

Spring 6-11-2022

The Illusion of Progress: The Disconnect Between the Anti-Racist Values Professed in Teacher Education Programs and the White Curriculum That Negatively Impact Students of Color

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DePaul University
College of Education

THE ILLUSION OF PROGRESS: THE DISCONNECT BETWEEN
THE ANTI-RACIST VALUES PROFESSED IN TEACHER EDUCATION
PROGRAMS AND THE WHITE CURRICULUM THAT
NEGATIVELY IMPACT STUDENTS OF COLOR

A Capstone in Education with a Concentration in Educational Leadership
By Adrienne Kay Carmona

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education
June 2022

I approve the capstone of Adrienne Kay Carmona

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Obelleiro', with a large, sweeping flourish above the letters.

5/6/2022

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Date

Certification of Authorship

I certify that I am the sole author of this capstone. Any assistance received in the preparation of this capstone has been acknowledged and disclosed within it. Any sources utilized, including the use of data, ideas, and words, those quoted directly or paraphrased, have been cited. I certify that I have prepared this capstone according to program guidelines as directed.

Author Signature Adrienne Kay Cannon

Date 4/27/22

Executive Summary

Research suggests that anti-racist teaching is the solution in classrooms to give students the ability to understand the origins of racism and to give them the ability to disrupt White Supremacy culture; however, there is a limited number of studies that look at anti-racist teaching in the classroom. The obstacle and challenge is how to implement an anti-racist curriculum into the secondary education classroom. With high demands from administration, teachers have struggled to successfully reach all students of color.

This purpose of this study is to investigate the connection between anti-racist training for pre-service teachers and the effectiveness of implementing an anti-racist curriculum in the secondary education classroom. This study investigates what can be done in pre- and in-service teacher training to help implement an anti-racist curriculum in the classroom and answer why anti-racist work does not happen more often.

The results of this qualitative study design and drawing on elements of phenomenology indicated that first-year teachers did not know what anti-racist teaching is and do not know how to implement anti-racist strategies in the classroom; however, participants felt the need to disrupt White Supremacy culture. I interviewed six first-year teachers: identifying as three male and three females. All participants had no more than three years of teaching experience. For each interview, I used questioning techniques to better understand each participant's background information, their teaching experience, and discovered if they used anti-racist teaching in their own classroom.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this Capstone Research Project to my husband, Steve Koras. Thank you for your love, support, and encouragement throughout the years. Thank you for believing in me through this stressful yet, rewarding journey. Thank you for being my constant source of support.

I also dedicate this to my parents: Alfredo and Sandra Carmona. Thank you for always loving me unconditionally and for your good examples. Thank you for teaching me to work hard for all the things I aspire to achieve. Without both of you, I would not be here today pursuing my dream of finishing my doctorate.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DePaul University, College of Education: Thank you for the opportunities and the expectation of excellence.

The Educational Leadership (Ed.D) doctoral program professors: Thank you for inspiring me to be the best student. With the plethora of knowledge and pedagogic practices, I know there is so much more that can be done in education. I will never forget how my educational journey began here at DePaul University through the master's program and how my educational journey has grown throughout this doctoral program.

A big, big, thank you to my chair: **Dr. Joseph Gardner.** Thank you for guiding me throughout this process and keeping me on track. Your endless words of inspiration, your insight, your feedback, and your guidance, has truly helped me get where I am today.

Lastly, another big thank you to: **Dr. Gonzalo Obelleiro.** Thank you for stepping in and helping me cross the finish line.

Introduction

As an educator, I have witnessed classrooms becoming more racially and ethnically diverse. Educational practices are not evolving quickly enough to keep pace with diverse classrooms. In addition, I have observed many first-year teachers feeling unprepared in addressing controversial topics about race, beliefs, and culture. There is a need to prepare teachers to have these conversations, and one approach to respond to this need is: anti-racist teaching.

Through my own personal experience as a pre-service teacher and an in-service teacher, I believe that pre-service teachers must receive effective anti-racist training, resources, and tools, so that when they become professionals in the field, they can have the opportunity to help students understand the complex beauty of diversity.

This study targets first-year teachers. The purpose of this study is to investigate the connection between anti-racist training for pre-service teachers and the effectiveness of implementing an anti-racist curriculum in the secondary education classroom where teachers will not be afraid to address controversial topics about race, beliefs, and culture- particularly focusing on how first-year teachers perceive and experience these connections.

As a result of this study, I want to help enhance all instruction for teachers and students to not be afraid to address controversial topics featured in an anti-racist curriculum.

