Q8 - Did the session meet you expectations?

Yes: 66.67% (12)  
No: 33.33% (6)

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The session exceeded my expectations. I wasn't sure how comfortable people would be discussing these issues. I thought there might be more guided questions, more things that Dr. Davies asked the group to think about or consider on our own. I appreciated Dr. Davies' insight and feedback but I found that the group dominated the conversation more than I would have liked. We spent nearly the whole meeting “sharing” and then with 15 minutes left, we finally were asked how this applies to our work. I wish more time had been spent turning it back on Queen's and how we can improve our practices.

I enjoyed the opportunity to hear from colleagues and consider how to position content from the book into our lives in Kingston/at Queen's.

It was great to see so much discussion, as I was afraid no one/not many people would want to speak up. I was also surprised that there was not much guidance to the discussion from the facilitator, which is good as it shows many employees were engaged in the book and didn't require a lot of prodding.

I really enjoyed the discussion and personal anecdotes, but I thought it could have been more time spent on discussion directed to the specific elements discussed in the book. Dr. Davies did a good job at trying to pull themes from individuals comments to direct conversation; however, without specific questions the conversation didn't delve as deeply as it could have into the issues raised in the book.

Great to hear everyone's insights and have a strong moderator who could connect those insights back to themes in the book.

I had hoped for more structured “discussion questions” rather than open forum about the book and the personal life experiences and reflections of colleagues. I also think smaller breakout groups may have been beneficial.

I enjoyed hearing from others based on their experiences and being able to share. I felt like it was a judgment free zone during that time.

I enjoyed listening to the people that wanted to speak about their thoughts on the book and their experiences.

it was an open dialogue

I was expecting more of a focus on the book itself, and it ended up being more of a "sharing of stories" from staff. (Which isn't a bad thing, but not what I expected.) The start with meditation also kicked things off in a surprising way.

-It was not facilitated by a person of colour -personal stories were shared that weren't particularly helpful, rather they reinforced white fragility -the actual book itself was not discussed, unpacking the author's content - rather it was again, personal stories -The moderator could have done a better job keeping us on topic as they do usually in book clubs

I didn't have any idea of how the discussion would progress and therefore it exceeding my expectations. Jacqueline was a wonderful moderator and I really enjoyed the introduction to bring everyone in a similar mindset before delving into the book. It spurred thought and conversation while motivating people to read the book. It was clear that the topic was fairly new to some people or presented from a new perspective - so having them read the book was impactful.

We didn't seem to delve into the messages of the book so much as personal experiences. Those have value of course, but we didn't explore them or the lessons in them. Also, it strikes me that by choosing this book, we were prioritizing whiteness. There was not a single member of the discussion group who was not white or white passing and I have to ask myself why.

I really enjoyed the discussion - thank you for facilitating!
Q2 - What single insight stays with you the most after reading the book White Fragility?

I continue to think about how I may have inadvertently, despite good intentions, caused others harm due to my own ignorance. We have to get comfortable being uncomfortable, our guilt, tears and fear are not productive or conducive to change.

The one concept that was new to me - White Women's Tears. How the fact that crying makes the victim turn around and have to comfort the woman who made the offensive comment/action/etc. I should take my processing and my discomfort out of the room, it is not anyone else's responsibility to comfort or address my feelings.

That anti-racism efforts and work promoting EDI are in some ways work that white people need to do themselves, obviously in cooperating and consultation with people from other races but also in ways that these conversations and efforts continue when people from other races are not present.

Diangelo's discussion on the good/bad binary.

I am much more aware of the micro aggressions that we are either the cause of or witness of in our everyday life.

The chapter on the good/bad binary.

The fact that being white is a race, and that the existence of racism does not mean racist acts.

It was a difficult read at first but shared very real experiences. I feel that the perspectives shared in the book were really good associations and relatable experiences that take place for others regularly.

that I need to do self-reflection about what makes me uncomfortable and how I center my whiteness

how much we are need to keep talking about this!

That intentions don't matter, it's impact that matters.

That racism exists whether or not we realize it; it is a systemic reality.

