THE AIR WE BREATHE: HOW WHITENESS PERMEATES RACIAL EQUITY EFFORTS IN SUBURBAN SCHOOLS

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of

Antioch University

In partial fulfillment for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

by

Bailey Elizabeth Tighe

ORCID Scholar No. 0009-0005-8584-9146

April 2025

THE AIR WE BREATHE: HOW WHITENESS PERMEATES RACIAL EQUITY EFFORTS IN SUBURBAN SCHOOLS

This dissertation, by Bailey Tighe, has
been approved by the committee members signed below
who recommend that it be accepted by the faculty of
Antioch University
in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Dissertation Committee:

Dr. Emiliano Gonzalez, EdD, Chairperson

Dr. Cristy Sugarman, EdD

Dr. Gary Delonoye, EdD

ABSTRACT

THE AIR WE BREATHE: HOW WHITENESS PERMEATES RACIAL EQUITY EFFORTS IN SUBURBAN SCHOOLS

Bailey Tighe

Antioch University

Yellow Springs, OH

This critical ethnographic study examines how white culture influences educators' perceptions of their participation in racial equity work in a predominantly white, suburban Massachusetts public school district. This research explored five educators' experiences through Critical Race, Critical Whiteness, and White Supremacy Culture Frameworks. The study extends CWS by illuminating how white cultural norms operate within institutional contexts, revealing patterns through which racial equity work is neutralized. The study found that superficial equity initiatives, color-evasive language, and prioritizing white comfort over substantive transformation all actively perpetuate inequity. Recommendations directly address these findings: developing comprehensive professional development that explicitly names whiteness and its impacts; creating equity leadership roles with decision-making authority to counter bureaucratic resistance; and implementing systematic approaches to policy review that challenge white cultural dominance. This research contributes insights into how white cultural norms operate within educational institutions, informing more effective approaches to institutional transformation. This dissertation is available in open access at AURA (https://aura.antioch.edu) and OhioLINK ETD Center (https://etd.ohiolink.edu).

Keywords: racial equity, white culture, K-12 education, suburban schools, critical ethnography, educator perspectives, culturally relevant pedagogy, predominantly white institutions, whiteness, public education

Dedication

To Sherayna and Javon: your voices opened my eyes to my complicity in racial oppression. You inspired me to commit to creating more equitable environments for all marginalized students.

Thank you for your courage and guidance.

"Washing one's hands of the conflict between the powerful and the powerless means to side with the powerful, not to be neutral." From Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed, *1970*

Acknowledgments

This dissertation would not have been possible without the love and support of so many. First, to my children, Finn and Brooks: thank you for your patience and understanding when work took me away from playtime. Your joy, resilience, and graciousness kept me going. To my husband, Caleb: your unwavering support and belief in me have been my anchor. You've always reminded me that I can do hard things, and I'm forever grateful for your love and encouragement. To my parents: thank you for being my biggest cheerleaders, always believing in me and supporting me every step of the way. To the rest of my family, your constant support has been a source of strength throughout this journey. I am also deeply grateful to my committee chair, Dr. Emiliano Gonzalez, for your guidance and support throughout this program. My sincere thanks also go to my committee members, Dr. Gary Delanoeye and Dr. Cristy Sugarman. Finally, I want to acknowledge all my students—past, present, and future—who have shaped my journey as an educator and inspired this work.

Table of Contents

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Problem of Statement/Background

The fight for racial equity in the American education system has been an ongoing struggle marked by countless reforms and initiatives. While some progress has been made since the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* ruling (*Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka,* 1954; Center for Educational Policy Analysis, 2015; Lee, 2022; Rothschild & Scovronick, 2006), the state of racial equity in suburban Massachusetts K-12 public schools remains unresolved and problematic (Chen et al., 2021; Kahlenberg, 2021; Lazar, 2017). This dissertation looks at how unexamined white culture, or the unconscious perpetuation of white cultural norms and racial ignorance without critical self-awareness or examination of one's racial identity and its impact on educational spaces, affects teachers working on combating racial equity in suburban schools (Cabrera & Corces-Zimmerman, 2017). To do so, this research covers the historical context of the issue, the prevailing challenges, and the overarching significance of this study.

Suburban Massachusetts, often seen as a haven of privilege and homogeneity, offers a unique backdrop for examining racial equity efforts within K-12 public schools as the student demographics in many areas are shifting, but the teacher demographics are mostly stagnant (Middleton, 2023; Schneider et al., 2020). There is a profound need to close gaps in educational outcomes for students of minoritized racial backgrounds. These demographic incongruities between students and teachers have helped highlight these educational gaps, which are detrimental both to individual students and American society because they perpetuate systemic inequities, which weakens the foundations of American society (Karumbaiah & Brooks, 2021; Payne, 1984; Yosso, 2005). Understanding how white culture influences educators' engagement

in racial equity work is not just an academic exercise, but also a practical imperative to create inclusive and equitable learning environments.

Relationship to Topic

As a doctoral student, I stand at the intersection of practitioner and scholar, driven by profound personal and professional commitments to exploring racial equity in education. The question of racial equity within the context of suburban Massachusetts K-12 public schools holds both immense importance and personal resonance. My journey into education has been shaped by my experiences as a white woman navigating predominantly white school systems throughout my academic and professional life. I was educated in a setting reflecting a significant lack of diversity among the student bodies and teaching staff. This lack of diversity extended into the curriculum and broader school culture, creating an environment in which issues of racial equity were non-existent.

I was ignorant of the continued presence of racism in our society, so as an educator, I struggled when these issues landed in my classroom. Fortunately, I had the opportunity to teach and learn from a brilliant Black student who introduced me to the racism she experienced daily in our community, school, and even in my well-meaning classroom. Her experiences in my classroom pushed me to research and learn more about how my whiteness shows up in spaces, how White Supremacy Culture (WSC) is at the heart of traditional education (Jones & Okun, 2001), and how, as a white educator, I have a responsibility to do everything I can to best serve all my students. My subsequent research has allowed me to advocate in my workplace and other public education spaces while actively and continuously working towards becoming an increasingly anti-racist educator and leader.

Over the years, I have witnessed the persistence of these inequities within numerous school districts of southeastern Massachusetts. Despite well-intentioned efforts, the landscape of racial inequity in public education remains stagnant. Students of color continue to face academic challenges and subtle, yet insidious, aspects of the hidden curriculum, or the unspoken expectations around behavior, communication styles, and cultural norms that favor dominant middle-class values (Smith, 2014). These are values that are never explicitly taught to students, and it is disheartening to see students punished socially, emotionally, and academically for not accessing the covert curriculum, which often operates under the radar of official policies and guidelines (De Lissovoy, 2012; Gusa, 2010; Smith, 2014).

One of the most troubling aspects of persistent racial inequity in our schools is the tendency I have observed to treat racialized incidents as isolated occurrences rather than systemic problems if they are addressed at all (Costello & Dillard, 2019; Pulido, 2015). This approach fails to address the root causes of racial inequity and perpetuates a cycle of injustice. As a practitioner, it is a cycle I find deeply troubling and unacceptable. My interest in this research goes beyond academia's confines; it reflects my desire to make meaningful changes within the education system. I am passionate about understanding why well-intentioned individuals, like me and many of my colleagues, often fall short in making the necessary improvements to the school system. It is this passion driving me to uncover the barriers, both conscious and subconscious, hindering progress towards racial equity.

At the core of my inquiry is the recognition that whiteness, a culture deeply ingrained in the educational system, plays a significant role in perpetuating these barriers (Gusa, 2010). Tatum (2001) notes:

> In a race-conscious society, the development of a positive sense of racial/ethnic identity not based on assumed superiority or inferiority is an important task for *both* white people and people of color. The development of this positive identity is a lifelong process that often requires *unlearning the misinformation and stereotypes* [italics added] we have internalized not only about others, but also about ourselves. (p.53)

I aim to explore how the unexamined white culture in predominantly white public school settings influences educators' perceptions, actions, and inactions regarding racial equity. By bringing these dynamics to light, I believe we can pave the way for more effective strategies to dismantle systemic inequities. My exploration of this topic as a doctoral student is grounded in a firm commitment to bridging the chasm between good intentions and meaningful action. My experience as a white woman in a predominantly white school district has fueled my determination to understand and address the complex issues of racial equity within the educational system. This research is not just an academic endeavor, but a deeply personal and professional journey towards creating more equitable and inclusive learning environments for all students.

My presence in educational equity work has the potential to perpetuate racial harm, which is crucial to explicitly acknowledge. As a member of the white community, I am aware I will and do unintentionally contribute to the systemic inequalities faced by people of color (Milner, 2007; Tillman, 2002). I must confront this uncomfortable reality as I continue this project. It is essential to recognize this dissertation embodies an indirect understanding of the profound realities of racism, inherently limited by my perspective as a white individual (DiAngelo, 2021; Milner, 2007). Engaging with critical whiteness studies (Jupp & Lensmire, 2016; Roediger, 2001) and whiteness in education more explicitly, I center the ongoing realities of White supremacy and recognize the responsibility of white educators to actively work against systems of oppression, including White supremacy (Casey, 2022). This recognition is not merely theoretical; it must result in a material commitment to social justice, informed by a focus on

structural oppressions (Casey, 2022). When delving into the complexities and injustices of racism, I do so with the awareness my knowledge is predominantly observational and thus intellectualized, lacking the insights which would arise from personal experience.

Within the confines of this work, I remain assured in my commitment to explore and expose the potential for increased dedication and responsibility among white educators in the realm of racial equity within educational institutions. Drawing from my firsthand experience as a teacher actively engaged in racial equity work in education, I aim to offer insights and perspectives geared towards nurturing a more inclusive and just educational environment. As white individuals, we must cultivate righteousness and collectively contribute to a more equitable society rather than relying on people of color to educate us about our inherent biases (DiAngelo, 2021). By examining the systemic barriers and individual practices that perpetuate inequity, this research seeks to highlight pathways for meaningful institutional transformation and personal accountability in educational settings.

Research Question

The research question guiding this study is as follows: How does white culture influence some educators' perceived participation, roles, and impacts within Edgewood Public Schools, a suburban Massachusetts K-12 public school-based racial equity work? This question explores how white culture, deeply entrenched in the fabric of educational institutions, shapes educators' engagement in efforts to advance racial equity within suburban Massachusetts K-12 public schools.

In this study, “white culture” refers to the dominant cultural norms, values, and ideologies historically associated with white individuals and perpetuating systems of privilege and oppression (Leonardo, 2004). White culture encompasses societal norms shaping the

behaviors, attitudes, and perspectives of individuals traditionally of European descent (NEA Center for Social Justice, 2020). It often includes an emphasis on individualism, Eurocentric worldviews, and the normalization of whiteness as the standard by which all other cultures are measured (Brookfield & Hess, 2021; Bucholtz, 2011; Brodkin, as cited in Green et al., 2007). White culture is examined within the context of white supremacy, a systemic and structural framework which upholds and maintains the dominance of white individuals and their cultural norms (Jones, 1974; Kendi, 2016; Ture & Hamilton, 1992). White supremacy perpetuates racial hierarchies, discrimination, and marginalization of communities of color.

Purpose Statement

This study aims to illuminate the landscape of racial equity work in some predominantly white suburban K-12 public schools in Massachusetts. By drawing upon critical insights from existing literature, the goal of the study is to unpack how white educators perceive and report their participation, roles, and impacts in these initiatives (Brookfield & Hess, 2021; Daniels & Varghese, 2020; Eaton, 2020; Ladson-Billings, 2014). This study explores how the historical context of racial segregation, exemplified by the Boston Busing Crisis and the ongoing challenges of hypersegregation (Eaton, 2020; Ispa-Landa, 2013; Kahlenberg, 2021), has shaped how educators perceive and report their participation, roles, and impact in suburban schools seeking to address racial inequities. This study also explores the impacts of these approaches to racial equity work: color blindness, culturally relevant pedagogy, and informal teacher leadership. The study acknowledges challenges faced by BIPOC educators in predominantly white educational settings as they navigate stakeholder dynamics and resistance to discussions about race (Cormier et al., 2022; Dixon et al., 2019; King, 2016; Schmidt et al., 2022).

By analyzing the interplay between educational institutions, historical legacies, and individuals engaged in racial equity work, this study aims to shed light on the perceived and reported outcomes and impacts of racial equity work in public education. I am particularly interested in examining white educators' perceived and reported participation, roles, and impacts within this context. By doing so, I aim to provide insights to inform sustainable and practical approaches to dismantling systemic inequalities in K-12 education (Adams & Love, 2010; Cheesman, 2022; Radd & Grosland, 2019;). Ultimately, this research aspires to contribute to the ongoing discourse on racial equity in education and to inspire transformative change in suburban Massachusetts schools.

Potential Significance of this Study

This research holds profound significance due to its dual focus on addressing persistent racial disparities in predominantly white suburban areas and providing essential insights for educational leaders to make informed decisions regarding racial equity initiatives. First, this study addresses persistent racial disparities in educational outcomes, particularly in some predominantly white suburban areas like suburban Massachusetts (Lee, 2004). While research has focused on equity work in urban settings (Bryan et al., 2020; Obiakor & Beachum, 2005; Safir & Dugan, 2021; Sleeter, 2015), the implications of racial inequities in suburban educational settings require further study (Adams & Love, 2010; Cheesman, 2022; Milner, 2007). Despite efforts to tackle these disparities, they remain deeply entrenched, impacting the lives of countless students. This study offers a unique opportunity to understand how these inequities manifest in suburban educational settings. Secondly, effective educational leadership necessitates a deep understanding of racial equity complexities. By examining how white educators in particular suburban contexts perceive their roles in racial equity initiatives, this study can provide school

administrators, educators, and stakeholders with the insights necessary for informed decision making.

This study seeks to promote transformative change in some suburban Massachusetts' K-12 public education systems by seeking to uncover the barriers hindering racial progress. I focus on the enduring impact of historical housing segregation, discriminatory lending practices, and intricate dynamics of busing programs (Corporate Finance Institute, 2022; Eaton, 2020; Rothstein, 2018). These findings are crucial for dismantling systemic inequalities and advancing racial parity. Understanding the experiences of educators within predominantly white schools is key to refining educational practice and developing more inclusive, culturally relevant pedagogy. Additionally, this study's implications could influence teacher-preparation programs. Aspiring educators need to be equipped with the knowledge and skills to navigate complex racial dynamics in the classroom, making the findings of this research instrumental in advocating anti-racist pedagogy and cultural competence training.

This study also pays attention to the historical struggles for educational equity programs in Massachusetts by acknowledging their impact on the present educational landscape (Eaton, 2020; Johnson, 2011; Reber, 2010; Ware & Ware, 1995). These historical patterns of segregation, which extend beyond educational institutions to encompass systemic housing discrimination, have created deeply entrenched barriers to equity that continue to shape educational opportunities today. Recognizing this history is vital for steering future efforts towards more significant equity and inclusivity. It is essential to note, while this study focuses on some predominantly white suburban areas in Massachusetts, its findings may hold national relevance to similar communities. Racial disparities, particularly in educational spaces, are not

unique solely to Massachusetts, and the insights gained here may inform efforts to combat similar issues in similar suburban areas within the United States.

In summary, this study seeks to unravel the complex tapestry of racial equity work in Massachusetts K-12 public schools, providing invaluable insights into educators' perceptions, challenges, and opportunities. It aspires to spark transformative change, inform educational practices, and honor the legacy of those who have fought for educational equity. Ultimately, this study aims to understand the status quo, then shape a more equitable and inclusive future for all students.

Researcher Assumptions

Several assumptions underpin my research in the pursuit of understanding the dynamics of racial equity within predominantly white suburban schools. White educators may unknowingly harbor implicit biases within these educational settings, a premise supported by existing scholarship (Devine, 1989; Greenwald & Krieger, 2006). Additionally, white educators may exhibit varying degrees of awareness of their privileges. Their awareness is critical to the broader discourse on racial equity in education (McIntosh, 1989; Sleeter, 2018). The discomfort experienced by white educators in conversations about race may be an avenue for exploration, acknowledging conversations surrounding wider discussions of racial issues (DiAngelo, 2018; Kay, 2023; Sue et al., 2009). Furthermore, historical events such as the Boston Busing Crisis may continue to influence the contemporary racial dynamics of these schools (Orfield & Eaton, 1996). I surmise historical factors, such as discriminatory housing practices, continue to shape the racial composition of schools within suburban regions, necessitating an examination of the historical context of racial segregation (Rothstein, 2018; Sugrue, 2008).

This study also anticipates differing perspectives on racial equity initiatives between white educators and their BIPOC counterparts, reflecting the multifaceted nature of this discourse (Ladson-Billings, 2006a; Milner, 2007). Moreover, white educators actively engaging in anti-racist efforts may hold distinct viewpoints compared to their less-engaged peers, potentially offering valuable insights into practical strategies for addressing racial disparities (Kendi 2019; Picower 2009). In line with contextual considerations, this study assumes the experiences and perspectives of white educators within predominantly white suburban schools differ significantly from those in more diverse urban settings (Lareau, 2018; Oakes, 2005). Furthermore, the receptiveness of white educators to cultural competence training and anti-racist pedagogy will vary, potentially leaving nuances in their willingness to adapt to evolving educational paradigms (Howard, 2016; Sleeter, 2012). All of the above-mentioned assumptions collectively provide the foundation for this study, offering potential insights into the landscape of racial equity within predominantly white suburban schools.

Limitations, Delimitations

My dissertation is underpinned by a commitment to provide a nuanced understanding of racial equity within predominantly white suburban schools through the lens of critical ethnographic narratives. The chosen methodology involves data collection techniques, including interviews, observations, and document reviews. However, it is vital to recognize the limitations and delimitations inherent in these methodologies, which shape the boundaries of the study and influence the generalizability of its findings.

Limitations

This study contends with a significant constraint on the sample size. I have centered my research on a relatively small sample of predominantly white suburban educators within a small

number of school systems in suburban Massachusetts. While this sample offers valuable insights, their views may differ from the broader educational landscape. A significant limitation of this study is the difficulty in gaining access to predominantly white school districts for data collection. Several districts were unwilling to participate in this research, which limited the potential pool of participants and the diversity of perspectives within the study. For instance, one district superintendent declined participation by stating, "Your research is not something we will move forward with. I support your interest, but we conducted an Equity Audit a couple of years ago and we delve into this. In fact, we created an Equity Strategic Plan based on our findings" (personal communication). Despite my explanation of how this study could complement their ongoing efforts, their response suggested a perception that their work in this area was complete. This attitude points to a potential sense of finality around racial equity efforts, where previous initiatives are seen as fulfilling the need for continued inquiry or self-reflection. Such responses shaped the final sample, resulting in a narrower focus on those districts and educators who were willing to engage in conversations about racial equity. This reluctance to participate may reflect broader discomfort or sensitivity around discussions of race and equity within these communities, which could have implications for the findings of this study (Bonilla-Silva, 2018; DiAngelo, 2018; Kay, 2023). The limitation restricts the study's capacity to represent the experiences of a wider range of predominantly white school districts.

The regional specificity of this study is another crucial limitation. This research is focused explicitly on Edgewood, Massachusetts Public Schools (pseudonym), which is characterized by the town's unique historical, socio-economic, and demographic attributes. This concentration means the findings may not be generalizable to all states or regions with distinct educational environments and racial dynamics. Research on racial equity can touch on sensitive

subjects, and educators' readiness to engage with these topics can vary considerably. This variance in willingness to participate introduces potential selection bias, which may affect the representativeness of the sample and, consequently, influence research outcomes.

Another limitation of this research is related to participant self-selection and potential response bias. Following district approval, participant recruitment relied on an invitation extended to all educators and paraprofessionals interested in racial equity work across Edgewood Public Schools. This approach inevitably attracted those who already possessed some interest in or commitment to racial equity work, potentially excluding educators with different perspectives or those uncomfortable discussing race. The voluntary nature of participation created a selection bias toward individuals willing to engage in potentially sensitive discussions about race and equity. Of the seven educators who initially responded, two withdrew before data collection began—one citing time constraints and another becoming unresponsive after multiple rescheduling attempts. These withdrawn participants may have represented different viewpoints that remain uncaptured in the findings.

Social desirability bias likely influenced how participants presented their experiences and perspectives during interviews. Given the nature of discussing racial equity in predominantly white spaces, participants may have consciously or unconsciously shaped their responses to align with what they perceived as socially acceptable views. This effect could have been amplified by participants' awareness of my dual role as both researcher and fellow educator engaged in racial equity work.

While strategies were employed to mitigate these biases, they remain inherent limitations of research on socially sensitive topics. Response biases must be considered when interpreting

the findings, as they may present a more favorable picture of educators' racial consciousness and equity engagement than might exist in unobserved contexts.

Delimitations

The study focuses on a predominantly white suburban public school district in Massachusetts. Rather than selecting a more racially diverse urban district or conducting a comparative study across multiple districts with varying demographics, I intentionally centered my research in a context where white cultural norms would likely be most embedded and normalized. This choice aligned with my research question's focus as well. While this decision limited the representation of diverse perspectives, it provided the opportunity for an in-depth examination of dynamics in settings where white cultural dominance might operate without explicit recognition. The setting in Edgewood offered an appropriate context for investigating how whiteness shapes institutional practices and professional identities in ways that might remain unexamined in more diverse settings.

The chosen methodology—interviews, observations, and document reviews—would be another delimitation. As Gournelos et al. (2019) note, ethnographic research is inherently influenced by the perspective and perception of the researcher, as well as by social desirability bias. Attribution bias can also arise, where the researcher might unconsciously assign positive attributes to those who are relatable and negative attributes to those who seem different. Such biases can distort interpretations, attributing characteristics to cultures or identities rather than understanding them within the context of specific situations (Gournelos et al., 2019). This potential for bias must be acknowledged, as it may affect how the research findings are framed and understood. Document reviews may provide valuable context but are limited by the availability and selection of relevant materials, which can further shape the study's findings.

My study intentionally centered on examining white cultural dynamics in racial equity work rather than investigating other potentially relevant factors. This focus informed my research questions, interview protocols, and analytical frameworks, deliberately placing other variables such as socioeconomic influences, policy constraints, or pedagogical approaches outside the primary scope of analysis. By operationalizing white culture as the pervasive, often unspoken set of norms, values, and ideologies historically linked with white individuals, I made a conscious choice to employ specific theoretical frameworks. This deliberate focus allowed for depth in exploring specific dynamics but excluded other potentially valuable perspectives on educational equity that might have emerged from different theoretical orientations.

The study specifically examined dynamics within a suburban Massachusetts K-12 public school district, intentionally excluding other educational contexts. The findings may not capture the different dynamics that might exist in urban or rural educational settings, where different demographic compositions, resources, and histories might shape racial equity work in distinct ways. This boundary was established to maintain coherence in analyzing institutional structures specific to public education rather than attempting to address the broader educational landscape.

The research was deliberately conducted in the fall of 2024, capturing a specific moment in Edgewood Public Schools' equity journey. This timeframe coincided with work in the professional development calendar, allowing for observation of equity-focused sessions, but also meant the study captured only a snapshot of ongoing developments rather than longitudinal changes. The decision to conduct a time-bound study rather than a multi-year investigation limited the ability to track evolution in educators' understanding and practices but allowed for focused analysis of current conditions. This temporal boundary reflected practical constraints but

also served the research purpose of examining present manifestations of white culture rather than attempting to document institutional change processes over time.

These limitations and delimitations are integral to this study, framing its context and shaping its boundaries within the realm of critical ethnographic narratives. While they impose constraints on the research, they do not diminish its value within the specific scope defined by the study. Instead, they underscore the need for future research endeavors with more extensive and diverse samples encompassing broader regions, addressing potential participation challenges and further exploring the nuances of critical ethnographic narratives to provide a more comprehensive understanding of racial equity in education.

Definition of Terms

Note on Language and Capitalization

In this dissertation, the topic of whiteness will be covered extensively; however, there is significantly less focus on defining and placing Blackness in the same context. This is because of the historic nature of racism in the United States. The blood fraction laws of the early 18th century have more commonly become known as "one-drop" laws designating anyone with a certain percentage of ancestry as Negro or Black (Cooper, 2008). Although the notion of the one-drop classification is two centuries old, some scholars maintain the doctrine continues to impact socialization today (Spencer, 1997). Beyond this, “Black” frequently suggests a shared community and sense of identity. Historically, it has connected people of African descent and has come to replace more dated words such as Negro (Laws, 2020).

However, there is a minor classification and less of a shared sense of community or identity regarding whiteness. In fact, until relatively recently, most white people in the United States did not racialize themselves or see themselves as white, and many still do not. Instead,

white people frequently list a series of percentages associated with nationality, placing them within the hierarchy of European ancestry (DiAngelo, 2021; Painter, 2020). Until recently, only those who self-identified as white supremacists would have put themselves into the racial category of whiteness. As a result, many white people experience discomfort when racialized as white (Painter 2020). Defining what constitutes white and whiteness is essential, because white people in the United States are just beginning their journey to understand what it means to be white.

Whether to capitalize "black" or “white" is an unsettled issue in the field; however, for this paper, I will capitalize Black. I will not capitalize white in order to disrupt the traditional racial hierarchy of "white" over "black" because language is not neutral; it is inherently political, and capitalizing "Black" is a political choice (DiAngelo, 2021). Although this is an unsettled issue, many corporations have taken a stand on why they make their own stylistic choices with regards to capitalizing Black. The Associated Press, PBS, and the *New York Times* have all come out in favor of capitalizing the B in "Black" and outline a variety of defenses. The vice president of standards for The Associated Press wrote the change recognizes "an essential and shared sense of history, identity and community among people who identify as Black, including those in the African diaspora and within Africa" (Daniszewski, 2020). PBS also claims such capitalization makes their reporting "more inclusive, fair, and accurate," while the *New York Times* claims it "better reflect[s] a shared cultural identity (Apperson, 2020; Coleman, 2020). While this argument regarding capitalization of Black took root recently due to racial unrest in the summer of 2020, it is not new. When advocating for a change from the lowercase "n" in "negro," W. E. B. Du Bois commented, "eight million people are entitled to a capital letter," and some have claimed the capitalization of the letter B in Black is tantamount to social capital (Appiah, 2020).

In recognition of the need for social capital, I will capitalize "Black" and not "white" for the rest of this review.

Race as a Social Construct

Race is a social construct central to this study emerging from social influences rather than from biology (Altman, 2006; Green et al., 2007; Frankenberg, 1993, as cited in Nayak, 2007). Scholars such as Altman (2006) and Frankenberg (1993), as cited in Nayak (2007), highlight its historical use to legitimize power imbalances. Race fluidity across time and regions requires ongoing redefinition to reflect shifting power dynamics (Altman, 2006; Green et al., 2007). This recognition underpins the examination of whiteness and white supremacy in the American culture in this dissertation.

Whiteness, White Culture, and White Supremacy

In the context of this dissertation, “whiteness” refers to a socially constructed racial identity predominantly associated with individuals of European descent in the United States. It is a complex and historically contingent concept central to maintaining unequal power dynamics and racial hierarchies (Altman 2006; Green et al., 2007; Frankenberg, 1993, as cited in Nayak, 2007). Whiteness is marked by its normative and often invisible nature within American culture, where individuals classified as white often do not critically reflect upon their racial identity or the privileges it affords (Altman, 2006; Green et al., 2007; Frankenberg, 1993, as cited in Nayak, 2007). Whiteness operates within the framework of white supremacy, which relies on the subordination of other racialized groups to perpetuate its dominance (Bucholtz, 2011; Withers, 2017). The fluidity of whiteness allows for the inclusion of various ethnic groups over time while maintaining its power and cultural normativity (Bucholtz, 2011; Green et al., 2007).

Understanding the concept of whiteness is essential to critically examine its implications for American society and culture, which is the central focus of this dissertation.

Within the framework of this research, white culture refers to a cultural framework primarily associated with individuals of European descent in the United States. White people in America often perceive themselves as unraced, characterized by a lack of racial awareness and the assumption race pertains mainly to people of color (Brookfield & Hess, 2021; DiAngelo, 2021; Green et al., 2007). Their perception of unraced status stems from the normative nature of whiteness, whereby white culture is considered a baseline or norm which is pervasive and, therefore, often invisible (Altman, 2006; Bucholtz, 2011; Green et al., 2007; Withers, 2017). Due to this normalization, white individuals typically have limited knowledge about race and do not actively contemplate racial issues because they perceive white culture as unproblematic and thus leave it unexamined (DiAngelo, 2021). This lack of critical analysis sustains and perpetuates white superiority and dominance (Brookfield & Hess, 2021). The power of whiteness is reinforced by the invisibility of white culture, which is sustained through the marginalization of other cultures (Brookfield & Hess, 2021; Bucholtz, 2011; Brodkin, as cited in Green et al., 2007). American white culture's normative, standard, or baseline nature is fundamental to maintaining whiteness's power.

White culture can also be understood as an ethnoracial category and racial identity shaped by worldviews tied to established practices and structures (Bucholtz, 2011; Withers, 2017). However, this ethnoracial category lacks any authentic culture or ethnicity and is often associated with euphemisms like "vanilla" or "mayonnaise," juxtaposed with descriptions of subordinated cultures as "spicy" or "colorful" (Bucholtz, 2011). It is a seemingly empty category characterized by absence, yet it carries a perception of innocence and an expectation of freedom

(Bander Rasmussen et al., as cited in Green et al., 2007; Morrison, 1993; Simson, 2019). The absence of a distinct culture within whiteness often leads to the appropriation of subordinated cultures in a manner that disrespects, offends, or further marginalizes the non-white cultures being appropriated (Bander Rasmussen et al., as cited in Green et al., 2007). In essence, the racial identity of whiteness is constructed through practices and values but lacks authenticity, ultimately resulting in the appropriation of marginalized cultures perpetuating racial oppression.

White supremacy, in the scope of this investigation, is a deeply ingrained system of belief and practice with historical roots in European colonialism and imperialism, contributing to the establishment of racial hierarchies and further developed in the United States through practices such as slavery, segregation, and discriminatory policies (Alexander, 2010; Coté, 2009; López, 2005; Rothstein, 2018; Wilkerson, 2020). This system of white supremacy is characterized by the belief in the inherent superiority of individuals categorized as white over those classified as non-white, and it has had far-reaching impacts on American society, including within education. White supremacy has been perpetuated through pseudoscientific justifications for racial disparities and the promotion of whiteness as a marker of social status and prestige (Gossett, 1997; Kendi, 2016; Yacavone, 2022). The systemic barriers and discriminatory practices stemming from white supremacy have had lasting effects on people of color, continuing to shape the landscape of American society and education.

Blackness

Blackness here refers to a socially constructed racial identity primarily associated with individuals of African descent in the United States. Blackness, like whiteness, is a complex and historically contingent concept influenced by socio-political factors and historical narratives (Altman, 2006; Green et al., 2007; Frankenberg, 1993, as cited in Nayak, 2007). The racial

identity of Blackness has been subject to systemic racial discrimination, oppression, and marginalization in American society. Blackness carries the legacy of being the "other" in relation to whiteness, often characterized by experiences of racialized subjugation and disadvantage (Altman, 2006; Morrison, 1993; Withers, 2017). Blackness is intimately tied to the historical context of slavery, racial segregation, and ongoing systemic racism, which has shaped the lived experiences of Black individuals in the United States (Bucholtz, 2011; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). It represents a collective racial identity with its own cultural heritage, history, and resilience in adversity (Altman, 2006; Morrison, 1993; Withers, 2017). Understanding the concept of Blackness is essential for comprehending the historical and contemporary struggles Black communities face and to critically examine the intersections of Blackness and whiteness within American culture, which is a central focus of this dissertation.

Hegemony

In the context of this dissertation, hegemony refers to the dominance and control exerted by one social group or ideology over another in a given society (Bates, 1975; Carragee, 1993). Hegemony plays a pivotal role in maintaining and perpetuating systems of power and dominance, as it enables the dominant group, often associated with whiteness, to establish and sustain its cultural, economic, and political influence over marginalized groups (Bates, 1975; Carragee, 1993; Jackson, 2006). It involves exercising power and the ability to shape and control the prevailing social norms, values, and narratives to reinforce the status quo (Bucholtz, 2011; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). In essence, hegemony operates as a mechanism through which the interests and perspectives of the dominant group are upheld and promoted while suppressing the voices and experiences of those subjugated within the existing power structure.

Marginalization

Marginalization, in the context of this dissertation, encompasses a multifaceted process characterized by the relegation of individuals or groups to the fringes of social, political, and economic spheres, where they encounter varying degrees of exclusion and disempowerment (Hall, 2004). The foundational properties of marginalization, as identified by scholars like Hall et al. (1994), initially included intermediacy, differentiation, voice, secrecy, power, reflectiveness, and liminality. However, as Hall (1999) articulated, subsequent conceptual developments introduced additional dimensions, such as exteriority, economy, ecology, constraint, Eurocentrism, seduction, and testimony. Recently, marginalization has expanded to encompass individuals designated as 'dangerous others,' particularly in the Americentric geographical sphere, such as those labeled terrorists post-9/11. These individuals are exteriorized, sometimes within the social circle, residing close to mainstream society. Consequently, marginalization has evolved to represent not only those dwelling on the periphery but also those outside the circle and an increasing number of exteriorized within the circle. This dynamic conceptualization underscores the growing complexity of marginalization and the need to examine the intricate interplay between those relegated to the margins and the dominant centers of society (Dussell, 1996; Hall et al., 1994; Hall, 1999; Said, 1980).

Predominantly White Schools or Districts

While often applied to higher education, predominantly white schools or districts in the context of this dissertation include public K-12 schools where the student population is primarily composed of white students, typically consisting of 50% or more of total enrollment (Bourke, 2016; Cabrera et al., 2016; Cronovich & Mitchell, 2022; Sprull & Starling, 2021; Vizenor, 1999). These institutions are characterized by a racial composition predominantly composed of

white individuals and have historically been the focus of discussions concerning racial diversity, equity, and inclusion (Bourke, 2016; Schnell, 2021). These schools or districts also regularly have faculty, staff, and administration who are majority white, curriculum centered around Western, Eurocentric, or Americentric perspectives, and a legacy of racial segregation or restricted diversity in the past (Bowles & Gintis, 1976, as cited in Espinoza, 2007; King & Chandler, 2016; Pew Research Center, 2021; Robinson, 2004; Sleeter & Zavala, 2020).

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

In the context of this study, culturally relevant pedagogy is an educational approach empowering students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by incorporating their cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles into the teaching and learning process (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Gay, 2010). It emphasizes setting high expectations for students' success, engaging cultural knowledge and experiences, and validating every student's culture, thus bridging the gaps between school and home through diversified instructional strategies and multicultural curricula (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Gay, 2010). Moreover, it seeks to educate the whole child, focusing on long-term academic achievement rather than end-of-year tests (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Culturally relevant pedagogues understand students must learn to navigate between home and school, acquiring access to the broader culture while honoring their cultural beliefs and practices (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1995a; Ladson-Billings, 2006b). Additionally, they develop sociopolitical consciousness, which involves helping students recognize, understand, and critique current social inequalities related to race, class, and gender, both in themselves and in society (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). It is not a fixed framework but an ever-evolving pedagogical approach embracing global identities, including developments in arts,

literature, music, athletics, and film (Ladson-Billings, 2014; Paris, 2012). This approach recognizes the dynamic nature of scholarship and the ongoing need to adapt educational practices to meet the diverse needs of students (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 2014).

Chapter Summary

In this introductory chapter, I provide the background and context necessary to examine how white culture shapes educators' participation, roles, and impacts in racial equity initiatives within suburban Massachusetts K-12 public schools. The chapter provides a thorough exploration of unresolved racial inequities in education, especially in predominantly white suburban areas, despite reform efforts. This study aims to unravel how white culture embedded within educational institutions influences educators' engagement in advancing racial equity. The research is grounded in my personal and professional commitment to equity as a white educator in mostly white contexts. It relies on assumptions about implicit bias and differing racial perspectives while acknowledging methodological limitations. This chapter defines key terminology and outlines the study's significance in addressing persistent disparities, informing leadership, promoting change, and honoring advocates. Ultimately, this chapter furnishes the foundation to investigate this multifaceted issue, shedding light on educators' perceptions and experiences to spark transformative improvements in education.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE HISTORICAL AND CRITICAL LITERATURE

In this literature review, I critically examine the construction and impact of white supremacy on American society and education from a historical perspective. I focus on understanding the roles and impacts of whiteness and the cultural gaps left behind by predominantly white school leadership and educators. Drawing on the perspectives of critical race theory, critical whiteness studies, and an exploration of racial equity initiatives in the US landscape and the specific sphere of Massachusetts public education, I aim to contribute to a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding efforts for racial equity in predominantly white educational settings while also amplifying the voices and experiences of BIPOC scholars and researchers.

Historically, in America, the social construction of race has been used to organize a hierarchical caste system, which Critical Race scholars argue has been codified into our country's systems, structures, and laws (Alexander, 2010; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Rothstein, 2018; Wilkerson, 2020). In this structure, whiteness maintains racial power systems by varying the definition of who belongs to the racial category of white (Bucholtz, 2011; Withers, 2017). Black scholars from Frederick Douglass to James Baldwin and beyond have discussed how race and racism are an issue not just for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC); instead, addressing racism requires a critical examination of whiteness (Engels, 2006).

In the wake of George Floyd's violent murder in 2020 and the following uprisings protesting for the rights of Black Americans, there has been a triggering of what Carol Anderson (2017) calls "white rage." This rage, Anderson attests, comes when Black Americans demand "full or equal citizenship [and] refuse to accept subjugation" (pp.3-4). White Americans have pushed to rid schools of discussions on race under the guise of Critical Race Theory and the

misguided notion that K-12 public schools are teaching the tenets of this theory (Bridges, 2022). White Americans fear shifts in racial dynamics, which could lead to increased entitlement among BIPOC (Gómez et al., 2022). The recent push against Critical Race Theory in education is due to a lack of critical awareness of being white, which is why this discourse is essential. Following the review and critical analysis of the literature, I argue for white people to make effective changes in the fight against racism, it is critical to study whiteness within a historical context as a construction of subjugation and as a specific subset of Critical Race Theory. Only through a critical study of whiteness can white people begin to disrupt the structures built to serve the hegemony [privilege and power] associated with white supremacy [domination and oppression].

Methodology

This literature review was guided by a rigorous research methodology encompassing a wide-ranging exploration of academic databases and sources. The databases were not limited to include Academic search complete, EBSCOhost, Taylor and Francis Journals, APA PsycINFO, OAIster, Oxford Scholarship Online, WorldCat.org, and Open Dissertations. Additionally, I utilized the landscape of Internet search engines, such as Google Scholar, to continue the research process. I also leveraged platforms such as perplexity.ai, connectedpapers.com, and insightful.xyz, pioneering tools harnessing the power of artificial intelligence to facilitate the discovery of additional resources for my literature review. Incorporating these emerging AI technologies introduces a novel dimension to the methodology. Although still at an early stage of development, these tools have proven to be exceptionally valuable in expanding the scope of my research. Perplexity.ai, with its advanced natural language processing capabilities, enabled me to uncover nuanced insights and patterns within the literature, providing a deeper understanding of complex concepts and contributing to a more comprehensive analysis. Inciteful.xyz, with its

advanced algorithms, helped me navigate the scholarly literature, surfacing connections, and insights I might have otherwise missed in traditional search methods. Connectedpapers.com, in turn, facilitated the identification of relevant academic papers and their interrelations, aiding me in crafting a holistic and interconnected understanding of the research landscape.

In tandem with these tools, the traditional search methodology remains robust. My search terms encompassed concepts such as equity work in public education, the impacts of whiteness in equity work, suburban education, predominantly white spaces, Critical Race Theory, Critical Whiteness Theory, Critical Whiteness studies, history of whiteness, racial construction, history of race, and whiteness, which formed the bedrock of my research. I further extended my exploration beyond electronic databases by delving into the references cited in articles and websites, thereby casting a broader net to gather additional valuable sources.

The synthesis of these varied sources and reputable news sites such as The Associated Press, *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, and PBS enriches my research. This comprehensive exploration, underpinned by a robust and methodical research method, offers a nuanced understanding of the interplay among white supremacy, society, and education. It also positions this study as a vital contribution to the ongoing discourse on racial equity within educational settings, serving as a potential catalyst for transformative change.

Construction of White Supremacy in Society

The construction of white supremacy in American society and educational systems has a complex history, with origins fueled by historical forces such as colonialism, imperialism, and the perpetuation of racial hierarchies through practices such as slavery and segregation (Coté 2009; López 2005). Additionally, ideologies such as scientific racism amplified the growth of white supremacy within institutional structures, contributing to racial disparities in areas like

housing and education, thereby creating a disproportionate impact on communities of color (Alexander, 2010; Rothstein, 2018; Wilkerson, 2020).

European Racial Hierarchies Impact on American Culture

The pre-existing European ideas about race and racial hierarchies demonstrate the impact of colonialism on shaping racial categories in America. The concept of race, including the invention of the white race, is a socially constructed category with no basis in biology, which is discussed in more depth later on; rather it was developed to justify and sustain systems of exploitation and inequality. The use of race-based categories created economic, social, and legal systems favoring whites, and continued the legacy of colonialism in shaping racial categories in the U.S. even after formal colonial rule (Harris, 1993; Lipsitz, 2006; Wellman, 1993). Social relationships in colonial society are complex, with distinctions based on race, class, and gender. Despite women being subordinate to men, elite white women share privileges with men based on their social status and race (Stoler, 1989). However, at the bottom of the social hierarchy were indentured servants and enslaved African Americans, whose oppression severely limited their lives (Berlin, 2019). Kendi (2016) discusses the origins and rationalization of slavery as a financial system in America as the Puritans, who settled in America in the 17th century, inherited a justification for the enslavement of Africans based on the European idea some people were naturally inferior and destined to be ruled by others (Kendi, 2016). The Puritans also rationalized the enslavement of Africans by interpreting the Bible as endorsing the slavery of "heathens" (Cannon, 2004; Haynes, 2004). Kendi (2016) discusses how Puritanical leaders like Richard Mather and John Cotton inherited racist beliefs about African slavery from English thinkers during their time. These ideas were around for almost 200 years before Puritans and Virginians used them to legalize and codify slavery in New England in the 1630s (Kendi, 2016).

Racial Segregation and Systemic Discrimination Foundations in America

Segregation in America, implemented during the late 19th century, was a pervasive system of degradation and oppression disadvantaging racial minorities, and was enforced by state and local laws and upheld by intimidation and violence against Black people. Ware (2018) describes how race and class intersect with disadvantaged racial minorities in both the South and the North. This system was implemented in the late 19th century and involved segregating various public spaces, including schools, hotels, theaters, and public transportation (Harris, 1993; Ware, 2018). It also extends to other areas, such as elevators, parks, hospitals, and places of worship (Harris, 1993; Sandoval-Strausz, 2005; Ware, 2018). Black people were disenfranchised, relegated to low-paying and undesirable jobs, and subjugated to routine violence and intimidation (Alexander, 2010; Ware, 2018; Wilkerson, 2020). Jim Crow laws enforced racial segregation and discrimination against Black Americans. Even after these laws were abolished, other legal policies, such as redlining and mass incarceration, disproportionately affected people of color (Alexander, 2010; Rothstein, 2018; Wilkerson, 2020). These policies led to a hierarchical caste system based on inherited status which continues to shape United States society (Alexander, 2010; Wilkerson, 2020). The legal systems created to favor whites were designed to maintain power and control and were often justified through pseudoscientific beliefs about racial superiority (Alexander, 2010; Wilkerson, 2020).

Early American powers also created social systems reinforcing racial hierarchies using pseudoscientific justifications for race, claiming whites were inherently superior to people of color (Gossett, 1997). Social Darwinism, as exemplified by the hierarchical view of races and the justification of power dynamics based on presumed biological superiority, was entrenched in the legal and social systems at the time (Hofstadter, 2017; Stepan, 1986)**.** Social Darwinism shifted

under the theory of eugenics, notably through Francis Galton's comparison of the Irish to African populations based on facial features, perpetuated the belief in racial hierarchies and advocated for selective breeding to "improve" the genetic stock of the population (Hofstadter, 2017; Stepan, 1986). Racial hygiene with its focus on skull measurements, brain sizes, and facial angles, provided seemingly empirical justifications for discriminatory practices and policies, attributing inferiority to certain racial groups based on perceived physical characteristics (Bachrach, 2004; Stepan, 1986). These ideologies, rooted in pseudoscience, served to uphold racist structures and perpetuate systemic discrimination against marginalized communities.

Colonial powers also promoted the idea of whiteness as a marker of social status and prestige, further entrenching the racial divide between whites and people of color. According to Kendi (2016), John C. Calhoun, a defender of American slavery seeking to gather scientific evidence to support his beliefs, turned to George R. Gliddon, an Egyptologist, claiming Egypt was the land of Caucasian rulers, Hebrews, and enslaved Black people. Gliddon sent Calhoun books arguing Black people had always been servants and enslaved to Caucasians. Calhoun used these "facts" to defend American domestic policy before antislavery Europe. By promoting whiteness as a marker of social status, American colonial powers further rooted the racial divide between whites and people of color (Kendi, 2016). Black people's dehumanization was a tactic used to reinforce the idea they were inferior and deserving of their enslavement (Kendi, 2016). These systems and practices have had lasting effects on American society and continue to impact people of color. Understanding the deep historical injustices and discrimination I have discussed here is crucial for grasping how these issues affect education, as I will explore in the next section.

Historical Context of Segregation and Desegregation Efforts in American Education

The historical context of European colonialism, with its influence on racial categories and the deep-seated belief in white American identity and superiority, directly contributed to shaping American society, leading to the establishment of segregated educational policies and practices systematically disadvantaging Black Americans (Mineo, 2022). The introduction of racialized power systems and the promotion of whiteness as a marker of social status further reinforced racial division and systemic discrimination. This historical backdrop forms the foundation for understanding systemic barriers in predominantly white educational settings (Yacavone, 2022). Laws such as the "separate but equal" doctrine upheld by *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) institutionalized racial segregation in public schools, denying Black students' equal access to quality education and resources. Then, in 1954, *Brown v Board of Education* marked a significant turning point, legally dismantling the notion of "separate but equal" schooling and declaring segregated schools unconstitutional; however, the desegregation process faced resistance and slow implementation, perpetuating educational inequalities (*Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, 1954). The historical context of segregation lays the groundwork for understanding the challenges we face today in achieving racial equity within the education system. By examining the historical roots of white supremacy, segregation, and the construction of whiteness, we gain invaluable insights into the persistent systemic barriers and the urgent need for educators to grasp this historical backdrop. The effects of systemic racism are both deeply entrenched and profoundly impactful in education (Gillborn, 2008).

Understanding the historical underpinnings of privilege, power, and racial hierarchies is essential for predominantly white educators engaging in K-12 school-based racial equity work, as it enables us to reckon with the enduring legacies shaping educational systems. By delving

into the historical context, we gain a nuanced understanding of how historical injustices and discriminatory practices have influenced the current educational landscape, often resulting in racial disparities and unequal access to opportunities (Karumbaiah & Brooks, 2021; Payne, 1984). Comprehending the historical context provides insights into the potential biases and privileges predominantly white educators may bring to their racial equity work. It encourages critical self-reflection and promotes a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding race, power, and identity in educational settings. This understanding is vital for educators, as it illuminates the historical legacies informing present-day challenges and underscores the urgency and necessity of dismantling systemic barriers to achieving racial equity in education.

Desegregation efforts have been central to addressing racial disparities in education; however, it is crucial to recognize the complexities and unintended consequences of these initiatives. As Clotfelter's (2004) work on school desegregation highlights, a paradoxical dynamic can emerge, even among individuals advocating for desegregation. Bettelheim's (1958, as cited in Clotfelter, 2004) observations shed light on this paradox, stating many people champion desegregation while their children remain segregated in tracked classes for gifted students or in suburban schools. He notes:

> It is not that these groups, who fight against segregation and for special facilities for the gifted, wish to establish a new color line. On the contrary, they want to do away with the old-fashioned color line, to replace the "white color" elite with a more up-to-date "white collar" elite, composed of all highly educated persons of all colors. (as cited in Clotfelter, 2004, p. 183)

Bettelheim brings attention to the complexities of desegregation and highlights the tension between advocating equal access to education and maintaining advantages for privileged groups. This underscores the issues with desegregation efforts, considering both intended and unintended consequences.

Structural Manifestations of White Supremacy

Institutional racism, as a structural manifestation of white supremacy, continues to hinder racial equity in society. By examining the influence of institutional practices and policies, we can better understand how housing segregation, the criminal justice system, and the education system perpetuate racial disparities, highlighting the structural manifestations of white supremacy and how these structures hinder racial equity, especially in predominantly white settings (Alexander, 2010; Jones, 1974; Rothstein, 2018). Ture and Hamilton (1992) discuss how institutional racism operates within "established and respected forces in . . . society," (p. 20), often escaping public critique or condemnation, especially in comparison to individual acts of racism. Institutional practices and policies have disproportionately disadvantaged marginalized communities through housing segregation, the criminal justice system, and the educational system, underscoring the need for systemic changes to address these deep-rooted issues (Alexander, 2010; Jones, 1974; Rothstein, 2018). The persistence of whites' spatial isolation further intensified white neoliberalism and the extent to which race was constructed in terms of moral categories (Blau, 2004). This perspective sheds light on how broader societal and economic changes contribute to perpetuating racial disparities and framing race in moral terms. According to Baron (as cited in Jones, 1974), institutional racism

> involves the operating policies, properties, and functions of an ongoing system of normative patterns that serve to subjugate, oppress, and force the dependence of individuals or groups by (1) establishing and sanctioning unequal goals, objectives, and priorities for blacks and whites, and (2) sanctioning inequality in status as well as in access to goods and services (Baron, 1969, as cited in Jones, 1974, p. 219).

Baron’s definition further reinforces the argument institutions play a significant role in perpetuating racial inequality by establishing and maintaining race-based unequal treatment (Yosso, 2005). While Jones (1974) asserted institutions assign and maintain minorities in inferior positions on race, it is critical to recognize these institutional practices have been deeply

embedded in the fabric of American society (Yosso, 2005). Examining institutional racism underscores the urgent need for systemic change to address deeply rooted issues. The historical legacies of privilege, power, and racial hierarchies continue to shape educational systems, creating racial disparities and unequal access to opportunities (Jones, 1974). Consequently, predominantly white educators engaged in racial equity initiatives must reckon with the historical burden and actively work to dismantle these entrenched structures.