“Asian parents push their kids to do well in schools.”
“Blacks don’t learn as well as White people.”
“Why are we favoring a certain group, but not others?”
“Since Hispanic parents don't value education, why bother tailoring instruction to meet their needs when they [Hispanic parents] don't care?”
“You can't know all students, so just teach the subject.”
Pre-service teachers: cited in Dr. Grace Cho, 2006

Problem Statement

Referring to Dr. Grace’s quote from an address to pre-service teachers, it portrays the prejudices that many pre-service teachers have among students. These racial biases still linger in education. Teachers are not always intentional about their actions, but these biases can unconsciously affect their thoughts and behaviors. Deeply embedded in American society, racism still negatively affects the teacher-student relationship (Carter, 1992).

Part of the problem is that teachers come into the classroom without being fully prepared to teach students of color. Throughout the history of U.S. public schooling, minorities have struggled to be treated as equals to their white and majority peers in the classroom (Spring, 2001; Au, et. al., 2016) and racial inequities continue to linger in American society (Bonilla-Silva, 2003). The historical inequity is maintained through public institutions (Bonilla-Silva, 2003, p. 26) and U.S. schools have arguably maintained a “White Supremacy Culture,” where white people believe their ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions are superior to those people of color (Okun, 1999).

Brown and Brown (2010) argue that the contemporary curriculum has many instances of White Supremacy and is overlooked and allowed to continue in U.S. schools. Ladson-Billing and Tate (1995) state that white supremacy has been a pervasive influence in U.S. schools. Even though U.S. public schools are formally committed to the promotion of equality in practice, this is not always the case. Anti-racist work examines the issues of power and equality while helping teachers and students recognize stereotypes and prejudice. There is a need for dismantling structures of institutionalized racism and anti-racist work is one way of approaching the problem. Anti-racist work is a solution to examine issues of power and equality while helping teachers and students recognize stereotypes and prejudice. I believe that it is necessary for pre-service teachers to have anti-racist training to be able to implement an anti-racist curriculum as in-service teachers. Through anti-racist work, educators can help dismantle racist beliefs and can also help students develop a respect for differences and help their self-esteem (Cheng and Soudack, 1994).

The topic of discussing institutionalized racism and its effect on students of color has been avoided in the history of US public schools (DiAngelo, 2018; Picower, 2021). Much of this avoidance is due to uncomfortable feelings and reactions brought about by racial discourse in the classroom. At the pre-service level, professors must guide and support the tough conversations among pre-service teachers to help cultivate their cultural competence and application of an anti-racist curriculum into the secondary education classroom (Pollock, 2004).

Moving forward, it is important to highlight the past and the present events that profoundly affected education that people of color received in US schools. There is still a relative absence of discussing race in the classroom and an absence of anti-racist teaching in the classroom. The literature review will examine the history of racial silence and more recent attempts to address race in US schools as well as findings from research into the effects of anti-racist teaching.

Purpose Statement

The lack of diverse representation in school curriculums presents a developmental challenge for students as they seek to establish their identity and sense of self. This is particularly true for students of color. White authors are still heavily overrepresented in curriculums, regardless of student demographics. Research has also shown that students engage and achieve at a higher level is when curriculum connects to their own identity and experiences (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). To dismantle white supremacy culture, anti-racist work is needed. White supremacy culture dehumanizes people and shuts down learning. One way to do this is to work towards being anti-racist educators and build an anti-racist curriculum (Truss, 2019).

This study explores the connection between anti-racist training for pre-service teachers and the effectiveness of implementing an anti-racist curriculum in the secondary classroom and what can be done through the perspective of first-year teachers. Because strategies and pedagogies of anti-racist teaching can help students of color, I would like my primary research question to focus on:

- How can we make anti-racist teaching and pedagogy happen more regularly, more dependably, more systematically?

Teaching tolerance and acceptance in the classroom takes significant skill. It is important that teachers not only be able to teach content and implement lessons to meet the academic needs of students, but teachers also need to be prepared to have tough conversations about race, beliefs, and culture with their students (Scharf, 2018). Pre-service and in-service teachers must be equipped to meet the academic and external challenges from students of various backgrounds. The conversation between pre-service and in-service teachers must be constantly relevant to address the problems for students of color. Teachers are an essential part in helping all students feel welcomed, acknowledged, and engaged in the classroom. Teachers play an important role in students' lives by engaging them academically by making sure students are represented in the curriculum. The issues of race represent significant aspects of student's lives. For teachers to play the important role of making sure students feel represented, they need to be prepared to have difficult conversations with students, especially about race. So, how can we promote such conversations? How do we address the stereotypical and prejudicial behavior that students and educators engage in, and which prevents these conversations? Is it parents or guardians who are responsible for how their children are raised? Do we hold teachers and administrators accountable for not addressing the topic of race in the classroom? How do we change the current situation in classrooms in schools? If the tough conversations about race happened, would these conversations potentially help students understand and learn the beauty of diversity?