Recognition that as settlers, white supremacy, biases, racism and false truths are part of our narrative. It needs to be acknowledged, broken down and removed from white culture. The second point that stuck with me is the very different realities for Black people in everyday life. From the obvious - interactions with police, people in authority, perceptions and stereotypes and the fact that as white people we can still make their trauma and hurt 'about us.'

I am continually referring to Robin's comments on the traditional definition of racism. The idea that racism can occur without it being intentional is very powerful. In reading articles relating to racism people still argue that if it not intentional people can't be labelled as racist. This misnomer is something that needs to be discussed more broadly.

While most modern white people may be 'good' and not 'actively' racist - inaction and ignorance permit ongoing systemic and institutional oppression, violence, and white supremacy.

The irony of selecting and paying for a book by a White author when a number of books with similar content have been written by Black, Indigenous, and Asian authors. We need to interrogate whiteness, and we can choose to do that while supporting impacted communities and individuals.

I have a lot more work to do to be the best anti-racist ally I can be.
What did you find surprising? Challenging? Liberating? Hopeful?

For years I had thought and accepted that society has come such a long way in terms of race relations and racism. What has transpired over the last 4-5 years has made me realize my assumptions were wrong and I've been struggling with this. It's been hard to watch the news and make any sense of things. This book has helped me come to understand at this issue runs far deeper that I knew, that it has evolved, that my ignorance is real, and that we still have a lot of work to do.

I was surprised that Queen's decided to put their money toward a white author for the book club. However, I realize that this might be a more "palatable" intro to doing anti-racist work for many of the staff/faculty. I am glad to hear that there will be other books focused on that support authors of colour. It would also have been great if this session wasn't led by a white person, but I'm aware that this wasn't the initial plan for this session. I am hopeful that this will help change the culture at Queen's, to that of a more inclusive and considerate environment for all who work, study and play here.

One surprising/challenging feeling I had was during the mindfulness exercise that kicked off our session. (And I don't mean this to be overly critical, but I was surprised as the thought came to mind) As I looked at 40-50 Advancement staff with eyes closed getting in to the mindframe to discuss the book, I wondered if having the privilege and ability to take 90 (paid) minutes of their work days to discuss white fragility and our feelings about the book, was in of itself a racist activity? Is this type of activity an example of the kind of privilege white people (or rather, people working in certain sectors) have that other groups in other types of work wouldn't have the ability to do (which could correlate along racial lines)? I'm not fully sure how I would answer the question, and I very much enjoyed the session, but it's what first came to mind when you asked what I found surprising.

That addressing racism is a work in progress, that mistakes will happen while we try to change our society, but that's okay, as long as we learn and change ourselves.

The book highlights a number of challenges about how racism is embedded into society and our institutions. It is overwhelming to read and feel like you can make a difference but encouraging staff to read and participate in these sessions is a good way to take action.

I still feel challenged regarding what I can do differently. My perspective has changed however it will take more time to really understand how I am part of the problem and how I can do better.

I felt liberated sharing my experience about being identified by others and then determining where I belong.

I loved the opportunity to reflect on my thoughts and feelings and actions that we are talking about this and want to take action

That there are certain things I have done (sushing my child for commenting on someone's appearance) or saying I don't see race/color, that I'm not racist, that I thought were good things but really weren't. It was eye opening and caused a lot of thought

The discomfort is challenging; the fact that we are having these conversations makes me feel hopeful.

It is great that our leadership supports difficult and necessary topics. This was a first run, so having a book written by a Black author as the selection would be a very good next step.

The book was very eye-opening. While it challenged assumptions it wasn't challenging to understand or relate to the content. I found that it was liberating as it helped me understand myself culturally and review my acquired perceptions.

The author's downplaying or dismissiveness about intersectionality and economic systems was disappointing (and problematic) - though this was acknowledged somewhat in the forward by another author. This may also be limited by scope and the fact that the book originated as an article.