While an examination of institutional racism sheds light on the systemic barriers perpetuated by white supremacy, I focus on how these barriers are both deeply entrenched and profoundly impactful within education. Racial disparities in educational systems often result in unequal access to opportunities and limited academic achievement in marginalized communities (Howard, 2019). As Mickelson (2003) points out, racial discrimination in education can arise "from actions of institutions and individual state actors, their attitudes and ideologies, or processes that systematically treat students from different racial/ethnic groups disparately or inequitably" (p. 1052). Understanding the historical context and structural manifestation of white supremacy is essential for comprehending the complexities surrounding predominantly white educational settings and the urgent need for transformative change to address racial inequities within the educational system (Blau, 2004; Clotfelter, 2004). Historical factors have contributed to the persistence of racial disparities in education through de jure and de facto segregation, unequal resource allocation, and the impact of policies on marginalized communities (Blau, 2004; Clotfelter, 2004).

Whiteness as a Social Construct

To place the study of whiteness among the study of other races, one first has to articulate who is white and what constitutes whiteness. Race is a social construct built on ideas of

ideological supremacy, not based on genetic or biological differences (Altman, 2006; Green et al., 2007; Frankenberg, 1993, as cited in Nayak, 2007). Instead, this supremacy is based on skin color. In the United States, when referring to whiteness, those who qualify as white are Americans of European descent, despite their nationality and ethnicity. The people of Irish, Greek, Jewish, and Italian heritage were all historically considered non-white at different points and were normalized culturally into whiteness over time (Brookfield & Hess, 2021; Brodkin, as cited in Green et al., 2007). The impact of whiteness on society is deeply rooted and widely felt owing to the normalization of whiteness's power and the culture in which it is based.

Evolving Notions of Whiteness: From Ethnic Exclusion to Cultural Normalization

Due to the historical nature of whiteness as an antithesis to Blackness, whiteness correlates directly with power in American society. Whiteness in America is built on a structural and institutional system of power and relies on the ideology of white racial dominance (Bucholtz, 2011; Withers, 2017). The power tied to whiteness is hegemonic and has specific, unchecked structural advantages which continue to mean privileged access to benefits which come with occupying a longstanding racial hierarchy (Bucholtz, 2011; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Harris, 1993; Hea Kil, 2010; Simson, 2019). Moreover, while it is hegemonic, it is not monolithic, complete, or uniform, because it is constantly reworking to maintain the system of racial power (Bucholtz, 2011; Green et al., 2007; Withers, 2017). The fluidity of whiteness is part of how it maintains its hegemonic power. It is alive, meaning it is situational, multifaceted, and constantly changing in meaning (Bucholtz, 2011; Green et al., 2007; Withers, 2017). Whiteness is a socially constructed category of race giving those of predominantly European heritage power and privileges in American culture (Wellman, 1993). Ethnic groups such as those mentioned above shift over time from categories of non-white to white in order to maintain

hegemonic power. Because of this shift, whiteness maintains the power to authorize the subordination or superiorization of other racialized groups to serve white supremacy's interests (Bucholtz, 2011). It is also directly dependent on Blackness. Whiteness requires the cultural presence of the "degraded other" regularly redefined based on whiteness's power and is subordinated based on ideologies and practices which may be oppressed, seen as savage, or even romanticized (Altman, 2006; Bucholtz; 2011; Green et al., 2007; Hei Kil, 2010; Harris, 1993; Morrison, 1993; Wellman, 1993; Withers, 2017). The impact of the power that comes with whiteness and the subordination it requires is a system of white supremacy that self-perpetuates to preserve the status quo. The dependency of whiteness on Blackness as "other" gives those who are considered white advantages in society which are both material and ideological. However, because whiteness needs to maintain this racial hierarchy, it has had to adapt over time to determine who is considered equal and who is subordinate (Bucholtz, 2011; Harris, 1993; Morrison, 1993; Wellman, 1993). Whiteness is hegemonic, but it constantly shifts in nature to maintain that power and relies on Blackness as the subjugated "other" (Morrison, 1993; Wellman, 1993). Because of this positionality and the way race serves as a lens to engage in reflections on power structures, it is essential to recognize whiteness is constantly evolving based on perceptions and access. Moreso, it is a process rather than a static category (Feckenberg, 1997, as cited in Daniels & Varghese, 2020; Roegman, 2018).

Intersectionality of Whiteness: Subjectivities and Privilege

In the same way whiteness shifts over time to include various ethnicities and cultures, it is also filled with subjectivities like gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, language, and citizenship status (Roegman, 2018). While there is intersectionality regarding the privilege of whiteness, part of the pervasiveness is that, despite other forms of identity oppression

experienced, being white is always a form of power. Being a poor white person affords more structural opportunities for success than a poor Black person, because whiteness is invisible. It is normalized, and the norm against which the difference is measured (Daniels & Varghese, 2020). The power tied to whiteness is hegemonic and has specific, unchecked structural advantages which continue to mean privileged access to benefits occupying a longstanding racial hierarchy (Bucholtz, 2011; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Hea Kil, 2010; Simson, 2019). Whiteness has highly desirable material benefits including economic benefits, educational opportunities, and physical safety (Roegman, 2018). Investment in this material benefit drives collective efforts to construct whiteness as positive and Blackness as negative (Allen & Liou, 2019).

Whiteness as an Ethnoracial Category

White people in America frequently consider themselves unraced due to a lack of racial awareness and the assumption race is correlative to people of color (Brookfield & Hess, 2021; DiAngelo, 2021; Green et al., 2007;). Owing to the normative nature of whiteness, white people do not often know much about race and frequently do not think about race because white culture is considered a baseline which is normative and therefore invisible (Altman, 2006; Bucholtz, 2011; Green et al., 2007; Withers, 2017). Because it is considered normal and white people do not have to think about it, it upholds and perpetuates white superiority and dominance (Brookfield & Hess, 2021). People who grow up white are frequently unraced throughout their lives, and because of this, they do not develop racial awareness or take steps to address racial differences because they do not see it as a problem for them to solve (DiAngelo, 2021). Whiteness maintains power because there is no specific culture with which it is associated, and because of this, it can appropriate subordinated cultures to marginalize them further. It is considered the norm in American culture; thus, those who identify as white do not frequently

critically reflect on what it means to be white (DiAngelo, 2021). When not critically analyzed, whiteness thrives, so systems which uphold white supremacy are considered normal and unquestionable.

It is easy for whiteness to maintain power because of the culture of invisibility tied to whiteness, supported by the marginalization of other cultures. The definition shifts to include more ethnic groupings without taking on the shape of specific cultures in those groups (Brookfield & Hess, 2021; Bucholtz, 2011; Brodkin, as cited in Green et al., 2007). Thus, while groups considered white do not lose specific cultural heritage or attributes, their culture is accepted as white and not treated as subordinate. As discussed above, American white culture's normative, standard, or baseline nature gives whiteness power. It is an ethnoracial category and racial identity created through worldviews and values tied to practices and structures (Bucholtz, 2011; Withers, 2017). However, the ethnoracial category lacks an authentic culture and ethnicity. It correlates to blandness through euphemisms like "vanilla," "white bread," or "mayonnaise" and is often juxtaposed to the subordinated "other" which is often described as spicy or colorful (Bucholtz, 2011). It is an empty category constituted by absence, but absence is a perception of innocence and an expectation of freedom (Bander Rasmussen et al., as cited in Green et al., 2007; Morrison, 1993; Simson, 2019). The impact of this lack of culture is often an appropriation of subordinated cultures in a way which disrespects, offends, or further marginalizes the non-white culture being appropriated (Bander Rasmussen et al., as cited in Green et al., 2007). The racial identity of whiteness is built on practices and values; however, it lacks authenticity and is marked by the absence of culture, leading to an appropriation of marginalized cultures which maintain racial oppression. It is evident the normative nature of whiteness perpetuates invisibility and a lack of racial awareness among white individuals, which, intertwined with the absence of

authentic cultural identity, allows whiteness to maintain power and perpetuate superiority and dominance within educational institutions.

Critical Race Theory

According to Bohman (2021), critical theory is a framework which emancipates people from circumstances which have impinged upon their freedom. Because of this, numerous critical theories have been developed over time due to the myriad ways people are subjugated and the continuous process of seeking liberation (Bohman, 2021). One such framework is the Critical Race Theory, which developed after the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s when America deemed itself post-racial after an ambiguous victory against racist ideology (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Farmer & Farmer, 2020). While there was no longer an agreement about racial subordination in America, there was still a noticeable chasm between whiteness and Blackness. Scholars and activists have begun studying the relationship between power and race (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Fine et al., 2004), and the product of this is what we currently know as Critical Race Theory.

Critical Race Theory is built on the foundations of critical legal studies and radical feminism, drawing inspiration from various sources, including European philosophers, such as Gramsci, Foucault, and Derrida (Brown & Jackson, 2013; Crenshaw, 2011; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). It also finds roots in American figures such as Frederick Douglass, Martin Luther King, Jr., and W. E. B. Du Bois as well as movements such as the Black Power and Chicano movements (Crenshaw, 2011; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). The key tenets of Critical Race Theory include addressing the structural nature of racial discrimination in institutions moving well beyond individual biases and prejudices (Brown & Jackson, 2013; Crenshaw, 2011).

Critical Race Scholars and Key Tenets

This section introduces and highlights influential scholars in Critical Race Theory and provides an overview of the theory's key tenets which illuminate the pervasive impact of race and racism within legal and social contexts. According to Crenshaw (2011), Critical Race Theory took shape when, in 1989, a group of legal scholars of color convened a weeklong workshop. They came together to critically examine and challenge the dominant narratives of "race neutrality" perpetuated within legal and academic circles (Brown & Jackson, 2013; Crenshaw, 2011). Their meeting marked a deliberate effort to address the shortcomings of prevailing approaches to create a space for exploring how law and society contributed to racial inequalities, despite claims of neutrality (Brown & Jackson, 2013; Crenshaw, 2011).

One of the pioneering figures in the realm of original Critical Race Theory scholars was Derrick Bell, a constitutional law scholar from Harvard, whose contributions to the field include interest-convergence and racial realism (Bell, 1980; Bell, 1992b; Crenshaw, 2011). Bell's theory of interest-convergence was built on the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka's* (1954) Supreme Court ruling declared segregation in public schools to be unconstitutional. According to interest-convergence theory, significant racial advancements such as *Brown v. Board* ruling, are more likely to occur when they align with the interest of those in power, particularly white elites or predominantly white institutions (Bell, 1980). In the *Brown v. Board* ruling context, Bell's (1980) theory suggests the decision to desegregate schools may have been influenced by the convergence of the economic, labor, and political interests of white people and predominantly white institutions. While the *Brown v. Board* ruling is often celebrated as a step towards racial progress, interest-convergence theory prompts us to consider the role of strategic interests in shaping decisions by underscoring the idea that societal changes, even those aimed at racial

equality, are influenced by complex interactions between various stakeholders and their motivations (Bell, 1980). Another tenet of Bell's (1992b) Critical Race Theory is the idea of racial realism, or the concept racism is a permanent and enduring feature of American society, and efforts to achieve racial justice should acknowledge this fundamental reality. Bell's concept of racial realism has profound implications for understanding the complexities of racial inequality, as it encourages a more critical and nuanced examination of societal structures and power dynamics, like his ideas around interest convergence (Bell, 1980; Bell, 1992b). Bell's interest–convergence theory explains why racial realism is relevant. Interest convergence theory focuses on the practical alignment of interests for racial progress, while racial realism highlights the enduring nature of racism in society (Bell, 1980; Bell, 1992b). Together, these concepts provide a more critical understanding of the complexities of racial dynamics, societal change, and challenges of achieving meaningful racial justice.

Another scholar and pioneer of Critical Race Theory, Kimberlé Crenshaw's theories on critical race, particularly her groundbreaking exploration of intersectionality, provide a complementary perspective unveiling the intricate ways in which various dimensions of identity intersect and contribute to systemic inequalities (Crenshaw, 2015). Just as Bell illuminated the pragmatic underpinnings of racial progress, Crenshaw's scholarship sheds light on the complexities of identity and oppression, offering a multidimensional lens through which to analyze the intersections of race, gender, and beyond (Bell, 1980; Bell, 1992b; Crenshaw, 2015). Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality highlights how various social identities intersect and interact to create unique experiences of discrimination and privilege as reflected in *DeGraffenreid v. General Motors* (1976, cited in Crenshaw, 2015). This legal case centered around a group of Black women who filed a class-action lawsuit against General Motors for

alleged racial and gender discrimination in their employment practices (Crenshaw, 2015). The women argued General Motors' seniority-based layoff policy disproportionately affected Black female employees, leading to their marginalization in the workforce (Crenshaw, 2015). Crenshaw (2015) used the *DeGraffenreid* case as a pivotal example to illustrate how traditional legal and feminist approaches inadequately addressed the unique experiences of Black women. She highlights how both antiracist politics and feminist theory focus exclusively on either race or gender, failing to account for the compounded impact of both forms of discrimination faced by Black women (Crenshaw, 2015). Her case analysis illustrates the need to consider the intersections of race and gender when analyzing legal and social issues (Crenshaw, 2015).

While Kimberlé Crenshaw's pioneering work on intersectionality has illuminated the complex ways in which various dimensions of identity intersect to shape experiences of privilege and oppression, Alan David Freeman's critical review of the Supreme Court doctrine sheds light on the intricate relationship between legal language, precedents, and the legitimization of discriminatory practices (Crenshaw, 2015; Freeman, 1978). Freeman (1978) asserted antidiscrimination laws can inadvertently legitimize racial disparities through their interpretation, which is closely examined alongside the concept of unconscious racism introduced by Lawrence (1987) in his seminal article. While Freeman analyzes Supreme Court cases to reveal the Court's role in maintaining racial inequalities, Lawrence's (1987) exploration of unconscious biases demonstrates how these biases can influence legal judgments, perpetuating unequal treatment. Their collective impact on critical race theory is noteworthy, as they reveal the intricate mechanisms through which racism persists within the legal system, shedding light on the often-hidden intersections of legal interpretation and psychological influences (Crenshaw, 1988; Freeman, 1978; Lawrence, 1987). Freeman (1978) argues anti-discrimination laws, while

seemingly designed to combat racial discrimination, can sometimes be manipulated and interpreted in ways legitimizing or reinforcing racial disparities. Freeman (1978) reviews several US Supreme Court cases related to civil rights and anti-discrimination legislation, analyzing how the Court's interpretations of these laws have sometimes resulted in decisions to maintain or perpetuate racial inequalities. The idea of "legitimation," where the Court's decisions can give a veneer of legitimacy to discriminatory practices by finding them consistent with the letter of the law while ignoring their discriminatory impact, is a central tenet to the development of Critical Race Theory (Crenshaw, 1988; Freeman, 1978). His idea contributes to the Critical Race Theory by highlighting the complexities of legal interpretations and their impact on racial equality (Crenshaw, 1988; Freeman, 1978). His work also underscores the need for a critical and contextual examination of how legal doctrines can reinforce or challenge racial discrimination (Crenshaw, 1988; Freeman, 1978).

Similarly, in his seminal article, "The Id, The Ego, and Equal Protection: Reckoning with Unconscious Racism" (1987), Charles Lawrence III contributed to the development of critical race theory and legal scholarship by introducing the concept of unconscious racism and exploring how deeply ingrained racial biases can impact legal decision-making, even in the absence of explicit discriminatory intent. Racial biases can operate subconsciously or unconsciously, influencing individuals' thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors without awareness (Crenshaw, 1988; Lawrence, 1987). Lawrence (1987) argued these unconscious biases can shape legal judgments and contribute to unequal treatment, perpetuating racial inequality, which has profoundly impacted legal scholarship, Critical Race Theory, and discussions about racial justice within the legal system. While Lawrence's concept of unconscious racism explores the psychological and cognitive factors contributing to racial inequalities in legal decision-making,

Freeman's idea of legitimization delves into how legal structures can inadvertently perpetuate these inequalities (Crenshaw, 1988; Freeman, 1978; Lawrence, 1987). The correlation between these concepts lies in their shared revelation of how racism can persist within the legal system even without overtly discriminatory intent.

Critical Race Theory's Relevance to Education and Schooling

Critical Race Theory, as developed by the scholars mentioned above, offers a framework for critically examining and addressing racial disparities in education. Critical Race Theory's interrogation of intersectionality encourages educators to analyze how various intersecting dimensions of identity shape students' educational experiences and outcomes to help identify gaps in those experiences and outcomes (Carbado et al., 2013; Clarke & McCall, 2013; Crenshaw, 2011; Patton et al., 2016). It unmasks how conventional practices overlook the complex intersections of identity, inadvertently reinforcing unequal treatment and outcomes (Clarke and McCall, 2013; Crenshaw, 2011). The notions of interest convergence and racial realism employed by Critical Race Theory offer a lens through which educational policies can be critically examined and analyzed to improve policies and practices in education (Bell, 1980; Bell, 1992a; Milner, 2008; Milner et al., 2013). This examination compels a re-evaluation of mainstream educational reforms, spotlighting instances where apparent progress may mask underlying power dynamics (Bell, 1980; Bell, 1992b; Milner, 2008; Milner et al., 2013). Freeman's (1978) exploration of the unintended consequences of anti-discrimination laws underscores the necessity of moving beyond mere compliance to actively address the systemic factors which continue to disguise education as equitable with apparently race-neutral policies re based on underlying assumptions disadvantaging those who struggle to comply with the policies due to culture or access (De Plevitz, 2007). Lawrence's (1997) work on unconscious racism

within pedagogical interactions focuses on the subtle biases which can influence interactions, fostering an environment of heightened awareness and accountability (Banks, 2014; Pattniak, 1997; Warikoo et al., 2016). By integrating these insights, the Critical Race Theory offers a comprehensive framework transcending conventional approaches and guides educators, researchers, and policymakers to expose the gaps, contradictions, and hidden biases embedded in conventional educational practices and policies. Together, these interconnected ideas foster dynamic and critical dialogue driving the pursuit of equitable and inclusive education.

The theoretical underpinning of this dissertation research resonates within the Critical Race Theory framework, which offers insights into the dynamics of racial equity work in K-12 public schools in predominantly white suburbs. As articulated by Bohman (2021), critical theory, including the Critical Race Theory, seeks to liberate individuals from the constraints of systemic oppression. The evolution of Critical Race Theory was spurred by the recognition that despite the post-Civil Rights era, racial subjugation persisted, prompting scholars and activists to explore the intricate relationship between power and race (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Farmer & Farmer, 2020). Critical Race Theory recognizes racial discrimination transcends individual biases and operates within institutional structures (Brown and Jackson, 2013; Crenshaw, 2011). In the context of my research question, which examines the perceptions and experiences of white educators in school-based racial equity initiatives, concepts of interest convergence and racial realism shed light on the potential alignment of strategic interests and the enduring nature of racism (Bell 1980; Bell 1992b). These ideas prompt a critical examination of how underlying power dynamics may influence white educators' involvement, the complexity of achieving genuine racial justice, and the interest white educators might have in pursuing racial equity (Bell, 1980; Bell, 1992b). By anchoring this research within the framework of Critical Race Theory,

this study aims to unravel the intricate web of power, identity, and systemic racism underpinning K-12 school-based racial equity work in predominantly white suburban contexts.

Critical Whiteness Studies

Critical Whiteness Studies is a subset of Critical Race Theory which emerged in the 1990s as a follow-up to the years of criticism provided by Black scholars like Fredrick Douglass, W. E. B. Du Bois, and James Baldwin (Baldwin, 1965; Engels, 2006; Irby et. al, 2019). The formal establishment of Critical Whiteness Studies in the 1990s was marked by several groundbreaking works. Ruth Frankenberg's *White Women, Race Matters* (1993) introduced the concept of whiteness as a social construct and provided one of the first systematic analyses of how white women understand and experience their racial identity**.** David Roediger's *The Wages of Whiteness* (2007) examines the historical construction of white identity in relation to labor and class in American demonstrating how whiteness became a form of social capital. Toni Morrison's *Playing in the Dark* (1992) offered a crucial literary perspective, analyzing how whiteness operated as an organizing principle in American literature and how white authors constructed their narratives in relation to the presence or absence of Black characters.

These foundational scholars consistently acknowledged their intellectual debt to earlier black theorists who had long scrutinized whiteness from their unique vantage point as racial outsiders. Roediger (2007) explicitly drew upon Du Bois's (2021) concept of the "psychological wage" of whiteness, while Frankenberg (1993) built her analysis of white women's racial identity on Baldwin's insights about white Americans' self-deception. Douglass theorized whiteness and white identity are embedded into the institutions of American society and any talk of the "Negro problem" was misguided, as the problem was inherent to white people and their ability to accept Black people as equals (Engels, 2006; Roediger, 2001). As outsiders to the

white race, W. E. B. Du Bois argued Black people have a vantage point to peer into the "soul of white folk," while Baldwin (1998) recognized the "white man's desire not to be judged by those who are not white" and yet continued his critique of whiteness (as cited in Roediger, 2001, p. 79, 85). These and many other Black scholars paved the way for what is now known as Critical Whiteness Studies.

Critical Whiteness Studies draws upon and intersects with theoretical traditions in critical theory and critical race scholarship which have produced theoretical frameworks for understanding how whiteness operates at structural, institutional, and interpersonal levels. Critical Race Theory provides the foundation to understand that racism is endemic to American society, while Critical Whiteness Studies specifically examines how whiteness maintains this system through both visible and invisible mechanisms (Leonardo, 2009). Leonardo argues that white supremacy is maintained not just through obvious acts of racism, but through the everyday practices of white people who may consider themselves progressive or anti-racist. His work particularly examines how educational institutions serve as sites where whiteness is simultaneously invisible to those who benefit from it while remaining hypervisible in its effects on students of color.

Sara Ahmed's (2007) phenomenological approach to whiteness offers another crucial theoretical lens, examining how whiteness operates as an orientation in the world. Ahmed argues that whiteness functions as a "habit" that allows white bodies to extend into spaces with ease, while creating barriers and disorientation for bodies of color. This theoretical framework helps explain how institutional spaces like schools become "oriented" around whiteness in ways that appear neutral but reproduce racial hierarchies. Ahmed's work bridges phenomenological

philosophy with critical race theory, demonstrating how abstract theoretical concepts manifest in lived experience.

These theoretical frameworks have relevance for understanding how whiteness operates in educational settings. Leonardo and Zembylas (2013) demonstrate how white emotionality, particularly white guilt, shame, and anger, shapes classroom dynamics and often derails attempts at meaningful racial dialogue. This theoretical insight connects to broader questions about how affect and emotion function in maintaining white supremacy, a theme later taken up by scholars like Matias and Allen (2013) in their work on the role of white emotions in teacher education. The intersection of Critical Whiteness Studies with feminist theory has also produced important theoretical insights about the intersectional nature of privilege and oppression. Building on Frankenberg's (1993) early work, scholars like Leonardo and Boas (2013) have examined how gender and whiteness co-construct each other in ways that particularly impact educational leadership to teacher identity development.

Contemporary White Scholar Engagement

More recently, scholars have studied the role and impact of whiteness in American culture. White scholars have recognized the need to critically examine whiteness to make sense of the continued racial disparities and oppressions which exist by dissecting the construction of whiteness and any moral implications coexisting within it (Frankenberg, as cited in Jayne, 2014). White scholars recognize the potential of the study of *self* to focus on white supremacist systems and as a shift away from studying the impact of those systems on BIPOC (Earick, 2018). Peggy McIntosh (1989) famously listed specific advantages she recognized as white privileges which paved the way for many white scholars to reflect on how they experience the world differently than their peers of color. This shift away from race as a non-white problem is critical for white

people to address the power shifting needed to find the liberation of all people in American society.

Equity Attempts in Predominantly White Spaces

There have been attempts to address equity in predominantly white spaces, like public schools, including desirablizing whiteness, embracing colorblindness, and enacting culturally relevant pedagogy. There are inherent issues in these approaches which perpetuate the minoritization of non-white students as they center whiteness in their attempts at equity. According to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2022), the percentage of students taking Advanced Placement examinations is disproportionately based on student populations. White and Asian students were overrepresented in Advanced Placement courses, whereas Black and Hispanic/Latino students were underrepresented. A reason for this is due to the "insidious and blatant-but-transparent way that . . . educational equity effort[s] normalize . . . Whiteness" (Radd & Grosland, 2019, p. 657). This normalization of whiteness frequently occurs when administrators look for ways to diversify white spaces without shifting them to decenter whiteness. Radd and Grosland (2019) defined this as “desirabilizing whiteness” (p. 658).

Desirabilizing whiteness can be seen in the example of Advanced Placement courses by school leaders working to diversify the number of students of color within those courses without addressing the systemic issues of tracking, discipline, compliance, and elite course placement. The intention of the effort is rooted in attempts at equity but instead fortifies the systems rooted in Eurocentricity by maintaining the status quo as accepted by white suburbanites (Eaton, 2020; Radd & Grosland, 2019). Approaches like this center whiteness and provide access to white spaces without working to disrupt the systems of oppression in place and continue to position

whiteness as desirable and reinforce power and perpetuate the perceived superiority of whiteness (Radd & Grosland, 2019).

Color Blindness in Educational Equity

Another attempt at equity white administrators frequently present in predominantly white educational spaces is color blindness which posits if we see education as race-neutral, all students can and should be treated equally (Daniels & Varghese, 2020). Brookfield and Hess (2021) identify a majority of educators of race recognize color blindness as "the biggest pedagogic challenge they faced" (p. 49). They discussed two major foundational issues regarding color blindness as a pedagogical approach. First, white people cannot counteract implicit racial biases if they do not know they exist; thus, they cannot treat students as unraced. Second, even if there was a way for individuals to see their students as unraced, presenting color blindness "assumes a level playing field is in place" (Brookfield & Hess, 2021, p. 49) socially, economically, and politically for people of color. Bucholtz (2011) further argues colorblind policies are often implemented to desirablize whiteness by defining race neutrality in ways favoring white people. Many white people go so far as to argue "raising concerns about race-based inequality is…furthering racial division and thus conversations that center race should be avoided at all costs" (Bucholtz, 201, p.165). However, since equal power does not exist in society, treating our students as race-neutral continues to create desirablized whiteness and prevents students from understanding and working to combat these power structures.

An aspect of the discussion on color blindness is the difference between equity and equality. Most policymakers, educators, and stakeholders use the terms interchangeably to discuss distributive justice (Espinoza, 2007); however, critical distinctions between the two impact the discussion of colorblindness. Equity is more frequently associated with fairness,

providing individuals with what they need to find educational success. At the same time, equality is correlative to treating everyone the same way despite their different needs (Corson, 2001, as cited in Espinoza, 2007). Color blindness, as an attempt at equity, fails because it treats everyone as if they are the same. In educational settings, much of the basis for color blindness stems from seeing education as "ethnic-less, race-less, culture-less, and language-less" only if it is representative of Eurocentrism (Daniels & Varghese, 2020. P. 60). This treatment allows many administrators and educators to refuse to "see" color and thus ignore systemic racism while upholding white supremacist ideology (Sleeter, 1993, as cited in Jupp & Lensmire, 2016).

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Leadership

Another attempt to achieve equity in education and move beyond the paradigm of equality and color blindness has led many administrators and school leaders to adopt culturally relevant leadership and pedagogy in recent years. *Culturally relevant pedagogy* is a theoretical framework originally presented by educational theorist Gloria Ladson-Billings (1994), who described it as "a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes (pp. 17-18). The framework was modified to apply culturally relevant leadership practices to administrators. Unfortunately, according to Ladson-Billings (2014), much of what is being presented in school districts now that calls itself culturally relevant is "unrecognizable" to her–"often a distortion and corruption of the central ideas [she] attempted to promulgate" (p. 82) She posits much of this is because administrators implementing the framework have superficial notions of culture. As outlined above, they are uncomfortable with conversations around race (Ladson-Billings, 2014). There is an avoidance of the sociopolitical aspect of Ladson-Billings' work as administrators and school leaders center fears and feelings of white parents and their students (Eaton, 2020).

Administrators avoid considering policies and practices in their districts which impact the lives of their students of color. Much the same way "cooperative learning" (Cohen 1982, as cited in Ladson-Billings, 2014, p. 81) was created in order to address inequalities across race, class, gender, language, citizenship status, or sexual identity, and was quickly reduced to a classroom activity utilized to shake things up in the classroom, school districts and administrators have reduced Ladson-Billings' work to "adding some books about people of color, having a classroom Kwanzaa celebration, or posting "diverse" images" (Ladson-Billings, 2014, p. 82). Without a critical understanding of the role of whiteness in leadership positions, these shifts in frameworks designed to uplift marginalized students will continue to provide surface-level classroom activities rather than transformative change.

DiAngelo's Influence, Debate, and Impact

Critical Whiteness scholar Robin DiAngelo has caused strife in the academic community due to how she has educated other white people about whiteness, which brings up a fascinating conundrum. As a white person, she studied and committed her career to educating white people about whiteness. She has published two books that brought her fame and theoretical financial gain (DiAngelo, 2021). Nevertheless, as a white woman presenting to others about race, she upholds and reinforces whiteness simply by being white in this leadership role (Jackson, 2019). There has been a push among people of color arguing a white woman should not be the voice which is centered on the conversation about race and racism, especially when *White Fragility: Why it is so hard for white people to talk about racism* includes a "relative dearth of contemporary black studies scholarship (Jackson, 2019). In her most recent book, *Nice Racism* (2021), DiAngelo states white people should continue to learn from the work of BIPOC people and be in a relationship with them. She also acknowledges that as insiders to whiteness, white

scholars also have a perspective which can help other white people understand how race shapes our lives, and it is not solely the responsibility of BIPOC people to teach us how to seek liberation from whiteness. While there will not be a specific resolution to the role white scholars should play in profiting from the tenets of Critical Whiteness, it is evident white people need to understand how whiteness impacts how all people are kept from experiencing true liberation.

Implications for Research

In the pursuit of unmasking the connections between whiteness, racial equity, and education in predominantly white suburban areas of Massachusetts, this research sheds light on the critical dimensions shaping K-12 school-based racial equity efforts. Drawing on the insights of Critical Whiteness Studies, which build upon the foundational critique of whiteness by Black scholars such as Douglass, Du Bois, and Baldwin, I aim to uncover how whiteness manifests in efforts to achieve racial equity (Engels, 2006; Roediger, 2001). The concept of "desirabilizing whiteness," as outlined by Radd and Grosland (2019), surfaces as a pivotal challenge within these efforts, starkly illustrated by an attempt to diversify Advanced Placement courses without confronting the underlying systemic issues of tracking, discipline, and elite course placement. This serves as a stark reminder that genuine equity necessitates a comprehensive re-evaluation of existing structures rather than superficial changes. In parallel, the notion of color blindness, introduced by Daniels and Varghese (2020), emerges as another key theme, offering a counterpoint to authentic equity by advocating a race-neutral approach which fails to address systemic racism. By examining all these dimensions, including Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994), I learned how white educator navigate systems which have historically perpetuated racial disparities and inequities.

This exploration makes a shift in white scholar engagement within Critical Whiteness Studies, as white scholars increasingly recognize the imperative to critically examine their own positionality within systems of racial privilege, and the study of self becomes paramount for comprehending and dismantling white supremacy (Earick, 2018; Frankenberg, as cited in Jayne, 2014). By engaging white educators in my research, I hope to illuminate the complex interplay between white scholars' engagement and their perceived engagement in racial equity discourse in education. This review of the literature on Critical Whiteness Studies aims to illuminate the multifaceted dynamics underpinning school-wide racial equity work in predominantly white suburban educational settings. By exploring educators' perceptions and roles, as well as the influence of white scholar engagement, I hope to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the complexities surrounding efforts for racial equity work while striving for a future where liberation from the harm of white supremacy is within reach.

Whiteness in Educational Leadership

Whiteness is rarely questioned in leadership positions, which are prominent in the present Eurocentric structures of the American public school system (Blackmore, 2010). The nature of predominantly white school leadership is problematic; however, within the structures operating presently, a dissection of predominantly white leadership can lead to substantial encouragement of those in leadership positions to recognize the role whiteness plays in their leadership style. The data show most school superintendents are white men and despite the specific preparation programs, most feel they are prepared to lead their districts successfully (Tienken, 2021). According to the American Superintendent Decennial Study (Tienken, 2021), 53% of postgraduate degrees attained by superintendents were in Educational Leadership and 34% were in Educational Administration & Supervision (p. xv). The majority (82%) felt their preparation

was good to excellent for the position (Tienken, 2021, p. xv). Most people entering formal leadership positions in education feel well prepared to lead and supervise the administration of school districts. 73% of the superintendents identified as male, while 27% were female, 91.8% were white, and only 8.2% were superintendents of color (Modan, 2020, para. 2; Tienken, 2021, p. 13). Approximately 20% of these school leaders work in suburban schools (Tienken, 2021, p. 66).

Disparities Between School Leadership and Student Demographics

When these numbers are compared to the demographics of students, one can assume there are cultural gaps between those who create and implement policies and those whom they most impact. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2021), approximately 47% of school-aged children are white (para. 1). The disparity between the number of students of color and the number of superintendents of color leads to a disconnection between superintendents and children and the communities they serve (Marshall, 2004). Despite this vast difference, 95% of superintendents feel supported by their communities, but 51% indicated the district's largest racial/ethnic minority group had concerns which differed from those of the racial/ethnic majority (Tienken, 2021, xvi). This lack of support could be due to many superintendents being unprepared to have difficult conversations about race within their communities.

Barriers to Conversations About Race

About half of the superintendents responded that it was essential to lead conversations about race, meaning the other 50% did not prioritize this work (Tienken, 2021, p. 47). Only about 20% of white superintendents reported being prepared well for leading conversations about race (Tienken, 2021, p. 47). Another 20% of *white* superintendents noted unpreparedness, the

highest of any racial group surveyed (Tienken, 2021, p. 47). As social justice values do not dominate school administration coursework, many white administrators recognize they "have difficulty talking about whiteness or understanding racism as a systemic issue" (McMahon, 2007, as cited in Roegman, 2018, p. 838). They either lack equity training altogether, or equity training only provides surface attempts to address what they might consider "management challenges" (Marshall, 2004, p. 4).

These facts indicate school leadership predominantly comprises white men who are not comfortable with conversations about race. Much of this correlates back to the positionality of whiteness and the intersection with gender, as those who experience the most power and privilege are the least likely to engage in racial reflection since they "have no consciousness of themselves as persons or members of an oppressed class" (Freire, 2014, p. 178). Thus, they perpetuate a refusal to critically analyze white racial supremacy and the state of being dominant, leading to the continued oppression of already minoritized students.

Navigating Complex Stakeholder Dynamics

Educational leadership is beholden to many stakeholders with differing priorities regarding what is best for students. These stakeholders might challenge administrators working to combat racism; thus, these leaders are often pushed to uphold whiteness and maintain the status quo (McMahon, 2007, as cited in Welton et al., 2019). How administrators and educators perpetuate oppression within school districts must not be confined solely to race and racism, as there are many intersections of oppressed identities (Crenshaw, 1988). As of April 2022, more than a dozen states are presently considering legislation to prevent public schools from using curricula or discussing topics of gender or sexuality in classrooms. These bills are paired with legislation prohibiting the teaching of structural racism, patriarchy, sexism, and other forms of

oppression which could leave some students who are usually centered feeling uncomfortable (Franklin, 2022). This pushback against centering marginalized students correlates with the idea presented earlier in the paper about the idea that moving away from a traditionally Eurocentric education should be considered a failure of the American education system.

Implications for Research

In pursuit of critically examining K-12 public school racial equity initiatives in the predominantly white suburbs of Boston, the endeavor to address equity within these spaces has become a multifaceted exploration intersects with the research questions guiding this study. By examining all of these dimensions and navigating stakeholder dynamics (McMahon, 2007, as cited in Welton et al., 2019), through the lens of white and BIPOC educators' perspectives and experiences, this study aims to uncover the way whiteness and equity initiatives in predominantly white educational spaces. Through a comprehensive analysis, this research provides insights to inform sustainable and effective approaches to dismantle systemic inequalities in K-12 education.

Educators of Color in Predominantly White Educational Settings

This section synthesizes key findings from existing literature to shed light on the challenges and opportunities encountered by BIPOC educators in their endeavors to promote racial equity in educational settings. The literature underscores the vital role of a steadfast commitment to racial equity for BIPOC students in various educational contexts, including suburban high schools, led by informal teacher leaders (Gardner, 2019; Pittman, 2021; Schmidt et al., 2022). Informal teacher leaders can be crucial in advancing racial equity in predominantly white schools as they navigate the challenges of addressing racial inequity. Schmidt et al. (2022) found by building relationships with colleagues and administration, creating a shared vision for

racial equity, and implementing strategies to promote inclusivity and cultural responsiveness, teacher leaders can help to create a more inclusive and equitable educational environment for BIPOC students. Teacher leaders can also help establish student-led racial equity clubs and leadership classes to help students of color and white students navigate racial equity skillfully (Gardner, 2019). By fostering constructive dialogues and collaborative actions, teacher-led efforts address immediate tensions and contribute to a broader cultural shift toward equity and understanding (Gardner, 2019).

Foundations of Effective Anti-Racist Pedagogy and Educators' Development

Research also shows the journey toward effective anti-racist pedagogy necessitates educators' personal anti-racist development before instructing on the subject (Adams & Love, 2010; Cheesman, 2022). Research within the realm of education requires profound awareness of racial and cultural dynamics, requiring researchers to scrutinize their own and others' systems of knowledge and experience (Adams & Love, 2010; Milner, 2007). This perspective resonates with the need for ongoing professional development for teachers to effectively engage in anti-racist pedagogy as they navigate intricate systemic challenges (Cheesman, 2022). The inherent dangers of a color-and-culture-blind approach underscore the critical importance of acknowledging and valuing diverse perspectives, an essence echoed by both the call to incorporate narratives and counter-narratives in research (Milner, 2007) and the imperative of teacher-led initiatives which foster inclusivity and cultural responsiveness (Schmidt et al., 2022). The intricate interplay between these insights solidifies the foundation for a transformative educational environment, wherein educators' self-awareness, researchers' reflexivity, and an unwavering commitment to diversity converge to advance anti-racist pedagogy for the betterment of all students (Adams & Love, 2010; Cheesman, 2022; Milner, 2007). This study

contextualizes the importance of anti-racist pedagogy for students and educators of color in predominantly white educational settings by emphasizing the need for educators to engage in ongoing learning, self-reflection, and inclusive practices to create a more equitable and supportive learning environment for all students, particularly those from marginalized backgrounds.

Challenges, Complexities, and Toll: BIPOC Educators Doing Racial Equity Work

Navigating the path towards effective anti-racist pedagogy, while essential, also presents significant challenges for teacher leaders who undertake the responsibility of driving transformative change within educational institutions, especially BIPOC educators in predominantly white spaces (Helena, 2023; Pizarro & Kohli, 2018; Singleton, 2014; Sue, 2010). While informal teacher leaders are critical in advancing racial equity work for students, it is essential to acknowledge the inherent tensions between adults and students in school-based decisions and policy work (Gardner, 2019). The transformative influence of informal teacher leaders and structured student engagement is essential while acknowledging the intricate power dynamics and multifaceted challenges in pursuing a more equitable educational environment (Gardner, 2019; Schmidt et al., 2022). It is also vital to acknowledge the complexity of this work and the toll it takes on educators who are tasked with pursuing equity work, especially if they are new to the work or are holding discussions in predominantly white settings where there is limited experience discussing race (Helena, 2023; Singleton, 2014). Many BIPOC educators are tasked with leading such dialogues; they may encounter resistance, anger, racial microaggressions, and what is referred to as *racial battle fatigue* (RBF) (Matthews et al., 2024; Pizarro & Kohli, 2018; Sue, 2010). RBF refers to the psychological, emotional, and physiological toll experienced by individuals when confronted with racism (Mathews et al., 2024; Pizarro & Kohli, 2018). BIPOC

educators need supportive and inclusive environments to prioritize self-care; otherwise, many BIPOC educators withdraw to cope with the emotional and psychological stress of participating in or facilitating professional development around diversity, equity, and inclusion (Baulier, 2022; Helena, 2023; Lac & Diamond, 2019). As Kishimoto (2018) notes, limited scholarly attention has been directed toward exploring the social position of faculty members integrating anti-racist pedagogy and what pedagogy should look like.

BIPOC educators often contend with a challenging work culture which perpetuates feelings of invisibility and unwelcomeness (Cormier et al., 2022; Dixon et al., 2019; King, 2016). This unsettling environment stems from several factors, including that educators of color bear an unequal burden of responsibilities, surpassing their fair share without corresponding recognition or compensation (Dixon et al., 2019; King, 2016). Their agency and autonomy in tailoring their teaching to suit the needs of their students are constrained, reflecting institutional limitations, and they need to grapple with unfavorable working conditions which lack the necessary support for their professional growth (Cormier et al., 2022; Dixon et al., 2019; King, 2016). In addition, the toll of being a teacher of color is high financially and psychologically, exacting a taxing price also known as the “invisible tax” (Cormier et al., 2022; Dixon et al., 2019; King, 2016). Teachers of color shoulder extra responsibilities, including serving as cultural experts, disciplinarians, and educators on racial justice issues, which in turn depletes their time and emotional well-being, increases burnout rates, and contributes to attrition (Cormier et al., 2022; Dixon et al., 2019; King, 2016). It is essential to recognize the responsibility to eliminate this tax should not rest on those enduring it. Instead, school and district leaders play a crucial role in fostering inclusivity through proactive hiring, professional support, multicultural curricula, and cultural competence workshops (Cormier et al., 2022; King, 2016). Research has

shown these unique demands can lead to burnout, a concerning issue given the already limited presence of Black educators, which is particularly worrisome given the documented positive impact of Black teachers on academic and nonacademic outcomes for Black students (Carver-Thomas, 2018; Cormier et al., 2022; Dixon et al., 2019; King, 2016; Scott et al., 2021).

Implications for Research

This literature review section correlates with my research question, delving into various aspects of racial equity work in educational settings, particularly in predominantly white suburbs. This section discusses the crucial role of informal teacher leaders, their challenges, and the impact of educators' engagement in anti-racist pedagogy and racial equity work. My research explores how some white educators perceive and report their participation, roles, and impacts on K-12 school-based racial equity work. This section provides insights into the complexities and challenges faced by educators, addressing their engagement in discussions on race and equity. Additionally, this section discusses challenges such as the "invisible tax" and the impact of an antagonistic work culture (Cormier et al., 2022; Dixon et al., 2019; King, 2016). This directly relates to my research, which seeks to understand how BIPOC educators perceive and report the participation, roles, and impact of white participants in K-12 school-based racial equity work. This section provides a context for examining the interactions, dynamics, and experiences of BIPOC educators in predominantly white educational settings.

Educational Evolution in Massachusetts Suburbs

Suburban schools have changed demographically. After the Black migration from the South, post-reconstruction, and white relocation from cities suggests the presence of *white flight*, or departure of white residents from rapidly diversifying cities to the suburbs, suburban school districts grew to be predominantly white in both student bodies and faculty makeup (Boustan,

2007; Chen et al., 2021; Ryan, 2010). Many places throughout the United States continued this segregation through more overt housing policies like exclusionary zoning, redlining, or discriminatory practices by banks to refuse lending in specific neighborhoods based on race or ethnicity, and discriminatory lending which existed through the early 2000s (Boston Foundation as cited in Eaton, 2020, p. 10; Corporate Finance Institute, 2022). After *Plessy vs. Ferguson*, mandated school facilities could be separated as long as they were equal, a series of cases appeared before the Supreme Court, arguing part of what makes schools unequal is a lack of access to white peers and educators (Eaton, 2020). These cases helped create a climate which encouraged mandated desegregation, paving the way for *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, deciding segregated facilities are inherently unequal (*Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka,* 1954), inspiring a series of policies to enforce this desegregation, including busing students from one segregated school district to another to create integrated schools.

The success of the *Brown* decision was predominantly measured in terms of the percentage of racial minorities in student populations; however, in the decades since, educators and administrators have resisted efforts to diversify curriculum, policies, or practices in schools would prove beneficial to more complex measures of success around those integration efforts (Ware & Ware, 1995). Education in America is a sociopolitical endeavor rooted in Eurocentric notions of culture and built on power structures which reproduce class relationships. It was devised to create a binary where European American culture and values are privileged over others (Bowles & Gintis, 1976, as cited in Espinoza, 2007; Robinson, 2004). The Eurocentric ideology of traditional school settings and curricula has continued to benefit white students but remains a roadblock for students from racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse backgrounds. The opposition to including non-Eurocentric perspectives extends beyond academic circles to

parents and school boards, who may regard a move toward multiculturalism as a failure which will cause a decline in instruction in American public schools (Robinson, 2004; Ware & Ware, 1995).

In Massachusetts, as throughout the country, suburbs have become more ethnically, culturally, and racially diverse, but school faculty and administrators have yet to catch up in many districts (Chen et al., 2021). This shift in student demographics has been paired with the Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity (METCO) program, which serves as "one of America's largest and longest running interdistrict desegregation programs" (Eaton, 2020, xi). This combination has created challenges for the predominantly white administrators in Massachusetts to provide equitable access to education for all students, because non-white students face obstacles built into the Eurocentric systems of education that are not faced by the predominantly white student populations (Eaton, 2020; Ware & Ware, 1995). Therefore, a critical examination of how administrators' whiteness affects their ability to provide transformative equity work is necessary to serve students best in the structures as they are presently available. While many would argue the entire public education system needs to be fundamentally shifted, we need to address the issues impacting students in classrooms every day. One of these issues is the lack of a critical understanding of whiteness among those making policy, procedural, and pedagogical decisions in schools. Due to this lack of critical understanding of whiteness and the perception that good intentions approximate equity, predominantly white school leaders in Massachusetts fail to provide transformative equity work in suburban public schools, thus detrimentally impacting all students.

Massachusetts Historical Context

Massachusetts has a history of residential, racial, ethnic, and economic segregation which mirrors the history of discrimination throughout the United States. According to Kahlenberg (2021), the Boston busing riots are a visible blemish on the record of Massachusetts's seemingly liberal ideology. However, more invisible efforts against integration keep lower-class "people of all races out of more-affluent neighborhoods and schools in Massachusetts and throughout the country" (Kahlenberg, 2021, para. 6). One exclusionary practice is that many communities are primarily zoned for single-family homes, making it difficult for lower-income families to afford opportunities to move into those communities. From 2007 to 2017, 200 of Massachusetts's 351 cities and towns did not build new multifamily housing units (Kahlenberg, 2021, para. 22). These laws perpetuate segregation and increase disparities by restricting opportunities for lower-income people to build wealth through housing.

Another housing policy perpetuating racial and ethnic disparities in Massachusetts and across the country is deceptive and illegal lending practices which victimize people in communities of color. Low-income and minority communities were hit hard by subprime mortgages. However, "African American and Latino borrowers were more likely to get high-APR loans than their white counterparts, regardless of their income level" (Mortgage Lending Discrimination, 2007, p. 2). These practices maintained hypersegregation in Massachusetts, along with redlining hazardous and undesirable areas on home appraisal maps issued by the federal government in the 1930s (Leydon, 2019). Homeownership is a significant driver of wealth accumulation. It is also one of the most significant drivers of inequality in school systems throughout the country (Shapiro et al., 2013). So, despite the mandated integration of public schools, residential segregation creates a norm of school segregation. Massachusetts is no

exception to this implicit segregation, as a 2015 study found Greater Boston to be one of the most segregated cities in the nation (Massey & Tannen, 2015).

Implications for Research

In this context, research on K-12 school-based racial equity work in predominantly white suburban areas is significant. Massachusetts bears a complex history of racial, ethnic, and economic segregation, which weaves into the broader narrative of discrimination in the United States. This narrative exposes the incongruence between professed ideals and tangible reality. In delving into this historical context, I seek to contextualize the challenges and complexities that have shaped the educational landscape. Critical Whiteness Studies and Critical Race Theory have gained focus within this historical landscape. As I expose the layers of Massachusetts's residential segregation, I am confronted with the paradox of seemingly liberal ideologies coexisting with exclusionary policies perpetuating disparities (Kahlenberg, 2021). The legacy of restrictive zoning laws limiting housing opportunities for lower-income families, compounded by discriminatory lending practices, perpetuates hypersegregation and inequality (Leydon, 2019; Mortgage Lending Discrimination, 2007). By tracing the intricacies of Massachusetts's history, I hope to illuminate how white educators must grapple with their roles and responsibilities within a system shaped by historical inequities. Simultaneously, the enduring ramifications of redlining and discriminatory lending practices are manifested in the educational sphere. The residual effects of hypersegregation have become the norm in school segregation despite mandated integration efforts (Massey & Tannen, 2015; Shapiro et al., 2013). As I research the perceptions of BIPOC educators, I hope to gain insight into how the hypersegregation of the commonwealth informs the experiences and expectations of white participants in the context of racial equity initiatives. By acknowledging the area's complex history, I aim to navigate the complexities of

racial equity work within an environment shaped by overt and covert segregation and discrimination.

Boston Busing Crisis

As mentioned above, Massachusetts attempted to desegregate schools without addressing the issue of hypersegregation in housing policies. The Boston Busing Crisis of the 1970s is the most well-known. Black parents of students who attended underfunded schools in Roxbury, Mattapan, and Dorchester—redlined parts of Boston—were frustrated with overcrowding, teaching shortages, and lack of access and resources their children faced in neighborhood schools (Thomas, 2017). Litigation from these parents against the Boston School Committee, in the case of *Tallulah Morgan et al. v. James Hennigan et al*., argued despite the Brown ruling, Boston Public schools remained segregated due to de facto segregation ("Busing in Boston: a research guide," 2022).

