussion: Jackson (2019), hooks (2003), and Penniman (2018)</p> <p>Reading: Jackson (2019) To promote true advocacy, don't be an ally: Be an Accomplice</p> <p>Hooks (2003) What Happens When White People Change (in <i>Teaching Community</i>)</p> <p>Penniman (2018) White People Uprooting Racism</p> <p>Recommended: Powell & Kelly (2017) Accomplices in the Academy in the Age of Black Lives Matter</p>
	THANKSGIVING BREAK - NO CLASSES	
	Tuesday	<p>Antiracism, geography, society:</p> <p>Final Discussion and reflection</p> <p>Group Work: finalize Projects, work on presentations</p> <p>No Reading</p>
Week 14	Thursday	<p>Group Work: Finalize Projects, work on presentations</p> <p>End of Term Survey</p> <p>NO READINGS</p>

Week 15	Tuesday	Final Presentations
	Thursday	Final Presentations

Appendix B

IRB



Institutional Review Board
210H HULLIHEN HALL
NEWARK, DE 19716
PHONE: 302-831-2137
FAX: 302-831-2828

DATE: October 27, 2021

TO: Nathan Thayer
FROM: University of Delaware IRB

STUDY TITLE: [1799177-1] Care-Full Work: Black Lives Matter, Care, and Antiracism

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: APPROVED

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 27, 2021

NEXT REPORT DUE: October 26, 2022

REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

REVIEW CATEGORY: Expedited review category # (6,7)

Thank you for your New Project submission to the University of Delaware Institutional Review Board (UD IRB). The UD IRB has reviewed and APPROVED the proposed research and submitted documents via Expedited Review in compliance with the pertinent federal regulations.

As the Principal Investigator for this study, you are responsible for, and agree that:

- All research must be conducted in accordance with the protocol and all other study forms as approved in this submission. Any revisions to the approved study procedures or documents must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to their implementation. Please use the UD amendment form to request the review of any changes to approved study procedures or documents.

- Informed consent is a process that must allow prospective participants sufficient opportunity to discuss and consider whether to participate. IRB-approved and stamped consent documents must be used when enrolling participants and a written copy shall be given to the person signing the informed consent form.
- Unanticipated problems, serious adverse events involving risk to participants, and all noncompliance issues must be reported to this office in a timely fashion according with the UD requirements for reportable events. All sponsor reporting requirements must also be followed.

The UD IRB REQUIRES the submission of a PROGRESS REPORT DUE ON October 26, 2022. A continuing review/progress report form must be submitted to the UD IRB at least 45 days prior to the due date to allow for the review of that report. If you have any questions, please contact the UD IRB Office at (302) 831-2137 or via email at hsrbresearch@udel.edu. Please include the study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

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