Background of Researcher

People of color are still finding ways to fit into dominant society, and I experienced this growing up. I spent most of my elementary years in a white suburban environment, and I was treated differently because I was of “color.” I remember vividly when I was 12 years old walking into Mrs. V’s class. It was finally my last year attending private school. This experience was different and still, to this day, it is instilled in my mind. I clearly remember that I had a gut-wrenching feeling in my stomach when I was judged so harshly, and I was labeled as a “minority.” I remember feeling uncomfortable among my peers because that’s when I was pointed out that I was of color among my white classmates. With the label, I learned what it meant. It never had a positive connotation to it, but rather a negative one. It was an idea that I was not familiar with, nor was the word a part of my vocabulary. It was not a feeling that I was used to. I felt judged and seen as deficient in so many ways. I was seen as the one who needed extra help. I was seen as the one who needed to have extra work given to because I just did not get it. I was seen as the one who did not deserve to be treated like everybody else. But I just did not understand why judgement was so harsh. Right there and then, I reflected on all my teachers from pre-school to sixth grade, and I realized that every single teacher of mine was a female, “white,” mono-lingual, and middle class.

Comparing my sixth-grade experience to what I have observed in the workplace now, most of my colleagues are also female, “white,” mono-lingual, and middle class (U.S. Department of Education. Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). Even though my experience of having “white” teachers in the classroom and what I have observed in the workplace are twenty years apart, things still have not changed enough. Research still shows that educators, teachers, and administrators, are still predominately “white;” whereas students of color face the pressure of not sharing the same racial background of educators (Landsman & Lewis, 2006).

Definition of Key Terms

Race:

Race is a social construct that artificially divides people into distinct groups based on certain characteristics such as physical appearance, particularly through skin color (Wijeysinghem, Griffin, & Love, 1997, p. 88).

Biological anthropologist Alan Goodman states that racial categories are not biological realities, but social constructs (Goodman, 1997, p. 5). The social constructs of race are reinforced across society: in school, textbooks, political speeches, movies, advertising, and words and phrases (DiAngelo, 2018, p. 21). As a result, the construct of race becomes hardwired into our brains (Goodman, 1997; DiAngelo, 2018).

Racism:

Racism is any prejudice against someone because of their race (Oluo, 2019, p. 26). Society categorizes individuals based on their physical qualities, specifically skin color, and social qualities, categorizing an individual into a specific “race.” Racism is a systemic issue that is so prevalent and has become normalized in society. The normalization of racism in society is embedded across generations that is not even recognized as racism by the public. But the most powerful and damaging effect, though, is the acceptance of systemic racism. Racism involves systemic failure of people and institutions to care for students of color (Nieto, 1994, p. 29).

One component of racism is the systemic subordination of targeted racial groups who have little power. Blacks, Latinos/-as, Native Americans, and Asians are targeted racial groups (Wijeysinghe, C. L., Griffin, P., and Love, B., 1997, p. 88-89).

Racism is a loaded word that has been embedded in our society and continues today as it functions as a means of dividing lower classes. It effectively weakens the individual and collective socio-economic powers. As a result, Black and Brown citizens are getting less than their “White” counterparts (Oluo, 2019, p. 13).

Americans have falsely seen racism as isolated acts of individual prejudice, but racism is the domination and subordination between social groups who are superior and inferior (Gillborn, 1995).

Anti-Racism:

Anti-Racism is defined as the approach to combat racism and focused on creating equal opportunity and to produce equitable outcomes for racially marginalized groups (Kailin, 2002). Antiracism is the constant struggle to move towards greater equality (Gillborn, 1995, p. 246).

Antiracism challenges racism and the power of whites to gain, even unwittingly, from the exclusion and oppression of other people (Gillborn, 1995, p. 249).

Pre-Service Teachers:

Pre-service teachers are defined as those who are enrolled in a teacher preparation program.

In-Service Teachers:

In-service teachers are certified and licensed teachers. This study focuses on in-service teachers in the secondary education classrooms.

White Supremacy Culture:

The ideology that white people and the ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions of white people are superior to People of Color (Okun, 1999).