In Phase 1 of the plan, students were bused to and from predominantly Black schools in Roxbury and white schools in South Boston. However, during this time, students in South Boston schools had a 5% college attendance rate, and the highest concentration of white poverty in America was at the lower end of South Boston (Ashbrook, 2014). The students in the school system of South Boston dealt with many of the same issues students in the Roxbury schools dealt with when it came to overcrowding and lack of resources and were receiving even less per-pupil spending than students in Roxbury (Ashbrook, 2014). The choice to integrate two of the poorest neighborhoods in the city resulted in racial unrest and turmoil for months until the policy was finally reversed. The white flight stemming from the fallout of forced busing in Boston left Boston Public Schools as a majority-minority district and left the city with a legacy of racism ("Busing in Boston: a research guide," 2022).

Boston's Other Busing Story

A less well-known story of the Boston Busing Saga to desegregate schools is the story of the METCO program in Boston. The program stemmed from the same frustrations regarding institutional neglect of city schools, but this story does not end with violence. In 1964, Black parents conceived a transfer program to transport Black students to predominantly white suburban schools in metro areas (Eaton, 2020). The parents named it the METCO program, which is one of the longest-running, one-directional, voluntary busing programs of its kind. While the program's creators imagined it as a short-term solution, the state's enduring hypersegregation justified the METCO program's efforts (Eaton, 2020).

There are tangible benefits for students of color who participate in METCO and similar programs. Programs can continue because there is no markable effect on white students and there are benefits to the participating communities. Students participating in busing programs graduate from high school at higher rates than those of their home district, their test scores are higher, they attend higher-quality colleges, they have increased adult wages and annual earnings, have a lower probability of incarceration, and have improved adult health status (Eaton, 2020; Johnson, 2011; Reber, 2010). Desegregation has long been associated with reduced stereotypical thinking and racial bias among white students. It is also correlated with increased wages and reduced poverty and health issues (Eaton, 2020). Communities participating in these programs also benefit financially from their participation. The METCO program is state-funded and allocated almost $25 million dollars for the 2019 school year (Stokes, 2019, p. 9). Participating districts receive between $48,000 and almost $3 million dollars depending on the number of students the district accommodates (Stokes, 2019, p. 9). Eaton (2020) suggests METCO has been met with success "because it operates on terms that white suburbanites can accept" (xiv), as it is such a

small program, it does little to affect the demographics of schools. Hence, schools maintain Eurocentric educational values suburban schools have always espoused.

While students who participate in the METCO program experience traditional measures of success, as mentioned above, they also experience lower expectations from their teachers, implicit and explicit racism, negative stereotypes, and heightened stress (Walton & Spencer, 2009, as cited in Eaton, 2020). Ispa-Landa (2013) also studied the impact of urban Black students bussed to affluent suburban school districts and found gendered issues were at play for the Black students attending the school despite the abovementioned success measures. In Ispa-Landa's (2013) study, boys were welcomed by suburban social cliques but were constrained to enact their race and gender performance in narrow ways meeting the expectations of their peers. This perception frequently meant they had to perform masculinity in a way presenting toughness and performed race in a way stereotyped as "cool" (Ispa-Landa, 2013, p. 228). Conversely, the Black girls in the program were more likely to be stereotyped as "ghetto" and "loud" (Ispa-Landa, 2013, p. 219) and were excluded from social groupings. Other scholars have emphasized teachers "may negatively evaluate younger black girls for failing to live up to standards of white femininity" (Ispa-Landa, 2013, p. 230). These findings suggest Black students who are bussed into suburban schools are more constrained in how they perform gender and race than their peers. Because of this, many of these students acquire solid coping skills when dealing with whiteness, as many attend predominantly white colleges or universities (Braddock, 1980).

Massachusetts has a long history of attempts to desegregate their schools. Despite continued hypersegregation due to discriminatory housing policies, it has found some success with the METCO program, which continues to grow yearly. The program itself was not meant to be a long-term solution to segregation problems in Massachusetts. However, because of the

relatively small size of the program and allowances for white suburban culture to maintain the status quo, programs such as METCO will never counter segregation or inequality in educational programs (Eaton, 2020). Suburban school administrators who accommodate students and accept state funds for supporting them are not required to address more equitable outcomes for those students. They frequently employ many practices and policies to comfort and privilege white parents and their students at the expense of Black children and their families (Eaton, 2020). While Black families can always pull their students from the program and send them to their neighborhood schools, the neoliberal outcome of a better future is often more powerful than negative experiences.

Implications for Research

This exploration of Massachusetts's historical racial context and desegregation efforts directly informs this research. This study aims to critically analyze K-12 public school racial equity work in predominantly white suburban areas of Boston while investigating the roles and impacts of whiteness in educational spaces. The historical narrative reveals complex disparities and legacies of segregation which persistently affect educational settings. The METCO program provides a counterpoint to these issues, showcasing success and limitations in addressing racial inequalities through voluntary busing. While tangible benefits to students of color include higher graduation rates, improved test scores, and increased adult wages (Eaton, 2020; Johnson, 2011; Reber, 2010), success is accompanied by experiences of lowered expectations, implicit and explicit racism, negative stereotypes, and heightened stress (Walton & Spencer, 2009, as cited in Eaton, 2020; Ispa-Landa, 2013). This historical backdrop underscores the need to investigate the perceptions and roles of white and BIPOC educators in racial equity work. It explores how these educators navigate the lingering effects of segregation, implicit biases, and differing expectations

(Eaton, 2020), shedding light on the interplay between historical context and contemporary educational efforts. The Massachusetts history of desegregation and its outcomes emphasize the significance of understanding the roles and impacts of whiteness in fostering transformative equity work within a complex and nuanced educational landscape.

Synthesis of the Literature and Implications for Study

This chapter's synthesis of existing literature has provided a comprehensive understanding of the historical development of race, the construction of white supremacy, Critical Race Theory, Critical Whiteness Studies, and the intricate landscape of racial equity efforts in education pertaining to the suburbs of Massachusetts. Navigating these concepts gave me insights into the impacts of whiteness in the educational spaces I inhabit as a student and an educator. Examining the historical development of race demonstrated the complexity of racial dynamics. The construction of white supremacy has been deeply ingrained in American society as influenced by the colonization of Western European countries. The history of racial segregation in the U.S., discriminatory practices, and unequal housing policies have lasting imprints, and understanding these impacts helps the understanding of the continued disparities in educational settings.

This study aims to discover the complexities of K-12 racial equity efforts in predominantly white institutions by examining how both white educators and educators of color navigate, engage with, and sometimes reinforce existing power structures. Through diverse perspectives, including white, biracial, and immigrant educators, this research explores how white cultural norms influence racial equity work in educational spaces.

Critical Whiteness Studies emerged as a valuable framework to examine the privileges and mechanisms of whiteness. Critical Whiteness Studies help demonstrate how whiteness

perpetuates racial inequalities, especially in education. Applying Critical Whiteness Studies methodologies enhances my understanding of White educators' roles, relationships, and impacts on racial equity work while recognizing white culture and whiteness as norms have permeated public educational spaces. Using Critical Race Theory and Critical Whiteness Studies as frameworks for the study helps point out that Massachusetts' history of racial segregation, seen through the Boston busing crisis and discriminatory housing polices, reveals a dichotomy between liberal ideals and racial disparities I must navigate in this study. Shifting demographics and programs like the METCO program, which presents nuanced challenges for Black students navigating racial dynamics in predominantly white school districts, challenge equitable education access. Examining these challenges underscores white suburban limitations.

In the literature surrounding K-12 public school racial equity work in predominantly white suburbs of Boston, several notable gaps emerge underscoring the significance of the research question posed in this study. Despite existing scholarship, there remains a need for a deeper exploration of the nuanced perceptions and experiences of white educators in such settings regarding their participation, roles, and impact within racial equity initiatives. Existing studies may have touched upon this aspect, but a comprehensive examination of white educators' perspectives on predominantly white spaces is lacking. Additionally, while discussions around equity work have been initiated, there is a dearth of research delving into the lived experiences and reflections of BIPOC educators, specifically in relation to the participation, roles, and impact of white participants in racial equity work. Their voices and insights are essential for a comprehensive understanding of how these initiatives play out in practice and how they impact the educational landscape for students of color. These gaps in existing literature highlight the critical need for this research to delve into the perspectives of both white and BIPOC educators,

explore the intricacies of intersecting identities in equity efforts, and critically evaluate the impact and efficacy of current pedagogical approaches.

Exploring racial equity work in education has revealed diverse challenges, opportunities, and nuances. As I navigate this path, I address the multifaceted impact of white educators. The conclusions drawn from this exploration do not offer definitive solutions, but they underscore the significance of questions and perspectives which warrant further exploration. By examining the interplay of historical segregation, discriminatory practices, and educational dynamics with cautious reflection and scholarly humility, this research aims to shed light on the roles and impacts of whiteness and predominantly white educators in K-12 school-based racial equity work. Through this, I aim to contribute to the ongoing discourse on racial equity and cultivate a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities ahead.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Research Paradigm

The research paradigm for this dissertation is a critical ethnographic narrative qualitative approach looking to answer the research question: how does white culture influence some educators' perceived participation, roles, and impacts in suburban Massachusetts K-12 public school-based racial equity work? I chose this research methodology due to its appropriateness in delving into the intricacies of K-12 district-wide racial equity work within predominantly white suburbs of Boston, Massachusetts.

The rationale behind selecting a critical ethnographic narrative lies in its ability to enable the researcher to have a fuller understanding of the roles and impacts of whiteness and predominantly white educators in racial equity efforts. The study followed the steps of critical ethnographic research, according to Campbell's (2011) insights, including identifying the groups of interest, selecting critical ethnography to examine power structures, identifying patterns, selecting cultural themes, and conducting fieldwork (Carspecken, 1996; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Gournelos et al., 2019). This method allowed me to use qualitative methods, such as interviews, participant observations, and document analysis, to explore how educators construct narratives and make meaning of their engagement in racial equity work within the context of dominant white cultural norms (Carspecken, 1996). When I began consideration for the research, I also wanted to include focus groups, but after IRB submission, it became clear that I would not be able to maintain the complete anonymity of participants, so I chose to remove that data collection method.

I collected narratives and stories from participants, allowing them to express their experiences, perspectives, and realities in their own words. I used these stories as a valuable

source of data to provide insights into the lived experiences of the participants. I created individual profiles and then looked for themes that emerged from those stories. I then reconstructed the collected stories into a narrative format reflecting the complexity and diversity of the participants' experiences by weaving together multiple voices and perspectives to enhance the nuanced portrayal of the social context of the study (Carspecken, 1996). Critical ethnography aims to study a culture while also exposing underlying power structures and problematic practices marginalizing particular groups (Carpecken, 1996; Thomas, 1993). My role as a researcher was to access, interpret, and understand the multiple constructed realities related to this topic as revealed through their stories.

This paradigm supports an emergent, flexible, and collaborative approach to inquiry, which aligns well with the complex nature of race, culture, and equity in education. Rather than seeking objective truth, I aimed to construct knowledge from participants by engaging in dialogue about their narratives and remaining open to their ideas and perspectives (Carspecken, 1996; Madison, 2020; Thomas, 1993). The goal was to develop a holistic, contextualized understanding of how whiteness manifests in the stories educators tell about their perceptions and actions regarding racial equity. A critical ethnographic narrative approach allows me to honor participants' voices and diverse realities as revealed through their narratives.

This immersive process aligns with the goal of understanding how white culture influences racial equity work, emphasizing cultural sensitivity and ethical considerations. The adoption of a critical ethnographic paradigm resonates with Carolyn Ellis's emphasis on reflexivity (Douglas, 2016). Acknowledging the subjective nature of the research and being attuned to biases, assumptions, and cultural backgrounds are crucial to this approach (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Michelle Fine's perspective on the potential impact of research aligns with the

broader goal of this study, where the findings contribute not only to scholarly knowledge but also the policy, law, and community-based initiatives, creating meaningful differences in the field of racial equity (BigIdeaFest, 2014). Madison's (2020) emphasis on negotiation and dialogue in critical ethnography complements the interactive nature of this research, which will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of educators' experiences in racial equity work.

A critical ethnographic narrative approach, recognizing the socially constructed nature of culture and racial equity, illuminates educators' varied perspectives and experiences shaped by dominant white culture through their subjective narratives and co-constructed meanings. This allowed me to develop a nuanced understanding of this topic through participants' stories.

Rationale for Choice of Methodology

A critical ethnographic narrative approach was uniquely suited to investigate the complex, nuanced ways white culture operates in educational settings (Carspecken, 1996; Pino Gavidia & Adu, 2022). Unlike more rigid quantitative methods, this approach offers a dynamic framework for exploring how educators construct meaning within systemic cultural contexts (Madison, 2020). The methodology's strength lies in its ability to capture the interplay between individual experiences and broader institutional dynamics. By prioritizing participants' narratives, the approach allows for a deeper examination of how white cultural norms subtly influence racial equity work. Traditional research methods often flatten complex interactions, but a critical ethnographic narrative approach reveals the layered, contextual nature of institutional racism (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The interactive nature of this methodology proved particularly powerful for exploring a topic as complex and sensitive as racial equity in predominantly white educational institutions. The research captured nuanced insights that more

structured approaches might miss by creating space for participants to articulate their experiences in their own words.

Recruiting Participants

The recruitment process proved to be one of the most difficult aspects of this research process, as finding a public school district willing to participate was a considerable challenge. Initial outreach efforts included six predominantly white suburban districts in Massachusetts, including both my home district and my district of employment. Despite leveraging existing professional networks and connections, these initial attempts at securing a research site were unsuccessful. The reluctance of districts to participate in research examining white culture and racial equity work may reflect broader patterns of institutional resistance to engaging with topics of race and equity in predominantly white educational spaces. This pattern aligns with existing literature suggesting that predominantly white institutions often display hesitance when confronted with opportunities for critical examination of racial dynamics (Leonardo, 2009). Access to Edgewood Public Schools was ultimately secured through the interest and advocacy of a school board member who recognized the potential value of this research in advancing the district's equity initiatives. This circuitous path to securing a research site itself provides insight into the complex dynamics of conducting research on racial equity within predominantly white educational institutions, where institutional gatekeeping may serve to maintain existing power structures and avoid potential discomfort around discussions of race and equity.

One district superintendent declined participation by stating, "Your research is not something we will move forward with. I support your interest, but we conducted an Equity Audit a couple of years ago and we delved into this. In fact, we created an Equity Strategic Plan based on our findings" (personal communication). Despite my explanation of how this study could

complement their ongoing efforts, their response suggested a perception that their work in this area was complete. This attitude points to a potential sense of finality around racial equity efforts, where previous initiatives are seen as fulfilling the need for continued inquiry or self-reflection. Such responses shaped the final sample, resulting in a narrower focus on a district and educators who were willing to engage in conversations about racial equity. This reluctance to participate may reflect broader discomfort and sensitivity around discussions of race and equity within these communities (DiAngelo 2018; Bonilla-Silva, 2018). The limitation restricts the study's capacity to represent the experiences of a wider range of predominantly white school districts.

Following district approval, the superintendent facilitated participant recruitment by extending an open invitation to all educators and paraprofessionals across the district's schools who are interested in racial equity work. This district-wide recruitment effort yielded seven responses from educators who met the study's criteria of having a minimum of five years of experience within the district. Two potential participants withdrew from the study prior to data collection: one white female educator cited time constraints, while another female educator (racial identification undisclosed) became unresponsive after multiple rescheduling attempts. The final sample of five participants represented diverse professional roles, including classroom teachers and support staff, providing a cross-sectional view of educational positions within the district. While gender distribution among participants was predominantly female, with only one male participant, the sample included racial diversity with participants identifying as white, Indian, and biracial. This demographic composition, while not proportionally representative of the district's staff, offered varied perspectives on how educators navigate racial equity work within this predominantly white educational space.

Data Collection Methods

Interview Process

One data collection method consisted of semi-structured interviews conducted between October and November 2024. I developed interview questions based on the characteristics of White Supremacy Culture (Jones & Okun, 2001) to guide question formation**.** These questions were designed to align with the characteristics of white culture, even if educators did not consciously recognize them as such. While my interview questions were informed by WSC, I understood that not all participants would explicitly identify these characteristics as manifestations of white culture. Some participants framed their experiences in ways that did not directly align with the questions. In these cases, I adapted my follow-up questions to explore how institutional norms still shaped their perspectives. When Ashley, an educator who identifies as actively engaged in antiracist work, discussed her advocacy for students, she stated, “I have to make sure I’m their voice because oftentimes they can’t speak for themselves, or their parents don’t advocate not because they don’t want to, but they’re not able to.” While her commitment to student support was clear, her framing reflected the WSC characteristic of paternalism by assuming that marginalized students and their families require white educators to speak on their behalf. To explore this further, I asked, “How do you navigate the balance between advocating for students and ensuring their voices are centered in decision-making?” This allowed me to examine how white educators, even those committed to racial equity, may still enact white institutional norms in their roles as advocates. The reach and impact of white supremacy are such that, despite our best efforts, we are all still shaped by it, whether through the norms we resist or those we unconsciously reinforce.

The interviews took place virtually via Zoom video conferencing platform except for one

interview that was done in person at Edgewood Middle School. The virtual format provided consistency in the interviews while allowing for accommodation of participants' schedules and preference (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Gournelos et al., 2019). Each interview lasted about 45 minutes to an hour, giving enough time to explore participants' lived experiences and perspectives. To make sure I captured the data accurately, I utilized Otter.ai recording and transcription software to record all the interviews, including the in-person interview, with consent from the participants obtained beforehand. Otter.ai performed transcription, which I then edited as necessary for clarity and any inaccuracies. Verifying the interviews involved listening to the recordings while reviewing the transcripts, correcting any errors, and adding relevant non-verbal contextual notes.

Following transcription verification, participants received copies of their interview transcripts for member checking. This allowed participants to validate and clarify their input and develop anything to enhance their points (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This step further enhanced data validity and authenticity, while upholding the voices of participants within the research process. Then, I integrated the verified transcripts with my reflexive field notes taken during and immediately after each interview. The field notes captured observational data, initial analytical insights, and methodological considerations that emerged during the interviews. The combination of verified transcripts and reflexive notes provided a rich dataset for subsequent analysis through the theoretical frameworks.

Observation Protocols

To develop this critical ethnographic narrative, I constructed a comprehensive observation protocol that strategically integrated Critical Race Theory (CRT), Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS), and White Supremacy Culture Frameworks (WSC) to analyze equity focused

professional development within Edgewood Public Schools. My approach was informed by ethnographic observation methodologies emphasizing detailed field notes, participant interactions, and institutional dynamics (Frank, 1999). The observation recording sheets served as a structured data collection mechanism and a critical interpretive tool for examining institutional practices, participation interactions, and the nuanced manifestations of racial dynamics in educational spaces.

As a non-participant observer, I positioned myself among the participants who had consented to be observed and recorded their participation in professional development activities (Gournelos et al., 2019). This positioning allowed me to maintain methodological distance while capturing authentic interactions. To ensure accurate documentation of participants' exact language and interactions, I utilized Otter.ai transcription software to record and transcribe sessions in real-time, complementing my written field notes. My recording device for Otter.ai was placed near educators who had agreed to participate in the study to ensure ethical considerations. This dual approach to data collection enhanced the specificity and reliability of the observational data, which is particularly important when examining subtle manifestations of white culture in educational spaces.

I crafted observation protocols to capture the multiple dimensions of professional development contexts. I developed and employed a comprehensive observational protocol to systematically document the manifestations of white culture within equity-focused activities and initiatives at Edgewood Public Schools. The observation recording sheet was structured to capture explicit and implicit expressions of white cultural influences while maintaining methodological rigor aligned with critical ethnographic approaches. The observation protocol consisted of five primary domains: environment, equity content, participant engagement,

facilitator/facilitation, and overall imprisonment. Each domain was designed to illuminate how white culture might shape interactions, discussions, and the implementation of equity work within the school system.

The **Environment** section documented physical arrangements and atmospheric elements that might reflect or reinforce dominant cultural norms. In professional development sessions, Teachers sat in self-selected groups while an administrator facilitated from the front, creating an informal yet subtly hierarchical structure. This arrangement allowed educators to engage in familiar peer circles, potentially reinforcing existing comfort zones rather than fostering cross-group dialogue about equity. The **Equity Content** domain focused on tracking how equity-related concepts were presented and discussed, with particular attention to whether and how white cultural perspectives influenced the framing of these discussions. Visual displays in the room emphasized broad, depoliticized terms like “best practices” without addressing systemic inequities. One particularly telling example was a PD document that contained written content about systemic inequities; however, it was never referenced or discussed during the session. The omission of this material reflected a broader pattern in which equity work was present in theory but not in practice, signaling an implicit boundary around how deeply these discussions were expected or allowed to go. These environmental elements subtly reinforced white cultural norms by prioritizing comfort, neutrality, and surface-level engagement over critical interrogation of systemic inequities. **Participant Engagement** documentation captured interaction patterns that might reveal how white cultural norms influenced participation. The protocol tracked active participation, questions raised, and interaction dynamics, providing data on whose voices dominated discussions and how different perspectives were received. The **Facilitator/Facilitation** section examined how leadership approaches might reflect or challenge

white cultural norms. This observation data included attention to facilitation styles, clarity of instructions, and responsiveness to participant needs, particularly noting how these elements might privilege or exclude specific cultural engagement methods. I used the **overall impression** section into the interpretive notes component that ensured my descriptive notes separate from my interpretive notes (Frank, 1999).

Each observation was included with a reflection section, prompting ongoing researcher reflexivity about my positionality and potential biases as an observer (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). These align with critical ethnographic principles of acknowledging and examining the researcher's role in the research process. I designed the protocol to be structured enough to ensure consistent data collection across multiple observations and flexible enough to capture unexpected manifestations of white cultural influence (Gournelos et al., 2019). This balance was crucial for maintaining methodological rigor while remaining responsive to the complex yet often subtle ways white culture manifests in educational systems.

Document Review Processes

For the document analysis phase, I looked at public-facing district materials and internal professional development handouts to understand how white culture appears in official district discourse and pedagogical guidance grounded in Critical Race Theory, Critical Whiteness Studies, and White Supremacy Culture frameworks. While not explicitly labeled as equity focused, I analyzed selected documents representing key areas where equitable practices should be evident in daily educational operations, such as budget materials and the district's Strategic Plan. I also examined materials the district deemed as "deeper learning" and "best practices" to reveal how white culture influences fundamental pedagogical and operational approaches, even when equity is not the stated focus. This methodological choice aligns with Critical Race

Theory's emphasis on examining racial dynamics embedded in seemingly race-neutral policies and practices (Crenshaw, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Picower, 2009).

The documents I selected for analysis, including professional development materials, publicly available budget information, and the district Strategic Plan, represent institutional spaces where equity considerations should be intrinsic to effective practice. Through a multi-stage analytical process, I identified implicit manifestations of white culture, such as embedded assumptions about "normal" or "standard" practices. By looking at how these materials address (or fail to address) equity concerns, this study illuminates how white culture shapes institutional assumptions about teaching, learning, and student support, revealing whether equity is treated as an integrated element of educational practice or as a separate consideration (Leonardo, 2009; Matias, 2013; Picower, 2009). Throughout the process, I maintained detailed analytical memos documenting emerging patterns and themes about how white culture influences institutional practices and priorities.

Analyzing Data

This study's data analysis employed a systematic approach grounded in Critical Race Theory, Critical Whiteness Studies, and White Supremacy Culture frameworks. The process began as I developed an initial coding framework derived from these theoretical underpinnings, focusing on how white culture influences educators' perceived participation, roles, and impacts within racial equity work at Edgewood Public Schools (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Gournelos et al., 2019).

Initial Coding and Framework Development

Using both a priori and open coding (Blair, 2015), interview transcripts were first color-coded by key themes, which were highlighted directly in a document of the transcripts and then

transferred into a spreadsheet for further analysis. The first phase of analysis employed both a priori and emergent coding approaches. Initial codes were derived directly from the theoretical frameworks (See Appendix F for complete coding matrices), including concepts like counternarratives and interest convergence from CRT, white institutional culture and white privilege navigation from CWS, and fear of open conflict and power hoarding from WSC. These insights informed the development of detailed coding matrices (See Appendix A) for analyzing document reviews and observational data (Cresswell & Cresswell, 2018; Gournelos et al., 2019).

For the interview and observational data, In Vivo codes captured participants' exact language to preserve their voices and maintain fidelity to their experiences and perceptions (Bazeley & Richards, 2000; Saldaña, 2021). This ensured that the analysis remained grounded in participants' actual expressions rather than imposing external frameworks.

Iterative Coding Process and Evolution

The iterative nature of the process allowed for ongoing refinement of codes and analytical categories as new insights emerged. The coding process proceeded through multiple iterations, documented in Google Sheets to track the evolution of coding categories and decision rationale. As analysis progressed, these theoretical codes underwent significant refinement and expansion based on patterns emerging from the data. For example, the initial CRT code "whiteness as property" evolved to encompass specific manifestations such as "institutional control mechanisms" and "gatekeeping practices" as these patterns became increasingly evident in participant narratives.

In response to the evolving nature of the data, I made a deliberate effort to track changes and additions to the coding process. I maintained a code tracking sheet documenting when new codes were introduced and how existing ones evolved throughout the analysis. This practice

allowed me to capture shifts in theoretical understanding and ensure that the changes aligned with both the data and the theoretical frameworks. The coding framework underwent substantial development as new dimensions emerged from the data. For example, the initial code 'White Passing Privilege' expanded to include strategic identity disclosure and institutional navigation strategies as participants shared their experiences.

One of the theoretical codes, derived from Critical Whiteness Studies, initially categorized ‘White Institutional Culture’ as a broad theme capturing protective mechanisms that benefit white individuals within institutions. During my interview with Jessica, she remarked, “White women speaking about racial diversity . . . it was really out of touch,” which led to the addition of the dimension “Professional Development Manifestations” under this code. This spoke to how whiteness shapes institutional learning, particularly in professional development settings, and revealed how white cultural norms influence opportunities for professional growth.

Similarly, in my interview with Ashley, she noted, “A lot of our custodians over the years have either been Hispanic, South Korean . . . but not in leadership,” which prompted the addition of the dimension “Staff role Stratification.” This remark highlighted how racial hierarchies were embedded in institutional structures and revealed how whiteness operates within institutional settings to maintain racial hierarchies, particularly in leadership roles. Her journey suggests individual educators may undergo personal transformation, but without systemic interventions these changes remain isolated rather than institutionalized.

Emergent Themes and Categories

The analysis revealed several key thematic categories, including institutional manifestations of whiteness, individuals navigating white identity, systemic barriers to equity implementation, and resistance patterns to change. Within these broad categories, sub-themes

emerged, including those around institutional white culture, strategic identity disclosure, failed initiative patterns, professional development approaches, and gatekeeping practices. The final coding matrices in Appendix A include specific descriptions and indicators to ensure consistent application across data sources.

Regular memoing captured evolving analytical insights and theoretical connections. This systematic yet flexible approach supported the development of rich, theoretically grounded findings while maintaining sensitivity to emergent patterns and themes.

Analytical Considerations and Alternative Interpretations

Throughout the analysis, attention was paid to potential social desirability bias, recognizing participants might tailor their responses to align with perceived expectations. Alternative interpretations considered including the possibility educators' reluctance to engage deeply in racial equity work stemmed from institutional constraints rather than personal resistance.

While patterns of white cultural dominance were evident, some educators demonstrated meaningful shifts in perspective, though the change appeared to be self-driven rather than the result of institutional, professional development, or structural support. This finding underscores the limitations of current professional development approaches, which fail to consistently challenge white cultural norms or provide the sustained, critical engagement necessary for widespread shifts in practice.

Ethical Protections

Numerous ethical protections were employed in this study to safeguard participants and minimize any risks associated with involvement. For my study to be approved, I obtained permission and adhered to Antioch University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) principles.

Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection, clearly communicating the voluntary nature of participation, the purpose and procedures of the study, risks and benefits, and their right to withdraw (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Gournelos et al., 2019). The district, schools, and all participants were then assigned pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality. Any potentially identifiable details in the data were removed or altered to avoid inadvertent identification (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Rigorous data security measures have been implemented throughout the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Gournelos et al., 2019). All recordings, transcripts, field notes, and documents were de-identified, assigned pseudonyms, and stored in encrypted, password-protected files accessible only to me as the researcher. Physical data was secured in a locked, private cabinet. Interview recordings were transcribed and checked for accuracy, with all descriptions carefully crafted to prevent participation identification. Member checking allowed participants to review and request changes to interpretations of their narratives to further protect confidentiality (Blair, 2015; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). No compensation was provided to avoid coercion for participation. Data has only been used for this study and will be destroyed after study completion per ethical research guidelines (Gournelos et al., 2019). The confidentiality, privacy, and well-being of participants will be prioritized through these comprehensive protections, including de-identification, data security, member checking, informed consent procedures, lack of compensation, and IRB oversight (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Adhering to ethical standards will allow me to conduct the research in a manner respecting the participants and minimizes any associated risks.

Role of the Researcher

As the researcher in this study, I approached this work as an outside researcher who shares some commonalities with the participants and setting. As a white female English teacher in a predominantly white, suburban Massachusetts public school system, I understand many of the professional contexts and challenges that participants described; however, I had no prior connection to Edgewood Public Schools or its educators, which allowed me to maintain greater objectivity while examining their experiences with racial equity work.

To address my potential biases and assumptions that might arise from my own experiences as a white educator in a predominantly white district, I engaged in reflexive memoing and journaling throughout data collection and analysis. This process involved critically reflecting on my positionality, assumptions, and reactions and developing understandings (Blair, 2015; Carspecken, 2018; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Gournelos et al., 2019). The reflexive memoing also helped me systematically document observations and connect them to emerging narrative themes. Regular discussions with peer debriefers helped support this reflexivity (Carspecken, 2018). Member checking allowed participant feedback on the fairness and accuracy of my interpretations (Blair, 2015; Creswell & Creswell, 2019).

While my status as an outside researcher meant building trust required additional care and attention, it allowed participants to share their experiences without concern about internal district relationships or dynamics. My professional background as an educator provided enough shared context to facilitate meaningful dialogue, while my position outside their system allowed for greater candor in our discussions. Many educators seemed put at ease that they were going to be completely anonymous, and their administration did not have access to the real names of any participants. Through maintaining rigorous research practices and ethical standards, I worked to

conduct research that authentically represented participant perspectives while developing meaningful implications for equity promotion in predominantly white educational institutions.

My role as an equity leader in another suburban Massachusetts district provided important contextual validation of emerging themes. While maintaining analytical distance through bracketing and reflexive practices, I noted strong parallels between participant narratives and patterns I have independently observed in my professional work. This alignment with documented experiences across districts strengthens the transferability of findings within similar suburban contexts. I remained vigilant, however, through peer debriefing and member checking to ensure my prior experiences did not overshadow unique aspects of participants'' stories.

Timeline

This study employed a rapid ethnographic approach, adapting traditional ethnographic methods for an applied educational research context. While traditional ethnography typically requires several months of fieldwork followed by the equivalent time for analysis, this study utilized a collection of focused field methods designed to provide meaningful understanding within a compressed timeline (Millen, 2000). As Millen (2000) notes, rapid ethnography employs specific strategies to gather rich data efficiently, including narrowed research focus and short, very specific observation techniques. This study was conducted over a four-month period from October 2024 through January 2025. The research process was initially delayed when the IRB application, submitted July 2024, was lost within the institutional system. After following up, IRB approval was finally secured on September 20th, 2024. This administrative delay was followed by additional setbacks in securing a research site, with two districts declining participation in the study (my district of employment on September 10th and my home district on September 17th) before Edgewood Public Schools approved the research proposal on October

7th, 2024. Participant recruitment occurred between October 10th and October 20th, with interviews conducted during the last week of October through the first week of November 2024. Following each interview, transcripts were sent to participants for member checking to verify accuracy and enable credible representation of their narratives. Data collection continued through November with participation in two Professional Development sessions and a comprehensive document review extending into early December.

The four-month data collection period aligned with these rapid ethnographic principles in several ways. There was a clearly bounded focus on white cultural influences in racial equity work. There was voluntary participation from educators whose experiences with racial equity initiatives gave them unique perspectives on institutional dynamics and challenge. The self-selection of participants who chose to engage with this research provides valuable insight into how educators navigate racial equity work within institutional constraints. Their willingness to share their experiences, both positive and challenging, offers important perspectives on the complexities of implementing equity initiatives in predominantly white educational spaces. The study created intensive engagement through multiple data collection methods, utilizing interviews, observations, and document analysis. I also utilized interactive observation techniques during professional development sessions.

Analysis of the data occurred concurrently with later stages of data collection throughout November and December 2024. The final phase of the study, conducted through December 2024 and January 2025, focused on intensive analysis and the writing of Chapters 4 and 5. While the timeline was more compressed than initially planned due to the IRB delay and initial site recruitment challenges, it still allows for rigorous data collection, thorough analysis, and

thoughtful interpretation of findings while maintaining research integrity and honoring participant narratives.

Methodological Limitations

While Chapter 1 addressed the broader study limitations regarding scope and participation, several specific methodological constraints warrant discussion. The sample size of five educators from a single district, while providing rich narrative data, limits broader generalizability; however, similar ethnographic studies in education (e.g., Gardner, 2019; Schmidt et al., 2022) have demonstrated meaningful findings with comparable sample sizes when examining institutional dynamics around racial equity work. This alignment with existing literature suggests the sample size, though small, can provide meaningful insights into institutional patterns around racial equity work.

Recruitment was challenging due to initial site access and issues, as multiple districts declined participation before Edgewood Public Schools approved the study. This delay compressed the data collection timeline, potentially limiting deeper ethnographic insights. My initial expectation of this study was to operate in my own district where I have already built trust with educators to discuss their experiences honestly regarding their experiences with racial equity work in the district. With my district of employment not approving this research, I was left to rely on district admin to help me recruit educators to participate. The reliance on district administration for recruitment may have introduced selection bias, as participants may have been those more comfortable discussing racial equity within institutional frameworks, while those with more critical perspectives may have opted out.

The compressed 4-month timeline for data collection, while allowing for multiple touchpoints with participants, potentially constrained the development of deeper ethnographic

insights. This limitation was partially mitigated through intensive engagement through interview, observations, and document analysis, aligning with rapid ethnographic approaches (Millen, 2000). The study's recruitment process through district administration may have introduced selection bias, potentially excluding educators more critical of institutional practices. Additionally, two participants withdrew early from the study, which may indicate systemic differences between those who completed participation versus those who did not, though the precise reasons for withdrawal remain unclear. These factors likely shaped the narratives collected, potentially leading to a more institutionally favorable representation of their progress in racial equity work rather than capturing a full spectrum of educator perspectives.

The data collection process faced several technical constraints. Although most interviews were conducted virtually with one in-person exception, this mixed format may have influenced the depth and quality of participant responses. Virtual interviews, while convenient for scheduling and transcription, potentially limited the observation of non-verbal cues and environmental contexts that could have enriched the ethnographic data. The professional development observations, while conducted in person, were constrained by the district's predetermined schedule and format, potentially limiting opportunities to observe spontaneous interactions or informal discussions about racial equity.

The document analysis process encountered limitations regarding access and selection. While the district provided various materials including the Strategic Plan and professional development resources, these documents represented curated, public-facing institutional narratives. The absence of certain documents, such as informal communications or meeting notes, may have restricted a fuller understanding of how racial equity work manifests in daily practice.

My position as both researcher and practicing educator in another district introduced complex dynamics requiring careful methodological consideration. While this dual role provided valuable insight into institutional patterns and practices, it necessitated rigorous attention to potential bias in data collection and analysis. My parallel experiences as an equity leader in another suburban Massachusetts district offered important contextual validation of emerging themes. This familiarity required careful bracketing during analysis to ensure participants' unique experiences were not overshadowed by my professional knowledge. The analytical process faced additional constraints related to interpretation and representation. The risk of bias required constant vigilance, particularly when analyzing data from participants whose experience closely aligned with my own. Social desirability effects may have influenced participant responses, especially given the sensitive nature of discussing racial equity in predominantly white spaces. These effects could have been amplified by participants' awareness of my role as both a researcher and fellow educators.

To address these methodological limitations, I employed several strategies to ensure trustworthiness and credibility. I engaged in regular reflexive memoing to document and critically examine my potential biases and assumptions throughout the research process. Member checking was conducted by sharing interview transcripts and initial interpretations with participants for accuracy and clarification. Triangulation was used to enhance credibility by cross-referencing interview data, observational notes, and document analysis to identify consistencies and contradictions. I engaged in peer debriefing with doctoral peers at Antioch and collogues in education outside the study. These debriefing sessions provided opportunities to challenge my interpretations, refine emerging themes, and consider alternative explanations. Finally, I explicitly acknowledged my positionality throughout my analysis of the data. While

my insider knowledge of suburban educational contexts provided important validation of emerging themes, I remained vigilant about maintaining analytical distance by critically questioning my assumptions and interpretations. This ongoing tension between leveraging my professional insight and ensuring methodological rigor remained a constant consideration throughout the research process.

These methodological limitations should be considered alongside the broader study constraints outlined in Chapter 1. Together, they provide a comprehensive understanding of the study's boundaries while highlighting opportunities for future research with expanded methodological approaches.

Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the methodology for a critical ethnographic narrative study exploring how white culture shapes educators' perceived participation, roles, and impacts in racial equity work. The rationale, fit, and alignment of this qualitative approach was discussed, including the challenges encountered in securing a research site, which itself provided insight into institutional resistance to racial equity research. The study ultimately included five participants from Edgewood Public Schools, representing diverse roles and backgrounds within the district. The data collection process, while more compressed than initially planned due to the delays, was conducted from September 2024 through January 2025. This included in-depth interviews, observations of Professional Development sessions, and document analysis. Data analysis employed rigorous coding procedures and thematic analysis, revealing key patterns in how educators navigate racial equity work within predominantly white school districts. The chapter outlined comprehensive ethical protections for participants, including careful attention to confidentiality and member checking procedures. My position as an outside researcher, while

initially challenging for recruitment, provided objectivity in examining how educators experience and engage with racial equity work. Reflexive practices, including memoing and regular consultation with peer debriefers, supported maintaining research integrity throughout the study. Despite timeline adjustments necessitated by initial administrative delays and recruitment challenges, the study maintained methodological rigor while developing meaningful insights into educators' experiences advancing racial equity within the constraints of dominant white cultural norms.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

This chapter presents the findings from interviews, observations, and document analysis to help answer the research question guiding this study, which is as follows: How does white culture influence some educators' perceived participation, roles, and impacts within Edgewood Public Schools, a suburban Massachusetts K-12 public school-based racial equity work? This study aims to explore how whiteness is shaped by educators engaging with equity work, using their lived experiences to uncover the nuanced intersections of race, culture, and education in a predominantly white institution. The first section details the data generation and management process, followed by in-depth analysis of the five participants' narratives with the observations and document analysis. These individual accounts provide insight into how whiteness shapes educators' engagement with racial equity work. The latter sections present the emergent themes revealing patterns of power, resistance, and institutional constraints in Edgewood Public Schools. The chapter concludes with a synthesis of the themes and their implications for equity work in predominantly white institutions.

A qualitative methodology approach was selected because it enables a comprehensive understanding of the social and cultural dynamics at play in racial equity work. Given the nature of the research question, Critical Ethnographic Narrative (CEN) was deemed most suitable, as it allows for the integration of ethnography's focus on cultural and social structures with narrative inquiry's emphasis on personal experiences and stories (Connelly and Clandinin, 1988, as cited in Clandinin, 2019; Madison, 2005). This combination allows for an analysis both systemic and personal, providing insights into the ways in which power and oppression manifest in educational contexts. The Critical Ethnographic Narrative is particularly suited for this research because of its commitment to examining and challenging the dominant ideologies. As Brodkey

(1987) suggests, schools often act as sites of cultural hegemony where inequities are perpetuated through policies, practices, and interactions. Critical Ethnographic Narrative not only interrogates these systems but also amplifies the voices of individuals operating within them. By centering on educators' narratives, this research seeks to reveal unspoken or unacknowledged power dynamics, implicit biases, and inequities shaping their participation in racial equity work. This approach is informed by the critical theory model, which, as Madison (2005) noted, emphasizes the political purpose of overcoming social oppression. Critical Ethnographic Narrative extends this mission by employing personal narratives as tools to challenge dominant structures and ideologies, thus enabling the identification of transformative practices supporting equity and justice.

The Participants

This section presents the stories of five educators from Edgewood Public Schools, whose experiences illuminate the complex ways white culture influences participation in racial equity work within a suburban Massachusetts district. Their stories help us gain insight into how educators position themselves to navigate, confront, and sometimes reinforce existing power structures as they engage with equity initiatives in their daily practice. The following narratives showcase diverse perspectives within the district: Jennifer, a biracial teacher who presents as white provides insight into cultural representation in education; Sarah, a first-grade teacher whose transition from urban to suburban teaching contexts highlights systemic differences in approaching diversity; Aria, an educator whose immigrant experience offers a distinct lens on institutional power dynamics; Daniel, a special educator teacher wrestling with questions of privilege and equity in practice; and Ashley, an English language educator for over 20 years who has worked throughout most of the district but recently has been centrally located at Elementary

School #1. Each narrative reveals individual struggles, institutional constraints, and moments of transformation characterizing racial equity work in predominantly white educational spaces. Together, these stories paint a nuanced picture of how white cultural norms and practices influence educators' perceived roles and impact the advancement of racial equity within their school community.

Jennifer

Jennifer (pseudonym) is a world language teacher who brings a unique perspective as a biracial female educator, with one parent of European descent and another who immigrated from an island nation. Despite presenting as white, Jennifer's mixed-race background informs her approach toward diversity and inclusion in education. She has taught at Edgewood Middle School for several years, where she actively works to create an inclusive environment in her world language classroom. Jennifer's awareness of her own racial identity plays a significant role in how she approaches teaching and student relationships. She noted while race does not frequently come up in conversations with colleagues or administrators, it becomes particularly relevant when students seek representation among their teachers. Given the predominantly Caucasian staff at her school, Jennifer's disclosure of her African heritage often resonates with students of color who are "looking to see themselves in their teachers."

Her teaching philosophy emphasizes the importance of representation and cultural diversity, particularly through her curriculum choices. She intentionally incorporated materials from various regions that share a common linguistic heritage, including parts of Northern Africa, a central European country, a central African nation, several Caribbean islands, and a southern US state, ensuring students were exposed to diverse cultures connected by a shared language. Jennifer explains: "[This language] is spoken all over the world, and I try to make sure that's

reflected…I make sure I vocalize to the students as well that this is my point." Jennifer demonstrates a critical awareness of institutional challenges regarding racial equity. She recounts a problematic professional development session where white women presented about racial diversity, which she described as "out of touch." This incident sparked backlash from teachers, including Jennifer, leading to the formulation of a committee to address racial equity issues—though she notes this initiative eventually "fizzled out."

Her approach to education emphasized the importance of seeing oneself as reflected in academic content, particularly at the secondary level. She argued this representation is crucial for students to envision future career possibilities in various fields. Jennifer's teaching methodology includes deliberate efforts to showcase diversity, such as using images of people from various backgrounds during language exercises and actively seeking student feedback about representation in her classroom materials.

Daniel

Daniel (pseudonym) is a white, male special education teacher at Martin School with eight years of teaching experience, four of which have been in his current district. As a co-taught teacher, he serves a caseload of 14 students with diverse needs, splitting his time between two classrooms while coordinating with a paraprofessional to ensure consistent student support. Daniels' reflection on his white racial identity and its impact on his teaching practice was catalyzed by a pivotal job interview experience during the aftermath of George Floyd's death. When asked how his white privilege affected his teaching, he recalled being caught off guard: "I had a terrible answer because I wasn't expecting that answer. And I think I said something along the lines of, like, golden rule, I treat everybody the way that they should be treated." This marks

Daniel's description of his first confrontation with considering the role of his racial identity education.

His perspective on racial equity work was shaped by his experience implementing cultural initiatives at the elementary level. He described a revealing incident involving a school-wide cultural mapping activity in which an African American student's family opted out of participation. Daniel notes the complexity of this situation, reflecting on how the family's hesitation stemmed from uncertainty about sharing their background, despite the activity being as simple as "putting stars on a map." Daniel observes discussions of race and equity at the elementary level tend to focus on cultural celebrations and surface-level diversity rather than deeper conversations about race: "I don't think we talk much about like race in particular. I think it's more about like other people celebrate certain holidays, or other people have different family traditions."

His experience with the curriculum reveals the tension in addressing racial equity in schools. While newer reading and math curricula show improved representation, he points out social studies materials remain outdated and still focus heavily on traditional narratives of pilgrims and colonial history. This disparity highlights what Daniel sees as a broader challenge in the district, which he and his colleagues' joke is "10 years behind" in many aspects of equity work. Daniel exhibited an awareness of the institutional dynamics affecting equity work, noting teachers' approaches to race-related topics are often constrained by fear of paternal backlash. He observes a concerning dynamic where teacher expertise is frequently subordinated to parental perspectives, creating conditions that can inhibit more substantive equity work.

As a self-identified Caucasian educator, Daniel acknowledges the predominantly white composition of the district's staff (estimating "96-ish percent") and leadership. His reflections

suggest an emerging awareness of how racial homogeneity influences the district's approach to equity work, although he sometimes struggles to articulate specific impacts or solutions.

Sarah

Sarah (pseudonym) is a white, female, first-grade teacher with eight years of experience at her current school, following previous experience teaching in South Urban District (pseudonym). Her current classroom comprised 21 students, including English-language learners and students receiving special education services, reflecting her commitment to inclusive educational practices. Sarah's perspective on racial equity in education is significantly shaped by her contrasting experiences. Reflecting on her time in South Urban District, she notes, "I find that my experience in South Urban District, I'm a little bit different. I . . . think differently. So, I treat everybody the same, all the kids the same," while describing Edgewood as "very different, not as diverse." This transition between demographically different school environments provides unique insights into how racial dynamics operate in different educational contexts.

Despite being white, Sarah demonstrates an awareness of how racial dynamics influence educational practices. She emphasizes, "I feel like they don't know how difficult it is and how different countries are from our country. So you have to know the background of a child first," highlighting the importance of cultural understanding before making educational judgments. In her current practice, Sarah approaches discussions of race with young students through an "everyone is different" framework. However, she acknowledges the limitations of this approach, noting while young children initially "don't really see themselves as different," they begin noticing and questioning differences as they age.

Sarah expresses frustration with what she perceives as insufficient curriculum resources for addressing racial equity, stating, "I don't think that we have enough in the curriculum about

racial equity.” She advocates for a more comprehensive inclusion of diverse perspectives, although she acknowledges potential resistance from both colleagues and the community. Her approach to cultural inclusion focuses on celebrating different holidays and traditions, although she recognizes this as potentially surface-level engagement. Her perspective on institutional barriers to racial equity is particularly notable. She observed teachers often fear community backlash when addressing race-related topics, referencing a recent book-banning controversy in the district. Sarah argues this fear of conflict leads to avoidance of necessary conversations about race and equity: “I think teachers fear the community . . . if something comes like, not that different, that’s, yeah, gosh, that’s too much. And then we get backlash.”

Sarah's narrative reveals the complex interplay between personal commitment to equity and institutional constraints in a predominantly white school system. She argues the lack of diversity in the school community itself becomes a self-perpetuating excuse for avoiding deeper engagement with racial equity: "Our school is not diverse enough so why teach it as much?" She challenges this logic, asserting white students need exposure to diverse perspectives to prevent the development of stereotypes and racism.

Aria

Aria (pseudonym), a female, immigrant, Indian, paraprofessional at Edgewood Middle School, brings a distinct perspective as an immigrant educator who arrived in The United States in 2008. Working primarily with special-needs students in an inclusive program, she provided academic and social-emotional support to approximately 19 students. Her personal experience as an immigrant shaped her understanding of discrimination in American education. She notes discrimination extends beyond skin color to encompass accents, cultural practices, and other markers of differences: “It’s not like they identify people racially as that complex[ion] (sic) and

or color of the skin. It's the accent, it's the way we dressed up, it's the way we go to the shopping mall and all."

Aria's role allows her to observe both subtle and overt forms of discrimination within the school system. She recounts experiences in which students mock her accent and instances in which she perceives differential treatment based on her background. Despite these challenges, she maintained a commitment to supporting students and advocating inclusive practices. Her perspective on racial equity in education was informed by both professional experience and personal family dynamics. She shares poignant experiences of navigating racial differences in educational settings: "I was so scared because I was new as an adult. I don't know how you put it, but I felt sometime[s . . . when] I go to classes when teachers [have a] substitute, I felt the people from the different [non-white] racial background, and they come to substitute the kids don't respect them."

Aria observes the school has made efforts to become more inclusive, noting increased diversity in hiring practices and student populations. However, she emphasized the need for more systematic changes, particularly in how schools' approach cultural differences and support diverse staff members. She advocated for more open discussions about race and cultural differences, suggesting such conversations should be integrated into regular school programming rather than treated as special topics.

Ashley

Ashley (pseudonym) is a white, cisgender female educator with over 20 years of experience in Edgewood's public school system, primarily working with English language and migrant students. Growing up in a predominantly white community with minimal exposure to racial diversity, Ashley describes her early life as "sheltered," having only one Black family in

her entire town during her childhood. Her professional trajectory emerged not from a deliberate career plan but through a gradual evolution of responsibilities and a growing commitment to equity work.

Ashley's role as an English language educator has been characterized by continual adaptation and a deliberate stance of advocating for students of color and English language learners. She positions herself as a "teacher leader" who actively seeks opportunities to challenge systemic inequities, often taking on additional responsibilities without formal compensation. Despite her commitment to equity, Ashley demonstrated an acute awareness of her limitations as a white educator, recognizing the inherent power dynamics in her position and the potential for performative allyship.

Ashley developed strategic interventions to address racial incidents within the school system. Her approach centers on education and vocabulary-based discussions, deliberately avoiding punitive measures. She frames these interventions as "vocabulary lessons" designed to combat ignorance through knowledge, rather than singling out individuals or creating punitive environments. While acknowledging the district's historical limitations, Ashley saw herself as an instrumental change agent. She has been actively involved in professional development committees and consistently pushed for more inclusive practices.

Ashley represents a nuanced example of a white educator navigating racial equity. Her narrative illustrates the potential for critical self-reflection, institutional advocacy, and a commitment to creating more inclusive educational spaces, while simultaneously revealing the inherent complexities and limitations of white-led equity initiatives.