I'm really glad to see such a large number of advancement staff committed to the values of EDII. The poll answers were reassuring. The list of further readings to explore was great - I hope we'll be able to read Desmond Cole's essay/book! They have particular value to us here at Queen's because they address his time in Kingston as a Queen's student.
What did you find surprising? Challenging? Liberating? Hopeful?

I really enjoyed the opportunity to read the book and discuss it. I found it surprising how much I learned - I thought I knew it all, and this was a great wake-up call that there is still a lot more for me to do.
Q4 - Was there anything in particular that you had hoped would be covered or addressed at this session that wasn’t?

Was there anything in particular that you had hoped would be covered or add…

No

I wish more time had been spent on how this can apply to our work. We could have brainstormed and try to build off one another for ways that we can actually take action. Sharing is fine, but I’m not sure anyone left the session ready to make changes. We could have practiced calling each other in, or discussed safe language to address our colleagues when they have made a racist comment, etc. I would have liked tools on how I can safely address these things in my team/department/etc. and it would be great if teams knew that these comments will be addressed moving forward.

N/A - I had to leave with about 35 minutes left in the discussion due to the new Chancellor announcement so am not sure how the remainder of the conversation went.

It would have been nice to have more time to reflect on how we can apply what was learned from reading the book in our workplace.

No - I thought this was a great first session.

I would like to know more about how Black people view this book. Perhaps hearing from a black person that has read the book.

I joined late but really appreciated the fact that advancement was open to reading this book.

more time maybe and invitation for others who disagree with some of the book

I haven't really been to a book club before but i guess i was expecting more specific, directed questions. Maybe we would have gotten to more of that if time had allowed

More of a reflection of the book and tying that back to specific things (in the workplace, in the work we do).

The book

I would have liked to have the conversation move towards how we can take the learning from the book and apply them within our Queen's community. That said the book can uncover very personal emotional reactions and this may not have been the best forum.

Some more systemic/institutional thoughts of application of the learnings to Queen's Advancement. This may yet have a place at the end of the year's learning.

I hoped we'd be able to actually address the book in a more fulsome way. I wasn't expecting the group to be so large though, so I understand why that didn't happen.

Not that I can think of.
Do you have any recommendations for improvements for future book talks?

Not that I can think of. I really appreciated this session. I've been reading "how to be an anti-racist", and good as it is, I've been struggling through it. The density of the material has required me to step back frequently in order to process it thoroughly. White fragility I found more accessible, which I suspect works best for a book club format.

It would be great if people could send their "sharing" pieces ahead of time, so not to take time in front of the group. Or if we could submit after the fact and people can view the webpage/teams group etc. to share/discuss/etc. I was too nervous to speak in front of that large of a group, so maybe submitting via writing, or perhaps having smaller discussion groups? I appreciate that this was the first step in our conversation so I'm glad that it took place. I look forward to the next iteration.

A chance to speak in smaller groups might be nice, as it is hard to have a virtual discussion with so many people. Although these could also be organized by each smaller team if there is enough interest. Another possibility would be to have a MS Teams page for discussing the book for individuals who didn't get the chance to speak or who didn't want to speak during the session.

A balance in the meeting between allowing participants an open floor to share their thoughts/feelings/anecdotes and then focused time discussing specific themes or issues would ensure a broader scope of the book is discussed.

If we split the group into breakout rooms it might encourage more people to share their insights.

Smaller groups and perhaps Queen's wide. It can feel awkward to speak about these topics with colleagues that you are close with - a group of strangers might actually be easier.

I like having discussions about relevant topics that aren't part of our everyday work but can be integrated.

na

It would have been good to have more time to chat. The mindful exercise seemed to take up a lot of time and i would say we should remove that element going forward.

Less meditation, more book focus.

-two moderators -POC author -keeping to the content of the book and not trying to make ourselves feel better by sharing our stories

Not at this time.

This was a great first session and a wonderful initiative. It was a fairly big crowd for a book discussion - but there was still good participation.

Smaller group discussions or breakout rooms. We have a number of staff who are former anti-oppression trainers, and we could engage them along with the moderator to lead smaller groups in deeper discussions than you can achieve as a large group.

No - really enjoyed the session!

End of Report