Literature Review

There is a long and sad history about race in America, and it is far from over. The word “white” has evolved over time along with the words: “race” and “racism.” Going back to 1776, the Declaration of Independence included the famous line, “All Men are Created Equal,” but equality is not a doctrine that has been aligned with the foundation of the United States. “All” is defined and seen as an entirety, but not “all” people have been treated as equal. The United States was born as a racially divided nation. Then and now, people of color continue to be denied of equal rights.

Former teacher-educator and nationally known expert on diversity, equity, and inclusion training, Robin DiAngelo begins her book, *White Fragility*, by pointing out that the United States began with the attempted genocide of indigenous people and the theft of their land. It is important to understand the history of the United States and how the concept of “race” began as an ideology that was reinforced throughout society. American wealth was built on the labor of kidnapped and enslaved Africans and their theft of land and resources from Native Americans (DiAngelo, 2018, p. xiii). By no means was the United States founded only by “white men.” Before European explorers arrived, America was home to millions of Native Americans. European colonizers killed many Native Americans and removed them from their ancestral lands. Even though the history of the United States does not portray European colonizers taking land away from Native Americans, it still affects the United States today and people of color.

Race-Related Supreme Court Decisions:

The history of race and racism in education has been controversial, especially at the Supreme Court level. There were many court cases that affected American education, but these two cases in particular highlight the inequities of public education.

Briggs v. Elliott (1950)

Harry Briggs, one of twenty parents, brought a lawsuit against R.W. Elliott, the president of the school board in Clarendon County, South Carolina, challenging school segregation and fought for equal educational opportunities. At the time, taxpayers were spending \$179 to educate each white student and spending \$43 for each black student (Brinson, 2021). It was clear that schools were segregated, but through this data, it was clear that education was not equal. This was the first case in the twentieth century to challenge the constitutionality of racially segregated schools. The court ruled that schools be “equal,” but ignored the concept of “segregation.”

Brown v. Board (1954)

During the 1950s, the struggle for educational opportunity reached a climax (Leiding, 2006, p. 53). Another court case was brought to light: *Brown v. Board of Education*. In the historical 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, the U.S. Supreme Court rejected the

doctrine, “separate, but equal,” that led to segregated schools across the United States. (*Brown v. Bd. Of Educ. Of Topeka*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954)). This was a turning point in education that was supposed to give all children the opportunity for an equal education; however, 66 years later, education still is not “equal.” The intent of this historical event was focused on eliminating racial inequality and to create more racial equality in schools, but *Brown* failed in eliminating that. Zirkel and Cantor (2004) claimed that *Brown v. Board* only ended legal racial segregation, but the case did not emphasize or create equal education.

To improve educational equity, there needs to be an effort to reduce racial and ethnic stigma (Zirkel & Cantor, 2004). Researchers argued that racial stigmas impede academic performance, shape classroom climate and student-teacher relationships, and heavily influence student identity (Zirkel & Cantor, 2004). Furthermore, Zirkel and Cantor (2004) claimed that *Brown v. Board* could not do the heavy lifting to transform a racially divided nation into a harmonious one, and it could not address longstanding patterns of housing segregation or ethnically based economic disparities. In addition, *Brown v. Board* could not create effective multicultural learning environments and it could not end racial stigma.

With the benefit of hindsight, it becomes clearer that although there were many positive consequences of the *Brown* decision, there were also many negative consequences from *Brown v. Board* in 1954. Both *Briggs* and *Brown* court cases signaled a turning point in educational history, but the fight for equal education was far from over. The quality of education and how teachers perceive students of color is still a fight today.

Even though both court cases made history, we can no longer ignore the psychological implications of racism and discrimination that still happen. The court cases brought hope to students of color and hope to bring racial integration into schools, but today, there still needs to be more effort by teachers, schools, and districts to reduce the stigma and improve educational outcomes for students of color. As Zirkel & Cantor (2004) state, there needs to be more strategies for reducing stigma that include anti-racist pedagogical practices and techniques to encourage positive inter-ethnic relationships between students. For teachers to teach their students about anti-racist pedagogy, it needs to begin with training pre-service teachers.

Racial Inequities

The historical court case from *Briggs v. Elliott* (1950) and *Brown v. Board* (1954) were more than sixty years ago, but racial incidents continue to happen in public high schools. Racial inequities exist and have existed for a long time. These racial inequities have directly impacted teacher and student relationships and in turn, impacts students experience and success in school. Looking back on the year of 2020, it was a disdain for Black life. Anti-Blackness and racism showed up everywhere and even reached the most sacred spaces of American democracy: schools (Love, IX, 2021).