Narrative Reconstruction

While each educator's individual story provides crucial context for understanding their unique position within Edgewood Public Schools, reconstructing their collective experiences reveals common threads and shared challenges in navigating racial equity work within a predominantly white institution. This section presents reconstructed narratives through four key threads from five educators in Edgewood Public schools, weaving together their experiences to show how white culture influences participation in racial equity work. Through careful analysis of interviews, observations, and documents, four main experiential threads emerged highlight the complexity of engaging with racial equity in a predominantly white institution.

Thread 1: Entry Points and Initial Encounters

Educators' initial experiences with racial equity work in Edgewood revealed varying levels of preparation and awareness, shaped by personal backgrounds and prior professional experiences. These encounters, and the transformative moments following, highlight the complex ways white culture influences how educators' approach and understand racial equity work in predominantly white institutions.

For white educators, confronting racial equity often began with moments of unexpected self-reflection. Daniel's pivotal moment came during a job interview when asked about white privilege. He acknowledged this question caught him completely unprepared, revealing how he had never previously been required to critically examine his racial positionality. This initial confrontation with his whiteness led to deeper recognition of his need to examine racial identity in his practice. Similarly, Ashley's journey began from a "sheltered" perspective, growing up in Edgewood with "one Black family in this entire town." Her transformation emerged through necessity when her principal tasked her with addressing racial incidents. Support from a

colleague of color helped transform initial uncertainty into purposeful action. Her perspective shifted through active engagement in equity work, leading her to develop programs and embrace responsibility with a clearer understanding of her role.

For educators of color, the journey often began with personal experiences evolving into professional insights. Aria's story began with her arrival in the United States: "I still remember the first day when I landed in New York . . . and I was like, oh no, where [am I]." Her understanding deepened as she recognized how discrimination manifested beyond skin color through "the accent, it's the way we dressed up, it's the way we go to the shopping mall." These personal experiences transformed into professional insights about supporting students facing similar challenges, particularly evidenced through her response to her own daughter's experiences with exclusion at school.

Jennifer's journey reflects the complex intersection of personal identity and professional role. Her biracial identity and experience as a world language teacher who "presents as white" initially created complex dynamics in the predominantly white institution. While "race doesn't frequently come up . . . in conversations with colleagues," she transformed this awareness into purposeful action, strategically using her identity to support students seeking representation: "students who are looking to cling to someone . . . similar to them, racially, they tend to go towards it."

Sarah's transformation emerged through the stark contrast between teaching contexts. Moving from a district where she was the minority to Edgewood, "very different, not as diverse," forced her to confront how racial dynamics operate differently in various educational settings. This transition deepened her understanding of systemic inequities, leading her to observe disparities in treatment based on racial identity. However, she also witnessed how recognition of

these disparities could be neutralized by institutional patterns of avoidance that minimize the importance of teaching about diversity.

Document analysis of the district's strategic plan revealed an institutional approach prioritizing standardized metrics and technical solutions over meaningful cultural transformation. The plan's emphasis on "Achievement" and "Excellence" without explicit attention to equity or cultural competency established a framework in which new initiatives defaulted to existing institutional norms. Observations of professional development sessions reinforced this pattern, with equity work introduced through standardized frameworks that emphasized compliance rather than systemic change.

Thread 2: Institutional Navigation

The educators' stories revealed complex negotiations of professional identity within Edgewood's predominantly white environment, with experiences shaped by racial identity, institutional power dynamics, and professional roles. For educators of color, this navigation often involved careful calculations about when and how to express their authentic selves. "It was really tough for me when I came to school in terms of, like, professional setting," Aria reflected. She felt compelled to mask her authentic self, explaining, "So that's the one fear that I always have, so just in case, I try to play very normal." The power dynamics of being an educator of color in a predominantly white institution created additional layers of complexity in professional interactions. Aria described feelings constrained in complexity in professional interactions. Aria described feeling constrained in addressing student behavior when she reflected, "When we care being a people of color, a minority, that if I do, if I'll be strict on kids, they will go and complain to other teachers." Regarding her biracial heritage, Jennifer observed how students with similar backgrounds often seek connection. She shared an example of one particular student: "And he is

a student of mixed race, his father is black, his mother is white, but his mom is remarried to a man who is white, and so he is the only person of color in his house. So he was really reaching for something."

White educators' experiences with professional identity revealed its limited scope in elementary spaces. Daniel noted, "I don't think we talk much about like race in particular, I think it's more about like other people celebrate certain holidays, or other people have different family traditions." Sarah echoed this pattern, explaining, "We read a lot of multicultural books. But even you know, I do holidays around the world, and how what holiday is celebrated in you know, each country, and how it's different than our country."

Professional development observations revealed the institutional reinforcement, codified in the district's strategic plan, shaped educators' professional identity formation. While the plan emphasized "providing more authentic and differentiated learning experiences" and "expanding access to high-quality professional development opportunities," observed sessions demonstrated a focus on standardized implementation rather than cultural transformation. This pattern aligned with the strategic plan's emphasis on curriculum that is "research-based, vertically aligned, and delivered with consistency," prioritizing technical proficiency over cultural competency. In professional development sessions, facilitators emphasized differentiation strategies, reflecting the district's core values of "Achievement," "Respect," "Excellence," and "Support" while overlooking deeper engagement with equity issues. This technical orientation was further reinforced by the plan's focus on 'efficient processes' and 'effective financial and operational management,' creating an environment where discussions of systemic inequities were superseded by conversations about standardization and consistency.

This surface-level approach not only proved insufficient but could perpetuate problematic dynamics. This was made evident in how multiple educators discussed teaching about Martin Luther King, Jr. Sarah described careful boundaries placed around such discussions. She mentions “I always talk about, you know, that Martin Luther King . . . why he’s important, and back then what happened. But some of the videos and some of the talks are like, you know, [he] got gunned down…so it’s finding that like, line of what to stop talking about.” Similarly, Daniel discussed teaching about Martin Luther King, Jr. as follows: “We don’t want to get into too much detail about Martin Luther King and how he was shot, right, especially, like, nine years old, right? So, we don’t want to, like, go too much into detail.”

The avoidance of deeper engagement with racial Jennifer observed how some educators’ avoidance of meaningful racial discourse enabled misuse of racial concerns: “I’ve had students who feel as though they can play the race card to get out of things, because it’s kind of worked for them. Because I think some people in this building are a little scared of the race card, and they stay away from it.” Sarah similarly acknowledged the inadequacy in the curriculum’s approach to racial equity, highlighting how surface-level engagement perpetuated rather than challenged existing barriers.

Thread 3: Systemic Barriers

Educators' narratives revealed how systemic barriers, particularly through community pressure and ineffective professional development, created significant obstacles to meaningful equity work. These institutional challenges manifested in both external resistance and internal limitations, often reinforcing rather than challenging existing power structures.

Community pressure emerged as a powerful, systemic constraint on equity initiatives. Sarah articulated how fear of backlash shaped teacher behavior and decision-making. This fear

was validated by a recent book-banning controversy where community pressure led to the immediate removal of a book, resulting in educators facing personal attacks on social media before the administration eventually reversed its decision. The power of community influence was further emphasized by Daniel's reflection on how parental reactions create anxiety among educators, effectively limiting teacher agency in addressing racial issues. Jennifer noted additional complexities in this dynamic, describing instances where "parents accuse teachers of being racist in this building."

The district's strategic plan reveals how systemic barriers are embedded within institutional frameworks through carefully controlled language. While the plan emphasizes 'prioritize inclusive practice to ensure that all students have an equitable learning experience' and aims to "build meaningful relationships with all students," it avoids directly addressing racial inequities or systemic change. The plan's core values of "Achievement" and "Excellence" and its emphasis on 'implementing curriculum . . . delivered with consistency' prioritize standardization over transformation. This pattern extends to operational priorities, where the focus on "effective financial and operational management" and creating "efficient processes for system operations" supersedes addressing structural inequities. Even the plan's approach to community engagement frames family involvement as "opportunities to participate," suggesting controlled access rather than meaningful partnership. These institutional choices create systemic barriers by emphasizing technical solutions and operational efficiency while avoiding explicit commitment to addressing racial disparities.

Professional development emerged as another systemic barrier, often reinforcing rather than challenging inequitable practices. Jennifer described a particularly problematic session during COVID that prompted feelings of alienation, noting that afterward, "I think after that, it

was, this isn't our house. Let's kind of take a step back fully." The subsequent formation—and dissolution—of an equity committee illustrated the pattern of surface-level responses to systemic issues. In Aria's experience, while "They do professional development time to try . . . but not much," meaningful change requires deeper engagement, particularly from white educators: "Rather than the people who are people of color, people who are white need to talk."

However, Ashley's approach to professional development demonstrated the potential for systemic change when barriers are directly addressed. By expanding training to include all staff members—"bus drivers, bus monitors . . . because everybody has a stake in these kids"—she created opportunities for "honest conversations, challenging people's biases . . . getting people to really examine themselves and what they bring when they walk through the door." This comprehensive approach acknowledged meaningful change requires engaging every adult who impacts students' experiences.

These contrasting experiences illuminate how systemic barriers operate on multiple levels, from external community pressure to internal institutional practices. While these barriers often constrain equity work, examples like Ashley's comprehensive professional development approach suggest possibilities for transformative change when institutions commit to substantive rather than superficial engagement with racial equity.

Thread 4: Approaches to Student Support and Curricular Barriers

The intersection of individual efforts and institutional limitations becomes particularly visible in educators' approaches to supporting students. While educators developed creative strategies to promote inclusion, their efforts often highlighted deeper systemic barriers within the educational structure.

Curriculum and instructional materials emerged as a significant systemic barrier, with educators developing individual workarounds to address institutional gaps. Jennifer's world language curriculum provides an example of how educators must actively compensate for systemic limitations: "[This language] is spoken all over the world, and I try to make sure that's reflected . . . I make sure I vocalize to the students as well that this is my point." Similarly, Ashley's initiative to create a visually inclusive environment through "posters of people of all different colors . . . artwork, like sculptures of people—just anything and everything, not just like the standard picture" reveals the absence of institutionally provided representation in classroom materials.

The social studies curriculum exemplifies how systemic barriers manifest through outdated, Eurocentric content. Daniel's assessment of the "pretty outdated" curriculum focused on "the pilgrims, the Wampanoags, the Christopher Columbus like 1492" demonstrates how institutional materials perpetuate historical biases and limit opportunities for meaningful racial dialogue. This systemic constraint forces educators to either replicate problematic narratives or individually shoulder the burden of curriculum supplementation.

The inadequacy of institutional approaches to addressing racial awareness becomes evident through both educator practices and student experiences. Sarah's reliance on surface-level frameworks when discussing physical differences reflects systemic barriers to meaningful engagement with race. Aria's account of her daughter's experience underscores the consequences of these institutional limitations: "She came back from school after two weeks and started talking like, how some people are not playing with her. Why were we born [gesturing to her skin]? Did you forget to put the sunscreen?" This incident reveals how systemic barriers to addressing race

effectively leave both educators and students without adequate institutional support for navigating racial dynamics.

Ashley's commitment to equity work is evident in her reflection: "I try very hard. That's really, really important to me. And I'm always reading and researching and trying to find new ways of doing it." This dedication to ongoing learning points to another systemic barrier: the lack of comprehensive institutional approaches to equity. Her initiative to develop presentations for support staff demonstrates how individual educators must compensate for systemic gaps in professional development and community engagement.

These narratives reveal how systemic barriers manifest across multiple dimensions of educational practice—from curriculum and materials to professional development and community engagement. While individual educators develop creative strategies to support students, their efforts simultaneously highlight the persistent institutional limitations impeding comprehensive equity work.

Exposed Themes

The analysis of participant narratives, observations, and institutional documents exposed four interconnected main themes illuminating how white culture influences racial equity work within Edgewood Public Schools. These themes—*Institutional Power Structures*, including institutional barriers and white cultural norms; *Individual Navigation & Identity, White Fragility & Comfort*, encompassing resistance and avoidance patterns; and *Surface-Level vs. Systemic Change*, including race-neutral and colorblind approaches—illustrate the complexities of whiteness operating within predominantly white educational spaces and are supported by critical theoretical perspectives.

The theme of *Institutional Power Structures* examines how administrative hierarchy, resource control, and decision-making power perpetuate white-dominated leadership and limit systemic change. Through analysis of participant narratives, document review, and observations, this main theme and its subtheme of institutional barriers and white cultural norms reveal how control over curriculum content and professional safety functions as protected property interest, exemplified by committees that participants described as “fizzled out” when threatening white norms, and through institutional practices maintaining power structures while claiming neutrality.

Another central theme, *Individual Navigation and Identity,* explores the strategies educators use to navigate white-dominated spaces, the formation of professional identity, and the validation or devaluation of their experiences which is particularly evident for educators like Jennifer, whose white-passing identity affords selective belonging. Other educators of color, like Aria, experience exclusion from professional networks despite their commitment to equity.

The *White Fragility and Comfort* theme examines how whiteness maintains dominance through mechanisms prioritizing white emotional safety and minimize racial discourse in educational spaces. This theme reveals how individual and institutional behaviors consistently prioritize white comfort over meaningful engagement with racial equity, manifesting through patterns of avoidance, deflection, and resistance when racial discussions challenge established norms. The related subtheme of Resistance and Avoidance Patterns explores the specific ways this white fragility manifests in practice, from educators being "careful" in race discussions to institutions implementing surface-level initiatives that preserve white comfort. Together, these patterns demonstrate how white fragility shapes both individual responses to racial discourse and institutional approaches to equity work, effectively limiting opportunities for substantive change.

Finally, the *Surface-Level vs. Systemic Change* theme critiques the gap between institutional rhetoric and transformative action. This theme, including its subtheme of Colorblind Ideologies as a Barrier, emerged through analysis of token diversity initiatives and cultural celebrations reinforcing rather than challenging white dominance, revealing tensions between surface-level inclusion and systemic change, particularly in how color evasive language and practices mask racial inequities while maintaining white cultural norms.

This analysis contextualizes the interplay between institutional norms, individual agency, and systemic inertia through these themes and their subthemes. The following sections analyze how these dynamics manifest across data sources, indicating how whiteness shapes racial equity work in educational space.

Theme 1: Institutional Power Structures

"Look at the upper management. Who are people? Those people? They're white people, right?" (Aria). Aria's question underscores an apparent lack of diversity within Edgewood Public Schools' leadership. Through a lens of Critical Race Theory, this demographic homogeneity reflects what Bell (1992b) identifies as the permanence of racism in educational institutions, manifesting through leadership structures maintaining white cultural dominance. The district's administrative demographics appear to all identify as white, at least per the faculty and staff. Jessica explained, "The majority, if not all, of the administrators . . . they're all Caucasian." Daniel emphasized, "I know the two main people in our district who are, like the curriculum person, also Caucasian," highlighting how this pattern extends throughout various levels of administrative control. This power hoarding manifests in Edgewood through what, in Sarah's view, "stem down to, you know, administration."

Themes from the document review reveal Edgewood Public Schools' homogeneity in leadership structure is reinforced through institutional structures coded as "Institutional Reproduction," where centralized authority and limited stakeholder input characterize decision-making processes. The district's policy documents show a clear pattern of "white institutional presence," (Gusa, 2010) with decision-making concentrated among administrators who, as Jessica noted, are "all Caucasian." Analysis of district documents reveals coded "White Normativity" patterns prioritizing unstated cultural standards, universal professional standards, normalized communication patterns, and an assumed sharing understanding. These patterns are evidenced in the guiding principles emphasizing "accuracy, transparency, easy-to-understand" approaches without examining disparate impacts on different student populations.

The document review shows a "Dominant Narrative" where standardized metrics and universal language about "all students" mask racial inequities. Reviewing the documents revealed the frameworks present prioritization of technical solutions over equity considerations. The observational data from the study continues to support these patterns. Professional Development sessions reflect what is coded as "Normalized Communication Patterns" and "Behavior Classifications" privileging white cultural ways of operating.

The budget presentation revealed Edgewood ranks last in Operations and Maintenance spending ($964 per pupil) compared to 17 similar districts. While the district received over $5 million in ESSER funds to address COVID-19 impacts, the document notes this created a "false sense of financial security." This false sense of security is evident in how the district frames Special Education as a "budget driver" without examining potential racial disparities in special education identification and services. The per-pupil spending data positions Edgewood near the bottom of comparable districts, significantly below the state average.

Aria's insight that "I think, rather than the people who are people of color, people who are white. They need to talk. Know what struggle, what we have to cross, and where we are going, right?" highlights how institutional power remains concentrated among white leadership despite diversity initiatives. Daniel's recognition that "if we did have administration…kind of…guidance, I think that would be helpful" demonstrates inadequate institutional support for equity work. Drawing from White Supremacy Culture frameworks (Jones & Okun, 2001), the document analysis, observational data, and participant interview narratives exposed patterns of power hoarding, standardization, and technical rationality reinforcing white cultural dominance while masking racial inequities through color-evasive language and practices. These patterns manifest most clearly in the district's focus on zero-based budgeting and resource allocation, particularly evident in the district's rankings last in Operations and Maintenance spending among comparable districts.

Subtheme: Institutional Barriers and White Cultural Norms

The data reveal how white cultural norms create institutional barriers through language choices, professional development approaches, and community engagement practices. Strategic documents systematically avoid direct language about racism, privilege, or bias, instead adopting softened terminology emphasizing "inclusive practices" and "success for all students." This deliberate language choice obscures specific racial inequities while presenting an appearance of equity commitment. The normalization of whiteness is particularly evident in how equity efforts prioritize harmony over critical engagement with systemic inequities.

Professional development in the district reflects these white cultural norms through its emphasis on technical solutions rather than cultural competency. Documents show professional development as prioritizing standardized district goals and "best practices" while avoiding

deeper engagement with racial equity issues. This approach reinforces white cultural norms by treating education as a technical rather than cultural practice, focusing on metrics and standardization rather than cultural transformation.

Community engagement practices also reflect limited power-sharing, reinforcing institutional control. Daniel pointed out that parent opinions are “more valued than ours” or “more understood or like more respected than ours.” Strategic documents frame family involvement as “opportunities to participate,” suggesting the institution dictates the terms and scope of engagement. This approach reflects white cultural norms of hierarchical decision-making and controlled communication. The emphasis on “providing effective systems of external and internal communications” suggests how the institution maintains control over narratives about race and equity, preferring managed messaging over authentic dialogue about race and equity.

While institutional power structures create the framework within which educators must operate, individual responses to these structures vary significantly based on racial identity and professional role. This variation becomes evident when examining how educators navigate their professional identities within Edgewood’s predominantly white institutional space.

Theme 2: Individual Navigation and Identity

Aria’s recollection of her first day in New York in 2008 offers a poignant entry into understanding the challenges educators of color face in predominantly white spaces Her reflection, "Slowly I started learning about it, and I would have felt it's like, it's not like they identify people racially as that complex and or color of the skin," signals the disorientation and identity conflict often accompanying entering white-dominated professional settings. This moment sets the stage for examining how racial identity intersects with professional identity,

particularly when educators of color navigate environments shaped by white institutional norms. The theme of *Individual Navigation and Identity* explores how educators in Edgewood Public Schools navigate their professional identities, roles, and experiences within predominantly white educational spaces. Through analysis of participant narratives, this theme reveals the complex interplay between identity formation, cultural navigation strategies, and institutional power dynamics shaping how educators position themselves in racial equity work.

The data reveals how navigating predominantly white institutional spaces significantly shapes educators' professional identities. Jennifer's experience as a biracial world language teacher who "presents as white" illustrates the complex identity negotiations educators of color must manage. Her disclosure of her African heritage to students seeking representation demonstrates how educators of color often must carefully navigate when and how to share aspects of their identity. She highlights race "doesn't frequently come up in conversations with colleagues or administrators," highlighting how white institutional spaces can silence racial discourse while simultaneously making educators of color hyper-aware of their racial identity. Aria's experience as an immigrant Indian paraprofessional reveals how professional identity formation intersects with cultural navigation. Her observation discrimination extends beyond skin color to encompass "the accent, it's the way we dressed up, it's the way we go to the shopping mall and all" demonstrates how educators of color must navigate multiple layers of cultural differences in forming their professional identities.

According to this research, educators use sophisticated strategies to navigate how cultural differences are minoritized within predominantly white educational spaces. As a biracial educator, Jennifer has intentionally incorporated materials from various regions worldwide, which represents a strategic approach to embedding cultural diversity within curriculum

constraints. She explains, “[This language] is spoken all over the world, and I try to make sure that’s reflected . . . I make sure I vocalize to the students as well that this is my point.” In contrast, Daniel's account of his first confrontation with considering his white racial identity during a job interview, "I was just like, that was the first time I really thought about it, just because I was asked to [do] that," demonstrates how white educators often lack developed strategies for navigating racial discourse until explicitly prompted, highlighting the privilege of whiteness in allowing many educators to remain unaware of their racial identity's impact on their profession and the professional space they occupy.

Professional development observations revealed how institutional expectations, codified in district documents, shaped educators’ professional identity formation. During observed sessions, educators of color demonstrated careful navigation of white institutional norms, while documentation of “best practices” and “professional standards” reinforced white cultural ways of operating. This pattern was particularly evident in professional development sessions where facilitators emphasized a focus on non-threatening forms of differentiation and common resources, while marginalizing or avoiding cultural competency or equity-focused practices. The observed responses to white educators during these sessions often validated their existing practices without pushing for critical examination of how these approaches might not adequately serve all students. Comments like “Give yourself a little bit of credit. We just haven’t labeled it like you did today” and “You’re doing fantastic things already, right?” exemplified how white educators were frequently assured of their effectiveness without being challenged to consider necessary cultural adaptations or equity-focused improvements.

This research points to the power dynamic in everyday interactions within a school system. Sarah drew attention to students of color being treated unequally, noting specific

differences in how African American students experience the educational environment. This reflection reveals how educators must navigate institutional power structures built to perpetuate racial inequities. These power structures become more evident in decision-making processes, as illustrated by Daniel's candid acknowledgment that many teachers operate under constant concern about parental reactions.

Educators' understanding of their roles and perceived limitations in advancing equity work is a significant subtheme. Ashley frequently asked, "If not me, then who?" This reflection exemplifies how some educators position themselves as advocates while simultaneously wrestling with the limitations and complications of their role. Her awareness of the complex tensions white educators face in equity work shapes her approach to advocacy.

The data has revealed a deep divide between how educators navigate their professional identities within Edgewood Public Schools. Educators of color demonstrate a conscious and deliberate negotiation of their identities and experiences within an institutional context privileging white cultural norms while marginalizing diverse perspectives. Jennifer’s decision about when to disclose her race to her students and Aria’s navigation of cultural differences highlight how educators of color engage in constant, intentional identity work. Contrastingly, white educators like Daniel show little awareness of their racial identity until explicitly prompted, which highlights how whiteness allows them to move through professional spaces without constant conscious identity negotiation. The differences in these experiences with identity navigation significantly affect how educators perceive their ability to participate in and impact racial equity work within the district. Educators of color seem to bear the burden of conscious identity management, while many white educators remain unaware of how their racial identity shapes their professional experience.

The ways educators navigate their professional identities within Edgewood's institutional structures directly influences, and is influenced by, patterns of white fragility and comfort-seeking behaviors. As educators attempt to maintain their professional standing while engaging with racial equity work, the institutions prioritization of white comfort becomes increasing apparent.

Theme 3: White Fragility and Comfort

The theme of *White Fragility and Comfort* explores how whiteness maintains dominance by centering white emotional safety, minimizing racial discourse, and resisting structural change. Educators' narratives, institutional documents, and observational data reveal how individual and institutional behaviors prioritize comfort over meaningful engagement with racial equity. These behaviors manifest as avoidance, deflection, and backlash when race-conscious discussions challenge white norms. Sarah's approach emphasizing "Everyone's different and everybody is . . . no one has the same color hair, no one has the same skin color" exemplifies how whiteness resists deeper engagement with racial identity. Similarly, Daniel's emphasis on cultural holidays and family traditions—while avoiding discussions of systemic inequities—demonstrates how white educators can center whiteness while attempting inclusion. These patterns reflect what DiAngelo (2018) identifies as white fragility, wherein even minor racial discussions elicit defensive reactions preserving existing power structures.

Institutional responses also reflect white comfort as a guiding principle. Strategic plans emphasize broad, race-neutral commitments such as "building meaningful relationships with all students" while avoiding direct discussions of racial disparities. Aria expressed that "school is like trying to neutralize it, because it's their job," underscoring how institutions sanitize racial

discourse to maintain white comfort. Document analysis further reveals a pattern of color-evasive policies framing equity in universal terms, preventing meaningful systemic change.

Subtheme: Resistance and Avoidance

This subtheme examines the specific ways educators and institutions evade racial accountability, from deflecting difficult conversations to implementing superficial diversity initiatives. Resistance emerges both individually through discomfort, silence, and self-protection and institutionally through bureaucratic inertia and policy vagueness.

The research exposes sophisticated strategies for avoiding direct engagement with racial issues. Fear of community response emerges as a significant barrier to substantive equity work. From Sarah's perspective, "there's people are too nervous to talk about anything that's different, or anything that's not how the majority of the world, you know." This fear creates what Daniel identifies as a fundamental constraint on educator autonomy, where concern about parent reactions effectively limits engagement with racial equity work. The district recently experienced a book-banning controversy, as both Daniel and Sarah referenced, which exemplifies how community resistance can create a chilling effect on racial equity initiatives.

The institutional response to community pressure creates a context where educators develop sophisticated self-protective behaviors. Ashley's reflection that "I was pretty sheltered. I grew up in Edgewood. When I grew up . . . we had one Black family in this entire town for a long, long time" highlights the background many white educators bring to their equity work. This limited exposure creates challenges as educators like Ashley navigate both isolation from colleagues and uncertainty about their appropriate role in racial equity initiatives. Together, these ideas create a self-reinforcing cycle. White discomfort leads to avoidance, which protects

institutional norms prioritizing whiteness. These dynamics limit substantive racial progress while allowing the appearance of commitment to equity.

White fragility and comfort-seeking behaviors at the individual and institutional levels ultimately contribute to a broader pattern of superficial rather than systemic change. This dynamic becomes particularly evident when examining how the district's approach to equity work often prioritizes appearances over transformation.

Theme 4: Surface-Level vs. Systemic Change

The disconnect between institutional rhetoric and transformative action manifests in how Edgewood Public Schools approaches equity work. The district's strategic planning and implementation reveals a pattern of superficial commitments fail to address systemic inequities. general language like "build meaningful relationships with all students," but it does not address any specific racial dynamics that may come up from having a predominantly white staff and a growing student-of-color population. As Aria points out, "School is like trying to neutralize it, because it's their job," highlighting how institutional responses often prioritize appearance over meaningful change. The documents reveal a notable absence of explicit racial equity strategies or anti-racist practices, instead defaulting to implementation approaches reinforcing existing power structures.

The district's approach to implementation reinforces and reflects normalized white-middle class cultural values through its emphasis on "Achievement, Excellence" and standardized metrics. This manifests in policies emphasizing "implementing curriculum . . . delivered with consistency" and "create efficient processes for system operations." These administrative priorities demonstrate how surface-level changes can entrench existing power dynamics rather than facilitate systemic transformation.

Subtheme: Colorblind Ideologies as a Barrier

The use of colorblind ideologies functions as a primary mechanism sustaining surface-level change equity efforts while preventing systemic transformation. Institutional discourse frequently uses race-neutral, broad, non-specific language like "Success for All Students" or "Building meaningful relationships with all students," which mask racial disparities through color-evasive approaches aligning with Radd & Grossland's (2019) "desirabilizing whiteness." These approaches center whiteness through the reinforcement of existing hierarchies and access to white spaces without disturbing their foundational inequities.

This color-evasive pattern extends beyond documentation into daily practices. Professional development sessions demonstrate how colorblind frameworks operate in practice, with facilitators consistently driving discussions away from explicit discussions around race toward technical solutions like differentiation strategies. Rather than engaging with cultural competency or anti-racist frameworks, these sessions default to generic "best practices" avoiding racial specificity. The pattern of deflection from race-conscious dialogue reinforces white cultural norms while sidestepping critical conversations about structural inequities.

Tokenism, perpetuated through colorblind equity frameworks, reinforces the normalization of whiteness. Colorblindness, as observed in professional development sessions, often shifts focus to technical solutions, avoiding discussions of race or systemic inequities. For example, facilitators deflected opportunities for race-conscious dialogue, emphasizing "best practices," avoiding any racial specificity.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presents findings on how white culture influences educators' perceived participation, roles, and impacts within racial equity work at Edgewood Public Schools. The

research revealed complex dynamics of how whiteness shapes educational equity work in predominantly white institutions through analysis of educator interviews, institutional documents, and observational data. The study examined the experiences of five educators whose narratives illuminate different aspects of racial equity work within the district. Jennifer, a biracial world language teacher, provided her insights into cultural representation and the complexities she faces navigating a white-dominated space while being white-passing. Daniel, a white special education teacher, demonstrated the journey of confronting white privilege in educational practice. Sarah, a white first-grade teacher with experience in urban and suburban contexts, highlighted differences in approaching diversity while she continued seeking and maintaining white comfort. Aria, an Indian immigrant educator, offered necessary perspectives on institutional power dynamics and cultural discrimination. Ashley, a white English language educator with over twenty years of experience, illustrated the evolution of equity work within the district and the complexities of white educator allyship.

The analysis revealed interconnected themes illumining how white culture shapes racial equity work at Edgewood Public Schools. At the institutional level, power structure creates and maintains barriers through administrative hierarchies, centralized decision-making, and homogenous white leadership. These structural elements manifest through carefully controlled language choices, standardized professional development approaches, and limited community engagement—all of which serve to preserve existing power dynamics while presenting an appearance of equity commitment.

The ways educators navigate these institutional structures vary dramatically based on racial identity. Educators of color demonstrate sophisticated strategies for managing their professional presence, as exemplified by Jennifer’s careful decisions about when to disclose her

biracial identity and Aria's conscious navigation of cultural differences. In contrast, white educators like Daniel's moved through professional spaces with minimal awareness of how their racial identity shaped their experience, highlighting how whiteness allows for unexamined privilege within the institution. This dynamic connects directly to the theme of white fragility and comfort, where both individual and institutional behaviors consistently prioritize white emotional safety over meaningful engagement with racial equity.

The avoidance patterns emerging from deflecting toward "safer" cultural discussions to fears of community backlash, reveal how white comfort maintains dominance by minimizing substantive dialogue about race. These patterns become particularly evident in the observed professional development settings and the responses to community pressure, where the institution systematically steers away from race-conscious conversations that might challenge established norms.

The gap between institutional rhetoric and transformative action emerged as a defining characteristic of equity work within Edgewood. While the district presents surface-level commitments to equity, its reliance on colorblind ideologies and race-neutral language effectively maintains existing power structures while creating an illusion of progress. The disconnect between stated intentions and systemic change reveals how white cultural norms continue to shape and constrain meaningful equity reform within educational spaces.

The findings demonstrate how whiteness shapes racial equity work through institutional structures, individual identity navigation, patterns of resistance, and the disconnect between surface-level initiatives and systemic change. Through both main themes and their subthemes, these results reveal how white cultural norms operate within educational spaces and impact efforts toward meaningful racial equity reform.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Study Summary

This study examined how white culture influences educators' perceived participation, roles, and impacts within racial equity work at Edgewood Public Schools, a suburban Massachusetts K-12 public school system. Through a critical ethnographic narrative approach, the research analyzed the experiences of five educators whose diverse backgrounds and roles provided unique perspectives on navigating racial equity work within a predominantly white institution. The study employed multiple data collection methods, including in-depth, semi-structured interviews, observations of professional development sessions, and document analysis.

The theoretical framework, grounded in Critical Race Theory, Critical Whiteness Studies, and White Supremacy Culture, provided a lens for understanding how racial power structures manifest in educational settings. This framework proved particularly valuable in analyzing how educators navigate, challenge, or inadvertently reinforce white cultural norms in their professional practice. The analysis exposed interconnected themes illuminating how white culture influences racial equity work:

Institutional Power Structures examines how administrative hierarchy, resource control, and decision-making power perpetuate white-dominated leadership and limit systemic change. Through institutional barriers and white cultural norms, control over curriculum content and professional safety functions as protected property interest, exemplified by committees that "fizzled out" when threatening white norms.

Individual Navigation and Identity explores the strategies educators use to navigate white-dominated spaces with particularly complex dynamics for educators like Jennifer, whose

white-passing identity affords selective belonging, while educators like Aria experience exclusion despite their commitment to equity.

White Fragility and Comfort reveals how both individual and institutional behaviors prioritize white emotional safety over meaningful engagement with racial equity, manifesting through patterns of avoidance, deflection, and resistance when racial discussions challenge established norms.

Surface-Level vs. Systemic Change critiques the gap between institutional rhetoric and transformative action, exploring how colorblind ideologies and race-neutral approaches hinder meaningful change. This theme emerged through analysis of token diversity initiatives and cultural celebrations reinforcing rather than challenging white dominance.

The findings demonstrated that while individual educators might commit to advancing racial equity, institutional structures, and white cultural norms often constrain their effectiveness. Educators of color must carefully navigate their professional identities within predominantly white spaces, while white educators remain unaware of how their racial identity shapes their professional experience. The findings also identify white cultural dominance operating through what Sullivan (2006) identifies as "habits of white privilege," a concept explored in Chapter 2, where unconscious patterns perpetuate white cultural dominance in professional spaces. The research revealed patterns of "colormute" practices (Pollock, 2004), also discussed in the literature review, where institutions systematically avoid meaningful engagement with race, instead favoring surface-level initiatives maintaining white comfort while avoiding substantive change.

Theoretical Contributions and Empirical Extensions

Critical Whiteness Studies have long provided sophisticated theoretical frameworks for understanding how whiteness operates as an institutional and cultural force. However, the field continually requires empirical research confirming existing theories and reveal their manifestations in real-world contexts. This research contributes to the ongoing scholarly dialogue by providing a granular, context-specific examination of how white cultural norms shape racial equity work within educational institutions.

Existing scholarship conceptualizes whiteness as an institutional wall, simultaneously invisible yet pervasively influencing organizational dynamics, as established in the literature review (Ahmed, 2012; Leonardo, 2004). This study offers empirical evidence both validating and complexifying these theoretical understandings discussed in Chapter 2. The research reveals institutional whiteness's adaptive and dynamic nature by documenting how white cultural norms operate through seemingly neutral professional practices. Contrary to some theoretical perspectives explored in the literature review portraying whiteness as a monolithic system (Frankenberg, 1993; Leonardo, 2004), this study demonstrates how white institutional norms are constantly negotiated through individual interactions. The participants' experiences reveal white cultural dominance is not a static structure but a fluid process involving resistance, compliance, and strategic navigation, extending the understanding of whiteness as discussed in the literature review. The concept of interest convergence (Bell, 1980), a key tenet of Critical Race Theory outlined in the theoretical framework, finds nuanced expression in this research. The study reveals how equity initiatives are frequently framed through organizational language, maintaining existing power structures while appearing progressive. Document analyses and participant narratives expose how institutional discourse subtly transforms radical potential into

manageable, non-threatening narratives, illustrating Bell's interest convergence examined in Chapter 2.

The research supports existing scholarly critiques examined in Chapter 2 regarding theoretical assumptions about fixed racial identities, arguing for more nuanced, intersectional understandings of racial experiences (Crenshaw, 1991; Frankenberg, 1993). Participants like Jennifer demonstrate the limitations of rigid racial categorizations, reflecting broader scholarly critiques of binary racial understandings discussed in the literature review. The findings suggest Critical Whiteness Studies might benefit from more sophisticated frameworks capturing the fluid, intersectional nature of racial experience, extending Frankenberg's (1993) work referenced in Chapter 2. These empirical insights suggest several potential avenues for theoretical refinement, including developing more nuanced analyses of how white cultural practices are negotiated within institutional contexts, creating theoretical frameworks emphasizing individual agency alongside structural constraints, and expanding contextualization of racial identity to accommodate more complex, intersectional understandings as explored in the theoretical framework through scholars like Anzaldúa (2012) and Crenshaw (1991).

By providing rich, contextually grounded evidence of theoretical concepts in action, this research does more than apply theories established in Chapter 2; it contributes to their ongoing evolution. The study demonstrates theoretical frameworks are not static but dynamic tools for understanding complex social phenomena. This research also bridges theoretical abstraction and practical understanding. By documenting how white cultural norms manifest in educational equity work, the study offers insights informing both scholarly discourse and institutional transformation strategies.

Critical Whiteness Studies frameworks, as explored in Chapter 2, serve as a foundation for this research, which extends beyond mere application to actively contribute to the field's theoretical development. It enriches our understanding of how racial power dynamics function in contemporary educational institutions by revealing how white cultural norms operate, negotiate, and sometimes resist transformation. The findings prompt critical questions about reimagining the relationship between individual agency and institutional power and suggest the need for new methodological approaches to further illuminate the complex dynamics of racial identity and institutional whiteness.

Implications

Professional Practice Implications

The findings from this study have implications for educational practice, particularly in predominantly white suburban school districts. The research reveals a critical need to address the disconnect between institutional rhetoric around equity and actual transformative practice. The prevalence of surface-level initiatives maintaining white comfort while avoiding substantive engagement with racial issues suggests the need for more robust accountability measures in equity work, reflecting concepts of white fragility and comfort discussed in the literature review (Bonilla-Silva, 2018; DiAngelo, 2018). The study illuminated how white cultural dominance operates through what Sullivan (2006), as discussed in Chapter 2, identifies as "habits of white privilege," or the unconscious patterns perpetuating white cultural dominance in professional spaces (Picower, 2009). The research suggests schools must develop mechanisms to identify and interrupt these habitual patterns, particularly in daily instructional practices and decision-making processes.

The findings also contribute to existing theories in Critical Whiteness Studies, as established in Chapter 2, by demonstrating how white cultural norms influence both racial equity efforts and resistance to systemic change in educational spaces. Aligning with habitual patterns of white privilege and Pollock's (2004) analysis of 'colormute' practices (Pollock, 2004; Sullivan, 2006), this study reinforces the idea whiteness operates as a structuring force in educational institutions. Participants' narratives illustrate the tension between well-intentioned engagement and the maintenance of white comfort, demonstrating whiteness adapts to protect its own dominance (Leonardo, 2009). These findings extend current literature by providing concrete examples of how white educators perceive their roles within racial equity efforts, including moments of resistance, avoidance, and transformation. This underscores the need for professional development that does more than introduce DEI concepts but actively disrupts patterns of racial avoidance and white fragility in instructional and leadership spaces.

The study's findings regarding educator identity navigation highlight the importance of developing more supportive professional environments for educators of color. The experiences of Jennifer and Aria demonstrate how educators of color must carefully manage their racial identities while navigating white institutional spaces, suggesting the concept of whiteness as hegemonic power structure discussed in Chapter 2 (Bucholtz, 2011; Withers, 2017). Schools must create authentic professional learning communities where educators of color can share their expertise without being tokenized or burdened for equity work.

The research also indicates a need to reconceptualize professional development approaches. Current practices often prioritize technical solutions and maintain white comfort over meaningful engagement with racial equity issues, reflecting the patterns of avoidance discussed in the literature review (Jones & Okun, 2001). This suggests the need for more

challenging, sustained professional development directly addressing systemic racism and white cultural dominance in educational settings. Professional development should move beyond one-time workshops to integrate ongoing critical reflection and action research, addressing the gap between surface-level diversity initiatives and transformative change examined in Chapter 2. To address this, I have developed a Professional Development Implementation Guide (Appendix G), which provides a structured framework for integrating anti-racist pedagogy, addressing institutional resistance, and supporting educators through ongoing critical reflection.

The findings also highlight the need to address what Jones & Okun (2001) identify as perfectionism in equity work, as established in Chapter 2, where rigid categories of racial identity and over-cautiousness in addressing race can prevent meaningful engagement. The research revealed how the fear of making mistakes in equity work and hesitation in engaging with differences creates barriers to authentic practice, aligning with Kendi's (2019) framework of anti-racism examined in the literature review. This suggests the need for professional development explicitly addressing these perfectionist tendencies and building the capacity for engaging with complexity and uncertainty. To address these barriers, the Professional Development Implementation Guide (Appendix G) provides structured strategies based on the theoretical frameworks established in Chapter 2. This guide includes approaches for engaging with complexity, managing discomfort, and fostering a mindset of continuous learning rather than avoidance. These elements collectively create a development pathway helping educators move beyond perfectionism and either/or thinking toward more authentic engagement with racial equity work.

The study also revealed patterns of either/or thinking in professional practice, manifested through simplified approaches to diversity and binary racial categorization. This indicates the

need for developing more nuanced approaches to equity work accommodating complexity and avoiding false dichotomies between individual and systemic solutions and comfort versus confrontational choices. Professional development should help educators move beyond these binary frameworks to engage with the full complexity of equity work. To address these binary thinking patterns, the Professional Development Implementation Guide (Appendix G) includes Complex Identity Workshops specifically designed to challenge rigid racial categorization and develop more sophisticated understandings of intersectionality. Drawing from Crenshaw's (1991) intersectionality framework discussed in Chapter 2, these workshops can help educators recognize how multiple social identities are organized and interconnected to shape student and educator experiences in educational spaces. The workshops should provide structured protocols for exploring the fluidity and complexity of racial identity while developing pedagogical approaches honoring rather than simplifying this complexity. Moving beyond essentialist views of race, reinforcing either/or thinking, these workshops should build educators' capacity to engage with border identities and experiences between rigid categories (Anzaldúa, 2012). This approach addresses the patterns of either/or thinking identified in this research, providing educators with frameworks to engage with the complexities of racial identity and avoid false dichotomies which might limit meaningful equity work. By developing more nuanced understandings of how identities are formed and experienced, educators can move beyond binary approaches often categorizing discussions about race in educational settings.

Structural Leadership Implications

The findings have several important policy implications as well. The research in this study suggests a need for policies mandating more diverse representation in educational leadership. The homogenous white leadership observed in Edgewood Public Schools indicates a

systemic issue requiring policy intervention to ensure more diverse perspectives in decision-making positions. The research aligns with the demographic disparities in educational leadership discussed in Chapter 2 while reinforcing the issues of representation in predominantly white institutions. This disparity reflects entrenched systemic norms, perpetuating whiteness as the default for what power and authority represent, a theme explored in the literature review. The concept of permanence of racism from Critical Race Theory, a key tenet established in Chapter 2, contextualizes this phenomenon by emphasizing how structural inequities are deeply embedded in institutional frameworks (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). These national trends align with the data from Edgewood Public Schools.

The concentration of white leadership in Edgewood Public Schools exemplifies Sullivan's (2006) concepts around the habit of white privilege where whiteness becomes unquestioned in leadership positions within the Eurocentric structure of American public schools (Theoharis, 2024). This normalization is particularly problematic as revealed through Daniel's observation: "I know the two main people in our district who are, like, the curriculum person, also Caucasian," highlighting how this pattern extends throughout various levels of administrative control. The perpetuation of white leadership creates what Jones and Okun (2021) identify as power hoarding, a characteristic of white supremacy culture discussed in the literature review, where power becomes concentrated among those who already hold it, reinforcing what Kendi (2019) describes as systemic racism. This power hoarding manifests in Edgewood through what Sarah describes as decisions that "stem down to, you know, administration." This top-down structure maintains white cultural dominance, reflecting the entrenchment of whiteness in institutional structures as examined in Chapter 2.

The homogeneity in administrative levels also reflects what Freire (2014) describes as the dominant group's lack of consciousness about their privileged position, as described in Chapter 2, leading to a refusal to analyze white racial supremacy critically. Maintaining predominantly white leadership serves to perpetuate white institutional racism both symbolically and practically, which is especially problematic given half of the superintendents do not prioritize leading conversations about race, as the Tienken (2021) study referenced in the literature review reveals. This connects to the systems of oppression and institutional racism also discussed in Chapter 2 (Jones, 1974; Yosso, 2005). From Aria's assessment, "That should come from there, so the corrections start from the top," highlighting the problem and the intervention point necessary for meaningful structural change. This suggests an immediate need for comprehensive auditing of current district initiatives through a Critical Race Theory lens, a framework established in Chapter 2, including documentation of demographic-based decision patterns and the creation of audit teams, including BIPOC and white-passing educators. Such structural assessment must examine how institutional structures maintain white normative frameworks while limiting opportunities for diverse leadership, addressing the patterns of institutional reproduction outlined in the literature review.

Themes from the document review reveal Edgewood Public Schools' homogeneity in leadership structure is reinforced through institutional structures coded as "Power Hoarding," where centralized authority and limited stakeholder input characterize decision-making processes, reflecting concepts of white supremacy culture examined in Chapter 2 (Jones & Okun, 2001). The district's policy documents show a clear pattern of what Gusa (2010) terms "white institutional presence," a concept explored in the literature review, with decision-making concentrated among administrators who, as Jessica noted, are "all Caucasian" (Ahmed, 2012).

Analysis of district documents reveals coded "White Cultural Norms" patterns prioritizing technical rationality, professional culture standards, and hierarchical decision-making processes, aligning with the characteristics of whiteness discussed in Chapter 2. These patterns are evidenced in the guiding principles emphasizing "accuracy, transparency, easy-to-understand" approaches without examining disparate impacts on different student populations. The document review maintains a dominant narrative where standardized metrics and universal language about "all students" mask racial inequities, reflecting the color-blind approach to education criticized in the literature review. To address these systemic patterns, schools must implement specific structural changes, including establishing compensated equity leadership roles, creating teacher equity leadership positions, and developing distributed leadership models to challenge traditional power structures. Schools also need to create explicit protocols for addressing bias incidents and establish brave space protocols enabling authentic dialogue about racial equity issues.

Resource and Administrative Implications

The study reveals significant implications regarding how institutional resource allocation and administrative processes perpetuate white cultural dominance. As Bell (1992b) argues through the concept of permanence of racism, a key tenet of Critical Race Theory established in Chapter 2, these patterns are embedded in budget and resource allocation decisions (Lipsitz, 2006; Ladson-Billings 2006a). Document analysis revealed how Edgewood's budgeting decisions align with what Harris (1993) terms "whiteness as property," a concept examined in the literature review, where control over resources functions as a protected property interest. This manifests most notably in resource disparities, with Edgewood ranking last in Operations and Maintenance spending compared to 17 similar districts. The district's per-pupil spending positions it near the bottom of comparable districts, with facility conditions and maintenance

disparities disproportionately affecting underserved populations, reflecting the systemic inequities discussed in chapter 2. To address these systemic inequities, districts must implement immediate structural changes, including creating permanent equity funding streams, redistributing resources equitably, and funding structural change initiatives. This requires establishing accountability frameworks, instituting mandatory equity reporting, and creating equity-focused decision-making protocols intentionally challenging patterns of controlled access to equity initiatives and restricted decision-making power.

The district's approach to resource management reflects a technical-rational framework prioritizing standardized measures over equity considerations. The guiding principles emphasize "accuracy, transparency, easy-to-understand" approaches, while the "zero-based budgeting" system exemplifies what Leonardo (2009) identifies as the "color of supremacy" operating through seemingly objective processes, a concept explored in the literature review. These standardized measures effectively mask disparate impacts on marginalized communities, perpetuating systemic inequities through ostensibly neutral administrative practices (Bonilla-Silva, 2018), reflecting the color-blind approach to policy discussed in Chapter 2. The handling of the ESSER funding further illustrates these systemic patterns. While the district received over $5 million in ESSER funds to address COVID-19 impacts, the document notes this created a "false sense of financial security." The planning post-ESSER environment reveals how temporary equity initiatives often align with institutional interests while failing to address systemic inequities. This is particularly evident in how the district frames Special Education as a "budget driver" without examining potential racial disparities in special education identification and services. These resource allocation patterns reveal "white institutional presence" (Gusa, 2010), a concept established in the literature review through an emphasis on standardized

approaches failing to account for diverse student needs. The budget documents' focus on aggregate data and universal language about "all students" masks demographic disparities, representing what Critical Race Theory scholars identify as color-evasive ideology in institutional practices (Bonilla-Silva, 2018).

The implications extend beyond budgeting to broader administrative processes. Aria observed that "we are not the policymakers," which illuminates the invisible barriers excluding marginalized voices from decision-making processes, reflecting the concept of "institutional walls" discussed in Chapter 2 (Ahmed, 2012; Leonardo, 2004). Daniel's statement, "if we did have administration kind of guidance, I think that would be helpful" reflects inadequate institutional support for equity work, exemplifying white discomfort with racial discussions examined in the literature review (DiAngelo, 2018).

These findings suggest the need for a fundamental transformation in how educational institutions approach resource allocation and administrative processes. This transformation must include developing systems by allocating resources to address systemic inequities, creating administrative processes centering on equity rather than technical efficiency, establishing decision-making structures including marginalized voices, and implementing robust accountability measures for equity initiatives. The research indicates meaningful change requires moving beyond surface-level initiatives to address the deep-seated patterns of resource allocation and administrative control maintaining white cultural dominance in educational institutions, connecting to the institutional reproduction of inequity discussed in Chapter 2.

Individual Educator Implications

The findings also have implications for individual educators working in predominantly white institutions. White educators must develop greater awareness of how their racial identity

shapes their professional practice and interactions, reflecting the concept of racial consciousness explored in Chapter 2 (DiAngelo, 2018). Daniel's journey illustrates how many white educators lack preparation for considering their racial identity's impact on teaching, connecting to the discussion in the literature review about how white people often consider themselves unraced (Brookfield & Hess, 2021; DiAngelo, 2021). This suggests the need for white educators to engage in ongoing critical self-reflection about their positionality and privilege, a process aligned with the Critical Whiteness Studies framework established in Chapter 2.

The research also indicates educators need to develop more sophisticated strategies for navigating racial discussions and equity work. Ashley's evolution from initial discomfort to proactive engagement illustrates how educators can develop more productive approaches despite initial limitations, connecting to the process of racial identity development discussed in Chapter 2. This suggests the importance of building capacity for difficult conversations about race while acknowledging responsibilities, reflecting the need to address what the literature review identifies as the normalization of whiteness that allows many to avoid critical racial discourse. The findings also suggest educators must develop skills for identifying and interrupting patterns of racial inequity in their sphere of influence. This includes learning to recognize manifestations of white supremacy in school practices and developing strategies to advocate for systemic change while working within existing constraints, addressing the institutional barriers described in the theoretical framework.

The study also highlights the need for educators to examine how their instructional choices either challenge or reinforce white cultural dominance. Jennifer demonstrated this approach through her intentional incorporation of diverse cultural perspectives in her curriculum. Her practice aligns with Leonardo's (2009) critique of how educational institutions serve as sites

where whiteness remains simultaneously invisible to those who benefit from it while remaining hypervisible in its effects on students of color. As discussed in the literature review, educators should regularly audit their curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment practices to challenge the Eurocentric systems that perpetuate racial inequities.

Developing nuanced understandings of student identities represent another dimension of educator growth in equity work. Effective educators must cultivate approaches honoring the complex, intersectional nature of students' lived experiences beyond binary frameworks and essentialist categorizations that often dominate educational spaces. Patterns of either/or thinking identified in the study demonstrate how educators often default to simplified approaches to diversity. As highlighted in the literature review's discussion of Critical Race Theory, Kimberlé Crenshaw's work on intersectionality provides a crucial framework for understanding identity. The study's Complex Identity Workshops directly address the diversity-understanding limitations by providing educators with frameworks and tools to recognize how various social identities intersect. Drawing from Crenshaw's exploration of intersectionality, as discussed in Chapter 2, these workshops help educators recognize how racial identity intersects with other social categories, including gender, class, language, and ability, creating unique experiences that cannot be reduced to single axis thinking.

By exploring the border identities existing between rigid categories, educators can develop approaches that honor the fluidity and complexity of student identities rather than forcing them into restrictive categories. This nuanced understanding directly influences instructional practice, enabling educators to create learning environments affirming the rich diversity of student experiences. These workshops should provide structured opportunities for educators to examine their assumptions about identity while developing strategies for creating

classroom environments where students' full identities are recognized and valued rather than fractured or essentialized.

The research revealed specific patterns around the fear of open conflict that individual educators must learn to navigate. The data showed widespread avoidance of identity discussions and a limited space for authentic dialogue stemming from individual discomfort. This avoidance suggests educators need to develop personal capacity for engaging in difficult conversations while maintaining their own emotional responses. As discussed in the literature review on Critical Race Theory and Critical Whiteness Studies, these findings echo the work of scholars examining how white educators often struggle with racial discourse. The research highlights issues around what Jones and Okun (2001) term "right to comfort," where educators consistently engage in sanitized curriculum choices and age-based avoidance tactics to maintain comfort. Individual educators must examine how their own comfort-seeking behaviors may limit authentic equity work, which includes recognizing patterns of softening content and avoiding conflict in their personal practice.

The study builds on the literature review's exploration of how whiteness operates in educational settings, demonstrating how educators' discomfort leads to missed educational opportunities. Specifically, the data revealed patterns where educators avoided difficult conversations, such as discussing Martin Luther King, Jr.'s death and other aspects of the social studies curriculum. Drawing from the critical perspectives outlined in Chapter 2, these findings reveal how educators often avoid difficult conversations, particularly around race and social justice. When educators make unilateral decisions about discussing race or removing content, they risk reinforcing damaging beliefs that children internalize when not given tools to process their experiences. Individual educators must develop a capacity for critical consciousness,

moving beyond superficial inclusion to engage authentically with racial discussions even when uncomfortable. This approach aligns with the literature review's emphasis on the need for educators to critically examine their own positionality and the ways whiteness perpetuates systemic inequities in educational spaces.

The study also revealed concerns around "paternalism" in individual practice, where educators made unilateral decisions about representation and engaged in determining appropriate advocacy approaches without adequate stakeholder input or administrative support. As discussed in the literature review's exploration of Critical Whiteness Studies, this highlights the need for educators to develop more collaborative approaches that center marginalized voices rather than speaking for communities. The data also showed problematic patterns of "individualism" where educators took on uncompensated individual responsibility for equity work, which aligns with the literature review's discussion on the challenges faced by educators of color, particularly the concept of the 'invisible tax' explored in Chapter 2. While individual initiative is important, educators need to develop more collective and systemic approaches rather than shouldering personal responsibility for institutional change. This includes building collaborative action capacity while recognizing individual efforts' limitations.

These findings underscore the importance of developing collaborative action capacity while recognizing individual efforts' limitations. As highlighted in the earlier discussion of Critical Race Theory, meaningful change requires a systemic approach that goes beyond individual actions to address the deeper structural issues perpetuating racial inequities in educational spaces.

Proposed Professional Development

The findings from this study suggest the need for a comprehensive, multi-tiered professional development approach addressing both individual and institutional manifestations of white cultural dominance in educational settings. This framework builds directly on the literature review's exploration of Critical Whiteness Studies and Critical Race Theory, particularly Leonardo's (2009) critique of how educational institutions simultaneously render whiteness invisible to those who benefit from it while making its effects hypervisible for students of color. As discussed in Chapter 2, the interconnected themes of institutional power structures, individual identity navigation, and the dynamics of white fragility provide a crucial context for understanding racial equity work.

Current professional development approaches often prioritize surface-level initiatives and maintain white comfort over meaningful engagement with racial equity issues. This observation aligns with the literature review's discussion of how white educators frequently default to approaches that center their own experiences while marginalizing those of BIPOC educators and students. Drawing from the theoretical frameworks of Critical Race Theory and Critical Whiteness Studies outlined in the earlier literature review, I propose a three-phase professional development framework that progressively builds capacity for authentic equity work while systematically dismantling patterns of white cultural dominance. This approach seeks to address the unconscious patterns of white cultural dominance identified in this research, echoing the literature review's emphasis on the need for educators to critically examine their positionality and the ways whiteness perpetuates systemic inequities in educational spaces.

Phase 1: Foundation Building (0-6 mos.)

The initial phase must focus on establishing foundational structures directly confronting patterns of avoidance and resistance identified in the research. As discussed in the literature review's exploration of Critical Whiteness Studies, this approach recognizes the deep-seated mechanisms by which white educators often resist engaging with racial equity work. In Jennifer's insight that effective professional development can lead to backlash highlights the need for carefully designed initial interventions. Ashley's observation about the challenges of building meaningful relationships with students underscores the importance of addressing the systemic barriers that prevent authentic engagement. Building on the literature review's discussion of whiteness in educational settings, this initial phase should begin with mandatory equity training for all staff that directly challenges the patterns of avoidance and comfort-seeking behaviors identified in the study. This approach aligns with the critical perspectives outlined in Chapter 2, particularly the work of scholars like Leonardo (2009), who emphasize how educational institutions often maintain whiteness as an invisible yet pervasive force. The proposed initial intervention seeks to make these unconscious patterns visible and create opportunities for meaningful dialogue and transformation in educational spaces.

Comprehensive Cultural Assessment

The foundation of meaningful institutional transformation begins with a rigorous and nuanced cultural assessment going beyond traditional demographic reporting. As discussed in the literature review's exploration of Critical Race Theory, this approach directly engages with the foundational work of scholars like Derrick Bell and Kimberlé Crenshaw, who emphasized the need to critically examine institutional power structures. A comprehensive approach must start with a critical examination of power structures, recognizing institutional inequity is often

embedded in invisible systems of decision-making and leadership composition. Drawing on the literature review's discussion of Critical Whiteness Studies, this assessment would intentionally expose the underlying mechanisms of exclusion and gatekeeping that perpetuate racial disparities in educational settings. Sarah's observation that diversity has incrementally changed over time highlights the need for a deliberate and comprehensive approach. Building on the insights from Chapter 2 about intersectionality and the complex nature of racial identity, researchers will need to deliberately assemble a team including BIPOC, mixed-race, and white-passing educators. This approach ensures the analysis captures the multifaceted experiences of marginalized professionals who often see structural barriers that might remain invisible to those with more privileged positionalities. This method of cultural assessment aligns with the literature review's emphasis on the importance of recognizing how whiteness operates within institutional structures, particularly in educational settings. The assessment moves beyond surface-level diversity reporting to a more profound understanding of institutional inequities by centering diverse perspectives and critically examining power dynamics.

Professional worth and advancement opportunities demand equally sophisticated scrutiny. As discussed in the literature review's exploration of Critical Whiteness Studies, this assessment must delve into how professional credibility is constructed, maintained, and validated within the school district. Drawing from the literature's examination of whiteness in institutional settings, the research needs to uncover the subtle ways authority is distributed and recognized. Ashley's experience provides a critical lens for understanding these dynamics, echoing the chapter's earlier discussion about how power structures operate in predominantly white educational paces. By examining the experiences of educators like Jennifer, who navigates complex racial identity, the research can uncover the nuanced mechanisms often disadvantaging

educators of color and perpetuating white cultural dominance. This approach aligns with the literature review's discussion of the 'invisible tax' faced by educators of color, highlighting how institutional structures subtly reinforce racial hierarchies. The assessment should critically examine how professional advancement opportunities are structured, revealing the often-unspoken ways that white cultural norms dominate institutional evaluation and recognition processes.

The data-gathering process should be comprehensive and deeply human-centered. As discussed in the literature review's exploration of Critical Race Theory and Critical Whiteness Studies, this approach needs to move beyond traditional methodological approaches that often flatten complex experiences of racial identity and institutional dynamics. Drawing from the chapter's earlier discussion of intersectionality, the assessment should create a cultural safety approach that captures the rich, complex lived experiences of educators and students across racial and cultural identities. The surveys and interviews should be crafted to explore emotional and professional safety, detailed experiences of marginalization, and the intricate ways individuals navigate institutional environments. This method recognizes true understanding comes from listening to personal narratives, not just collecting numerical data. This approach reflects the literature review's emphasis on centering the experiences of marginalized educators and students, particularly in predominantly white educational settings. By prioritizing personal narratives and complex identity experiences, the research can uncover the subtle mechanisms of white cultural dominance that often remain invisible in more traditional research methodologies.

Diverse stakeholder engagement is crucial to this assessment. Crenshaw's work on intersectionality, explored in the literature review's examination of Critical Race Theory, provides a theoretical foundation for this multi-perspective methodology that centers

marginalized voices. By using focus groups and interviews, the research actively seeks out and creates spaces for educators and students who have been traditionally silenced or overlooked in predominantly white educational settings. The goal is not just to collect information, but to create a dialogic process that itself begins the work of institutional transformation. This approach builds on the literature review's discussion of how educational institutions perpetuate systemic inequities, moving beyond surface-level initiatives to a more profound engagement with institutional dynamics. By developing a systematic method for monitoring trends in racial equity over time, the district can move beyond one-time interventions that "fizzle out" to create a sustainable framework for continuous improvement. Drawing from the critical perspectives outlined in Chapter 2, this approach tracks numerical representations and qualitative shifts in institutional culture, power dynamics, and individual experiences. It reflects the literature review's emphasis on understanding how whiteness operates within educational institutions, providing a comprehensive and dynamic approach to institutional change.

This comprehensive cultural assessment needs to be not just an administrative exercise. It needs to be a profound act of institutional introspection. It needs to represent fundamental commitment to understanding and dismantling the often-invisible systems perpetuating racial inequity. By centering the experiences of marginalized individuals, creating transparent and accountable processes, and maintaining a dedication to deep, meaningful change, institutions can begin to create environments truly honoring the potential of all community members.

Mandatory Equity Training

Mandatory equity training should incorporate theoretical frameworks, helping educators understand their own racial identity development and its impact on their practice. Rooted in the literature review's exploration of Critical Whiteness Studies, the importance of understanding

racial identity development emerges as a critical pathway for educators to critically examine their positionality within systemic racial dynamics. Drawing from the theoretical frameworks outlined in Chapter 2, the district's equity training must move beyond surface-level cultural competence. The goal is to address unconscious bias, systemic racism, and the ways white privilege perpetuates inequities within educational spaces. This approach aligns with the literature review's emphasis on the need for white educators to critically examine their own positionality and the ways whiteness maintains systemic oppression. Daniel's reflection on his inability to articulate his white privilege during a job interview exemplifies the early stages of racial identity awareness, while Ashley's evolution from "profound imposter syndrome" to actively engaging in equity work demonstrates the potential for developed racial consciousness.

Establishing Accountability Structures and Metrics

Establishing effective accountability structures is essential for sustaining meaningful equity work. The district needs to develop transparent reporting mechanisms that examine deeper systemic patterns beyond surface-level demographic reporting. These accountability measures should go beyond traditional demographic measures to examine decision-making patterns, resource allocation, and power distribution within the institution. Daniel's observation about the district's significant lag in addressing equity issues underscores the importance of creating robust accountability frameworks that expose the underlying mechanisms of institutional inequity. Building on the insights from Chapter 2 about how whiteness operates in educational settings, establishing strategic accountability partnerships for external oversight becomes crucial. This approach ensures diverse perspectives are centered in the evaluation process, moving beyond internal assessments that may inadvertently perpetuate existing power structures. The goal is to create a comprehensive accountability system that tracks both quantitative and qualitative

indicators of progress, revealing the complex ways racial inequities are maintained within educational institutions.

To combat the institutional reproduction of inequity, the district should create an equity audit committee, including BIPOC educators, to ensure broad representation in oversight processes. This approach directly challenges the systemic patterns of exclusion in educational leadership discussed in the literature review's exploration of Critical Race Theory and Critical Whiteness Studies. Aria's observation that "corrections start from the top" is reflected in this committee structure, which institutionalizes accountability at multiple organizational levels. Drawing from the chapter's earlier discussions about power dynamics in predominantly white educational settings, the committee should regularly assess progress using frameworks that examine both individual growth and systemic change. The accountability structures must track patterns of resource allocation, professional advancement opportunities, and implementation of equity initiatives, addressing the tendency toward power hoarding in institutional structures (Skrla et al., 2004). Given Ashley's observation, white educators often work in isolation on equity initiatives; the framework should clearly measure collective responsibility and institutional support for equity work rather than relying on individual initiative. Building on insights from the literature review regarding how whiteness operates in educational institutions, these accountability measures aim to create systemic pressure for meaningful change. This approach helps prevent the pattern Sarah identified, where lack of diversity becomes an excuse for inaction, instead creating a comprehensive mechanism for exposing and dismantling institutional barriers to racial equity.

Creating White Affinity Spaces and Brave Spaces

Effectively engaging with racial equity work requires dedicated spaces for educators to process, reflect, and engage in challenging conversations. These spaces are crucial for white educators to critically examine their racial identity and understand the mechanisms of white privilege. Ashley's characterization of "profound imposter syndrome" highlights the need for structured environments where white educators can work through their discomfort and racial identity development without burdening colleagues of color with their emotional processing. Drawing from the chapter's earlier discussion about white scholar engagement, these spaces allow white educators to develop racial literacy and anti-racist strategies (Rogers & Mosley, 2006). Daniel's struggle to articulate his understanding of white privilege exemplifies the importance of creating dedicated spaces for racial reflection. The implementation of white affinity groups acknowledges the need for white educators to engage in deep, self-reflective work that moves beyond a surface-level understanding of race and racism. Building on insights from Chapter 2 regarding how whiteness operates in educational institutions, these group spaces aim to create a supportive environment for white educators to critically examine their positionality, develop racial consciousness, and prepare for meaningful anti-racist work without placing additional emotional labor on educators of color.

While white educators engage in this foundational identity work, educators of color need parallel professional spaces supporting and empowering them rather than tokenizing or additional burden. These spaces are crucial for addressing systemic challenges and the emotional toll of racial equity work. Drawing from the chapter's earlier discussion about the "invisible tax" faced by educators of color, these spaces should facilitate mentorship, professional networking, and leadership development. The experiences of isolation many educators of color encounter in

predominantly white institutions underscore the critical need for spaces of validation, community building, and strategic planning. Building on the insights from Chapter 2 about the challenges faced by BIPOC educators, these affinity spaces provide a vital support system that acknowledges the concept of racial battle fatigue. They offer a structured environment where educators of color can share experiences, develop collective strategies, and find professional support in navigating the complex dynamics of predominantly white educational settings.

Parallel to these affinity spaces, the district must establish 'brave spaces' where educators can actively engage with discomfort and challenge in service of growth. These brave spaces directly address the pattern of avoidance and resistance that frequently emerge in discussions about race and equity. Sarah's observation about the teacher's fear of the community and Jennifer's articulation of being 'scared of the race card' highlights the critical need for structured environments that support meaningful engagement with racial equity work. Drawing from the chapter's earlier discussion about white educators' discomfort, these brave spaces provide a framework for moving beyond surface-level interactions to more profound, transformative dialogue (Leonardo & Porter, 2010). Building on the insights of Chapter 2 regarding how whiteness operates in educational institutions, these spaces explicitly challenge traditional professional development models that prioritize white comfort. They acknowledge the inherent discomfort of equity work while providing educators with tools and support for navigating complex racial conversations. The goal is to create an environment that encourages critical reflection, challenges existing power structures, and supports genuine growth in racial understanding.

The creation of dedicated spaces must be thoughtfully structured to avoid reinforcing patterns of white supremacy culture. These spaces require careful facilitation that critically

examines how institutional dynamics perpetuate racial inequities. Drawing from the chapter's earlier discussion about systemic barriers, the goal is to create environments where educators can authentically engage with racial equity work while developing the capacity for sustained engagement with systemic change. The labor of facilitating these spaces must be equally distributed and compensated. This ensures that educators of color are not expected to provide unpaid emotional and intellectual labor in service of institutional transformation. The careful design of these spaces reflects the literature review's emphasis on recognizing and dismantling the hidden power structures that maintain white cultural dominance in educational settings.

Developing Growth Mindset

Effectively engaging in racial equity work requires educators to develop what Dweck (2006) calls a "growth mindset," or the belief that abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work. As discussed in the literature review's exploration of Critical Whiteness Studies, this approach directly challenges patterns of defensiveness and avoidance that often emerge when white educators confront racial equity work. The research reveals how perfectionism can become a significant barrier to meaningful engagement with racial discussions. Drawing from the literature review's examination of white educators' discomfort, this pattern of avoiding conversations for fear of making mistakes ultimately maintains white comfort and prevents transformative practice. This avoidance reflects the deeper mechanisms of white cultural dominance explored in Chapter 2. Building on the insights from the literature review about how whiteness operates in educational institutions, developing a growth mindset requires educators to embrace vulnerability and view mistakes as opportunities for learning. The goal is to create an approach that moves beyond fear of being labeled racist, instead focusing on continuous self-

reflection, active listening, and genuine commitment to understanding and dismantling systemic racial inequities.

Growth mindset frameworks help educators recognize developing racial consciousness and anti-racist practices is an ongoing process rather than a fixed destination, connecting to the fluid nature of racial identity development discussed in Chapter 2. The research revealed how educators frequently exhibited what DiAngelo (2018) identifies as "white fragility," a concept explored in the literature review, where the fear of making mistakes creates defensiveness and disengagement from racial equity work. Ashley's feeling of "profound imposter syndrome" exemplifies how perfectionism can paralyze even well-intentioned educators, reflecting the characteristics of white supremacy culture examined in Chapter 2 (Jones & Okun, 2001). By implementing structured growth mindset approaches, educators can develop stamina for racial discomfort while maintaining a commitment to ongoing learning, addressing the avoidance patterns identified in the theoretical framework.

Building upon the concept of racial identity development explored in Chapter 2, growth mindset development must also include explicit attention to developing educators' ability to recognize, respond to, and redress inequities while creating and sustaining equitable learning environments. This process acknowledges developing equity consciousness is not a linear process but rather involves ongoing reflection, action, and growth, connecting to the fluid nature of racial identity discussed in the literature review. By framing equity work through this developmental lens, educators can move beyond the fixed category approach where people are simply labeled as racist or not (Kendi, 2019), a concept examined in Chapter 2, toward a more nuanced understanding of continuous growth and learning.

The implementation of growth mindset frameworks must also address the culture of niceness often found in educational settings, which frequently prevents authentic engagement with racial equity work. This culture prioritizes politeness and comfort over honest dialogue and creates barriers to meaningful growth by stigmatizing mistakes rather than viewing them as learning opportunities, reflecting the "right to comfort" characteristic of white supremacy culture discussed in Chapter 2 (Jones & Okun, 2001). Growth mindset approaches counter this by explicitly normalizing discomfort and imperfection as necessary development components. This approach helps educators develop intellectual humility around racial equity issues, acknowledging the limitations of their understanding while maintaining commitment to growth, connecting to the concept of critical reflections on whiteness examined in the literature review.

To ensure sustainable implementation, growth mindset frameworks should include structured reflection processes that help educators identify their own patterns of avoidance and resistance. These processes align with the development of racial consciousness discussed in Chapter 2, where educators are provided with tools for examining how their racial identity and socialization shape their professional practice. By developing their critical consciousness, a concept explored in the literature review, educators can recognize perfectionism as a manifestation of white supremacy culture (Jones & Okun, 2001) rather than a helpful, professional standard, addressing the patterns of institutional and individual resistance identified in the theoretical framework

The development of growth mindset approaches directly addresses the barriers to authentic equity work identified in this research by helping educators understand that making mistakes is an inevitable and necessary part of anti-racist practice. Rather than viewing errors as evidence of moral failure, growth mindset frameworks reframe mistakes as opportunities for

learning and development, connecting to the discussion in Chapter 2 about how fear of making mistakes often prevents white educators from engaging with racial equity work. This shift helps educators move beyond pacing for privileges white comfort, a manifestation of the white fragility concept explored in the literature review (DiAngelo, 2018), where equity work proceeds only at the pace comfortable for white educators, toward more transformative engagement with racial justice issues.

Phase 2: Capacity Development (6-12 mos.)

After establishing foundational structures for equity work, Phase 2 focuses on developing institutional capacity for sustained transformation. This phase responds to patterns identified in the research where an equity initiative "fizzled out," as Jennifer characterized, due to insufficient institutional support and resource allocation. Building on the accountability structures and affinity spaces established in Phase 1, this phase emphasizes creating sustainable systems supporting ongoing equity work through compensated leadership roles, professional learning communities, mentoring structures, and equity coaching, addressing the institutional barriers to racial equity work discussed in Chapter 2.

The capacity development phase addresses the permanence of racism in educational institutions by creating infrastructure supporting long-term systemic change rather than relying on individual initiatives (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Equity work cannot depend solely on motivated individuals but requires institutional commitment and support. This phase focuses on developing collective capacity while ensuring educators of color, like Aria and Jennifer, are not disproportionately burdened with responsibility for institutional transformation, connecting to the discussion in the literature review about how whiteness maintains power through the subordination of non-white perspectives.

By implementing structured support systems and creating compensated pathways for equity leadership, Phase 2 addresses the systemic barriers identified in the research while building sustainable capacity for ongoing. The following initiatives outline specific strategies for developing this institutional capacity while challenging patterns of white cultural dominance in professional development and leadership structures, connecting to the institutional manifestations of whiteness discussed in Chapter 2.

Compensated Equity Leadership Roles

To prevent the exploitation of educators of color and ensure sustainable equity work, districts must create formalized, compensated leadership positions dedicated to advancing racial equity initiatives. This shift directly addresses patterns identified in the research where educators like Ashley take on additional equity responsibilities without formal recognition or compensation, leaving it up to "moral obligation." Rather than relying on volunteer labor or adding equity work to exiting duties, these positions should be properly compensated and embedded within the institutional structure with real decision-making power. These equity leadership roles must be carefully structured to avoid interest convergence, a concept examined in Chapter 2, where equity initiatives advance only when they align with white interests (Bell, 1980; Bell, 1992a). These positions should have explicit authority to influence policy decisions, curriculum development, and professional development initiatives, which responds to Aria's observation change needs to "start from the top" by creating formal pathways for equity-focused leadership within institutional hierarchy. These roles should include both classroom-based teacher leaders and administrative positions, ensuring equity work is embedded at multiple organizational levels and addressing the hierarchical power structures discussed in the literature review.

These positions must move beyond traditional "Diversity and Inclusion" roles, which often lack any real power to create systemic change. These leadership positions need to have clear authority, adequate resources, and institutional support to implement meaningful reforms, addressing the systemic barriers to equity work discussed in Chapter 2. The compensation structure needs to reflect both the importance of this work, and the additional labor involved, particularly in recognizing and avoiding the burden placed on educators of color in equity initiatives, connecting to the discussion in the literature review about how whiteness maintains power through the subordination of non-white perspectives.

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) explicitly focused on racial equity and anti-racist pedagogy provide crucial structures, sustained educator development, and collective learning. Unlike traditional PLCs, which often focus solely on academic data or common assessments, these equity-focused communities must create spaces for educators who examine how their practices perpetuate or disrupt white cultural dominance patterns, reflecting concepts explored in the literature review. The research revealed how educators like Sarah often default to surface-level cultural celebrations or what she termed an "everyone is different" framework when discussing race. Structured PLCs can help move educators beyond these comfort-maintaining approaches to develop more sophisticated strategies for addressing racial equity in their practice. These communities must be thoughtfully structured with dedicated time and resources, addressing the pattern Daniel pinpointed where equity initiatives often falter without proper institutional support. These PLCs should examine how white cultural norms shape instructional practices, assessment approaches, and student-teacher relationships, connecting to the institutional manifestations of whiteness discussed in Chapter 2.

To be effective, these PLCs incorporate structured protocols for examining student data through an equity lens, analyzing classroom practices, and developing anti-racist pedagogical strategies. The communities should provide opportunities for educators to engage in ongoing reflection and action research, with specific attention to how their racial identities influence their teaching practice, addressing the concept of racial consciousness explored in the literature review. This addresses the need Ashley advocated for "honest conversations, challenging people's biases . . . getting people to really examine . . . themselves and what they bring when they walk through the door." These PLCs must be carefully facilitated to ensure they do not reproduce patterns of white cultural dominance or place undue burden on educators of color to educate their white colleagues. The focus should be on collective responsibility for equity work while maintaining brave spaces for authentic dialogue and professional growth, reflecting the need to challenge patterns of avoidance discussed in Chapter 2.

Cross-Generational Mentoring Programs

Cross-generational mentoring programs require thoughtful consideration of racial and generational dynamics in their design and implementation, which connects to the discussions of intersectionality in Chapter 2. While cross-racial mentoring can provide valuable learning opportunities, the structure must avoid placing an additional burden on educators of color to educate their white colleagues, a pattern observed throughout the research. Instead, mentoring relationships should be strategically structured to provide appropriate support for different racial identities and career stages, reflecting an understanding of how whiteness operates as discussed in the literature review.

For white educators, same-race mentoring pairs can provide important opportunities to develop racial consciousness and anti-racist practices without burdening colleagues of color with

their emotional processing (DiAngelo, 2018), a concept examined in the literature review. For instance, pairing early-career white educators like Daniel, who grappled with articulating his understanding of white privilege, with veteran white educators who have developed more sophisticated equity practices can support growth while maintaining appropriate boundaries around emotional labor.

For educators of color, mentoring relationships should prioritize their professional growth and leadership development rather than institutional diversity work. Drawing from Aria and Jennifer's experiences navigating predominantly white spaces, these mentoring relationships should create networks of support addressing the unique challenges educators of color face across career stages, connecting to concepts in the literature review about how educators of color must navigate white institutional spaces. When cross-racial mentoring does occur, it should be carefully structured with clear protocols and compensation for any additional labor performed by educators of color.

The key is ensuring mentoring structures serve the professional development needs of all educators while avoiding exploiting educators of color for institutional diversity work. This requires careful attention to power dynamics and clear institutional support for maintaining appropriate boundaries in mentoring relationships, addressing the issues of power and privilege examined in the theoretical framework.

Equity Coaching Infrastructure

To sustain meaningful equity work, districts must implement comprehensive equity coaching programs to provide targeted, ongoing support for educators engaged in racial equity initiatives. Unlike traditional instructional coaching, equity coaches need specialized training to help educators identify and address how white cultural norms manifest in their practice while

developing more culturally responsive approaches, connecting to the discussion in Chapter 2 about how whiteness shapes educational practices. This coaching infrastructure addresses pattern identified in the research where educators like Sarah defaulted to surface-level cultural celebrations or struggled to move beyond comfort-maintaining approaches to racial discussions.

Equity coaches must be carefully selected and thoroughly trained to guide educators through the process of examining their practice through a racial equity lens, reflecting the Critical Race Theory framework established in the literature review. These coaches need expertise in both pedagogical development and Critical Race Theory to help educators navigate both technical and adaptive challenges of equity work. Coaches could help educators like Daniel to move beyond his initial uncertainty about discussing race to develop more sophisticated approaches for addressing racial equity in Edgewood Public Schools. The coaching structure should include regular observation cycles, feedback sessions, and opportunities for guided reflection. However, the program must be carefully designed to avoid reproducing patterns of perfectionism or accommodating a right to comfort (Jones & Okun, 2001), characteristics of white supremacy examined in Chapter 2. Instead, coaching should focus on developing educators' capacity to engage authentically with racial equity work while building sustainable practices for anti-racist education.

The coaching infrastructure must include appropriate compensation and support for coaches. The program should establish clear protocols for coaching relationships, including explicit attention to power dynamics and emotional labor. This responds to patterns identified in the research, where educators of color, like Aria and Jennifer, had to navigate their roles in supporting institutional equity work while maintaining their own professional well-being.

Distributed Leadership Model Implementation

Moving beyond the traditional top-down administrative approaches characterizing white supremacy culture, districts must implement distributed leadership models to share power and decision-making authority across multiple levels of the organization, which connects to characteristics of white supremacy culture discussed in Chapter 2. This shift directly addresses Aria's observation that change needs to "start from the top" while recognizing meaningful transformation requires engagement at all institutional levels. The distributed leadership models create formal pathways for educators to influence systemic change while challenging traditional hierarchical power structures that often perpetuate white cultural dominance, reflecting the concept of institutional power discussed in the literature review. This leadership model should intentionally distribute authority across both formal and informal roles, creating opportunities for teacher-leaders to drive equity initiatives from within their classrooms and department teams. As Ashley's experience demonstrates, relying solely on individual initiative without institutional support creates unsustainable patterns of equity work. Instead, distributed leadership provides structured support and recognition for educators engaging in equity-focused leadership.

Teacher-leader training must go beyond traditional leadership development to include specific preparation in equity-focused leadership practices. This preparation needs to include developing skills in facilitating difficult conversations about race, analyzing systems through an equity lens, and supporting colleagues in developing anti-racist practices (DiAngelo, 2018). This connects to the concepts of white fragility and racial consciousness examined in the literature review. The model should create clear pathways for advancement while ensuring emotional and professional safety for educators of color.

Implementation of this model requires careful attention to power dynamics and decision-making processes (Tatum, 2017). Without real authority to influence change, distributed leadership can become merely symbolic, so the model must include explicit decision-making authority, resource allocation, and institutional support for teacher-leaders working to advance equity initiatives. This approach helps address the historical delay in equity advancement that Daniel identified by creating multiple points of leadership for advancing equity work (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995), reflecting the permanence of racism concept explored in the literature review. The distributed leadership model should also create specific opportunities for educators of color to move into leadership positions without being limited to diversity-focused roles. This responds to patterns in the research where educators like Aria and Jennifer had to carefully navigate their racial identities within predominantly white institutional spaces, connecting to the discussion in Chapter 2 about how educators of color must manage their identities in white-dominated environments.

Phase 3: Systemic Transformation (1-3 years)

Building on the previous phases' foundational structures and capacity development, Phase 3 focuses on deep systemic transformation of institutional culture and practices. This phase moves beyond surface-level changes to address the permanence of racism in educational institutions (Bell, 1992a; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995), a core tenet of Critical Race Theory examined in Chapter 2. The longer timeline for this phase acknowledges meaningful institutional transformation requires sustained commitment and systematic restructuring of how power, resources, and opportunities are distributed within public educational spaces. The research revealed how white cultural norms often remain embedded in institutional structures even when implementing surface-level diversity initiatives. As evidenced by Sarah's comment, "Which, like

a lot of people, think what you don't know won't hurt you. And I don't believe that. I believe that all kids should learn different things, and so they're not questioning it when they see it in the world," institutional culture often perpetuates patterns of avoidance and resistance to meaningful change. Phase 3 directly confronts these patterns through three interconnected initiatives: institutional, cultural redesign, professional standards revolution, and development of sustainable equity ecosystems, addressing the systemic manifestations of whiteness discussed in the literature review.

This phase specifically addresses the need for transformative rather than additive approaches for equity work. Rather than simply adding diversity initiatives to existing structures, Phase 3 focuses on fundamentally reimagining how educational institutions operate to serve all students equitably, connecting to the critique of surface-level diversity efforts explored in Chapter 2. The following initiatives outline specific strategies for achieving this systemic transformation while ensuring sustainable, long-term change.

Institutional Cultural Redesign

Systemic transformation requires deliberately dismantling white-centered institutional norms and practices perpetuating racial inequity in educational spaces, connecting to the discussion of whiteness as a social construct in Chapter 2. The research revealed how the institutional culture at Edgewood often defaulted to what Jones and Okun (2001) identified as white supremacy characteristics, including perfectionism, a sense of urgency, and the right to comfort, which are concepts that were explored in the literature review. Meaningful cultural redesign must systematically address these embedded patterns through policy reforms, curriculum revision, and fundamental shifts in institutional values and practices.

This redesign process must extend beyond surface-level diversity initiatives to address how power operates within the institution. Aria's observation, "looking at upper management…they're white people," highlights how institutional leadership often reproduces patterns of white cultural dominance, reflecting the concept of white institutional presence discussed in Chapter 2. Cultural redesign requires examining and transforming hiring practices, promotion pathways, and leadership development to ensure diverse representation at all institutional levels. The transformation of institutional culture must also address how racial equity discourse is integrated into daily operations. Rather than treating equity as a separate initiative, institutions must embed racial equity considerations into all aspects of decision-making, from budget allocation to curriculum development. The lack of systemic integration leads to unsupported initiatives that then lead to what the research identified as initiatives "fizzl[ing] out." The redesign process should explicitly prioritize anti-racist practices, cultural responsiveness, and inclusion as core institutional values rather than optional add-ons (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995), addressing the permanence of racism concept established in the theoretical framework.

This cultural redesign must include mechanisms for addressing resistance and backlash. Sarah's reflection, "teacher fear the community," reveals how institutional culture often prioritizes white comfort over meaningful change. The redesign process must include explicit strategies for supporting educators through the discomfort of transformation while maintaining focus on systemic change. The redesign process must include explicit strategies for supporting educators through the discomfort of transformation while maintaining focus on systemic change. This includes developing clear protocols for addressing racial incidents, supporting educators

engaged in equity work, and maintaining accountability for institutional transformation, connecting to DiAngelo's (2018) concept of white fragility examined in Chapter 2.

Professional Standards Revolution

The revolution in professional standards, drawing from the critique of Eurocentric educational systems established in Chapter 2, requires fundamentally reimagining how educator excellence is defined, measured, and rewarded. Traditional evaluation metrics often fail to capture or value educators' contributions to racial equity work, as evidenced by Ashley's uncompensated equity initiatives. Districts must develop new frameworks explicitly assessing and rewarding educators' capacity for culturally responsive practice, including their ability to create inclusive learning environments and address racial equity.

Professional advancement pathways must be reconstructed to recognize and reward equity-focused leadership capabilities. This responds to patterns identified in the research where, in Aria's assessment, leadership positions remain predominantly white despite stated commitments to diversity, reflecting the concept of institutional power structures explored in the literature review. New promotion criteria should specifically value equity literacy or educators' ability to recognize and respond to systemic inequities. Chapter 2's discussion of representation in educational leadership underscores the importance of creating clear opportunities for educators of color to advance into leadership positions without being limited to diversity-focused roles.

The concept of white cultural dominance examined in the theoretical frameworks highlights why the standards revolution must also address the additional burden placed on educators of color. New professional standards should include explicit mechanisms for recognizing and compensating this labor while creating more equitable distributions of equity-

focused responsibilities across all educators. This includes developing specific criteria for evaluating and rewarding educators' contributions to building inclusive school cultures and advancing equity initiatives.

These transformed standards must move beyond technical competence to include cultural responsiveness competencies. This includes assessing educators' ability to engage in critical self-reflection, navigate racial dynamics, and support students' cultural wealth and identities. The goal is to create professional standards explicitly valuing equity-focused skills and commitments as core aspects of educational excellence rather than peripheral considerations. Such an approach directly challenges the color-blind educational policies that Chapter 2 identifies as barriers to meaningful equity.

Sustainable Equity Ecosystem Development

The development of sustainable equity ecosystems requires constructing support networks that can withstand leadership transitions, community resistance, and political shifts. The literature review's examination of institutional barriers to equity work highlights why these networks must specifically address the isolation many educators of color experience in predominantly white institutions. This research revealed how educators like Jennifer and Aria carefully navigate institutional spaces, demonstrating the need for structured support systems extending beyond individual mentoring relationships to create comprehensive professional communities.

Community accountability structures represent an essential aspect of sustainable ecosystems. Drawing from the Critical Race Theory framework established in the literature review, these structures should create formal pathways for marginalized voices to shape institutional direction (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). However, as Daniel reflected, "I think a

lot of teachers, not just about race, but I think, like overall, are very nervous about parents' reactions to things, just because I think their opinion is more valued than ours." These accountability mechanisms must carefully balance community input with protection for educators engaging in equity work, which requires developing brave spaces supporting authentic dialogue. White spatial isolation, a concept connected to the segregation patterns discussed in Chapter 2, can intensify resistance to equity initiatives. Sarah's observation that "teachers fear the community" highlights how predominantly white institutions often prioritize the comfort of dominant groups over meaningful change. To counter this, accountability structures must include explicit protocols for managing resistance while maintaining focus on equity goals. The core values of institutional transformation explored in the literature review suggests these structures should incorporate equity-focused school-family-community partnerships building collective capacity for sustaining transformation.

The ecosystem must include adaptive learning systems allowing for continuous evolution of equity practices. Rather than relying on static initiatives or one-time training, institutions need regular, systematic examinations of how power operates within the district, connecting to concepts of power and privilege explored in Chapter 2. These examinations should include specific metrics for tracking institutional progress while remaining flexible enough to respond to emerging challenges and opportunities.

Addressing what the literature review identifies as "hidden curriculum" of institutional practices often undermines stated equity commitments. This means the district must develop explicit protocols for addressing racial incidents, support educators through periods of resistance and maintain momentum for change despite institutional inertia. The goal is to establish

adaptive, self-regenerating frameworks that remain resilient despite administrative turnover, community resistance, or shifting political landscapes.

Summary

Through these three interconnected phases, foundational development, capacity building, and systemic transformation, Edgewood Public Schools can begin the complex work of dismantling entrenched patterns of white cultural dominance while creating more equitable educational environments. The progression recognizes the permanence of racism in educational institutions, a core tenet of Critical Race Theory established in the literature review (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995), while providing concrete pathways for change. As this research revealed, meaningful transformation requires sustained commitment at multiple levels from classroom practice to administrative leadership. The literature review's examination of failed equity attempts in predominantly white spaces helps explain why individual initiatives often "fizzle out" without proper support. In contrast, this phased approach creates the infrastructure, capacity, and ecosystem necessary for sustainable change by addressing both individual and institutional manifestations of white cultural dominance. Drawing from Chapter 2's analysis of white supremacy culture, the goal becomes a fundamental transformation of how educational institutions operate, requiring a revolution in professional standards, institutional culture, and organizational systems. Such comprehensive restructuring, connecting to the theoretical framework established in the literature review, can sustain equity work across changes in leadership, shifting demographics, and evolving institutional needs. This approach directly counters the surface-level diversity initiatives that Chapter 2 identifies as insufficient for creating meaningful change in predominantly white educational settings.

Limitations of Current Practice

The research revealed significant limitations in how racial equity work is currently implemented within predominantly white educational institutions, particularly regarding professional preparation, accountability structures, and resource allocation. These limitations create substantial barriers to meaningful transformation and suggest several areas requiring systemic change.

Current Implementation Limits

Research reveals equity efforts in predominantly white educational institutions often reinforce, rather than challenge, existing power structures. The district's planning reflects "white institutional presence" (Gusa, 2010), a concept explored in Chapter 2, where whiteness is embedded in operations, culture, and decision-making. White administrators, often unaware of how whiteness shapes their leadership, perpetuate "power hoarding" (Jones & Okun, 2001), maintaining homogeneity in leadership (Bucholtz, 2011; Green et al., 2007; Withers, 2017). The invisibility of whiteness, a key theme from Chapter 2, explains why white administrators might not notice how whiteness shapes their decisions because it feels "normal" or "neutral, and as participants described, administrators are "all Caucasian."

This leadership disparity mirrors the broader educational landscape examined in the literature review, where white superintendents outnumber white student populations, creating disconnection from diverse communities. With only 20% of superintendents reporting confidence in leading racial discussions, as indicated by Tienken (2021), referenced in Chapter 2, equity initiatives remain superficial, prioritizing white comfort over systemic change. Drawing from critiques of culturally relevant leadership in the literature review, this approach manifests in token diversity efforts, like adding books about people of color or hosting cultural celebrations,

rather than addressing structural inequities. These comfort-maintaining generalizations exemplify the colorblind approaches discussed in Chapter 2. The result creates what Ladson-Billings described as a "distortion and corruption" of equity work, where administrators implementing frameworks often have only superficial notions of culture and remain uncomfortable with substantive conversations around race. These inadequacies in professional development connect to broader systemic issues as many suburban school administrators who receive state funding for diversity initiatives are not required to address more equitable outcomes for their students (Eaton, 2020). Instead, they frequently employ practices and policies prioritizing the comfort of white parents and students at the expense of meaningful change.

The persistence of these surface-level approaches reflects the concept of desirabilizing whiteness examined in the theoretical framework, where institutions attempt to diversify white spaces without fundamentally shifting to decenter whiteness. Chapter 2's analysis of equity attempts in predominantly white spaces helps explain how this maintains the status quo as accepted by white people in the suburbs, aligning with institutional patterns defining race neutrality in ways ultimately favoring white people. The literature review's discussion of educational credentialing illustrates how the cycle persists as teachers like Daniel enter the profession unprepared to engage with racial identity and later become administrators who lack the tools for meaningful equity work.

This problem stems from a critical gap in licensing and preparation requirements that Chapter 2 identifies at both the teacher and administrator levels. Current certification requirements do not mandate a sophisticated understanding of racial dynamics or demonstration of cultural competency. This structural gap in professional requirements means educators can progress through their entire careers, from classroom teachers to district administrators, without

ever developing the skills needed to effectively engage in racial equity work. The absence of standardized requirements for cultural competency in professional licensing creates a system where educators struggle to talk about understanding racism as a systemic issue, reflecting the challenges of developing racial consciousness discussed in the literature review. The demographic implications of this gap are stark, while student populations grow increasingly diverse, with leadership remaining overwhelmingly white and largely unprepared to address racial equity issues.

Beyond these preparation gaps, the research also revealed patterns of perfectionism and fear of making mistakes representing significant barriers to authentic equity work in educational settings. The concept of white fragility explored in Chapter 2 (DiAngelo, 2018) explains how educators' concerns about "saying the wrong thing" or being perceived as racist often lead to avoidance of meaningful engagement with racial equity issues altogether. This hesitation maintains white comfort at the expense of transformative practice. By addressing the characteristics of white supremacy culture identified in the literature review (Jones & Okun, 2001), educators can develop the confidence to engage authentically with racial equity work despite the inherent messiness of this process.

Accountability and Resource Limitations

Financial and administrative decisions often perpetuate racial inequities under the guise of neutrality. Budgeting practices reflect "whiteness as property" (Harris, 1993), a concept thoroughly examined in Chapter 2, privileging white institutional interests. Edgewood's resource disparities, evidenced by its low per-student spending compared to similar districts, echo historical segregation patterns discussed in the literature review. The district's handling of ESSER funds, perceived as a "false sense of financial security," exemplifies how equity funding

is managed through the lens of institutional preservation rather than transformation. The theoretical framework established in Chapter 2 helps explain how budget documents obscure disparities with universal language, reinforcing color-evasive ideology (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). This connects to broader patterns of residential segregation in Massachusetts explored in the literature review, limiting access to resources for marginalized students. As the historical context section of Chapter 2 demonstrates, despite Massachusetts's seemingly liberal ideology, invisible efforts against integration keep lower-class people of all races out of more affluent neighborhoods and schools. The mechanism restricting housing opportunities through single-family zoning and limited multifamily housing developments is reflected in how educational resources are allocated and controlled.

The institutional wall concept from Critical Whiteness Studies discussed in the literature review (Ahmed, 2012; Leonardo, 2004) explains the administrative implications extend beyond just budgeting. The observation that there are no people of color in administration demonstrates white racial hegemony operating through material, institutional conditions creating invisible barriers excluding marginalized voices from decision-making processes. Daniel's observation, "if we did have administration kind of guidance, I think that would be helpful," reflects inadequate institutional support for equity work, connecting to Chapter 2's examination of how white administrators often lack the racial consciousness needed to understand systemic racism. This suggests even when resources are available, leadership may lack the framework to deploy them effectively for equity initiatives.

Future Implications and Needed Changes

The limitations shown in this study, ranging from surface-level equity initiatives to inadequate professional development, from homogeneous leadership to resource disparities,

highlight a pressing need for comprehensive systemic change in how educational institutions approach racial equity work. The persistence of these patterns, despite well-intentioned efforts, suggests that piecemeal reforms are insufficient. Instead, the findings indicate several areas that require fundamental restructuring of how schools conceptualize, implement, and evaluate equity initiatives. These necessary changes span multiple domains, including standardizing cultural competency requirements in educator preparation, reforming accountability frameworks, and redistributing decision-making power and resources. By examining these areas for change, we can envision more transformative approaches to address the deep-seated patterns of white cultural dominance identified in this research.

Standardized Cultural Competency Requirements

This research indicates an urgent need for standardized cultural competency requirements in educator preparation and ongoing professional development. Current training, described as "out of touch" by Jennifer, fails to prepare educators for engaging with racial identity. Chapter 2's examination of whiteness as a social construct helps explain why the lack of standardization means white educators often progress through their careers without developing racial awareness, reinforcing Eurocentric norms (DiAngelo, 2021). The concept of white people as "unraced" explored in the literature review clarifies why Daniel's experience represents a common pattern where white educators move their careers without developing the tools to engage in basic discussions about their racial identity. As Chapter 2 notes, many white people do not develop racial awareness and consider themselves unraced (DiAngelo, 2021). The theoretical framework established in the literature review helps us understand how this inadequate preparation is it maintains institutional power by creating the appearance of addressing racial equity while avoiding the actual transformation of educational practices.

To address this issue, the findings suggest professional development must include sustained training on whiteness in education, aligned with frameworks that foster racial consciousness development. Building on Chapter 2's discussion of Critical Whiteness Studies, these programs need clear evaluation metrics to track educators' progress in implementing culturally responsive practices, ensuring accountability beyond surface-level diversity efforts discussed in the literature review. Such frameworks would create a comprehensive approach ensuring educators develop and maintain the skills necessary for meaningful equity work, addressing the limitations in current professional preparation outlined in the theoretical background.

Professional Development and Support for Current Educators

Sporadic diversity training is ineffective. Professional growth must be continuous. Current educators need structural support systems acknowledging both the challenges and responsibilities of engaging in racial equity work. As revealed through the study, many white educators are unprepared for even basic discussions about race and identity, while educators of color like Jennifer and Aria must carefully navigate how and when to share their perspectives and experiences.

Professional development shifts should begin with establishing structured affinity groups meeting regularly throughout the school year. For white educators, these spaces provide opportunities to process discomfort, examine privilege, and develop anti-racist practices without burdening colleagues of color with their growth work. For educators of color, separate affinity spaces offer safe environments to share experiences, develop support networks, and strategize responses to institutional challenges. These groups should be facilitated by trained leaders and have clear protocols for productive dialogue.

Multi-tiered coaching systems should pair experienced equity practitioners with educators, fostering ongoing mentorship. This coaching framework should include regular one-on-one sessions focusing on specific classroom challenges, with coaches receiving specialized training in supporting adult learning around racial equity. These coaching relationships need to extend across multiple years to build trust and enable deeper work. Districts must also develop clear leadership pathways by identifying and compensating educators demonstrating commitment to equity work. This includes creating formal equity leadership positions with release time and stipends, providing leadership training and support for equity-focused teacher leaders, and establishing clear pathways for advancing equity work within the district. These leadership opportunities should be paired with robust accountability systems tracking both individual educator growth and institutional change through clear competency metrics, documentation of policy changes, analysis of initiative impacts, and transparent reporting to stakeholders.

The overall professional learning structure must be reimagined to schedule regular, protected time for equity work during contract hours, creating multi-year professional development sequences rather than isolated workshops. This approach integrates equity focus into all aspects of professional learning, not just designated “equity PD,” and provides resources and materials to support ongoing learning between sessions. To support this comprehensive transformation, districts must dedicate specific budget lines to equity-focused professional development, connecting to the resource allocation issues discussed in the literature review. This encourages authentic engagement while maintaining high expectations for growth.

New Accountability Frameworks

The research suggests the need for robust accountability frameworks, transforming how districts measure, report, and act on equity initiatives. Equity initiatives must move beyond broad, non-specific goals like “building meaningful relationships with all students,” which obscure racial disparities. The document analysis revealed how this generic language appears inclusive on the surface but works to hide specific challenges arising in a district with predominantly white teaching staff working with an increasingly diverse student population. Generic language masks systemic issues, such as Jennifer's experience navigating her biracial identity supporting students "looking to see themselves in their teachers," or Aria's critique, "They need to talk. Know what struggle, what we have to cross." New frameworks must intentionally challenge patterns of controlled access to equity initiatives and restricted decision-making power.

Districts need to implement comprehensive equity audits going beyond surface-level diversity metrics. These audits should examine systemic barriers, representation across leadership and staff, resource allocation patterns, and institutional practices. The analysis needs to track patterns of exclusion, access, and opportunities across professional and academic spaces. Drawing from Jennifer’s experiences of navigating her racial identity while “presenting as white,” the assessment should investigate how professional credibility is constructed and maintained by analyzing credential recognition practices, promotion pathways, and the subtle ways institutional power is distributed.

Strategic accountability partnerships should bring external oversight and diverse perspectives to ensure the work of dismantling institutional racism remains dynamic and accountable. The concept addresses a complex dynamic revealed in the research where

educators' apprehension about community backlash can lead to avoiding meaningful equity work, reflecting the patterns of resistance discussed in Chapter 2. These partnerships need to involve external organizations or experts who can provide objective oversight, include diverse community voices in decision-making processes, create a structured dialogue between schools and communities, and establish regular review and feedback mechanisms. The framework established in the literature review around white cultural dominance suggests the goal should be transforming potentially adversarial relationships into collaborative ones supporting meaningful change. Instead of educators feeling caught between institutional constraints and community pressure, these partnerships create spaces where difficult but necessary conversations about race and equity can occur productively, addressing the color-evasive approaches examined in the theoretical framework.

Resource Allocation Reform

Districts must address funding inequities through transparent, community-informed budgeting processes examining how resource allocation decisions perpetuate or disrupt racial inequities. As shown in Chapter 2's discussion of institutional racism, Edgewood's financial decisions demonstrate how whiteness remains embedded in resource distribution. The historical context provided in the literature review explains why districts should conduct regular equity audits of their budgeting processes and mandate meaningful stakeholder involvement in financial planning.

Collaborations with institutions like Bridgewater State University can provide oversight and accountability for resource allocation reform, using faculty expertise and research-based equity metrics to independently evaluate spending patterns and their impacts. These partnerships should explicitly examine what Leonardo (2004) identifies in the theoretical framework as the

material conditions perpetuating racial inequities in educational settings. Drawing from Chapter 2's analysis of systemic barriers to equity, partnerships with community organizations and civil rights groups can ensure external oversight, preventing backsliding into performative equity efforts.

Summary

Achieving meaningful racial equity requires systemic reform in policy, leadership, and accountability. The theoretical framework established in Chapter 2 demonstrates why establishing cultural competency standards, integrating equity into professional development, and restructuring resource distribution can help schools move beyond superficial diversity efforts. These comprehensive, data-driven reforms are essential to dismantling entrenched white cultural dominance and fostering truly inclusive educational environments.

Future Research

The findings from the study reveal several fundamental issues requiring radical transformation in how educational institutions approach racial equity work. While incremental changes can provide some progress, the research suggests the need for revolutionary shifts in who holds power, how knowledge is created and validated, and what voices shape educational policy and practice.

While this study focuses on a predominantly white suburban district, its findings have broader implications for other suburban districts with different demographic compositions. The structural patterns identified are not unique to Edgewood but reflect systemic trends in suburban public schools. Future research should investigate how these dynamics shift in districts with greater racial diversity among educators or students. For example, do more racially diverse teaching staff create greater institutional openness to systemic equity work, or do these educators

face similar resistance within predominantly white power structures? Additionally, research should explore how shifting suburban demographics impact school policy and educator engagement in equity work, building on Chapter 2's historical analysis of educational evolution in Massachusetts suburbs. By examining these variations across suburban districts, future studies can provide a more comprehensive understanding of how racial equity efforts are shaped by local demographics, governance structures, and community pressures.

The educational credentialing and licensing system requires complete reconstruction to center the perspectives and experiences of educators of color. As revealed by participants like Aria and Jennifer, current professional standards and evaluation frameworks remain deeply rooted in white cultural norms, creating professional standards privileging whiteness (Jones & Okun, 2001). The experiences of educators of color navigating these systems highlight how institutional structures systematically exclude diverse perspectives from positions of power. Future research must examine how to fundamentally restructure credentialing processes to validate diverse forms of expertise and cultural knowledge while creating clear pathways for educators of color to shape institutional direction, addressing the institutional reproduction patterns analyzed in the theoretical framework.

This restructuring requires moving beyond merely increasing demographic representation to fundamentally changing who holds decision-making power in educational institutions. As the research revealed, even when educators of color secure positions within predominantly white institutions, they frequently face an additional burden of uncompensated labor related to diversity work while having limited influence over institutional direction, connected to the power dynamics examined in Chapter 2. Future research should investigate models for redistributing

institutional power, especially by examining how to create governance structures centering rather than merely including voices of color in shaping educational policy and practice.

A second critical area requiring radical transformation involves the production and validation of educational research itself. The current study reveals how white scholars and researchers continue to dominate discourse around racial equity in education, often speaking about rather than with communities of color. This pattern perpetuates the idea white researchers maintain control over how racial dynamics in education are studied and understood (Leonardo, 2009). Future research must examine how to fundamentally restructure academic publishing, funding, and peer review processes to center scholars of color investigating issues directly impacting their communities.

This restructuring requires moving beyond simply increasing demographic diversity in academia to examine how white cultural norms shape what counts as legitimate research, reflecting the discussion in Chapter 2 about how whiteness operates as a cultural norm. Current academic structures often dismiss or devalue research methodologies and ways of knowing emerging from communities of color (Pizarro & Kohli, 2018). This study itself reflects these institutional constraints. While seeking to examine white cultural dominance in education, it necessarily operates within traditionally white academic frameworks through its methodology, literature review structure, and dissertation format. As a white researcher investigating racial dynamics in education, I acknowledge my own racial identity and academic training shape what questions I ask, what evidence I consider valid, and how I interpret participants' experiences. Even as this research critiques white cultural dominance in education, it emerges from and is validated through institutional structures historically marginalizing scholars of color and alternative ways of knowing. This tension between critiquing and operating within white

academic norms highlights the urgent need for future studies to investigate alternative frameworks for validating knowledge production and honoring diverse epistemological traditions while creating accountability to communities being studied.

The future research must also examine how to radically transform professional development and teacher preparation programs to center anti-racist practices and comprehensive cultural responsiveness as core rather than supplementary competencies. The findings reveal how current approaches often treat equity work as an add-on, resulting in unsustained initiatives that gradually lose momentum and ultimately dissolve without creating lasting change. Future studies should investigate models for completely reconstructing teacher education around dismantling rather than perpetuating white cultural dominance in schools. This transformation requires examining how white cultural norms shape every aspect of teaching practices. Many educators enter the profession without developed racial consciousness or equity literacy. Future research must investigate how to fundamentally rebuild teacher preparation programs to center critical consciousness development and anti-racist pedagogical practices as foundational rather than supplementary professional competencies.

Future studies should investigate the impact of identity-focused professional development on educators' understanding and practice. While this research identified patterns of binary thinking and simplified approaches to diversity, more investigation is needed into how structured engagement with intersectionality theory, as discussed in Chapter 2, transforms educator practice. Research should examine whether comprehensive identity workshops help educators move beyond essentialist categorizations toward more nuanced understandings of how students navigate multiple identities simultaneously. Longitudinal studies could track how these workshops influence classroom discourse, curricular choices, and student-teacher interactions

over time, measuring whether educators develop greater competence with culturally sustaining pedagogies honoring the complexity of student identities. Such research might explore whether exposure to intersectional, borderland, and matrix of domination theories (Anzaldúa, 2012; Crenshaw, 1991) established in the literature review translates into observable changes in how educators conceptualize and respond to diversity in their classrooms. This investigation connects to Chapter 2's discussion of shifting demographics in suburban districts, where educators must increasingly navigate complex identity dynamics that traditional diversity frameworks fail to address.

These changes are essential for moving beyond what this study revealed as patterns of institutional resistance to achieve genuine transformation of educational spaces. Drawing from the critique of surface-level equity efforts in the literature review, future research examining these areas must model the changes being advocated by centering scholars of color and remaining accountable to the communities most impacted by educational inequity. Only through these revolutionary shifts in who shapes educational research, policy, and practice can we begin to dismantle rather than describe patterns of white cultural dominance in schools.

The evidence presented in this study suggests meaningful progress requires completely reimagining rather than simply reforming current educational structures. Future research must examine how to radically reconstruct professional credentialing, knowledge production, and teacher preparation systems in ways centering rather than marginalizing perspectives of color. This reconstruction work requires a sustained commitment to examining how white cultural norms continue shaping educational institutions while developing alternative frameworks to genuinely serve all students.

Social Justice Implications

This study's examination of how white culture influences educators' perceived roles and impacts in racial equity work is deeply intertwined with pressing social justice issues in education. The findings reveal how institutional structures, professional practices, and cultural norms continue to uphold systems of racial inequity despite schools' public commitments to serve all students equitably. These dynamics expose the ways in which institutions, often in the name of diversity, perpetuate the very systems they claim to challenge. The perpetuation of racial inequities is not merely an incidental byproduct of educational systems; it is built into the fabric of those systems and needs intentional, targeted intervention.

The study highlights several ways in which white cultural dominance remains pervasive in predominantly white institutions. Predominantly white school districts like Edgewood often employ diversity initiatives, maintaining existing power structures rather than disrupting them. This resistance to change, whether active or passive, emerges when equity efforts challenge the status quo. The findings reflect the notion of "colorblind" policies appearing race-neutral but, in fact, serving to reinforce racial hierarchies by avoiding explicit racial discourse (Leonardo, 2009). These institutional mechanisms are designed to preserve rather than dismantle the power structures they purport to address (Villavicencio et al., 2022).

One of the most significant implications of this study is the recognition that surface-level diversity initiatives often mask deeper patterns of institutional resistance. As discussed in the literature review's exploration of Critical Whiteness Studies, schools frequently fail to engage with the root causes of racial inequities within their structures, reflecting a broader trend of hegemonic reform, where policies framed as reformist in nature continue to uphold the underlying power imbalances. Drawing from the literature review's examination of systemic

racism in educational settings, this avoidance of explicit racial discourse and reliance on vague, performative gestures detracts from meaningful institutional change. The colorblind rhetoric explored in Chapter 2 emerges as a key mechanism that obscures the very racialized system it claims to transcend, making it a barrier to transformative social justice work.

The research also illuminates how white cultural norms shape professional practices and institutional expectations within educational environments. As highlighted in the earlier discussion of Critical Race Theory, these norms often prioritize comfort-maintaining approaches over practices leading to transformative change. Institutional responses to racial equity efforts are either passive or resistant, inadvertently perpetuating the status quo and making it difficult for meaningful social justice work to gain traction.

The study's findings ultimately point to the need for systemic institutional change to achieve genuine racial equity. Institutional structures and professional development practices cannot simply tinker around the edges of racial inequities; they must confront the deep-seated power imbalances pervading educational spaces. This research emphasizes true social justice in education requires more than goodwill or individual efforts but a reimagining of the systems and structures continuing to privilege whiteness and marginalize communities of color. In alignment with the literature review's exploration of critical consciousness, social justice can only be realized through collective action that commits to dismantling the deeply ingrained racial hierarchies in education. This approach moves beyond surface-level interventions to address the fundamental mechanisms of institutional oppression outlined in the earlier theoretical framework.

Reflection

As a white educator committed to advancing racial equity in a predominantly white public school district, I find myself in a position of both privilege and responsibility. I am keenly aware, as a member of the dominant racial group, my efforts to advocate for systemic change in these spaces are met with a mix of passive and active resistance. This resistance come from colleagues, administrators, and the institution itself and often manifests in subtle but powerful ways. This resistance can come in the form of reluctance to engage in difficult conversations about race and overt pushback when equity initiatives challenge the status quo. These barriers are not just institutional, though; they are deeply personal, rooted in the discomfort whiteness often creates when forced to confront its own complicity in maintaining racial inequities. In pursuing this doctoral degree, I sought to build credentials to command attention and respect from my white peers in matters of racial equity. The reality, however, is this pursuit is an act of succumbing to the very structures of whiteness and academia I seek to challenge. Whiteness in academia often dictates only those with advanced degrees or specific credentials are deemed worthy of speaking on such topics, even when the lived experiences of students of color may be more informed and urgent. I recognize my pursuit of academic credentials, while intended to elevate my voice in racial equity work, inherently participates and perpetuates a system valuing and elevating dominant voices over others.

The findings of this study underscore the importance of acknowledging and confronting the ways in which white cultural norms continue to shape the educational environment. I have witnessed firsthand how attempts to address racial disparities are often slowed and diluted to accommodate white people's comfort or co-opted by surface-level diversity initiatives. The passive resistance I encounter reflects the broader institutional reluctance to disrupt the power

structures that have existed for generations. As a white educator, I am caught between my desire to be an ally and the recognition my presence and perspective are, at times, part of the problem. These dynamics expose the paradox of seeking equity within a system fundamentally designed to maintain its existing power structures. At the same time, the research has reinforced my commitment to actively creating change. I recognize I will never fully understand the lived experiences of my students of color, but I can use my position to amplify their voices and challenge the systems perpetuating racial inequity. White educators must confront their own biases and the ways their actions, however well-intentioned, may contribute to the perpetuation of racial disparities in education (DiAngelo, 2018). This study has encouraged me to reflect deeply on my positionality and how I can do better not just by acknowledging but actively working to dismantle the existing barriers for students of color.

My role as an educator in this predominantly white school district is not just to teach content but to challenge the system's failure to serve all students equitably. This research has opened my eyes to the limitations of my efforts and has motivated me to dig deeper in ways institutional racism shapes the experiences of both my students and my colleagues. I am committed to being part of the solution, not as a savior, but as an ally who uses their privilege and position to affect meaningful change. The path toward true equity is long, and the work is ongoing, but this study has reaffirmed the importance of persistence, reflection, and action in the face of resistance. As Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice" (Ellis, 2011).

References

Adams, M., & Love, B. J. (2010). Social Justice Education Faculty Development Framework for the post-Grutter Era. In K. M. Skubikowski, C. Wright, & R. Graf (Eds.), *Social Justice Education: Inviting faculty to transform their institutions* (pp. 3–25). Stylus.

Ahmed, S. (2007). A phenomenology of whiteness. *Feminist Theory, 8*(2), 149–168. https://doi.org/10.1177/1464700107078139

Ahmed, S. (2012). *On being included: Racism and diversity in institutional life.* Duke University Press.

Alexander, M. (2010). *The new Jim Crow: Mass incarceration in the age of colorblindness*. New Press.

Allen, R. L., & Liou, D. D. (2019). Managing whiteness: The call for educational leadership to breach the contractual expectations of white supremacy. *Urban Education*, *54*(5), 677–705. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085918783819

Altman, N. (2006). Whiteness. *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly, 75*(1), 45–72. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2167-4086.2006.tb00032.x

Anderson, C. (2017). *White Rage: The unspoken truth of our racial divide.* Bloomsbury.

Anzaldúa, G. (2012). *Borderlands: La frontera: the new mestiza* (4th ed.). Aunt Lute Books.

Apperson, M. (2020). PBS, Other media companies, capitalize 'Black' to be more inclusive. *Public Broadcasting Service.* https://www.pbs.org/standards/blogs/standards-articles/capitalizing-b-in-black/

Appiah, K. A. (2020). The case for capitalizing the *B* in Black. *The Atlantic.com*. https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/06/time-to-capitalize-blackand-white/613159/

Aronson, B., & Laughter, J. (2016). The theory and practice of culturally relevant education: A synthesis of research across content areas. *Review of Educational Research, 86*(1), 163–206. https://doi-org.antioch.idm.oclc.org/10.3102/0034654315582066

Ashbrook, T. (Host). (2014, June 20). Assessing desegregation in Boston schools forty years after court ruling. In *Radio Boston*. WBUR. https://www.wbur.org/radioboston/2014/06/20/1974-desegregation-ruling

Bachrach, S. (2004). In the name of public health-Nazi racial hygiene. *New England Journal of Medicine, 351*, 417–419.

Baldwin, J. (1965, March 7). “The American dream and the American negro.” *The New York Times*. https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/books/98/03/29/specials/ baldwin-dream.html?_r=1&oref=login

Baldwin, J. (1998). White man’s guilt. In T. Morrison (Ed.), *Collected essays* (pp. 722–727). Library of America.

Banks, J. A. (2014). *An introduction to multicultural education* (5th ed.). Pearson Education, Inc. Accessed from https://ucarecdn.com/d82827b2-9e39-40fe-a717-a1aca81ce4a9/

Bates, T. R. (1975). Gramsci and the theory of hegemony. *Journal of the History of Ideas*, *36*(2), 351–366. https://doi.org/10.2307/2708933

Baulier, M. L. (2022). *Schooling with racial equity at the center: A case study exploration of one elementary school-based leadership team* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Massachusetts Boston). Graduate Doctoral Dissertations. https://scholarworks.umb.edu/doctoral_dissertations/765

Bazeley, P., & Richards, L. (2000). First coding. In *The INVIVO qualitative project book* (pp. 23–34). SAGE Publications, Ltd. https://doi.org/10.4135/9780857020079

Bell, D. A. (1980). Brown v. board of education and the interest-convergence dilemma. *Harvard Law Review*, *93*(3), 518–533.

Bell, D. (1992a). *Faces at the bottom of the well: the permanence of racism*. Basic Books.

Bell, D. (1992b). Racial realism. *Connecticut Law Review, 24*(2), 363–380.

Berlin, I. (2019). Time, space, and the evolution of Afro-American society on British mainland North America. In *European and Non-European Societies*, 1450–1800 (pp. 119–153). Routledge.

BigIdeaFest. (2014, March 20). *Michelle Fine | youth participatory action research*. YouTube. Retrieved March 12, 2023, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vuXoKKXp6QM &feature=youtu.be

Blackmore, J. (2010). 'The other within': Race/gender disruptions to the professional learning of white educational leaders. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, *13*(1), 45–61. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603120903242931

Blair, E. (2015). A reflexive exploration of two qualitative data coding techniques. *Journal of Methods and Measurement in the Social Sciences*, 6(1), 14-29. Retrieved from https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/7393/c4f99b5fb8d2d6cd2948c87be0eadb1f023f.pdf

Blau, J. R. (2004). *Race in the schools: Perpetuating white dominance?* Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Bohman, J. (2021). Critical theory. In E. N. Zalta (Ed.), *The Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy.* Stanford University.

Bonilla-Silva, E. (2018). *Racism without racists: Color-blind racism and the persistence of racial inequality in America* (5th ed.). Rowman & Littlefield.

Bourke, B. (2016). Meaning and implications of being labelled a predominantly white institution. *College and University*, *91*(3), 12–21.

Boustan, L. P. (2007). Was postwar suburbanization "white flight"? Evidence from the black migration. *National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper Series* (No. 13543). http://www.nber.org/papers/w13443

Braddock, J. H. (1980). The perpetuation of segregation across levels of education: A behavioral assessment of the contact-hypothesis. *Education*, *53*(3).

Bridges, K. M. (2022). Language on the move: "Cancel culture," "Critical race theory," and the digital public sphere. *The Yale Journal Forum.* https://www.yalelawjournal.org/pdf/F7.BridgesFinalDraftWEB_pk75ecy3.pdf

Brodkey, L. (1987), Writing critical ethnographic narratives. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly, 18*, 67–76. https://doi.org/10.1525/aeq.1987.18.2.04x0666p

Brookfield, S., & Hess, M. (2021). *Becoming a white antiracist: A practical guide for educators, leaders, and activists.* Stylus Publishing.

Brown, K., & Jackson, D. D. (2013). The history and conceptual elements of critical race theory. In M. Lynn & A. D. Dixson (Eds.), *Handbook of critical race theory in education* (pp. 9–22), Routledge.

Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Opinion; May 17, 1954; Records of the Supreme Court of the United States; Record Group 267; National Archives.

Bryan, J., Williams, J. M., & Griffin, D. (2020). Fostering educational resilience and opportunities in urban schools through equity-focused school–family–community partnerships. *Professional School Counseling, 23*(1_part_2), 2156759X19899179.

Bucholtz, M. (2011). *White kids: Language, race and styles of youth identity.* Cambridge University Press.

Busing in Boston: A research guide. (2022). Suffolk University. Retrieved 5 April 2022, from https://www.suffolk.edu/-/media/suffolk/documents/academics/libraries/moakley-archive/research-tools/businginbostonresearchguide_2015_pdftxt.pdf?la=en&hash=485CB07AC31E3B4E7EE38C0B878D5B260866F64D.

Cabrera, N. L., & Corces-Zimmerman, C. (2017). An unexamined life: White male racial ignorance and the agony of education for students of color. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 50*(3), 300–315. https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2017.1336500

Cannon, K. G. (2004). Slave ideology and biblical interpretation. In J. Bobo, C. Hudley, & C. Michel (Eds.), *The Black studies reader* (pp. 413–420). Taylor & Francis.

Carbado, D. W., Crenshaw K. W., Mays V. M., & Tomlinson B. (2013). Intersectionality: Mapping the movements of a theory. *Du Bois Review, 10*, 303–312.

Carragee, K. M. (1993). A critical evaluation of debates examining the media hegemony thesis. *Western Journal of Communication (includes Communication Reports)*, *57*(3), 330–348.

Carspecken, P. F. (1996). *Critical ethnography in educational research: A theoretical and practical guide*. Routledge and Kegan Paul Limited.

Carver-Thomas, D. (2018, April 19). Diversifying the teaching profession: How to recruit and retain teachers of color. Learning Policy Institute. https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/Diversifying_Teaching_Profession_REPORT.pdf

Casey, Z. A. (2022). Whiteness has never left the center. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *35*(4), 479–495. https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2022.2025477

Center for Education Policy Analysis. (2015). Racial and ethnic achievement gaps. *The Educational Opportunity Monitoring Project.* Retrieved from cepa.stanford.edu/educational-opportunity-monitoring-project/achievement-gaps/race/

Cheesman, E. (2022). Exploring BIPOC student experiences and the teacher's role in anti-racist pedagogy. In *BSU Honors Program Theses and Projects* (Item 503). https://vc.bridgew.edu/honors_proj/503

Chen, X., Furuya, Y., Harwin, A., & Herold, B. (2021). *The 'dramatic' demographic shifts reshaping suburban schools: 7 key data points to know.* EducationWeek.com. https://www.edweek.org/leadership/the-dramatic-demographic-shifts-reshaping-suburban-schools-7-key-data-points-to-know/2021/03

Clandinin, D. J. (2019). Journeys in narrative inquiry: The selected works of D. Jean Clandinin (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi-org.antioch.idm.oclc.org/10.4324/9780429273896

Clarke, A. Y., & McCall L. (2013). Intersectionality and social explanation in social science research. *Du Bois Review*, *10*, 349–363.

Clotfelter, C. T. (2004). *After Brown: The rise and retreat of school desegregation*. Princeton University Press.

Coleman, N. (2020). Why we're capitalizing Black. *The New York Times.* https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/05/insider/capitalized-black.html

Cooper, E. F. (2008). *One 'speck' of imperfection—Invisible blackness and the one -drop rule: An interdisciplinary approach to examining Plessy v. Ferguson and Jane Doe v. State of Louisiana* (Order No. 3315914). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (193505748).

Cormier, C. J., Scott, L. A., Powell, C., & Hall, K. (2022). Locked in glass classrooms: Black male special education teachers socialized as everything but educators. *Teacher Education and Special Education, 45*(1), 77–94. https://doi.org/10.1177/08884064211061038

Corporate Finance Institute. (2022). *Redlining*. Retrieved 15 April 2022, from https://corporatefinanceinstitute.com/resources/knowledge/other/redlining/.

Costello, M., & Dillard, C. (2019). *Hate at school.* Southern Poverty Law Center.

Coté, J. (2009). Education and the colonial construction of whiteness. *ACRAWSA e-journal*, *5*(1), 1–14. https://www.academia.edu/50317870/Education_and_the_Colonial _Construction_ of_Whiteness

Crenshaw, K. (1988). Race, reform, and retrenchment: Transformation and legitimation in antidiscrimination law. *Harvard Law Review, 101*, 1331. Retrieved from https://scholarship.law.columbia.edu/faculty_scholarship/2866

Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review*, *43*(6), 1241–1299. https://doi.org/10.2307/1229039

Crenshaw, K. (2011). Twenty years of Critical Race Theory: Looking back to move forward. Commentary: Critical Race Theory: A Commemoration: Lead Article. *Connecticut Law Review, 117*. Retrieved from https://opencommons.uconn.edu/law_review/117

Crenshaw, K. (2015). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: a black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics. *The University of Chicago Legal Forum*, *1989*(1). Retrieved August 8, 2023, from https://heinonline-org.antioch.idm.oclc.org/HOL/Page?lname=&public=false&collection=journals&handle=hein.journals/uchclf1989&men_hide=false&men_tab=toc&kind=&page=1.

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Cronovich, P., & Mitchell, J. (2022). Universities with majority non-diverse, white students, where a strong anti-racist program can be met with resistance. In *Cases on Academic Program Redesign for Greater Racial and Social Justice* (p. 19). https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-7998-8463-7.ch002

Daniels, J. R., & Varghese, M. (2020). Troubling practice: Exploring the relationship between whiteness and practice-based teacher education in considering a raciolinguicized teacher subjectivity. In *Educational Researcher*, *49*(1), 56–63. SAGE Publications Inc. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X19879450

Daniszewski, J. (2020). The decision to capitalize Black. *Associated Press.* https://blog.ap.org/announcements/the-decision-to-capitalize-black

Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2017). *Critical race theory* (3rd ed.). NYU Press.

De Lissovoy, N. (2012). Education and violation: Conceptualizing power, domination, and agency in the hidden curriculum. *Race, Ethnicity and Education, 15*(4), 463–484. https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2011.618831

De Plevitz, L. (2007). Systemic racism: The hidden barrier to educational success for Indigenous school students. *Australian Journal of Education*, *51*(1), 54-71.

Devine, P. G. (1989). Stereotypes and prejudice: their automatic and controlled components. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 56*(1). American Psychological Association.

DiAngelo, R. (2018). *White fragility: Why it's so hard for white people to talk about racism*. Beacon Press.

DiAngelo, R. (2021). *Nice racism: How progressive white people perpetuate racial harm.* Beacon Press.

Dixon, R. D., Griffin, A. R., & Teoh, M. B. (2019). “If you listen, we will stay”: Why teachers of color leave and how to disrupt teacher turnover. *The Education Trust & Teach Plus*, Washington DC.

Douglas, K. (2016, September 9). *Qualitative conversations: Carolyn Ellis - a film by Kitrina Douglas and David Carless*. YouTube. Retrieved March 12, 2023, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dNT51dLdo3M&feature=youtu.be

drjasoncampbell. (2011, January 6). *46. introduction to methods of qualitative research ethnographies and case studies*. YouTube. Retrieved March 12, 2023, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0XQLXCU_mtA

Du Bois, W. E. B. (2021). *W.E.B. Du Bois: Black reconstruction: An essay toward a history of the part which black folk played in the attempt to reconstruct democracy in America 1860-1880*. Oxford University Press.

Dussell, E. (1996). *The underside of modernity: Apel, Ricoeur, Rorty, Taylor, and the philosophy of liberation*. Humanities Press International.

Earick, M. E. (2018) We are not social justice equals: the need for white scholars to understand their whiteness. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 31*(8), 800–820. https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2018.1479044

Eaton, S. E. (2020). *The Other Boston busing story*. Brandeis University Press.

Ellis, D. (2011). *The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.* The White House https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2011/10/21/arc-moral-universe-long-it-bends-toward-justice

Engels, T. (2006). Toward a bibliography of critical whiteness studies. *Faculty Research & Creative Activity.* 51. https://thekeep.eiu.edu/eng_fac/51

Espinoza, O. (2007). Solving the equity–equality conceptual dilemma: A new model for analysis of the educational process. *Educational Research, 49*(4), 343–363. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131880701717198

Farmer, V. L., & Farmer, E. S. W. (Eds.). (2020). *Critical race theory in the academy. Information Age Publishing.* Retrieved August 2, 2023, from https://web-s-ebscohost-com.antioch.idm.oclc.org/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook/bmxlYmtfXzI1Mjc3MDhfX0FO0?sid=dbbd2f47-1b12-4b46-9184-3035b400d068@redis&vid=0&format=EB&rid=1L.

Fine, M., Burns, A., Powell Pruitt, L., Weis, L. (2004). *Off white: Readings on power, privilege, and resistance*. Routledge.

Frank, C. (1999) *Ethnographic eyes: A teacher's guide to classroom observation.* Heinemann.

Frankenberg, R. (1993). *White women, race matters: The social construction of whiteness.* University of Minnesota Press.

Franklin, J. (2022). *Not just Florida. More than a dozen states propose so-called 'Don't Say Gay' bills.* NPR. https://www.npr.org/2022/04/10/1091543359/15-states-dont-say-gay-anti -transgender-bills

Freeman, A. D. (1978). Legitimizing racial discrimination through antidiscrimination law: A critical review of Supreme Court Doctrine. *Minnesota Law Review,* 804. Retrieved from https://scholarship.law.umn.edu/mlr/804

Freire, P. (2014). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (30th anniv. ed.). Bloomsbury Academic & Professional.

Gay, G. (2010). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice* (2nd ed.). Teachers College Press.

Gardner, N. L. (2019). *"We have the power": Youth, racial equity, and policy in a predominantly white high school*. [Doctoral dissertation, University of Oregon]. https://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/xmlui/handle/1794/25506

Gillborn, D. (2008). Coincidence or conspiracy? Whiteness, policy and the persistence of the Black/White achievement gap. *Educational Review*, *60*(3), 229–248. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131910802195745

Green, M. J., Sonn, C. C., & Matsebula, J. (2007). Reviewing whiteness: Theory, research and possibilities. *South African Journal of Psychology, 37*(3), 389–419.

Greenwald, A. G., & Krieger, L. H. (2006). Implicit bias: Scientific foundations. *California Law Review*, *94*(4), 945–967.

Gómez, R. F., Mignonne, G. C., & Cammarota, J. (2022): The psychological rages of Whiteness: acceptable casualties and the White American identity. *Ethnic and Racial Studies.* https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2021.2015418

Gossett, T. F. (1997). *Race: The history of an idea in America*. Oxford University Press.

Gournelos, T., Hammonds, J. R., & Wilson, M. A. (2019). *Doing academic research: A practical guide to research methods and analysis.* Routledge.

Gusa, D. L. (2010). White institutional presence: The impact of whiteness on campus climate. *Harvard Educational Review, 80*(4), 464–490. https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.80.4.p5j483825u110002

Hall, J. M. (1999) Marginalization revisited: critical, post-modern and liberation perspectives. *Advances in Nursing Science, 22*(2), 88–102.

Hall, J. M. (2004). Marginalization and symbolic violence in a world of differences: War and parallels to nursing practice. *Nursing philosophy*, *5*(1), 41–53.

Hall, J. M., Stevens, P. E., & Meleis, A. I. (1994). Marginalization: A guiding concept for valuing diversity in nursing knowledge development. A*dvances in Nursing Science, 16*(4), 23–41.

Harris, C. I. (1993). Whiteness as property. *Harvard Law Review*, *106*(8), 1707–1791. https://doi.org/10.2307/1341787

Haynes, S. R. (2004). *Noah's curse: the biblical justification of American slavery*. Oxford University Press. Retrieved August 8, 2023, from http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/oso/public/content/religion/0195142799/toc.html.

Hea Kil, S. (2010). Whiteness: An introduction. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *36*(3), 538–539. https://doi.org/10.1080/13691831003651739

Helena, D. (2023). Not the anti-racist meeting feeling racist: Black educators' racial battle fatigue in diversity, equity, and inclusion professional development. *UCLA.* Retrieved from https://escholarship.org/uc/item/0dx4q3ff

Hofstadter, R. (2017). Social Darwinism in American thought, 1860-1915 (Reprint 2016). University of Pennsylvania Press. https://doi.org/10.9783/9781512816976

Howard, G. R. (2016). *We can't teach what we don't know: White teachers, multiracial schools*. Teachers College Press.

Howard, T. C. (2019). *Why race and culture matter in schools: Closing the achievement gap in America's classrooms*. Teachers College Press.

Irby, D., Drame, E., Clough, C., & Croom, M. (2019). "Sometimes things get worse before they get better": A counter-narrative of white suburban school leadership for racial equity. *Leadership and Policy in Schools, 18*(2), 195–209.

Ispa-Landa, S. (2013). Gender, race, and justifications for group exclusion: Urban Black students bussed to affluent suburban schools. *Sociology of Education*, *86*(3), 218–233. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038040712472912

Jackson, L. M. (2019) *What's missing from "White fragility."* Slate. https://slate.com/human-interest/2019/09/white-fragility-robin-diangelo-workshop.html

Jackson, M. (2006). The enthymematic hegemony of whiteness: the enthymeme as antiracist rhetorical strategy. *Jac*, *26*(3-4), 601–641.

Jayne. A. M (2014). *Female teachers, whiteness, and the quest for cultural proficiency* (Order No. 3615705). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. https://www.proquest.com/pqdtglobal/docview/1524722460/98E5D5689F364D15PQ/1?accountid=26438

Johnson, R. C. (2011). Long-run impacts of school desegregation & school quality on adult attainments. *National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper Series,* (16664). http://www.nber.org/papers/w16664.

Jones, T. (1974). Institutional racism in the United States. *Social Work*, *19*(2), 218–225.

Jones, K., & Okun, T. (2001) *White supremacy culture.* Minnesota Historical Society. Digital File. https://www.thc.texas.gov/public/upload/preserve/museums/files/White_Supremacy_Culture.pdf

Jupp, J. C., & Lensmire, T. J. (2016). Second-wave white teacher identity studies: Toward complexity and reflexivity in the racial conscientization of white teachers. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education,* 29(8), 985–988. https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2016.1189621

Kahlenberg, R. D. (2021). *The walls of exclusion in Massachusetts: How three mothers had to overcome discriminatory zoning laws to improve the lives of their children.* The Century Foundation. https://tcf.org/content/report/walls-exclusion-massachusetts-three- mothers-overcome-discriminatory-zoning-laws-improve-lives-children/

Karumbaiah, S., & Brooks, J. (2021, May). How colonial continuities underlie algorithmic injustices in education. In *2021 Conference on Research in Equitable and Sustained Participation in Engineering, Computing, and Technology (RESPECT)* (pp. 1–6). Philadelphia, PA. doi.10.1109/RESPECT51740.2021.9620605.

Kay, M. (2023). *Not light, but fire: How to lead meaningful race conversations in the classroom*. Routledge.

Kendi, I. X. (2016). *Stamped from the beginning: The definitive history of racist ideas in America*. PublicAffairs.

Kendi, I. X. (2019). *How to be an antiracist*. One world.

King, J. (2016, May 15). Opinion | the invisible tax on teachers of color. *The Washington Post*. https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-invisible-tax-on-black-teachers/2016/05/15/6b7bea06-16f7-11e6-aa55-670cabef46e0_story.html

King, L. J., & Chandler, P. T. (2016). From non-racism to anti-racism in social studies teacher education: Social studies and racial pedagogical content knowledge. In *Rethinking social studies teacher education in the twenty-first century* (pp. 3–21). Springer International Publishing.

Kishimoto, K. (2018). Anti-racist pedagogy: from faculty's self-reflection to organizing within and beyond the classroom. *Race, Ethnicity and Education, 21*(4), 540–554.

Lac, V., & Diamond, J. (2019). Working for racial equity at the margins: Teacher-leaders facilitate a book study on race in a predominantly white suburban high school. *Journal of Cases in Educational Leadership, 22*(2), 54–67. https://doi.org/10.1177/1555458919833107

Ladson-Billings, G. (1994). *The dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of African American children*. Jossey-Bass.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1995a). But that's just good teaching! The case for culturally relevant pedagogy. *Theory into Practice, 43*, 159–165.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1995b). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. *American Educational Research Journal*, *32*, 465–491.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1998). Just what is critical race theory and what's it doing in a nice field like education? *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 11*(1), 7–24. https://doi.org/10.1080/095183998236863

Ladson-Billings, G. (2006a). From the achievement gap to the education debt: Understanding achievement in US schools. *Educational researcher*, *35*(7), 3–12.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2006b). "Yes, but how do we do it?" Practicing culturally relevant pedagogy. In Landsman J. G., Lewis C. W. (Eds.), *White teachers/diverse classrooms: Creating inclusive schools, building on students' diversity, and providing true educational equity* (pp. 33–46). Stylus.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2014). Culturally relevant pedagogy 2.0: a.k.a. the remix. *Harvard Educational Review*, *84,* 74–84.

Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate, W. F. (1995). Toward a critical race theory of education. *Teachers College Record*, *97*(1), 47–68.

Lareau, A. (2018). Unequal childhoods: Class, race, and family life. In *Inequality in the 21st Century* (pp. 444–451). Routledge.

Lawrence, C. R. (1987). The id, the ego, and equal protection: Reckoning with unconscious racism. *Stanford Law Review*, *39*(2), 317–388. https://doi.org/10.2307/1228797

Lawrence, S. M. (1997). Beyond race awareness: White racial identity and multicultural teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education, 48*(2), 108–117. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487197048002004

Laws, M. (2020). Why we capitalize 'Black' (and not 'white'). *Columbia Journalism Review.* https://www.cjr.org/analysis/capital-b-black-styleguide.php

Lazar, K. (2017, July 23). 50 years later, Metco's dream is still unanswered. *Boston Globe*. Retrieved from www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2017/07/23/half-century-later -diversity-still-eludes-school-desegregation-initiative/JWNkxX4angrq4OiID84y9N/story.html

Lee, C. (2004). Racial segregation and educational outcomes in metropolitan Boston. *The Civil Rights Project.* Harvard University. https://escholarship.org/content/qt2qg7c8x1/qt2qg7c8x1_noSplash_47482f5e6bd86770b77e39e4180d8cd0.pdf

Lee, J. (2022). Racial and ethnic achievement gap trends: Reversing the progress toward equity? *Educational Researcher*, *31*(1), 3–12.

Leonardo, Z. (2004). The color of supremacy: Beyond the discourse of 'white privilege.' *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, *36*(2), 137–152.

Leonardo, Z. (2009). *Race, whiteness, and education*. Routledge.

Leonardo, Z., & Boas, E. (2013). Other kids' teachers: What children of color learn from white women and what this says about race, whiteness, and gender. In M. Lynn & A. D. Dixson (Eds.), *Handbook of critical race theory in education* (pp. 313–324). Routledge.

Leonardo, Z., & Porter, R. K. (2010). Pedagogy of fear: Toward a Fanonian theory of 'safety' in race dialogue. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, *13*(2), 139–157.

Leonardo, Z., & Zembylas, M. (2013) Whiteness as technology as affect: Implications for educational praxis. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 46*(1), 150–165.

Leydon, S. (2019). How a long-ago map created racial boundaries that still define Boston. *WGBH Educational Foundation*. https://www.wgbh.org/news/local-news/2019/11/12/how-a-long-ago-map-created-racial-boundaries-that-still-define-boston

Lipsitz, G. (2006). *The possessive investment in Whiteness*. Temple University Press.

López, A. J. (2005). Introduction: Whiteness after Empire. In A. J. López (Ed.), *Postcolonial whiteness, a critical reader on race and Empire* (pp. 1–31). Introduction, State University of New York Press.

Madison, D. S. (2005). *Critical ethnography: Method, ethics, and performance*. Sage publications.

Madison, D. (2020). Introduction to critical ethnography. SAGE Publications, Inc. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781071878965

Marshall, C. (2004). Social justice challenges to educational administration: Introduction to a special issue. In *Educational Administration Quarterly, 40*(1) 5–15. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161x03258139

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2022, November 17). *2021-22 advanced placement performance - all subjects - all students*. https://profiles.doe.mass.edu/statereport/ap.aspx

Massey, D. S., & Tannen, J. (2015). A research note on trends in Black hypersegregation. *Demography*, *52*(3), 1025–1034. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13524-015-0381-6

Mathews, K., Huang, H., Yagi, E., Balfe, C., Mauerman, C., & Edwards, E. J. (2024). *Barriers to racial equity for teachers of color and Indigenous teachers in California's teaching pipeline and profession.* The California Educator Diversity Project, Civil Rights Project at UCLA. https://www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu

Matias, C. E. (2013). Check yo'self before you wreck yo'self and our kids: Counterstories from culturally responsive white teachers? . . . to culturally responsive white teachers! *Interdisciplinary Journal of Teaching and Learning, 3*(2), 68–81.

Matias, C. E., & Allen, R. L. (2013). Loving whiteness to death: Sadomasochism, emotionality, and the possibility of humanizing love. *Berkeley Review of Education, 4*(2), 285–309.

McIntosh, P. (1989). White Privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack. *Peace and Freedom.* https://psychology.umbc.edu/files/2016/10/White-Privilege_McIntosh-1989.pdf

Mickelson, R. A. (2003). When are racial disparities in education the result of racial discrimination? A social science perspective. *Teachers College Record, 105*(6), 1052–1086. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9620.00277

Middleton, O. (2023). *The state of educator racial diversity in Massachusetts.* Massachusetts Education-to-Career Research and Data Hub. https://educationtocareer.data.mass.gov/stories/s/The-state-of-educator-racial-diversity-in-Massachu/fm6k-958d/#:~:text=While%20Massachusetts%20has%20made%20some,student%20demographics%20in%20more%20detail

Millen, D. R. (2000, August). Rapid ethnography: Time deepening strategies for HCI field research. In *Proceedings of the 3rd conference on Designing interactive systems: processes, practices, methods, and techniques* (pp. 280–286).

Milner, H. R., IV. (2007). Race, culture, and researcher positionality: Working through dangers seen, unseen, and unforeseen. *Educational Researcher*, *36*(7), 388–400. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X07309471

Milner, H. R., IV. (2008). Critical race theory and interest convergence as analytic tools in teacher education policies and practices. *Journal of Teacher Education*, *59*(4), 332–346.

Milner, H. R., IV, Pearman, F. A., III, & McGee, E. O. (2013). Critical race theory, interest convergence, and teacher education. In *Handbook of critical race theory in education* (pp. 359–374). Routledge.

Mineo, L. (2022, March 2). Harvard historian examines how textbooks taught white supremacy. *Harvard Gazette.* https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2020/09/harvard-historian-examines-how-textbooks-taught-white-supremacy/

Modan, N. (2020). Survey: Superintendents still overwhelmingly white, male. *K-12 Dive.* https://www.k12dive.com/news/survey-superintendents-still-overwhelmingly-white-male/572008/

Morrison, T. (1993). *Playing in the dark.* Vintage Press.

Mortgage Lending Discrimination: Field Hearing Before the Committee on Financial Services, U.S. House of Representatives, One Hundred Tenth Congress, First Session, October 15, 2007. (2008) (Testimony by Martha Coakley). United States: U.S. Government Printing Office. https://www.mass.gov/doc/20071015agmortgagetestimonypdf/download

National Center for Education Statistics. (2021). Racial/Ethnic Enrollment in Public Schools. Condition of Education. *U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences.* Retrieved March 31, 2022, from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/cge

Nayak, A. (2007) Critical whiteness studies. *Sociology Compass, 1*(2), 737–755. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9020.2007.00045.x

NEA Center for Social Justice. (2020). White supremacy culture resources: Resources to sharpen our racial analysis and deepen our understanding of White Supremacy Culture. *National Education Association.* www.nea.org/resource-library/white -supremacy-culture-resources

Oakes, J. (2005). *Keeping track: How schools structure inequality*. Yale University Press.

Obiakor, F. E., & Beachum, F. D. (2005). Urban education: The quest for democracy, equity, and excellence. *Urban education for the 21st century: Research, Issues, and Perspectives*, 3–19.

Orfield, G., & Eaton, S. E. (1996). *Dismantling desegregation. The quiet reversal of Brown v. Board of Education*. The New Press.

Painter, N. I. (2020) Opinion: Why 'White' should be capitalized, too. *The Washington Post.* https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/07/22/why-white-should-be-capitalized/

Paris, D. (2012). Culturally sustaining pedagogy: A needed change in stance, terminology, and practice. *Educational Researcher*, *41*, 93–97.

Pattnaik, J. (1997). Cultural stereotypes and preservice education: Moving beyond our biases. *Equity and Excellence in Education, 30*(3), 40–50. https://doi.org/10.1080/1066568970300307

Patton L. D., Crenshaw K., Haynes C., Watson T. N. (2016). Why we can't wait: (Re)examining the opportunities and challenges for Black women and girls in education. *Journal of Negro Education, 85,* 194–198.

Payne, C. (1984). Multicultural education and racism in American schools. *Theory into Practice, 23*(2), 124–131.

Pew Research Center. (2021, December 10). America's public school teachers are far less racially and ethnically diverse than their students. *By Katherine Schaeffer*. Retrieved from www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2021/12/10/americas-public-school-teachers-are-far-less-racially-and-ethnically-diverse-than-their-students/#:~:text=In%20all%2C%20White%20teachers%20make,or%20the%20District%20of%20Columbia.

Picower, B. (2009). The unexamined whiteness of teaching: How white teachers maintain and enact dominant racial ideologies. *Race ethnicity and education*, *12*(2), 197–215.

Pino Gavidia, L. A., & Adu, J. (2022). Critical narrative inquiry: An examination of a methodological approach. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 21.* https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069221081594

Pittman, M. E. (2021). *Framing inequity: A qualitative study understanding how superintendents frame equity efforts for Black students in New York state suburban schools [*Doctoral dissertation, Manhattanville College]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

Pizarro, M., & Kohli, R. (2018). "I stopped sleeping": Teachers of color and the impact of racial battle fatigue. *Urban Education*, *55*, 004208591880578. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085918805788.

Plessy vs. Ferguson, Judgment, Decided May 18, 1896; Records of the Supreme Court of the United States; Record Group 267; Plessy v. Ferguson, 163, #15248, National Archives.

Pollock, M. (2004). *Colormute: race talk dilemmas in an American school*. Princeton University Press. http://www.vlebooks.com/vleweb/product/openreader?id=none&isbn=9781400826124

Pulido, L. (2015). Geographies of race and ethnicity I: White supremacy vs white privilege in environmental racism research. *Progress in Human Geography*, *39*(6), 809–817. https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132514563008

Radd, S. I., & Grosland, T. J. (2019). Desirablizing whiteness: A discursive practice in social justice leadership that entrenches white supremacy. *Urban Education*, *54*(5), 656–676. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085918783824

Reber, S. J. (2010). School desegregation and educational attainment for Blacks. *The Journal of Human Resources, 45*(4), 893–914.

Robinson, C. L. (2004). *Reconceptualizing the implications of Eurocentric discourse vis-à-vis the educational realities of African American students with some implications for special education* [Doctoral dissertation, Miami University]. OhioLINK Electronic Theses and Dissertations Center. http://rave.ohiolink.edu/etdc/view?acc_num=miami1083270345

Roediger, D. (2007). *The wages of whiteness: race and the making of the American working class.* Retrieved from https://hdl-handle-net.antioch.idm.oclc.org/2027/heb00570.0001.001

Roediger, D. R. (2001). Critical studies of Whiteness, USA: Origins and arguments. *Theoria: A Journal of Social and Political Theory*, *98*, 72–98. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41802174

Roegman, R. (2018). Seen, unseen, and unforeseen dangers: what a White emerging scholar learned about positionality in research with racially diverse practitioners. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *31*(9), 836–850. https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2018.1499983

Rogers, R., & Mosley, M. (2006). Racial literacy in a second-grade classroom: Critical race theory, whiteness studies, and literacy research. *Reading Research Quarterly, 41*(4), 462–495.

Rothschild, J., & Scovronick, N. (2006). *Demographic change and democratic education*. In S. Fuhrman & M. Lazerson (Eds.), *The public schools*. Oxford University Press.

Rothstein, R. (2018). *The color of law: A forgotten history of how our government segregated America*. Liveright.

Ryan, J. E. (2010). *Five miles away, a world apart.* Oxford University Press.

Safir, S., & Dugan, J. (2021). *Street data: A next-generation model for equity, pedagogy, and school transformation*. Corwin.

Said, E. (1980). *The question of Palestine*. Vintage Books.

Saldaña, J. (2021). The coding manual for qualitative researchers (4E [Fourth edition]). SAGE Publishing Inc.

Sandoval-Strausz, A. K. (2005). Travelers, strangers, and Jim Crow: Law, public accommodations, and civil rights in America. *Law and History Review*, *23*(1), 53–94.

Schmidt, J. J., Burton, S. M., Ferguson, K., El Ashmawi, Y., Neumann, T., & Dominguez, V. (2022). Pursuing racial equity in suburban high schools: How informal school leaders rise to the challenge of addressing racial inequity. *Race and Pedagogy Journal*, *5*(4).

Schneider, J., Piazza, P., Carey, A. J., & White, R. S. (2020). *School integration in Massachusetts: Racial diversity and state accountability.* Beyond Test Scores Project and Center for Education and Civil Rights.

Schnell, L. (2021, February 26). Predominantly white colleges tackle racism, diversity, equity and inclusion. *USA TODAY*. Retrieved from https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2021/02/26/black-history-month-predominantly-white-institutions-diversity/6646300002/

Scott, L. A., Brown, A., Wallace, W., Cormier, C. J., & Powell, C. (2021) If we're not doing it, then who? A qualitative study of Black special educators' persistence. *Exceptionality, 29*(3), 182–196. https://doi.org/10.1080/09362835.2020.1850453

Shapiro, T., Meschede, T., & Osoro, S. (2013). The roots of the widening racial wealth gap: Explaining the Black-White economic divide. *Institute on Assets of Social Policy.* https://drum.lib.umd.edu/bitstream/handle/1903/24590/racialwealthgapbrief.pdf

Simson, D. (2019). Whiteness as innocence. *Denver Law Review*, *96*(3), 635–698. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3173153

Singleton, G. E. (2014). *Courageous conversations about race: A field guide for achieving equity in schools.* Corwin Press.

Skrla, L., Scheurich, J. J., Garcia, J., & Nolly, G. (2004). Equity audits: A practical leadership tool for developing equitable and excellent schools. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *40*(1), 133–161.

Sleeter, C. E. (2012). Confronting the marginalization of culturally responsive pedagogy. *Urban education*, *47*(3), 562–584.

Sleeter, C. E. (2015). Equity and race-visible urban school reform. *Handbook of urban Educational Leadership*, 135.

Sleeter, C. E. (2018). Multicultural education past, present, and future: Struggles for dialog and power-sharing. *International Journal of Multicultural Education*, *20*(1), 5–20.

Sleeter, C. E., & Zavala, M. (2020). *Transformative ethnic studies in schools: Curriculum, pedagogy, and research.* Teachers College Press.

Smith, B. (2014). Class, race, and the hidden curriculum of schools. In *The Poverty and Education Reader* (pp.15–22). Routledge.

Spencer, J. M. (1997). *The new colored people: The mixed-race movement in America*. New York University Press.

Sprull, N. M., & Starling, C. B. (2021). The term used to describe an institution of higher learning in which 50% or more of their students enrolled are White. In A. Melvin Sprull (Ed.), *Navigating post-doctoral career placement, research, and professionalism* (p. 22).

Stepan, N. L. (1986). Race and gender: The role of analogy in science. *Isis*, *77*(2), 261–277. http://www.jstor.org/stable/232652

Stokes, C. (2019). *METCO Annual Report 2018-2019* [PDF] (p. 9). METCO, Inc. Retrieved 5 April 2022, from https://metcoinc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Annual -Report-2018-19- DIGITAL-PDF-1.pdf.

Stoler, A. (1989). Rethinking colonial categories: European communities and the boundaries of rule. *Comparative Studies in Society and History, 31*(1), 134–161. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0010417500015693

Sue, D. W. (2010). *Microaggressions in everyday life: Race, gender, and sexual orientation*. John Wiley.

Sue, S., Zane, N., Nagayama Hall, G. C., & Berger, L. K. (2009). The case for cultural competency in psychotherapeutic interventions. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *60*, 525–548.

Sugrue, T. J. (2008). *Sweet land of liberty: The forgotten struggle for civil rights in the north*. Random House.

Sullivan, S. (2006). *Revealing whiteness: The unconscious habits of racial privilege*. Indiana University Press. http://site.ebrary.com/id/10161027

Tatum, B. D. (2001). Professional development: An important partner in antiracist teacher education. In S. H. King & L. A. Castenell (Eds.), *Racism and racial inequality: Implications for teacher education* (pp. 51–58). AACTE Publications. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED469954.pdf#page=48

Tatum, B. D. (2017). Why are all the Black Kids still sitting together in the cafeteria?: and Other conversations about race in the twenty-first century. *Liberal Education*, *103*(3-4), 46–56.

Theoharis, G. (2024). *The school leaders our children deserve: Seven keys to equity, social justice, and school reform* (2nd ed.). Teachers College Press.

Thomas, J. (1993). *Doing critical ethnography*. SAGE Publications, Inc. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412983945

Thomas, L. L. (2017). Civil rights gone wrong: Racial nostalgia, historical memory, and the Boston busing crisis in contemporary children's literature. *Journal of Urban History*, *43*(2), 256–272.

Tienken, C. H. (2021). *The American superintendent 2020 decennial study* [eBook]. Rowan & Littlefield Publishers.

Tillman, L. C. (2002). Culturally sensitive research approaches: An African-American perspective. *Educational Researcher, 31*(9), 3–12.

Ture, K., & Hamilton, C. (1992). *For Black power: The politics of liberation in America* (C. Hamilton, Original authors). Vintage. (Original work published 1967)

Villavicencio, A., Klevan, S., Conlin, D., & Hill, K. (2022) "It's a marathon, not a sprint": The implementation and outcomes of a yearlong racial justice intervention. *Aera Open,* 8(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/23328584221107674

Vizenor, G. (1999). *Manifest manners: Narratives on postindian survivance*. University of Nebraska Press.

Ware, L. (2018). *A century of segregation: Race, class, and disadvantage*. Lexington Books.

Ware, L., & Ware, M. (1995). Plessy's legacy: Desegregating the Eurocentric curriculum. *Georgia State University Law Review, 12*(4), 1151.

Warikoo, N., Sinclair, S., Fei, J., & Jacoby-Senghor, D. (2016). Examining racial bias in education: A new approach. *Educational Researcher, 45*(9), 508–514.

Wellman, D. T. (1993). *Portraits of White racism*. Cambridge University Press.

Welton, A., Diem, S., & Carpenter, B. W. (2019). Negotiating the politics of antiracist leadership: The challenges of leading under the predominance of Whiteness. *Urban Education*, *54*(5), 627–630. SAGE Publications Inc. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085918783830

Wilkerson, I. (2020). *Caste*. Penguin.

Withers, E. T. (2017). Whiteness and culture. *Sociology Compass, 11*(4), 1–11. https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12464

Yacavone, D. (2022, September 19). *How white supremacy became part of nation's fabric*. Harvard Gazette. Retrieved April 14, 2023, from https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2022/09/how-nations-schools-taught-white-supremacism/

Yosso, T. J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 8*(1), 69–91. https://doi.org/10.1080/1361332052000341006

APPENDIX A: CONSENT FORM

Informed Consent Form for Participation in Research Study

Introduction: I, _____, have read and understood the following information provided to me about the research study titled **THE WHITE LENS: EXPLORING EDUCATORS' PERCEIVED ROLES AND IMPACTS IN RACIAL EQUITY EFFORTS IN SUBURBAN MASSACHUSETTS PUBLIC K-12 CONTEXTS**. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have received satisfactory answers to my inquiries. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to critically explore K-12 public, school-wide racial equity work and to examine the roles and impacts of whiteness and predominantly white educators in school-wide racial equity work.

Procedures: Participation in this study will involve participation in one-on-one interviews and/or observations of faculty meetings, other committee meetings, or Professional Development sessions. These procedures will be conducted in person or via Zoom. For in-person interviews, a recording device will be employed to capture audio accurately during face-to-face interactions. For online interviews, the Zoom meeting platform or Google Meet platform will be utilized and recorded. Prior to the commencement of each interview, participants will be notified of the recording and asked for explicit consent. To maintain confidentiality, pseudonyms will be used to label recordings instead of participants' real names.

Risks and Benefits: The potential risks of participation in this study include stress and emotional discomfort. The potential benefits of participation include increased awareness and reflection, empowerment and influence, enhanced understanding of racial equity work, improved educational outcomes, building a more inclusive society, guidance for school leaders, and advocacy and awareness.

Confidentiality: All information collected during the study will be kept confidential. Your identity will be protected through the use of pseudonyms, and data will be securely stored.

Voluntary Participation: Participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw at any time without penalty or consequence.

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, please contact the Antioch University Institutional Review Board Chair, Dr. Kevin Lyness, xxxxx@xxxxx.xxx

By signing below, you indicate your informed consent to participate in this study.

_____ _____

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTION GUIDE

Revised Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Your Story

1. Could you share a bit about your background, including your current role and time in the district?
2. How would you describe your racial identity, and how has it shaped your teaching practice?
3. What experiences have shaped your understanding of racial equity in education?
    - How have you experienced navigating racial dynamics in this school/district?

Your Work

4. When people talk about "racial equity work" in our schools, what does that mean to you?
5. What kinds of race-related initiatives or efforts have you been part of here?
6. Tell me about how your own racial background and life experiences affect:
    - How you connect with students
    - How you work with other staff
    - What and how you teach

How Your School System Works

Decision Making

7. In your experience, how are big decisions made about:
    - What and how you teach?
    - Which programs you use?
    - How you handle race-related issues?
8. How do educators of color get to share their knowledge and ideas?
    - When do you see this working well?
    - When do you see them being left out?
9. How do students, families, and staff of color get to be part of:
    - Running the school?
    - Leading important work?
    - Making key decisions?
10. How does your school/district approach professional development around racial equity?

Looking at Results

11. How has your school/district responded to racial equity concerns?
12. Can you tell me how (or if) your district tracks or documents racial equity efforts?
13. When someone brings up a race-related problem:
    - How do people usually react?
    - How do you handle different opinions?
    - Do people feel safe speaking up about tough issues?

Making Change Happen

In Your Classroom

14. How do you make your teaching relevant to all students?

- What works well?
- What's challenging?

15. What have you found helpful for:
    - Making everyone feel welcome?
    - Supporting students from different backgrounds?
    - Having conversations about race?

Making Things Better

16. What kind of support would help you:
    - Feel more confident doing equity work?
    - Learn and grow professionally around equity work?
    - Make lasting changes regarding equity?
17. From your view:
    - What would help racial equity work succeed?
    - What barriers can you imagine?
    - What would keep people engaged in racial equity work?

Final Thoughts

18. What would meaningful institutional change around racial equity work look like to you?
19. Is there anything else you'd like to share about your experiences with racial equity efforts in the district?

APPENDIX C: RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Dear Faculty and Staff,

Bailey Tighe, an English teacher at Walpole High School and a doctoral candidate, is looking for volunteers to participate in a research study focused on how educators contribute to racial equity efforts in schools. Your insights and experiences could play a key role in shaping more inclusive practices for both students and staff.

Participation is completely confidential—no names or our School/'s District's name will be included in her dissertation.

If you're interested in sharing your perspective through a confidential interview, please consider volunteering. You can fill out this Google Form, which will go directly to Bailey. Alternatively, feel free to contact her at xxxxxxx@xxxxxx.xxx or xxxxxx@xxxx.xxxif you have any questions or would like to participate.

Thank you for considering this opportunity.

APPENDIX D: OBSERVATION RECORDING FORM

Observation Recording Sheet: Equity-Related Activities

Observer Information:

- Observer Name: Bailey Tighe
- Date of Observation:
- Location of Observation:
- Time of Observation:

Activity Details:

- Type of Activity:
- Title or Topic:
- Facilitator/Leader:

Observation Notes:

1. **Environment:**
    - Description of Physical Environment:
    - Seating Arrangement:
    - Ambiance:
    - Participants in Observation:
2. **Equity Content:**
    - Overview of Content: [Brief Description of Equity-related Content Covered] —
    - Key Concepts Discussed: [List of Key Equity Concepts or Topics]
        1.
    - Strategies or Approaches:
        1.
3. **Participant Engagement:**
    - Active Participation:
    - Questions or Comments:
    - Interaction Dynamics: [Observations on Interactions Among Participants and Facilitator]—
4. **Facilitator/Facilitation:**
    - Facilitator's Approach:
    - Clarity of Instructions:
    - Responsiveness: [Observations on Facilitator's Responsiveness to Participants' Needs or Feedback]:
5. **Equity Practices:**
    - Incorporation of Equity Practices: [Observations on the Integration of Equity Practices into the Activity]:

    - Examples or Case Studies: [Use of Examples or Case Studies Related to Equity Issues]

    - Opportunities for Reflection: [Presence of Opportunities for Participants to Reflect on Equity Issues]
        1.

6. **Overall Impressions:**
    - Strengths: [Identified Strengths or Effective Practices Observed]

        .

    - Areas for Improvement: [Areas Where Improvement or Enhancement is Needed]
        1.
    - General Observations: [Any Additional General Observations or Insights]
        1.

Reflections:

- Observer Reflections: [Reflections on the Overall Observation Experience, Insights Gained, and Future Considerations]
    -
    - **Attachments (if applicable):**
- Supporting Materials:

Observer Signature: _____Bailey Tighe_____ Date: _____

APPENDIX E: DOCUMENT REVIEW AUDIT SHEET

Document Review

Document Information

- Document Title: Edgewood Public Schools Strategic Plan
- Date of publication/revision: 2022-2025
- Author(s)/Organization: NAPS
- Type of document:
  - ☐ Policy
  - ☐ Report
  - ☐ Strategic Plan
  - ☐ Meeting Minutes
  - ☐ Other _____
- Intended Audience:
  - ☐ Educators
  - ☐ Administrators
  - ☐ Parents/Guardians
  - ☐ Students
  - ☐ Community Members
  - ☐ Other _____

Content Analysis

1. **Equity Goals & Objectives**
   - **Stated Goals:**
   - **Specific Objectives:**
2. **Definitions and Terminology:**
   - **Key Terms Defined:**
   - **Use of "whiteness":**
3. **Roles & Responsibilities:**
   - **Educators' Roles:**
   - **Administrators' Roles:**
   - **Students' Roles:**
   - **Community Involvement:**
4. **Strategic Actions:**
   - **Action Plans:**
   - **Programs and Initiatives:**
   - **Training and Professional Development:**
5. **Monitoring & Evaluation:**
   - **Evaluation Methods:**
   - **Metrics & Indicators:**
6. **Challenges & Barriers:**
   - **Identified Challenges:**

- **Proposed solutions:**

7. **Impact of Whiteness:**
    - **Role of Whiteness:**
    - **Perceptions & Attitudes:**

Additional Observations

- **Notable Quotes/Sections:**
- **Gaps or Missing Information:**
- **Overall impression:**

Summary

- **Relevance to Research Question:**
- **Implications for Research:**
- **Potential Use in Advocacy:**

APPENDIX F: CODING MATRICES

Table of Contents:

This appendix presents the comprehensive coding framework used for data analysis in this study. The framework synthesizes multiple theoretical perspectives to examine institutional structures, practices, and discourse patterns in educational settings. Each framework section is organized by theoretical background and includes:

- Code descriptions
- Indicators
- Example markers from the data

Coding Matrices:

1. **Critical Race Theory (CRT) Framework**

1.1 Interest Convergence (IC)

Code	Description	Indicators	Example Markers
IC1	Economic/Workforce Benefits	References to market value, career readiness	“success for all students”, “Enhance workforce readiness”
IC2	Institutional Benefits	Appeals to organizational interests	“Enhance district reputation”, “Improve institutional metrics”
IC3	Reform Language	Centering dominant culture benefits	“Universal improvement”, “Excellence for everyone”
IC4	Resource Justification	Equity tied to organizational advantage	“Efficient resource allocation”, “Strategic investment"

1.2 Counter-Storytelling vs. Dominant Narratives (CN)

Code	Description	Indicators	Example Markers
CN1	Narrative Construction	Voice representation, perspective inclusion	Administrative vs. community voices
CN2	Success Definition	Performance measures, achievement standards	Standardized metrics, conventional benchmarks
CN3	Experience Validation	Lived experiences, cultural knowledge	Personal narratives, community wisdom

1.3 Permanence of Racism (PR)

Code	Description	Indicators	Example Markers
PR1	Systemic Recognition	Acknowledgment of structural barriers	System analysis, institutional patterns
PR2	Response Depth	Solution scope of intervention level	Transformative vs. surface changes
PR3	Historical Context	Pattern recognition, historical awareness	Legacy impacts, historical continuity

1.4 Institutional Reproduction (IR)

Code	Description	Indicators	Example Markers
IR1	Structural Barriers	Resource limitations, time constraints	Limited resources, systemic obstacles
IR2	Power Maintenance	Authority preservation, control systems	Hierarchical decision-making
IR3	Knowledge Distribution	Information flow, expertise validation	Controlled information sharing
IR4	Cultural Perpetuation	Norm reinforcement, tradition maintenance	Status quo preservation
IR5	Systemic Patterns	Organizational routines, institutional habits	Established procedures

1.5 Equity Approach (EA)

Code	Description	Indicators	Example Markers
EA1	Surface Solutions	Quick fixes, technical responses	Band-aid solutions
EA2	Comfort Centering	White emotional needs, conflict avoidance	Emotional protection
EA3	Individual Focus	Personal over systemic focus	Individual responsibility
EA4	Achievement Binary	Equity-achievement tension	Standard vs. equity
EA5	Transformation Resistance	Change limitations, status quo protection	Surface-level change

2. Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS) Framework

2.1 White Normativity (WN)

Code	Description	Indicators	Example Markers
WN1	Unstated Cultural Standards	Default white cultural norms	Professional standards, behavior expectations
WN2	Universal Professional Standards	Standardized expectations	“Effective communication”, professional norms
WN3	Normalized Communication Patterns	White communication styles	“Proper” discourse patterns
WN4	Assumed Sharing Understanding	Common knowledge presumptions	Unstated cultural references

2.2 White Institutional Presence (WIP)

Code	Description	Indicators	Example Markers
WIP1	Organizational Structures	Traditional hierarchies	Hierarchical system, traditional structures
WIP2	Professional Development	Training approaches	Dominant cultural lens, standard methodologies
WIP3	Assessment/Evaluation	Standard criteria	White cultural norms in assessment
WIP4	Leadership Authority	Power structures	Traditional leadership models

2.3 White Knowledge Construction (WK)

Code	Description	Indicators	Example Markers
WK1	Legitimate Knowledge	Definition of valid knowledge	Academic credentials, formal expertise
WK2	Ways of Knowing	Valued knowledge systems	Scientific rationality, empirical evidence
WK3	Evidence Standards	Acceptable proof	Quantitative data, formal documentation
WK4	Learning Outcomes	Achievement standards	Standardized measures, formal assessments

2.4 Professional Identity & Resistance (PI)

Code	Description	Indicators	Example Markers
PI1	Self-Protective Behaviors	Validation seeking, deflection	“You’re doing fantastic things”, “We’re already doing that” etc.
PI2	Technical Orientation	Strategy focus, procedure emphasis	Focus on methods over transformation
PI3	Role Definition	Professional boundaries, expertise claims	Professional authority assertions “I know what needs to be done”
PI4	Change Resistance	Comfort maintenance, tradition adherence	Protection of existing approaches “We’ve always done it this way”
PI5	Identity Performance	Professional presentation, competency display	Demonstration of expertise

2.5 White Cultural Practices (WC)

Code	Description	Indicators	Example Markers

WC1	Time Management	Urgency, efficiency emphasis	Structured timeframes
WC2	Documentation Practices	Written emphasis, formal records	Paper trail priority
WC3	Space Utilization	Physical arrangement, movement control	Controlled environments
WC4	Group Dynamics	Interaction patterns, relationship structures	Formal interactions
WC5	Professional Norms	Behavioral standards, success definitions	Standard practices

2.6 Cultural Navigation & Translation (CNT)

Code	Description	Indicators	Example Markers
CNT1	Surface Inclusion	Generic belonging language	Token diversity "all students"
CNT2	Cultural Mediation	Bridging attempts, interpretation efforts	Cultural translations
CNT3	Cultural Competency Claims	Expertise assertion, skill demonstration	Competence claims
CNT4	Cultural Avoidance	Topic deflection, discussion limitation	Discomfort avoidance
CNT5	Cultural Translation Gaps	Misalignment, misunderstanding	Communication barriers

3. White Supremacy Culture (WSC) Framework

3.1 Perfectionism (P)

Code	Description	Indicators	Example Markers
P1	Mastery Emphasis	Excellence focus	"High standards", perfection requirements
P2	Error Focus	Mistake attention	Error correction, deficiency orientation
P3	Performance Standards	Achievement requirements	Rigid criteria, strict standards
P4	Limited Alternatives	Restricted approaches	Standard methods only

3.2 Individualism (I)

Code	Description	Indicators	Example Markers
I1	Achievement Focus	Individual success	Personal progress monitoring
I2	Personal Responsibility	Individual accountability	Personal goal setting
I3	Competition Emphasis	Individual over collaboration	Competitive frameworks
I4	Merit-Based Evaluation	Individual assessment	Personal achievement metrics

3.3 Objectivity (O)

Code	Description	Indicators	Example Markers
O1	Neutral Claims	Unbiased approaches	"Objective" standards
O2	Quantifiable Measures	Numerical emphasis	Measurable outcomes
O3	Emotional Dismissal	Rationality priority	Dismissal of subjective factors
O4	Rational Thinking	Logic emphasis	"Critical thinking" parameters

3.4 Either/Or Thinking (EOT)

Code	Description	Indicators	Example Markers
EOT1	Success Dichotomies	Binary measures	Pass/fail frameworks
EOT2	Right/Wrong Frameworks	Absolute answers	Correct/incorrect binaries
EOT3	Assessment Structures	Binary evolution	Success/failure measures
EOT4	Behavior Classification	Good/bad binaries	Behavioral categorization
EOT5	Sequential Learning	Linear progression	Step-by-step pathways
EOT6	Skills Hierarchy	Structured development	Hierarchical learning
EOT7	Fixed Progression	Standard advancement	Required sequences
EOT8	Standard Advancement	Universal criteria	Fixed benchmarks
EOT9	Single Approach	One "right way"	Standard solutions
EOT10	Standard Methods	Universal procedures	Prescribed approaches
EOT11	Best Practices	Universal standards	"best" practices
EOT12	Fixed Solutions	Predetermined paths	Standard answers

3.5 Paternalism (PAT)

Code	Description	Indicators	Example Markers
PAT1	Top-Down Decisions	Hierarchical control	Administrative mandates
PAT2	Expert Solutions	Authority-driven	Expert-only input
PAT3	Limited Input	Restricted participation	Controlled stakeholder voice
PAT4	Prescribed Improvement	Dictated growth	Mandated development paths
PAT5	Expertise Hierarchy	Knowledge authority	Expert positioning
PAT6	Authority Positions	Unchallenged power	Leadership authority
PAT7	"We Know Best"	Assumed expertise	Authority claims
PAT8	Protective Justification	Defensive positioning	Protection rationales
PAT9	Mandated Changes	Forced implementation	Required modifications
PAT10	Prescribed Methods	Dictated approaches	Required procedures
PAT11	Controlled Implementation	Managed roll-out	Supervised execution
PAT12	Compliance Monitoring	Implementation control	Progress oversight

3.6 Right to Comfort (RC)

Code	Description	Indicators	Example Markers

RC1	Conflict Avoidance	Tension prevention	"Safe" environments
RC2	Dominant Group Protection	Comfort preservation	Emotional protection
RC3	Surface Inclusion	Generic "belonging"	Superficial diversity
RC4	Challenge Minimization	Difficulty avoidance	Conflict reduction

3.7 Urgency Culture (UC)

Code	Description	Indicators	Example Markers
UC1	Timeline Pressure	Implementation speed	Deadlines, rushed execution
UC2	Quick Solutions	Fast fixes	Immediate results, short-term focus
UC3	Process Rushing	Speed over depth	Rapid implementation, abbreviated processes
UC4	Results Pressure	Outcome urgency	Immediate impact expectations

3.8 Performance Practices (PP)

Code	Description	Indicators	Example Markers
PP1	Visibility Focus	Demonstration emphasis, public display	Performance pressure
PP2	Competence Claims	Expertise assertion, skill showcasing	Expertise proof
PP3	Success Narratives	Achievement stories, progress reports	Success stories
PP4	Role Enactment	Professional behavior, identity performance	Role conformity
PP5	Accountability Navigation	Requirement management, evaluation response	Evaluation management

4. Emerging Categories:

4.1 Terminology & Framing (TF)

Code	Description	Indicators	Example Markers
TF1	Terminology Choice	Word selection patterns	Technical terms, equity language
TF2	Framing Patterns	Issue presentation	Problem-solution framing, deficit focus, othering
TF3	Narrative Structure	Story construction	Document organization., voice hierarchy
TF4	Voice & Tone	Communication style	Authority language, formal discourse

4.2 Professional Language (LP)

Code	Description	Indicators	Example Markers
LP1	Academic Language	Formal discourse	Technical vocabulary, professional jargon
LP2	Standard English	Language dominance	English priority
LP3	Professional Standards	Communication requirements	Formal structures, official channels
LP4	Discourse Control	Voice management	Authorized speakers, legitimate forms

4.3 Organizational Design (SE)

Code	Description	Indicators	Example Markers
OD1	Institutional Structures	Organizational patterns	Hierarchy diagrams, reporting lines
OD2	Process Flow	Decision pathways	Approval processes, authority chains
OD3	Resource Distribution	Allocation patterns	Budget priorities, resource management
OD4	Implementation Models	Program execution	Action plans, strategy deployment

4.4 Cultural Capital (CC)

Code	Description	Indicators	Example Markers
CC1	Recognized Expertise	Valid knowledge	Professional credentials, formal training
CC2	Professional Standards	Behavior norms	Expected conduct, standard practices
CC3	Network Access	Connection patterns	Professional networks, information access
CC4	Resource Access	Distribution systems	Opportunity structures, resource allocation

4.5 Stakeholder Involvement (SI)

Code	Description	Indicators	Example Markers
SI1	Participation Patterns	Engagement structures	Community input, stakeholder voice
SI2	Partnership Models	Collaboration approaches	Partnership designs, relationship structures
SI3	Voice Distribution	Power sharing	Decision influence, input validation
SI4	Engagement Methods	Community connection	Outreach strategies, involvement patterns

4.6 Community Boundaries (CB)

Code	Description	Indicators	Example Markers

CB1	Institutional Standards	Participation requirements	Entry criteria, involvement standards
CB2	Cultural Expectations	Behavior norms	Community standards, social expectations
CB3	Power Relationships	Authority patterns	Decision rights, influence structures
CB4	Group Dynamics	Interaction patterns	Social hierarchies, relationship structures

APPENDIX G: RACIAL EQUITY IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

Core Principles:

- Equity is foundational, not an add-on.
- Sustained, multi-level interventions are necessary.
- Combine individual growth with systemic change.
- Expect discomfort as part of the process.

Phased Approach:

Phase 1: Foundational Development (0-6 months)

- **Cultural Assessment:** Examine leadership demographics, decision-making, and resource allocation.
- **Mandatory Training:** Focus on implicit bias, systemic racism, developing comfort with imperfect racial dialogue and racial consciousness.
- **Accountability:** Develop an equity audit committee and transparent reporting.
- **Develop Growth Mindset:** Introduce frameworks that normalize discomfort and mistakes

Phase 2: Capacity Development (6-12 months)

- **Equity Leadership Roles:** Establish paid positions with decision-making power.
- **Professional Learning Communities:** Facilitate racial affinity groups and brave conversations.
- **Equity Coaching:** Train equity coaches and provide ongoing support.
- **Complex Identity Workshops:** Provide training that challenges rigid racial categorization and develops nuanced understanding of intersectional identities.

Phase 3: Systemic Transformation (1-3 years)

- **Cultural Redesign:** Transform hiring, promotions, and leadership pathways.
- **Professional Standards:** Redefine metrics to include cultural responsiveness.
- **Sustainable Ecosystem:** Create community accountability and dialogue mechanisms.
- **Reflection Protocols:** Implement structured reflection process and support educators in growth

---

Challenges & Strategies:

- Anticipate resistance; foster open communication.
- Establish support systems and psychological safety for educators.

Monitoring & Evaluation:

- Conduct regular equity audits.
- Utilize both quantitative and qualitative assessments.

Resource Needs:

- Dedicated budget for equity initiatives.
- Professional development and release time funding.

This guide is a roadmap for districts aiming for deep, structural transformation in racial equity.

APPENDIX H: JENNIFER'S INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Interview #1: Jennifer Brown
Completed 10/21
Yeah, sure. So I'm biracial. My dad is **[of European descent],** and my mom is an immigrant from **[an island nation],** which I'm not sure if you know where that is or what that is.
It is island nation off the **[removed for anonymity]** right? So you said I present Caucasian. Sorry, I very much present Caucasian. People would not look at me and know that I am of mixed race. So my racial diversity is different than some other people of mixed race. Yeah.
It's been, well, it's kind of interesting. So I don't feel as though race comes up very often in regards to conversations with colleagues or administrators and mostly, as I mentioned in one of the questions, comes up and when students are looking to see themselves in their teachers, there's a predominantly Caucasian staff here in Edgewood Middle School. So when my students find out that my mom is from **[Island Nation],** and that makes me a mixed race and that I am **[Black]**, students who are looking to cling to someone from that is somewhat similar to them, racially, they tend to to go towards it, which is also one of the reasons I put that out there to my students. So you like to share a lot of my personal life, but I understand the importance of seeing yourself in your school and seeing yourself in your classes for a sense of belonging.
I have my students for two years in a row, which is lovely. And he is a student of mixed race, his father is black, his mother is white, but his mom is remarried to a man who is white, and so he is the only person of color in his house. So he was really reaching for something, and he was so funny, and he would say things like, You're half a kid like me, right? Then, Oh, okay. And then Barry was like, it's our month. It's our month.
And other students I've had some students in the past who I think have learned from their parents that we've had some parents accuse teachers of being racist in this building, which isn't necessarily from what I found in those specific cases to be the truth. So I've had students who feel as though they can play the race card to get out of things, because it's kind of worked for them. Because I think some people in this building are a little scared of the race card, and they stay away from it. And I'm like, you can't pull that with me.
To me, I think it really I and I didn't put this in what I sent to you, because I know this isn't like your mission and what you are, your thing is, but I look at race and gender as coinciding, because I think there are two strong points of. Identity, and I think both students want to see themselves reflected in their school and in their classes, both with race and I think gender identity, and when adults, I think students take a more active role in their learning. I think I feel welcome and safe and all of these things lead to a more productive learning environment and are more likely to be successful. I don't feel that that is the view of my school or my district. In fact, I don't think my school or district has really outwardly put a view out there for.
I think it's tricky when the majority, if not all of the administrators, I don't know all of them in the district, I know in my building, they're all Caucasian, so I think it's out of their realm of expertise to speak on and during the COVID, I did touch upon this and the questionnaire, we had a training that happened. It was during the COVID era, and it was put on where we're all kind of in a room watching a video with a slide deck, and it was white women speaking about racial diversity. And it was really out of touch and did not play well at all. And there was a lot of anger and backlash from teachers who were vocal, myself included, about how out of touch it was. I think after that, it was, this isn't our house. Let's kind of take a step back fully.

So, sorry about this. I didn't expand on this [but] I did put 2.5. They were in that patient commenting on the teachers of color in the district, and they said there were 2.5 teachers. And so we're all like, well, who's the point? How did you get that number? How do you go half the teacher, like, It's just it felt, it felt you don't present that, I feel like you round up, well, right? So, after, there was an initiative that took place afterwards, where they realized how offensive and out of touch they were. So, a committee was formed. I was not on the committee, nor was I invited, because I present this occasion, but one of my really close friends that I work with in this building is black, and she was asked to be on this committee, and it was they met, I think, bimonthly, to discuss issues, the issues at hand with race and equity. But the committee fizzled out, and nothing really came of it, which was also really frustrating.

I really think it is making sure all students can see themselves. And I mean, I did. I mentioned this as well in the questionnaire, but I really think it's separate Elementary Ed and secondary ed. And as a secondary ed teacher, I think we are looking towards pointing with students towards their future and giving them a direction. And if you can't see yourself in what you're learning, then you can't see a future career in that class. So like I really think it's important that science teachers are making sure all students of all races and genders and whatever diversities can consume themselves reflected in the class somewhere, whether it's through images or influential people within that field, or if they're lacking in that field, making that known. Hey, here's a whole you can be a breakthrough. This is like, let's break down some barriers and try to be the first, which that is, I think encouraging to some students, but will scare some away. But I think important that we do that and set the tone early.

I'm very lucky that **[This world language]** countries, … meaning **[this language]** speaking, are super diverse, which is amazing. **[This language]** is spoken all over the world, and I try to make sure that's reflected, and I make sure I vocalize to the students as well that this is this is my point. This is what I'm trying to do. So every four months, three or four months, we learn a song and a target language. And I try to reach different songs from different genres. There's one that's … from Northern Africa. There's one from **[parts of Europe]**, and he, his dad, is from Rwanda, and we talk a little bit about genocide, and get that in there.

We get the Caribbean going. We even get the United States.

And then in the unit where we actually learn how to describe people, we have warm ups where we I put a picture of a celebrity on the board, and you have to get a whiteboard and write down their description physically. And I purposely include different genders, different backgrounds, different countries. I make sure I hit India, Asia, South America, Latin I try to get everyone represented. I tell the students. And I also say, if I'm missing somebody, please let me know if there is something I could add in, more I could do for the future. Please let me know and try to include them in this and I think that has been nice. The students have not had a negative reaction to it, which is good.

So we don't do any work in this school.

I being an introductory language teacher, it's really important to model that it's okay to make mistakes, and mistakes were something we learned from so that happens even in my class when I will mislabel things that my class, especially when I'm trying to present people from around the world, to describe people, mistakes happen, and it's okay to make them, just accept them, own up to them, apologize if necessary, and learn from it and get better for next time. And I made one actually, recently, the other day, we have a large population of students in **[Edgewood]** who are from India or of Indian descent. And I mislabeled something when a student corrected me in class. And I was very grateful to that students inside a model apology,

gratitude, and I will be better for next time we all had an I think that's important,
So I have no ever witness at first hands. These are things that I hear a lot of it comes from dealing honestly with parents who are pulling the race card and accusing us of sending out students because of their race, and I see an unwillingness to engage in that conversation and an unwillingness to have a healthy back and forth conversation. And usually I don't, I don't know. I'm not a part of them, and I don't know where they're coming but I do see the effects of that seep into my classroom and into other teachers classroom, when students feel like I can't get in trouble, my dad or my mom's gonna come in and they're gonna drop the card and get away with anything, which, to me, is the opposite of what we're looking to do here, right?
I think that committee would have been a wonderful thing they could have done. I think they could have also expanded upon it as well, because we have a lot of paraprofessional. No, we're not sorry we've relabeled them. They're not paraprofessionals. They're educational support. ESPs, our ESPs, we have a lot of diversity within our ESPs, and they we're not. Ever asked to be on that committee? So I don't feel like it was fully formed, but I feel as though if they were to try to form a committee now, I think that would be something quite advantageous. We do have professional development days in April where it's a choice. Teachers can put on trainings for their colleagues, and I feel like that is a wonderful opportunity to let teachers in that area decide what they want to what is important, what does district need? And let's put a presentation out there, and teachers who want to take this and can sign up, I did one for gender in my building. Not that I'm an expert, but I feel like if you can just I call a student by their preferred name or pronouns, you can literally save a life. It's not that hard. It's not a big deal. and I don't know, but I feel like no one's been empowered to do so as well, and I think it's because everyone who runs this day is white. It's a bunch of white people doing white things, and I don't think they feel comfortable to single a teacher out and say, Hey, you, I get you. All decisions that are made from the top down. So to be honest, I don't know who sits in the meeting. Specifically these initiatives. I know that in September, when we come back to school, we are told, these are initiatives, and we're never really given any direction. And we are told to all students, but we're never really given direction again. I wouldn't know if there are Educators of color or community members of color in decision making, to be honest, I don't know who. Oh, that's not true. Hold on, no. Let me backtrack. I don't know if you saw this news last year with Edgewood. We had an issue with a book being banned in an elementary school. Did you see this? To be honest, I just sit. Politics are not my wheelhouse, and I like to just stay away. And I don't live in the area either of some kind of a little but I my understanding there's one gentleman, and I don't know if he's on Town Council or the school committee, who is a black man who stepped up and said, This is unacceptable. We can't have this. I will resign my position if this is where the town is heading. That's just one person with one and I don't know his role. It's not a very helpful answer. No, no, yeah. I just remember there was one man in one position, and it's my understanding, he was the only person, only BIPOC person in that discussion anywhere, who could have jobs.
I'm thinking, I know I didn't type anything in there, because I'm never I haven't witnessed anything firsthand. That's okay, and I don't want to speak out of turn. Yeah. were like, yeah. Be like, put an add on to your Aspen and have that track for us. I'd be like, sure. That's great, sure, yeah, as long as I don't have to do any numbers. Gotcha. So the only situations I know that I again, I don't witness them, but I've had a couple math teachers on my team. Parents have accused them of being racist because their child was not placed into algebra. But it was not a race thing. It was they didn't have qualifying scores. They didn't have qualifying this, like they're

and then when the students in front of me in class, they're not doing X, Y, Z. So it was, I don't it wasn't a race. Teacher never took it that way. yeah, and I feel like it's very isolated instances that I cannot put a blanket statement on it and say either way. Um, I hope you don't I do. I gotta slowly move out of my class. I got my children. Do you mind if I'm, like, multitasking, I don't mind. I'm thinking really hard on that. Okay, I just I one situation. I know the student was new to the district, and it was like, I gave them the in seventh grade, they take a placement test, so it's mostly the seventh grade teachers that place them, but I work on an eighth grade team, so like, the placements have already been made, so I don't know really the seventh grade that that would play out in, but I remember one student was near the district, and the parents expressed, I think, that they were misplaced. And so the teacher gave them the the test that seventh graders would take to qualify them in an algebra and the student didn't score well on that test, great. I really think that it's tricky, because I know this is the hot no one wants to be ever accused of being racist and even having, what is it called? Hold on. Sorry, it's the end of the day. So the sub …What is it not the subconscious bias. What is unconscious bias? Yep, I know the unconscious bias is hard for people to talk about. Out, and I don't think you need to engage and have a deep conversation, but I think it's important to make educators aware of what it is and what it might look like. But I also think twofold, it's extra important to show or help educators learn how they can make their classrooms more welcoming for students of all backgrounds, not just race, but race. Religion, I stay away from sexual orientation because I kind of feel like we should never talk about. I thought I stick with gender identity and like, what could you do to make everyone feel safe and welcome in your class? And I think it's what works for one works for almost all in that area. And I don't think my district really does anything for that, okay. Thinking deeply, because I know I most of when I filled out this survey was really thinking Edgewood, and Edgewood, which is not as diverse as **[other districts I worked in]**, and **[this other district I worked in]**, is way more diverse, and I found it to be I find the students in Edgewood to naturally segregate themselves by race, and I didn't see that in Milford, and I didn't see that in **[the other district I worked in]**, and I don't know what that's worth and where it comes from, but I found that worth noting. Yeah, fully it could also be like, I mean, **[The other district school]** was high school, so it's a horse of a different color than middle school.

Note: Identifying details have been bracketed/bolded or removed to protect participant anonymity

APPENDIX I: ASHLEY'S INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Interview #2 Ashley 10/24/24 - 3:30pm 46 mins

So I am an English language educator. So I work with English learners in Edgewood, and I've been here for over 20 years. When I say, like, the first year or two, I was, like, technically a tutor, but then I evolved into a full time teaching position after, like, it was really, well, like, yeah, it was definitely into the first year. So 21, 22 years in Edgewood. Primarily, I've worked throughout most of the district, and I would say, within the last 10 years I've been centrally located at **[one elementary]** School. But this year, the jobs a little bit different. Well, I started the year doing some teaching and then doing some instructional coaching. Kind of it's, I'm not really, technically called a coach. I'm considered the newcomer teacher throughout my role. My years at Edgewood, our numbers have really fluctuated. When I started, I think we had 20 kids district wide, and we immediately shot up over 100 within the first few years. And then I would say my school, because I'm the one that's sort of located in the downtown area where the rents are typically lower, I tend to get the most English learners and migrants, and then, typically, the newcomers. So I, over the years, have developed a newcomer program in our district that I've kind of created, and we sort of take it out when we need it, when numbers hit a certain, you know, threshold I will do, like a fully immersive all day English program. I've done it a few times over the years. Yeah. And then this year, and I think it's working with this population, you have to be very flexible. So I know that very well. So my job kind of shifts and changes, and, you know, whatever, to meet the needs of so this year, I started the year doing the problem is this. So what the newcomers started to show up in the other schools as well. And I'm Are you familiar with our district? Is that what like, yeah, do you have connection? That's why you chose it. So I used to live in Edgewood, actually, myself. Okay, yeah. So our district's really different. The schools, the makeup and community school, like I said, is the one downtown. So we've typically had the lower economic kids and but that we're really starting to find that the English learners have spread out, and especially the newcomers. So the issue has been, you know, we've had been able to do this lovely newcomers program at Edgewood and a community school, but what about the other students? And we have, like, waited doing a central, like, new program in one place, but we really didn't want to put all of those kids in one place for multiple reasons. So that was administration's decision, which I could see their point in a lot of ways. But then, on the other hand, seeing the gains the kids made being in a fully immersed English class, and then how it's like, you know, the outcomes over time is so beneficial. So it's really kind of like, you know, it's been tricky. So anyways, my new role this year was to do some teaching and then to be a newcomers teacher, where I would take my expertise out to the other schools who are now starting to see more newcomers work with both the classroom teachers as well as the other English language teachers. And, yeah, so, but that lasted until last week, when we started to get more newcomers at **[the elementary]** School, and I really needed to sort of pull back and focus more on the students arriving. So again, happened last week we set up new more students. You know, kind of share the wealth anymore. I'm still, I'm still doing it somewhat to, I'm always available to, you know, help other teachers, but I've really had to sort of focus on the new kids coming in. And that's the thing about our population, it's always changing. It's a transient population. So we'll get new kids, we'll lose a couple, we'll get a few more. That's the way it is. Sorry, I am a white woman.

Yeah, I have, because of my role, and especially because in my particular school, and just the makeup of the the students there, I would say it probably started the first for my student. But I think students, but I think it really started to kick in about, I would say, like, 14 or 15 years ago, when the population really started to grow and we started to see more and more, you know, diversity in our schools. We started to see more and more racial incidences. And, you know, it was really interesting, and it still is, that it's, it's, it's been, you know, across grade levels. It's been across the diverse races that we have, like, it's, you know, it's, it's really not, things that we've seen have really been different in terms of just being, like, a simple word that's been uttered to, like, you know, full on, you know, in, you know, insults to right, actual fights, you know, but not a lot. But first one started. The principal at the time called me into his office and said, Hey, we're having these problems. I want you to fix them. And I'm like, Okay, what's the middle age? My kids are the ones being impacted, if not me, then who? I ask myself that all the time, if not me, then who? Because we don't have a real diverse staff in Edgewood, I think at the time, like when I started doing this kind of work, I know there was one woman, particularly from Malaysia, lovely. She still, she still works with us. But I was so I started to do is, I started to really look critically at like, what are the issues? What are we seeing? What can I do? And being an English teacher, the first thing I did was, I just kind of developed this program. Is the first incident was with the older class, the older grades. And I just started going in and doing just like presentations with the kids. I do a lot of PD with adults. So kind of was, you know, when I'm teacher, so it was food, like a natural I just kind of decided to present, like, as if I was presenting to adults and I and I looked at it as a vocabulary lesson, rather than, I didn't single anybody out. I didn't like it was just a matter of here around the N word, specifically

No, just about in terms of discrimination and prejudice and peace and all like these different like the words that I feel like for me, it's as we know. It's based in ignorance. So why not combat that with knowledge? And so that's sort of how I approached it. And then it developed over the years. And then I started, we started seeing things in younger grades. So I started doing story times and integrating the same types of information, but obviously at appropriate age appropriate, um, stories like strictly no elephants, and then having discussions or a related activity and just kind of getting the conversation going even at a very young age. And it was really nice, because at the time my numbers were low, so I was able to really, like, develop and like, look at the problems in the kids that I had in front of me, and create these things. But then our numbers grew more, and then the newcomers started coming. And like I said, I'm always shifting in my job and to meet the needs, and I haven't been able to do as much of that of late, and doesn't mean that there aren't still issues. It's just hate time to that. Unfortunately, it's it, you know, it's kind of got pushed aside, but it's something I'm really proud of, and something and I started to say about my friend Kala, who's from Malaysia. I remember one of the first times I presented, I was so nervous because I had a lot of kids in the class of color, and I'm up there, and I'm thinking in my head, and I present all the time. I'm not nervous, you know, teaching or presenting to any age, and I remember the whole time. I'm like, I'm a fraud. I'm fraud. Why am I doing this? Who am I? Who am I to stand up here and teach these kids, and half of them are kids of color. And as I'm like, you know, this narrative inside my head, and I'm trying to do this, I look, and Kala is in the back of the room. She has a para, and she sits standing there, and that's all I could say, was her face and her and she's a lovely I love her to death, but she's a very stoic woman. So she's sitting there, look, staring at me, and I'm like, oh my god, oh my god. What is she thinking? Who is this girl that's like, the whole time I'm doing it, and I'm like, I just powered through. I felt like I really

reached the kids. I really so I was like, oh shit. I hope she wasn't insult. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to swear. I hope she wasn't in school, did I hope I didn't offend her in any way. I'm walking down the hallway, and who do I see at the end of the hallway? Bucha. And she's like, heading right for me. And I'm thinking, oh my god, oh my god, she's gonna punch me. Oh my god, she's gonna like, deck me. She grabbed me and a giant hug, and she squeezed me so tight. She's like, I thank you so much for doing that. Thank you so much. And I was like, bawling because I'm like, Oh, thank you, because we're so nervous. So that's kind of what, like, was my motivation to say, If not me, then who? Because she felt she's like, I can't It's not me. It's not what I do. But I'm like, you being in the room that was impactful, just having your face in the school. We need that, and we need more of it because, yeah, listen to me, but I can't back it up with stories. I can't back it up with experiences like we need to hear from people who actually, you know, live with discrimination and live with and I can say, oh, yeah, you know, people have been nice to me, yeah, as a black woman or a woman of color, standing up and saying, I didn't get a job once, because they hired someone who looks like Ashley, you know. So I do a lot of that, and even though I can't do more of that, like overt stuff with the kids, I still present all the time at all of our professional development days. And I try, I try, to really be a strong advocate for my students, and being not just my students, but just students of color in general, and just kids who, you know, have maybe not the same opportunities, or they're not always treated the same. So So I try very hard that's really, really important to me. And I'm always reading and researching and trying to, like, find new ways of doing it. And sometimes it's as simple as if someone says something, saying, No, that's not okay, you really can't do that, or you really can't say that. To me, just as important as doing a two hour, you know, presentation just that quick, like interrupting a bit, right? No, that's so much good. That's why I volunteered. Like, I really do have a unique perspective, because I've been doing it for so long. I've seen a lot. You know, I wanted to represent our district in a positive way, because I feel like I have done a lot, and we've come a a bit, right? No, that's so much good. That's why I volunteered. Like, I really do have a unique perspective, because I've been doing it for so long. I've seen a lot. You know, I wanted to represent our district in a positive way, because I feel like I have done a lot, and we've come a really long way. I mean, I think I'm a good example that, like I keep saying, If not me, then who? Because we have such a small you know, sorry, one more, three, three dogs. They all have to come in at separate times. I come in at separate times. Yeah, we have to take up the mantle and just do whatever we can do. I think that if we don't, then we're adding to the problem. So if it is just picking a really good story, and, you know, you know, using it to get a conversation going, or, like I said, being a disrupter or being whatever, I think, whatever we have to do. But I think the biggest thing is putting your personal biases aside. Last year, we had a migrant group I'm sure you're aware of in at the hotel, one of the hotels in town. So you know how? You know Massachusetts is a shelter state. Yeah, we received a large group of migrants, kind of unexpectedly, we didn't have a lot of notice at one of our hotels, and so we had to really shift and do a lot of like quick thinking to be able to accommodate their needs in the schools, yeah. And, you know, being one of the people who have been doing this for so long to I was like, how are we going to do this? And my first thing was, we have to make sure that we really set the tone for these kids, because I don't want people treating them differently because of their political views. And I really felt strongly about that, about educating people. And I thought like the smart way to do it is just to first of all start with the law. Like this is the

law in Massachusetts. All kids who are, in part, you know, part of our school system are, you know, entitled by law, to a free education and fair education, equitable education. So I thought we that was a smart way to just put it out there. And I wanted to come from the higher administration, down to the principals to the teachers and the staff that whatever you feel, you leave it at the door. You enter that door, and you treat all students, you know, in terms of what we're giving them for education. You don't let your biases, and I really felt strongly about that, and more, you know, especially obviously, for the reasons of, like, just compassion for these kids, but also for to make sure that that's a starting point so that they are going to opportunities, academic opportunities, as the other kids. Soon of the things I did was I took the first I had 12 kids at my school, and I took I took them outside as beautiful day like today, and I took really beautiful photos of them. And they're gorgeous. They were just beautiful. They still are. I still have a lot of them, and took these beautiful photos of them, and I blew them up to, like, as big as I could, like eight by 10, or, I don't remember what size, and it was plastered. So my classroom is right outside of, like, one of the main doors, staff comes in and then, as well as with the elevator, and just plastered my wall with these beautiful faces. I made sure we had like their names were very clearly spelled out, so that people would see the faces and the names. And then I put a big sign, all are welcome here, or something like that. Or they're all are I forget some something. I was not very subtle about it, but I thought, You know what? Let's write up the bat with a message that everybody's going to see over and over and over again and come in and say, Are they taking, you know, money away from these kids? Are they doing this? Are they doing that? Not more curiosity. Then there was some negativity underlying some of the questions. And again, I took it as an opportunity. Well, let me educate you. Let me tell you what I know. Maybe you should do some more, you know, digging yourself before you start putting your opinions out there. And really, the bottom line was, it doesn't matter if they just children. They're not, you know, they're not pawns in a political game. They're kids who are here, and we are obligated as professionals to give them the best education that we can. So it was I was a little political Ashley last year listening to me, but you know what that you have to like? Again, that's my role, and by doing that, I feel like setting an example for others. Because back to your original question, that's what we have to do as white educators, is that even though I can't talk from personal experience, these are my I have to make sure I'm their voice, because oftentimes they can't speak for themselves, or their parents don't advocate not because they don't want to, but they're not able to. Yeah, yeah, um, for me, making mistakes? Yeah, yeah. I mean, I I teach a growth mindset. I try to live by growth mindset. I don't think mistakes are bad. I see them as learning opportunities. And I think back to my call example, if she had feedback from instead of giving because I would take the notes and try to improve on it, and I that's how I operate. Yeah, I don't know anything like I try really hard to enter anything like that, like well informed and always have good intentions. But listen, I'm human, and I don't know everything, and I was pretty sheltered. I grew up in Edgewood. When I grew up, I'm a lot older than you, but we had one black family in this entire town for a long, long time. And he came to my school. They came from Haiti. It was a Haitian family and and he was lovely. They were all lovely. And that was it like they were a novelty, because they were the one and only family of color in our entire town my whole entire childhood. So I lived a very sheltered existence for a long time. Went to Catholic school my whole life. So it really didn't improve much as I went on to high school in college. I mean, I just, I sort of just sort of fell into this position after I went to graduate school, and I have not trying to learn and get better, I think because of the nature of the job too, that it evolves and it changes every year. It's kind of something new, because you got a new population. And I just, I get bored

fast, so I like the change and the ability to pivot quickly, but it also opens you up to making more mistakes when you're constantly kind of changing your job and your your responsibilities. But again, I just look at as I look at it as a growth experience, and whatever I learn, I'm able to pass off to my students and my families, hopefully once I learned my lesson. But, yeah, I don't see it as a negative.

Oh, I think, for sure, I think the whole political correctness thing has really, like, stymied a lot of people in interactions with my kids. I mean, I often, like, you know, I'll often correct kindly, but like, you know, the whole, like, over the 20 years that I've been working that has shifted from, oh, you're not allowed to do that, to It's okay. It's not okay. It's okay again. So it's like, you don't identify big color because then it demeans who they are as a person. But my kids aren't African American. A lot of my kids don't come from I hope I'm sorry don't come from there, so that's not a true identification, either. And they're proud of their brown skin, you know, they're proud of what they look like, and they should be. They're lovely. And I don't see that as a negative. I always say when I teach my classes with either adults or kids, words or words, it's the intentions behind the words that what are you really meaning behind those words? If it's, I love you a brown skin, it's absolutely gorgeous. That's not a negative. That's, you know, that's you can't be kinder than that. Like I I truly mean when I say things like that to kids. But if I if someone said, you know, that's not okay, then I would certainly somebody of color said, you know, we don't really I don't enlighten me, because that's not My experience, right? But yeah, I think it definitely inhibits people when they're interacting, because they're so afraid they're going to insult somebody. But okay, that's always my message. It's whatever the intent is behind the word.

No, unfortunately I havent seen BIPOC educator voices or expertise centered in conversations about race or equity work. Okay, yeah, and I they're really the few I'm thinking of are all in a like a paraprofessional position, to which that doesn't mean I think their voice is valued no matter who they are. Doesn't matter to me. Um, not to be stereotypical, but a lot of our custodians over the year have been either Hispanic South Korean. Right now, I think all jobs are important, and I make sure I share that with my kids. And a lot of our the custodians in the past who have been like Hispanic or Spanish speakers just gravitate towards, actually, the my Custodian. Custodian is from South Korea, and he just the minute he met me, he found out what I did for our job. He's like, incredibly respected, respects me so much because his kids were English learners when they got to the country. And it's great having the custodian who really loves you? Because, let me tell you, My room's always first one clean, but it's lovely. It's nice. So I don't care who they are, if they have something to give or something that I remember this one custodian. He was awesome. I had a lot of Spanish speakers that year, and he came down every morning and touched base with those kids to say good morning to them in Spanish, and to, you know, just have an opportunity to talk to them. So, yeah, yeah. So to me, whoever and anyone who comes in, parents, parents are hard to get in with my population, into the classroom, but when I can, I always try to, it's it and get it has nothing to do with their lack of interest. It's a cultural thing. A lot of other countries just view education in such a different way. And it's, you know, parents don't kind of, it's very intimidating for them to sort of step into the school in a different role. So yeah, and I respect that. I would never make anybody do anything they're uncomfortable with, but if a parent wants to come, Oh, please, I would put out the red carpet. Yeah, I would love it, yeah, but yeah, it's tricky. It's just not a lot. And I think sometimes, too coming from another country, they still harbor those feelings of like I'm just a lowly power. Why would you want to

hear my voice? And I think that's up to us to say, absolutely. You know everything you have to say, or just even kind of they see, yeah, there are, you know, adults here that don't all look like Mrs. Current with blonde hair and blue eyes. That's right, I keep forgetting, um, they look like me too. Yeah, yeah. Actually, this is so funny. I just that's one of my little girls. She Oh, somebody came in. Who was it? Someone came in for something, and it was a black woman, and she just dove into her arms, start stroking her face, and she said, You look just like me. This is so cute. We're like, oh, we need to have more. Yeah. So we need so much more, right?

Do I know? But you know what? We have to get creative in ways to show the kids that because, not maybe because there's not a physical person here, but either through the stories or the videos I choose, or even the decorations in my classroom, you know, I have posters of people of all different colors. I have artwork, like sculptures of people, like just anything and everything, not just like the standard picture, hands around the world. They have all different skin tones, like real like examples of real life, things that represent them.
I mean, I think as a whole district, there's been a an initiative for the last, I would say maybe five or six years. I can't even remember where we started to, like, really look more critically. We've had PDS, we've had classroom libraries. I mean, I've always been doing it, but I have been, you know, like, sensitive to the fact that we are a little bit, you know, behind the eight ball for a long time, but they have been making strides as an administration. I would think, over the last five or six years, we've had some really good PD, I would say I'm on the Professional Development Committee. I have been for years, so I was asked to be on, I'm like, Oh, another committee, but honestly, like to me, that was one of the best ones to be on, because I all that my voice is harder than that. Am I able to and I think that's part of the reason why we've sort of got not I'm not taking credit for it, but I think that having people speak up and say, We need a little bit more of this, and they've been very responsive to it, and that makes me happy, because so in terms of, like, decision making, it's not just what you're saying, like everything else, yeah, top down. But I think that too, that they listen to They do, yeah, exactly, yeah, most times, not always. Sometimes you have to say it a few times, but that's okay. And again, I'm a firm believer that everybody's voice is important. So it really to me I'm smart enough, and I know I've been doing this long enough to know that the real decisions are made from top down. But everybody's voice needs to be heard, you know? And I try to advocate for everybody, not just my students, but if I know of like, staff, who might not that we or that they have an idea, but they don't feel like they could bring it forward. And then I'm like, Hey, let me talk to somebody next week. I'll bring it up at that meeting. So I'm always like listening and trying to keep up my, like, my finger on the pulse of those sorts of things, because, again, it affects my students ultimately, if more people have a say in everything. So I wouldn't say deny, yeah, I wouldn't say they deny, maybe ignore, more than deny, just maybe brush it off or like, oh, it's not that. I think, just like, and maybe not so much recently, I think, yeah, I also think people are careful around me, because I they Yeah, and I have no problem calling people out or correcting them. So I think people are smart enough to know not to say things around me. That's why I'm thinking that it's not so much of a problem now, because right thinking better. But I've had no problem if I've heard things or I've seen things, I have no problem going straight to who needs to hear it and call people out. And I'm not a tattle tale. I respect my colleagues, but I also know if those kinds of behaviors or jokes or whatever that aren't funny perpetuate that's, you know, that's why we have the problems that we have, because people don't speak up. So I havenever had any problems. So I do think that there, it's out there, I just don't see or hear for good. go ahead. I'm sorry. I was just thinking. I feel like

this thing where people try so hard that, in a way, it's that's a form of racism too, because you're not, you know, you're trying so hard that you're not seeing the person, you're seeing the race. And I think a lot of times what we need to like, sort of like sort of like, get through that too. Like, it goes back to, like, the black, brown thing, and not calling someone by the color of their skin. It's like they're just a kid. Like, why don't you get to know that child, rather than, you know, put a label on them or not put a label on them, because you're afraid you're gonna, like, they don't do what they really need to do, because they're so sort of like stuck on making sure they say what they think people expect them to say. Does that make sense? Just be real, be human. And if you say the wrong thing, you say the wrong thing, there's obviously a line between kind of saying something stupid, and this goes for kids too, like repeating something that's Oh, why would a first grader know that word? They always heard it at home and they just repeat it. I get that all the time. I'm like, but that's not that's not a good enough excuse. They still need to know that's not okay, because when a child uses it in the right context, then that's more than just repeating something they heard. Yeah, like, that's knowing it's not okay, and again, it's the intention behind it. So I think sometimes that people make excuses rather than, like, take it on, like, head on. I think it's more because it's just not it. It's uncomfortable. It's uncomfortable to have to, like, address these sorts of things, and that's why I kind of took, like, the tack of our it's a lesson. It's a vocabulary lesson. I'm not calling anybody out, I'm not judging anybody. I'm just informing and educating. And I think really, that's what we need to do. We just need to get this message out and then take care of the kids. I remember one time I did that, and the little girl was one of my Girls who I adored, who was the target and And to me, that's what it's all about. I just need my kids know I have their back. And she knew it never stood a word to her. She had no idea that I did it on purpose or it was for her, but she didn't know, and that that's all we needed. And I think that's a good message for people to see too, that it's just those the kids knowing that you understand and that you're here for them. Yeah, that's great. And I think that I'm sorry I ramble.

I've been doing this for so long, I feel like over and again, it could be that they're just keeping it away from me because they don't want to. yeah. Again, fair, um, I think in the past, especially when I was out and about, when I had more time, and I was actually, like, in the classroom, was doing work, I think it was nice, and I was scheduling time so people and then they heard, oh, Ashley did this great activity. Why don't you have her do it too? So rather than, like, using as an intervention when there was an incident, we were doing and just regularly, just to kind of keep people informed. So I think I kind of became, like the person to call, and then it took, like, the responsibility off the teachers. So I think that's another reason why I backed off a little bit like, Okay, now you have the books they bought us these lovely libraries. Now you do the work like I went in a model. I showed you how to do it. You saw how the kids responded. Now you got to take it and run with it, but as a lot like things that they have to get done. And unfortunately, I think this, this kind of work, has sort of morphed into, like the SEL kind of things, and it sort of just becomes another topic within that realm, which is really kind of too bad. So I don't see as much like intervention. It becomes more of a discipline issue than an educational opportunity. Like, I always saw them as teachable moments, like, let's not let's call it out. And those, it should be a consequence, of course, but let's also use it as an opportunity, because if he said or did something, chances are 15 to 20 other kids saw it, and if they don't know that, there's going to be some kind of, like, follow up on that, then in their minds, Oh, he got away with it. It's okay if he did it, I can do it, you know what I mean. So I always felt like it had to be, like, addressed

immediately, like, as quickly as possible, and to the whole group, so that everybody who had even any kind of exposure to whatever happened, to just

Interviewer: sort of clarify that point to make sure that I'm getting it right. Is like educators move from almost like using it as a teachable moment to more of a disciplinary response?

Oh, for sure, which it should be right, depending on the circumstances, definitely be some kind of consequence and, you know, reaction from the adults. But, yeah, but then I think it loses, like, like you said the teachable moment, like, if that's all it is, and we don't use it as an opportunity, then yeah, I think it's lost, and it's too bad, so interesting. We have a new bullying initiative, and one of our first PDS at the beginning of the school year was rolling it out with staff and going through the whole thing point by point, all this work we did and went through the whole thing. And it's kind of funny, because whenever I'm going to meet if I interesting, because there was no language. And I've got my hand goes up, and he's like, there's no language for what if it's a racially motivated incident. And they're like, Oh, well, you know that's bullying. Well, no, it's not really, because if the incident involved a particular word or words or a threat, then it becomes something else, in my opinion. And everybody's like, yeah, she's right. It's like, why was that not brought up? And then someone said, What about, you know, what if it's homophobic or what? They're right. So it kind of opens a can of worms. So I think rather than opening that can, they just stuck it all back in and called it bullying. But I really believe that if a word is used, or if there's a threat or something attached to that incident, it becomes something else. But yeah, yeah, nothing was done, but I did voice my opinion. I don't know if it got up to administration, I think, but the I would if I had an opportunity, I would make sure I followed that to see if it did. But, yeah, you know, and again, that's sort of how I see, like my important role in this goal. I'm definitely a teacher, leader. I'm on lots of different committees. I have my hand in a lot of things, and I purposely done that so that my voice can be heard. Because again, when my hand goes up, they know what I'm going to be asking or what I'm going to you know where I'm coming from. Because, and it's not just the English learners. I really do try to advocate for all kids of color, because, again, if not me, then who? Because I have to have voices out there.

Interviewer: As a teacher leader, do you get compensated for that?

No, I look at it is just part of my job. I mean, because of my population, I feel like my roles and responsibility expands, especially, you know, depending on the population, like last year, with the migrants coming in, completely different job. I mean, there were things that I had never experienced in my 20 years, just because of their like, their journey here, and the trauma they experienced, and then the, you know, moving into a hotel, then being relocated to another hotel, and there's just a lot of things I'd never experienced before. So I really had to, sort of, like, expand my responsibilities. That's my choice. I mean, there are other teachers in my role in the district who don't, who choose not to kind of take on those responsibilities. But I live in this community. I live close to community school, so a lot of my families are my neighbors too, and so I just for me some moral obligation as well. and I have a voice, and people listen to me. I've been around a long time. I'm somewhat respected. I think around here again, probably more, she's a pain in the ass, but that's okay. Yeah, exactly. I know that because I get invited to things. I get asked to be part of things because people want to hear what I have to say, or my perspective from my what I've over the years. So how could I not like and do I get compensated? It's to me,

it's more. It's not just about the money. It's about making positive change. I'm a few years away from retirement too, so I'm kind of thinking like, I want to, like, I want a legacy, like, I want it, like, put things in place that I know are going to continue, or at the very least influence people in a positive way that hopefully this will keep on going, because that's, you know, that's what we're all about. And like I said, I consider the a lot of these families, my neighbors, as well as my, you know, my students, yeah, and I've had relationships outside of school with some families that started out as like, you know, they needed help. And to me, I leave the building. I'm not the teacher anymore, and now I'm the person who lives down the street from you. So I've kind of, like, looked at it that way too. So sometimes, just for like, you know, not liability reasons, but like, Okay, now I'm not your teacher. Now I'm your neighbor. What do you need? What can I do? Where can I bring that sort of thing? So that's just nature. I mean, that's just who I am. That's how I was raised. That's why I hope my kids. You know, I've raised my kids that way too, beings. We have to bring those things into our job. I find it I have a hard time with people who just clock in and clock out and don't, especially people who like work with, you know, the needier populations, and not bring that humanity to your job. Why are you doing this? Go work in an office somewhere, I was the boss, I think just more honest conversations. I really try when I do PD, and I'm actually working on one right now to present in a couple weeks to our support staff, include, and this is great too, because I do think this is long overdue. We're, we're including bus drivers, bus monitors. I think the cafeteria workers are going to be invited to it is huge, because everybody has a stake in these kids, and all the kids, kids, all the students, but particularly my students, because even if you don't have them in a classroom, you're still impacting them in some way and Just enlightening people in terms of, like, cultural differences and I use our tones and non verbal communication like these things are just so important, and everybody needs to know this, not just the teachers who have them at desks in their classroom, because Everybody impacts these kids. So I think honest conversations, challenging people's biases, and in these conversations, or these trainings, and just getting people to really, like, examine them themselves and what they bring when they walk through the door. And that's hard. That's hard work. You know, it's really hard for people to to be able to, you know, have a relationship with these kids that's going to impact them, you know, positively. So yeah, I didn’t plan this work, I kind of just fell into it. And it's just, it's really become, like, my life's work, like, I'm really proud of what I've been able to do over the years. I look forward to the next few years that I have left to see, like, what's next, and, yeah, I just, I hope it continues going in a positive direction. Because I really do feel like we've, we've grown a lot as a district. We definitely have a lot more work to do. I would love to see more people of color, hired, that's just, you know, we're lucky to get bodies in general. Remind having. But I think we're going in the right direction we need to keep going that.

Note: Identifying details have been bracketed/bolded or removed to protect participant anonymity

APPENDIX J: SARAH'S INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Interview #3 Sarah 10/25/24

Yess, so I, I've been working here at this school eight years. I worked in kindergarten and first grade. Currently in first grade, and I so in my classroom this year, I have 21 students, but they are, some students are on receive ELL services, and some do not. Some are on IEPs for speech, speech therapy, and some receive academic support in my classroom. So I used to teach in **[Nearby Urban District]**, so Edgewood is very different. Yeah, a lot from **[Nearby Urban District]**,. So it's very different, not as diverse, demographically, more diverse, I assume, yes, absolutely, there was, you know, it was very diverse in South Providence, and very different, very different demographic, which changes a lot of other things. So it's different, but I love it here. So yeah, So I'm white Caucasian. well, in **[Nearby Urban District]**, I was the only white person in my classroom. Very, very diverse. So I didn't look at it any differently. I don't see it as different. I look at more demographic and where they come from. That's kind of how I treat the kids. Some need a little bit of TLC if they have tough, you know, had a lot of trauma, and the differences between the kids, the demographic is very different, and how they act and how their lifestyle is different, I kind of take all of that into account. So it is very different, though,and in Edgewood, no, because I feel like everybody in **[Nearby Urban District]**, I taught in a Catholic school.

So I feel like everybody, they didn't really treat me any differently, which was great, because you never know, depending on the area, depending on the parents, depending on the students, so that can be I didn't really see it any different. I mean, I always have questions of like kids in first grade, like, you know, they don't really see themselves as different, because they don't really know, as they get older, it's, you know, they notice some of the changes. But the biggest thing is like, they're like, I have a different color skin, you know, I have darker skin than you. And we talk about skin colors and how just because your skin color on the outside doesn't mean that you're different than everybody. Everyone's different and everybody is no one has the same color hair, no one has the same color skin. So I do go over that a lot. So my kids all feel equal, that there's not differences, which is I feel like more especially year it's not very diverse at the school. As the years have gone on, I feel like it's more diverse. I have a student now from that just moved from Russia, really doesn't speak any English or understand any English. So that's been, this is the first time I've had that. So that's changed for me, trying to navigate all of that, and not, you know, it's always the holidays, what's celebrated, what's not what's okay, what's not okay. So it's definitely a learning curve. I feel like some people, there's not everybody treats each other the same, and some people get away with a lot more depending on the teacher. I feel like, okay, it's not always the same. I find that my experience **[Nearby Urban District]**, I don't, I'm a little bit different. I don't think differently. So I don't, I treat everybody the same, all the kids the same. But I see a lot of that. Not the case. Does that answer to answer your question?

Interviewer: it does. Can you be a little bit more explicit, just so that, just so that I'm not intoning things incorrectly? Is it, is it white kids get away with more, or is it students of color get away with more?

The second. And I feel like I have seen that a lot of students, you know, African American students, they are treated differently than white students. I feel like they don't know how difficult it is and how different countries are from our country. So you have to know the background of a child first, and what they deal with at home, or what they dealt with there, you know, before they

moved to America. And it's just, you have to think about that. And not everybody does. So they treat people totally. No, it's and I think it also comes with it's not very diverse here. There's not many. I think it would be different if it was very more diverse. I feel like there's not that. I mean, all of the teachers here are white. There's so in your in my building, in my bed, I don't know outside of my school, there's many different schools in Edgewood, but it's whether it's a different race, it's not, I don't find that. It's very diverse, so I don't see that. Yeah. More, so, okay, yeah, sort of that's okay. Decisions come from the superintendent and the curriculum director and then the principal. So it stems down to, you know, administration. Then it goes down to each, you know, the curriculum director, and then it goes down to the principle of each school and how they want to change that. And you know what they see, what they believe in.
um, I have, like, so, especially and more so when I taught in **[Nearby Urban District]** here, I have heard, you know, maybe one student say, like, Oh, you don't have the same color as me. They're like, Yeah, I'm different so and they're like, Well, why do you have darker skin? And then, you know, some of the kids might not know and say, I have the same color skin because they don't see themselves different. But then some kids are like, well, this is how I was made. So, like, you can kind of tell, like, if parents kind of told them and kind of prep them for something like that to happen. Um, I, I haven't seen any of it be a problem in my class at all. Which is great, right? Yeah, I would say so. I mean, it's the parents are always invited to a number of events and activities in the school. I don't see them being different, treated differently because they're not wanted, or they're, you know, they're not giving a notice or anything. I don't, I haven't seen any examples of or not allowing or, you know, and maybe because I'm in the work rates, they don't know, I'm probably not being helpful at all. But no, so I thought, I mean, all kids learn differently, and I see a you know, behaviors are a lot different now than they used to be, and I can tell which parents parent and which parents don't parent. So it's kind of like trying to engage them, which is the most difficult thing. But listening to someone talk, so I have to find ways to, kind of, you know, change that and just find ways to keep them engaged, but not also on the computer and on the board all the time. So that's the most difficult thing. And I find that, you know, they're all different in it more so special education is, you know, they see my students see more of someone who is different based on their behavior and their IEP than on racial equality. Does that make sense, especially in first grade? It does, yes, yeah. So I see that more. So it is tough to try to find different ways of how kids learn and how to apply it to everybody. I wouldn't say now, like, I mean, this is, this is the first year that I've had a student, an African American that is on an IEP, very obvious, different color, if that makes sense. I don't know how to word it, yeah. In my class, this is my first in years, really, yes. So that's how it's it's not very diverse here at all. okay, so, like, more of, like, in, you know, in the center of town, you'll see that more so. But at **[this elementary school]**, it's, yeah, not as diverse, yeah, I think that a conversation that always comes up is when we have to, when we talk about Martin Luther King and what it's okay to talk about, and what is not okay to talk about, how involved you want to get. Like, I always talk about, you know, that Martin Luther King, you know, I won't get into it, but what he did, and why he's important, and back then what happened. But some of the videos and some of the talks are like, you know, they got gunned down, and he got a set like, it's like, right? So it's finding that like, line of what to stop talking about it and kind of answer questions. But some of the questions can be tough, you know? yes, yeah, exactly like we don't give I, in my opinion, I don't think that we have enough in the curriculum about racial equality, and I think there should be.

Interviewer: yeah, how do you think that would be received from other educators in your

building?
Not some, not good, just, I mean, okay, in the world now, there's so many different opinions, and it's not even racial equality. It's like what you teach and what you can't teach and what you should teach, and it's like, oh my gosh. It's like the opinions kind of get in the way of all of that. Yeah ,absolutely, yeah. which, like a lot of people, think what you don't know won't hurt you. And I don't believe in that. I believe that all kids should learn different things, and so they're not questioning it when they see it in the world. Does that make sense? And I don't feel like we teach enough about it, we talk about it enough.
Interviewer: just be really specific there, like white students should have more access to understanding about it, because if we don't teach them, then they don't know right?
Exactly, and they have Okay, that's what might cause stereotypes and racism, because they don't know so they see that as so different, and that's not okay if they're not taught it, in my opinion, yeah, Yeah, I think there's people are too nervous to talk about anything that's different, or anything that's not how the majority of the world, you know, like, how do I put it like in our school? You know, it's not. Our school is not diverse enough, so why teach it as much, you know, like that, right? Maybe what they're thinking, I don't know, but it's not. Yeah, yeah, we read a lot of multicultural books. But even you know, I do a holidays around the world, and how what holiday is celebrated in each you know, each country, and how it's different than our country, and how everybody celebrates different things, so it incorporates everything, rather than just what we celebrate. So yeah, think there needs to be more of that. I think teachers fear the community, I think the community more parents, if something comes like, not that different, that's, yeah, gosh, that's too much. And then we get backlash, and there was a situation in our school about that, and it's just so sad that it's like, you know, you. I believe there were books in in the library that parents felt that shouldn't be in the library and that they should be pulled.I think it was last year. All the year, the time flies, so I just never know. But yeah, I think it was last year. And yeah, and we had to all meet about it, and it got out, and it's like, Why does something so simple.

Note: Identifying details have been bracketed/bolded or removed to protect participant anonymity

APPENDIX K: DANIEL'S INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Interview #3 Daniel
October 29, 2024; 1:24 PM (40:16 minutes)

So I started. This is my fourth year in the district, but my eighth year teaching I've been this is my second year in the position that I'm in now. Nope, third, yes, third, third year you know, time just, you know, time it just, you know, blends itself together. I've taught middle school. I've taught elementary I've had a variety of different positions in a variety of different grade levels. Currently, right now, I'm the third grade special education teacher at **[this elementary]** School. I'm the co taught teacher where I spend part of my time in one room, and I spend another part of my day in another room, where I have a caseload of 14 students with a variety of different needs, such as like health or learning disabilities, and whether and they're all working on a variety of different things. Some have one subject area that they're working on. Some have multiple some have executive functioning skills, and then most of them have, like related service provider services, speech, OT, PT, etc. I also have a educational support professional. That's their new title, a para. So wherever I am, my para is in the other room, so they're all getting supported throughout the day. It's just a different person that's that's doing it. I have a really great team. I work with two general ed teachers, obviously, in the two rooms. And I also have my own time where I pull out students either for academic testing or academic services, whether that be math, reading, writing or anything else that they might need. And then also my part of my responsibility is writing IEPs and doing academic testing. Yeah, I think that covers it. I identify as Caucasian. Um, I can't say that. I've had many. I will. It was interesting when I thought about when I was looking at the questions, there was one situation where I was interviewing in a district, and I've and I've gone on several different interviews. So you know, most of the questions are pretty standard and similar, but there was one district in particular that gave me a question that I never heard of, and it was, how does your white privilege impact your teaching? Which threw me, to be quite honest, because I wasn't I wasn't expecting it, and it was right around the time when, like, the whole George Floyd situation happened. So I had a terrible answer because, like, I wasn't expecting that answer. And I think I said something along the lines of, like, golden rule, I treat everybody the way that they should be treated. I don't know if that was a great answer or not. Never got the position. I don't think it was because of that, but I was just like, I that was the first time I really, like thought about it, just because I was asked to that. And then I've also had, we do a lot in our district about students having a sense of like, belonging. Do they have somebody to go to? And I remember there was one situation last year where our administration at the school was trying to do an activity to learn about different students, cultures and where they they belong. And I remember there was, I um, there was a student that I had that their family wasn't in agreement with, which I thought was interesting. Um, where they didn't, can you tell me what that means? So they didn't want the student to participate, okay, okay, in that activity, which I thought was interesting, and nobody was forced to participate. But this student was of African American and interesting family dynamic and interesting family situation. He the grandparents, the grandmother and the aunt adopted this student, and they just didn't feel comfortable, I think, because they just didn't know what the students background was or if they felt comfortable sharing. And of course, my administration was like, of course, we're not going to make your grandchild participate in this activity. So that was, that was kind of an interesting because the majority, and I would say 99% of the students

that participated, it was literally putting stars on a map. Like, this is where, like, here was a map of like the world. Put a star like, as where, where your family is, and then we have, like, this big map to look at. But they seem to, like, enjoy it. And they kind of learned, you know, about, about their cultures. And we actually talk about that in our reading curriculum, there's a whole unit on like understanding cultures, and I think our school in particular does a nice job of making sure we all highlight different holidays that people celebrate, and making sure that all students do feel like they they're represented in some way. Obviously, I think we can all do better in all areas, but I think we're, we're moving towards the right direction, from what it seems, from what I understand, we there really wasn't that before, so we're kind of easing our way to that. I hope I answered your question. I mean, at the elementary level, I don't think we talk much about like race in particular, I think it's more about like other people celebrate certain holidays, or other people have different family traditions that you might not know about. Like, let's learn all about them. I know also we've like Martin Luther King will sometimes talk about that, and, you know, just like the history, and not give too much information, but more of just like this is why we have that holiday. Decisions are it's based on like, the individual teacher, to be honest. I think some teachers are comfortable talking about it. I think some are like, Oh, I don't want to get like backlash, which I, you know, I can kind of see that too, because you don't want to say the wrong thing or offend somebody. But I think if we did have administration kind of guidance, I think that would be helpful. I will say, I think there are times I don't think it happens every year. But I think our administrator, I think sends like, video like, oh twali is coming up. For example, here's some videos that you could play. Or our our school librarian, she'll give us certain like, like, here's like, a choice board of like, here's some different like, things that the kids can learn about about the Chinese New Year or, I think that's about it. I think we try to find that fine balance of what is something that like parents want to expose their children to and not kind of overstep, because they're still young, right? So we don't want to, like, we don't want to get into too much detail about Martin Luther King and how we got shot, right, especially, like, nine years old, right? So we don't want to, like, go too much into detail. And I also, I also taught kindergarten here too. And I think when I did that, I think it was very like baseline, and it was very much like everybody lived happily ever after, you know, because they're five, right? you know. So I think we're all trying to Yes, be inclusive and yes, talk about these things, but also figuring out where the line is, if that makes sense. I would say the majority, I would say, of teachers are more concerned about the parents. Perspective, I feel like, because we did have an issue, now that I'm thinking about it, we, my co teacher, played a video of Martin Luther King, and I'm blanking on what it was called, and that same student that I told you about the map activity went home and complained about it, and it was a video I think my co teacher showed, like, every year, and that was, like, the first time that she got a reaction. And the administration was like, oh, like, we totally. Like, no worries. Like, we totally but maybe we should to the teacher, yeah, but maybe we should, like, maybe not do that. Like, like, there was no like, disciplinary because I because I think it was, it definitely was age appropriate. So it wasn't like, it wasn't like this, like, violent, you know, whatever. But I think a lot of a lot of teachers, not just about race, but I think, like overall, are very nervous about parents reactions to things, just because I think their their opinion is more valued than ours. That's the wrong word. I mean more like, maybe like understood or like respected more than than ours. I think, I think our school is getting better at that, but I think there's still work to be done to fix that. Okay, great. I think, I think the only work that we've done is, curriculum based, like, just making sure that the curriculum we're using is diverse enough

where, you know, everybody's represented. And I think the the curriculum we use the same company for math and we use the same company for reading now, so I think that's pretty good.

However, our social studies is pretty outdated. But that's typical, because it's not MCAS tested like the same book I think we use. I think it's 20 years old. Is what I heard, 2004 where it talks about like the pilgrims, and because we talk a lot, it's our social studies curriculum was like the pilgrims, the Wampanoags, the Christopher Columbus like 1492 like all and again, we don't get too many details around all that. We don't show Pocahontas, but it's more of like, how did, how did our land start? And then we get into, like, our history of our town. So we do, like, a whole tour of the town. The kids dress up as colonial students. We go to the little red schoolhouse. They be like a colonial student for the day. They hate it because it's chalkboards and writing, and you can't sit right in the desks and they like, it's a great reaction. But getting back to your question, I feel like the curriculum that's like, there that like, we like the more recent curriculum that we've gotten, I think, is is good, and we really haven't had to really work around that. But I think once we start looking at the newer stuff, like, what's because we go on, like, a curriculum cycle, so, like, once, like, Okay, we've looked at this curriculum, now we're going to move on to this one. I think once we get there, I think there's going to be some more work to be done, and I think we're also still like getting back from COVID Also, so who knows when that's going to happen, but I think the newer curriculum we have, I feel like, is it a good place in terms of that? I know, like the two main people in our district who are like so we live, we have Assistant Superintendent right? Who, I think she does curriculum, maybe think so usually she's Caucasian, and then we do have like a K to six or K to five curriculum. Person, also Caucasian. I know there's a social studies curriculum person, I mean a curriculum group meeting. I don't know if there's anybody, but I don't think we have, because I'm just looking at, like, when we all get to get I'm sure you have that in your district, like the first day of school, and we all get together in this big, huge space, and then the superintendent talks to us, but we see everybody is my point, right? And I, I would say, excuse me, 92 ish percent of our staff, I would say, is, is white, yeah, so I doubt it, but I can't say, right? Oh yeah, for sure. I feel like, I feel like there's been such a we have to be careful always. And I don't think it's necessarily just tied to race. I think it's everything we do, everything we say. You know, like our kids, some of them, like, we just had a conversation about smart watches, because kids are wearing them and recording and whatever. So, like, we just put a stance like, nope. Those go in your locker. Never see them or that they're going the office, because that's, that's where we are in society. And I think, I think we're always trying to find that fine line of, again, like making sure, like, our job as teachers and educators is to educate, but also not overstepping. And I feel like that's something a lot of teachers, especially like the newer teachers, I think the more experienced, like, I've been doing this forever, I know I know what to say. I've been doing this for years, but I think us that are new, that are more cognizant and have kind of been told early on in their career. Like, you know, be careful. And, you know, here's like, make sure that you're including everybody. Because I find that, you know, the teachers that are newer, I feel like they've kind of, they already have that in their back pocket. Like, already, like, how can I make sure I'm including versus teachers who have been here for 2030, years, right? Who have, who don't necessarily have lived with that mindset are now like, oh my gosh, now I have to adjust everything that I've done. And how am I supposed to do that? And but, you know, we work together as a team, and we work together and we say, you know, we share resources, and you know, anything that we might, that might cause controversy, like we, I think some of us would be comfortable. I can't say all, but I think some of us will be

comfortably. Like, hey, administration, my idea. You know, we're talking about this. What are your thoughts? Yep, we have some administrators who in this building anyway, who have worked in diverse districts for years. I actually one of my administrators I used to talk with at another district, so that was kind of funny, that we kind of joined together, but we could bear like, where we were, where we came from, yeah and here, and how, like, the mindset is just very different, like, we joke how, like, Edgewood is 10 years behind. And I didn't think of that until somebody said that, because I was like, wow, you're right. And it's just, it's, it's interesting, and our school in particular, I don't know if you heard or not, but there was a whole book banning incident, yeah, because that that blew up, and that took some that that was very interesting. And I think eye opening for a lot of us, especially the people that were on that committee of you know, we have to, we have to really be careful. And I think, I think our school because, because I think the people that wanted it, wanted it to be there for the education purposes. And the other angle was, I don't want to upset families. So again, finding that fine balance. So again, I think a lot of it, I think has to come from like you live and you learn. I would say it's about the same. I think because there was, there was no repercussions from anybody, right from my vantage point, I don't think from my understanding. Yes, I think it's, I mean, I haven't looked in the library, yeah, for sure, but yeah, I believe there was a whole reverse decision, and they updated that policy recently, of like This, war players involved and and I will say I uh, administration, at least our building administrator, was very understanding of that whole situation. But I don't think what what came, what was unexpecting. I think, from that whole situation is the personal attacks, because there was from the public really like personal and from people who don't even go to our school. Just happened to hear about it, only saw this one piece, maybe not knowing the full picture, and was doing a lot of personal attacks, phone calls, where I believe constantly happening that our school secretaries dealt with, and I know that that was hard for people, rightly so. I mean, you've been teaching for this long, and now you're being told the most hurtful things that you that you would never imagine, just just trying to play that again, that happy medium of like, Yes, I see where you're coming from, but also, you Know, this needs to be taught or exposed to, yeah? So yeah. And I think I think our society, I think as a whole, has a lot to learn from everybody. And I think accepting that, I think, is the biggest challenge, yeah. No, I've never, no, I think it's so prominent everywhere that, like, how could you not know that there's an issue? I mean, look at our politics today. You know? I know it's like, right? It's like, yeah, I don't know how you could. I mean, I personally haven't. I'm not saying that it's happened, but I personally, in my, you know, four walls, have not seen that. too. Yeah, I don't really have I think what I can tell you, I think there's, I think our assistant superintendent, I think, is like the title nine person that I think that title has to do with any racial Yeah, civil rights. Sounds familiar, maybe, but I think that, I think anybody that would deal with that, I think would go to Administration, and then if administration felt like, Okay, this needed to be, I mean, we don't we at the elementary level, I feel like the kids anyway, they don't, they don't see race, I don't think at this age, even when I did elevator, I feel like everybody's just so accepting of everybody, like, not even just race, just like ability Under and we do, we do a lot of like, everybody gets what they need. Not everybody gets the same, yeah, so like everybody just gets what they need to be successful. Um, so we've created kind of a culture in our classrooms of like, everybody has their own strengths and weaknesses. Everybody gets what they need. Everybody's included. And these kids, I love this age in particular, because they're just starting to build responsibility. They're starting to do things more independently. I think as you get older,

that's when like the real, like social and like those you know, higher level concepts come in, and that's like, like, the bullying instances come from. Because I keep hearing every year like, oh, fourth and fifth grade, like, oh, like, the these kids like, I don't know what's happening, and I'm like, Oh, well, they didn't pick the third grade, so something's happening. And I'm not saying that's because of the teacher. I'm just saying they're growing up like, I know that, like, we have like, a whole new, like bullying like form that. And like, even, I think they're they, they just redid this. So if you go to our district website, there's like a whole like bullying tab where, like, parents can't, or anybody can, like, you know, put in a report of somebody being bullied. I'm assuming, if it had to do with race, I'm assuming they would include that, but I don't think there's like, a separate racial discrimination. I'm also wondering, too. I'm wondering if, like, HR, right, something, but that I'm not sure, but it's interesting because we, I know, when I first started in the district, we had, we had, you know, like the PD days, like, we have, like, a, I want to say guest speaker, but I don't know if that's the right word, but like a presenter, yeah, the keynote sort of, yeah, thank you. That's the word I was thinking of. It's late on a school night, and I believe we had maybe two that I can think of, and I can't remember if it was more like, if it was race, or if it was like, student achievement, um, I mean, we have this, like, four pillar thing with that they like, push down our throat, which is, like, meeting all students and deeper learning and community engagement. I'm messing up the order and budget. I think money, I think, is the last one. It's more formal. but, but, and that's based on that, don't tell the district that I didn't mess up, because I feel like they give us a whole like video on like, here's the four pillars the quiz. I know the first two are right, the other two anyway. So that's been really like the district's focus, which I think has been nice, but I think, and I in the first pillar, we've been focusing on like, like students fill out a survey about, like, do they have friends at school? Who can they tell good news to that everybody takes but there's and like, and then like during our PD day, which is what I think we're going to do on election day, is dive into that data and kind of look at like, what are some trends I don't think. And the reason why I'm bringing this up is because I don't think, I don't think they use race as like I wonder why this kid answered the way they did. And I'm wondering if that is something. But then again, I'm not sure if there are anything I'm not sure if we have enough students that right. Data, facts, our school has a very small population of students of color. sure. I should know the answer that I know I should, but I don't. I mean, I can tell you, I think I've only had maybe one or two in each class that I've had, yeah, so, so it is. But, you know, I'm wondering if that's maybe something, but I but I really feel like at least at the district level, any instance of bullying. And I know this is also true, because the laws are changing in terms of that, like, what we can do, but I find that they've really put an emphasis on, like, let's nip it in the bud. Now, before it gets to this big explosion of like, now, this kid's really getting, you know, without any repercussions whatsoever. And then I don't know if maybe I know they so our district, our superintendent, sends out like a weekly bi weekly depends on the month, kind of like a here's a shout out thing. I don't know if they want to include anything about that. I know also too down. I'm just thinking of it. When we had all the new ELS come, there was a lot of because I think we were an emergency site or something. That sounds right, but don't quote me on that. I think we were, like, there was a lot of kids coming to us, yeah. And there was a lot at the beginning about, and I think it was more directed towards the teachers that had those students, but I don't think there was many much about like, why don't we share this with everybody, regardless of like, we got like, an MOU, about Like, translations, okay, um, MOU, something with the union memorandum of understanding. Like, it updated, like, yeah, contractual, I don't know It's fancy, um, where, you know, basically, like, we're not responsible for anything school wide that needs

to be translated, like, we'll take care of that. And, like, here's what you can do on the report card, but not really much from what I remember. Like, how do we like, if I'm in the cafeteria, right? Because we all have lunch duty. We all have recess duty, our favorite parts of the day, really. What do we do with those students? How do we best, versus and we have a fabulous el teacher, but again, she only works with the kid the classrooms that her students are in instead of so no, that's okay. So I'm wondering too if, like, maybe like the EL department. I don't know if that really falls under that, but it just that's something that I'm thinking of, like maybe they send out, like, how do we best support those issues and in the language piece as well.

Note: Identifying details have been bracketed/bolded or removed to protect participant anonymity

APPENDIX L: ARIA'S INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Interview #5 Aria
Date: 10/30/2024
Duration: 30 minutes

Okay, so my name is "Aria". First name is "Aria", and last name is **[Redacted]**. I am in Edgewood Middle School. This is my fourth year, and I work as a para professional with special needs kids, which include a social, emotional kind of need, where I support kids in inclusive program with other kids. So basically, I help them with the subject, understanding the direction and if they are able to follow the technological aspect of it, like the software which we are using, using and during we have our exclusive study for the 19 kids under this year. So we help them during our study to get homework so they can be less stressed out sometime when they are emotionally ready to talk about it, so they come and open with us about their problem, and then, basically, we call counselor and then see if we can help them.
So personally, like when I came here, I was like, Wow, I'm in the another. I still remember the first day when I landed in New York. That was 29th June, 2008 and I was like, oh, no, where I am. Slowly I started learning about it, and I would have felt it's like, it's not like they identify people racially as that complex and or color of the skin. It's the accent, it's the way we dressed up, it's the way we go to the shopping mall and all. And it was really little tough for me when I came to school in terms of, like, professional setting, I felt like it open about it personally, it's like, open well, like, it's like, they don't talking about it openly, that is racial discrimination. What I started feeling, too. So as an adult, sometimes, some kids mock at my accent, too. So not necessarily. Racial Discrimination is just a complex. It can be anything what I felt in America. So because America is totally so I feel the racial theme is not just connected anymore to complex and of color. It's beyond that in personal and professional settings.
So learning definitely yes, I see, and I think it's somehow related to their home setting, also in terms of economic beliefs. Mainly, I think the money of economic are playing a bigger role because I see that it's not like always there, like, it's also different from how long they are here, what changes and they are here. Because last year I have a student who was very, very good. He I like, I was, I was observing him from whole like academic year. And I was like wondering why they he did not got the student of the month. It was the last day of the school he got and some of the other kids not the same racial background, they asked me, Miss "Aria", why he is such a good student. He is very good in football, maybe one day stayed. His two sisters are in Harvard. Their parents are doctors. Himself is so brilliant, and I didn't have any I know what's going on, so I said, I really don't know what's going on, but maybe take something to upset the teacher. Maybe some thing happened in the class, or some detention. That's how my answer, but deep in my heart, yeah, sometimes it's not just the children. It's also just the people based on it.
Yes, yes, every year, like the team, which I work, is basically because I go frequently every day. So, so they started like, I see, like, there is like, kind of things written all over in the class. Everyone are welcome. Everyone belongs here. And then some of the social study teacher are taking the great initiative, like they are mixing the people sitting together, not just the complex and oration, gender equity, everything. So that's the second, and the third, they started talking more about Martin Luther King, and even if it's like little bit tough for the grade, which I'm working, the teacher tried to explain why it's necessary to talk, sometimes uncomfortable conversation. And I feel it's really necessary everywhere, not in this school everywhere in all

around the America world, to talk about the uncomfortable conversation, because as long as we are keeping quiet, that means we are not learning about it. Personally, I believe every cricket go to different country, like nearest country, Mexico, Canada, everywhere to learn. And even I believe there is no test based on, as I said, the complex. And there can be two people the same complex. I mean, they can hold the racial discrimination against each other, and then it's come, like economy, like how strong economically you are, what you can empower something so that also plays a role. It's just not the opposite complex one is like talking about it not like closing conversation. On the comfortable note, let it open. The conversation should be open, not just in the classroom. So I think the education educators should talk to kids in such a way that they should offend. They should be open minded about it, whatever complex and gender they belong. And they should go back to home and talk to their elders.

I will tell my personal experience. I have a nine years old daughter, and you can see my skin color. So when she came here, she came back from school after two weeks, and she started talking like, how some people are not like playing with her. Why we are born? Did you forget to put the sunscreen when I was like, No, that's how we are. We come from a different client, flying from mom's perspective. Yeah, it was tough for me to explain a six year old kids. So that's how they rotate it. It's like, not like, only the middle of high school. It's from the beginning. What seed you are putting? I personally felt some of the kids, it's come from, not just the school is paying. School is like trying to neutralize it, because it's their job, but it's coming from the parents, grandparents, when I came first time in America, and I came here, and then I went for the Whale Watch and yeah. And I was, like, tired of standing, so I there was a seat, and I knew there was, like, lot of people were sitting. There was an empty seat, and there was a bag beside it, so I didn't ask anyone, because, and then I sat there. Lady came from different, you know, and she thought I'm a thief because she thought I was taking her bag and she was so rude to me. All people noticed, but nobody came forward to talk, and I said,I'm an immigrant with a different background. The personal experience, professionally,it's never that tells you in your face, sometimes they connect you the way they share the information is knowledge, yeah, so whom you say to what it is you say that's also comes under the term.

So in general experience, yeah, it's so far good. So very fine. Here I was very new newbie, and I was supposed to work with a different set, but after two weeks, I got pulled from that class, saying that there was a kid who was born after, if I can leave him, yeah, and he was Afro kids. He was high demand, honorable. I wasn't supposed to work in that class setting, but then I was put into that. I was new. I didn't know any rules. And after that, all my colleagues were nice, except one, she was constantly on me because I was doing my job without asking any question to management, because management already spoke to me that we need you, and I was getting along with that kid, yeah, one, so I hadn't had any problem with working with other but just that. So I had to talk to the concerned person of the seven. They removed me from that race, and then they put me to place where I am from four years. So that time I felt would have done to the other people, because I was still talking to the sum of the adult in this building, and they say, you don’t, you know, people don’t do racial discrimination like old fashioned way. So welcome to the new discrimination. So you have to do and I was so scared because I was new as an adult. Yeah, I don't know how you put it, but I felt sometime I go to the classes when teachers are not substitute, I felt the people from the different racial background, and they come to substitute the kids don’t respect them. So like white substitutes get more like kinds of kids to listen to them. yeah, getting more like, kind of like kids listen to them. That's my personal experience. Yeah, when we go, they're like, trying not to listen. And teachers are aware of like we write things and

they talk to those people. Like, but person was very, very good to me, and she said sorry, or he said sorry, and they said we were not aware of that. We were doing really good job. I was getting appreciation in terms of work and everything. But that's the question I asked myself. They would have done it knowingly, if they will be a white person as a as a woman of color. Do you feel here in your school that your knowledge, your experience, is uplifted and valued, or is it not really taken into a lot of consideration? Or how do you feel like when it comes to it's depends who I'm working first thing there are some adult who doesn't care how much educated are you? They think something like that. But then there are people who realize,what's my educational background so one day somebody asked, because I was going through some kind of things, and they asked, Why you work here? Why don't you get a job outside? Because I don't work here for my first day, somebody asked me, What did you study? A study back in India? And I said, I said, because it's an easy job, it's my personal choice. Why I want to so, yes, they judge. They're not just based on her. It's what education. So again, I see some substitute white people who come from college and they don't do anything in the time because they're not supposed to. They're substitute. They're just there to control. It's not like they are blaming on them, yeah. But kids reaction are different to them. They scared of them. They don't they don't care about the consequences. When we care being a people of color, a minority, that if I do, if I'll be strict on kids, they will go and complain to other teachers.

Interviewer: But when you say that you're afraid that they're going to complain. Are you afraid of your administration's response or about parents response?
Sometimes parents and sometimes I feel everyone reacts differently when they explain the things. So that's the one fear that I always have so just in case. I try to play very normal. That's the one fear I always had, and I have other people who are from my country, so I constantly see my audience, my friend, and they have the same fear, yeah, and they have the same kind of problem that how they get disrespected.

Interviewer: Has the school done professional development around racial equity?
Yes, every time they do like they are doing, so do you again in this school, I had a student who was a person of color, because, you know, the kids had different mindset, and she was telling me the mean things about myself and all. So couple of time I did what she was also the people of color, yeah, it was like, I don't know what she was going through back home…who was raising her, right? met the people concerned here, and I said, so they immediately didn't and they said, sorry. But then I felt like, oh, yeah, but what he wanted on that thing the administration here, the administration became more aware about it, and they said, please keep us posted anytime, like that. So that was the first time I felt like, backed up by the people, yeah, that was a good and they do it professional development, time to try and get the car, but not much I would like to hear like that. Thought, like English conversation, you don't have to be like good stuff. We are equal, why we know why we are not equal, and if we are not equal, that's okay. You don't have to be like, equal, yeah. That should be.

Yeah, kids try to talk about it, but I feel the class is just for 45 minutes, and we, or educators, have to finish the curriculum also, so sometimes we are bound to end that conversation, or maybe the teachers call students after the class one thing, yeah, like times have the people call grade wise to talk about discipline. They can include this topic also. I feel like, you know, like as a sixth grader or seventh grader, eighth grade, every year, the people call in the gym and they

talk about what they should or they should not do in terms of how to use their technology. I feel this topic can be also included. every year, like when I joined, there was very less students, including the work. Now I see it in prison, so it's interesting. Like when they, I think a year back, I don't remember when they posted some kind of job, I think they are prefer more color, because now people from all over the place are coming to Edgewood, this place, so they wanted to hire more people. Can get more students confidence also, okay, people, because when I came here, there were just two photos. So I also feel comfortable. I feel like people are paying attention, and tht's just from the hiring practices and lots of kids, people like kids of color, they are coming more and more. They are coming more. And I think one reason also they started hiding more.

Interviewer: Do you think white teachers feel safe having conversations about race?
The teacher, yes, he is. He's very open minded, or he is very open minded. I work the teachers, but basically the social studies teacher, she is, I don't know that's social studies. Her subject, lke, its not. In science, so sometimes that is doing giving up class, because today I I was trying to help, a bunch of they were calling me again and again to her, and I was trying to help, but then they were making fun of me, and I got so irritated. And I said, if you need help, will not do anything. So, I told it so loud that everyone listened, because I was so irritated, everybody kept quite, including the adult, the other adult, person to person. It's not like the school or workforce or administration or anybody. It's different how they want to pursue this conversation. Some people, if sometimes in class, some teachers like, I'm sorry, some people, just, but it was and I go and talk to principal person. There was several incidents happen, and I was like letting it go, because I was newbie. I was expecting myself, I was learning, but now I know where to go, how to tell good. Um, So first year I didn't have this, it's not more than the reason, and I feel it's something to do with what's going around the world. People are coming from different that the immigration thing is going on, I think this will also include the people who different way, I don't know. So, yeah, I see more and more people coming, not equal still, it's less compared to last year. It's increasing, and I think it's socioeconomic conditions, right? People are suffering. It's something to do with the social skills of the kids I have. It is tough for him to understand all the services. I started working with him, really, because I know how double whammy for him, different country, and he's very sweet kid. So I told the teacher, don't worry about him. Though I shouldn't be but I pull him from my group so I can help him exhale, and he's doing excellent. Teachers also recognize his ability and all the teachers really supporting that particular one for one hour.
I think, rather than the people who are people of color, people who are white. They need to talk. know what struggle, what we have to cross, and where we are going, right? But I think the other people needs to understand our flight. I said, just understand, not conversation. They should come back. They should take right next level, where they people, those who are from different background, other than us, can about the society. You ever, I think it's my personal if I'm from India, the people from the other country, Africa or immigrant, they always talk about it, not the people who are not from that second or third world So if we are talking in our and raising our we need this. It's not gonna work. So I think it's the district should include more white people, not as it's kind of, I feel they aggregate, they put in yourself. That's not gonna work. We are not the policymakers. Yeah, look at the upper management. Who are people? Those people? They're white people, right? That should come from there, so the corrections start from the top, not from the top. Right. Hi, the gender equality, education, know one particular incident my daughter, we are in this district, but not Middle School, yeah, some of my friends, those are from India. It's our

like Indian House meeting when we meet each other, how, getting food from home because they make fun of our food how they smell, and they started feeling it something. I take a discomfort. I eat my food. Of course, it's a smell. If somebody is eating meat, that's also smell. It's true, but we took it for granted that that is superior. You know, that's also like they have to tell the thing. When I was going into with some kids, some of the kids from my country, they were eating in a such kind of where you cannot see their teeth. So they were hiding in, like in a glass the rice and the curry, yeah, so they don't have to which I come from, our self fight between North and South, because South people are more food habits. Basis it's a fair from the background. You can't fly from India. Other people come from India, but maybe they say public condition is more better than me. There will be this person. In India, yes. So in India, it's a very interesting story about the fairness. There is a particular loss in North. So in the south, when they did a research. It's more, you know, the outcome of that? Yeah,they saw more, the in India there is a caste system, yeah. So how I put the research in when they talk about the caste system in India, I don't get embarrassed, because the only sentence I say wherever you go in the world.

Note: Identifying details have been bracketed/bolded or removed to protect participant anonymity