Everyone in society has experienced prejudice, and it stems from particular people and through society. Society has built these stigmas, biases, and prejudices that show up in what is being taught (Zirkel and Cantor, 2004). But there is little attention to the ongoing daily injustice that students of color experience. How students are taught influences their judgement and mindset. Many students spend their time at school and year after year, the school curriculum does not reflect them, their families, or their communities. Love (2021) argues that one way to erase students of color is through curriculum (Love, X).

Racial inequalities have continued to linger in American society (Bonilla-Silva, 2003). People of color face so many barriers and there needs to be a way to change how people view them. Racial inequalities are driven and maintained by the public and put communities of color at a disadvantage. As Mica Pollock (2004), director of research on educational equity, assessment, and teaching excellence mentions that society has built systems of inequality around race categories, but on the other side, society has also built identities, friendships, and marriages around them, but racial inequality continues to be a problem in society.

According to the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, Black students are less likely than white students to have college-ready courses. Back in 2011-2012, only 57 percent of black students had full access to math and science courses compared to Asian Americans at 81 percent and 71 percent of white students. In addition, Black and Latino students have less access to gifted and talented education programs than white students. Black students are often in schools with less qualified teachers and research has shown that systemic bias in teacher expectation for Black students were found that teachers have lower expectations for them versus non-black students (United Negro College Fund).

Zirkel and Cantor (2004) also argue that racial stigmas impede academic learning and that teachers should not stereotype students of color. Lisa Delpit (2006) claims, that regardless of color, students can make it and succeed in education with the appropriate support (Delpit, 2006, p. 159). For students to receive the appropriate support, teachers need to get rid of the stereotypes and develop an antiracist curriculum.

DiAngelo argues that racism is so profoundly complex and nuanced that our learning will never be complete or finished (DiAngelo, 2018, p. xv). DiAngelo points out such a great example that portrays an early lesson in white racial framing: “Imagine that white mother and her white child are in the grocery store. The child sees a black man and shouts out, “Mommy, that man’s skin is black!” DiAngelo points out that a child may be able to recognize a skin color that is different from his or hers. As DiAngelo says, most people in this circumstance just say “shush” and quiet their children rather than attempting to help the child understand race and racism and even develop their own healthy racial identity (DiAngelo, 2018, p.37).

Looking at this specific example, is it correct for the mother to tell her child to be quiet? On one hand, the mother is trying to teach her child to be polite about the situation, but is there something wrong with pointing out someone is of color? This goes back to the question who do we blame -do we blame parents for not having those tough conversations with their children about race?

DiAngelo explains how children first learn it is taboo to talk about race, then, they learn that people should pretend not to notice racial markers like skin color that define some people as less valuable than others (DiAngelo, 2018, p. 38). It is made clear that children have been taught that we should not talk about race, and teachers carry these beliefs into their classrooms, becoming very hesitant to talk about race in schooling (Pollock, 2004, p. 44). It is necessary to investigate and better understand how pre-service teachers can be trained in anti-racist values and implement an anti-racist curriculum that will help students not only talk about race, but to also be open-minded where race is not a taboo issue. It is important that children have their voice heard and understand the importance of their cultural backgrounds. When students recognize the importance of that in the classroom, the community, and the world, they will feel more valued.

As Darling-Hammond (2010) argues that this work begins in the classroom. Teachers believe that their expectations can affect student outcomes (Markow, 2009) whereas students also favor teachers who believe in their ability to succeed (Curwin 2012). Teachers’ expectations

strongly predict students' postsecondary educational attainment; however, this is not a causal relationship. If teacher expectations are systemically biased, this will contribute to the sociodemographic gaps in education.

White Supremacy Culture

Zirkel & Cantor (2004) argued that racial stigmas impede academic performance, shape classroom climate and student-teacher relationships, and heavily influence student identity. Zirkel & Cantor (2004) also claim that there can be various explanations for the discrepancy between teacher and student perceptions, but what is more disturbing is the fact that (white) teachers underestimate the motivations, aspirations, and the potential of their most motivated students of color.

Teachers have been underestimating students of color for years and white supremacy culture can be one source of blame. According to Joe Truss, a middle school principal in San Francisco, explains it is necessary to dismantle "White Supremacy Culture." One, it dehumanizes people; two, it shuts down learning, and three, it unites staff to work towards being anti-racist (Truss, 2019).

White supremacy culture is an ideology that white people and their ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions of white people are superior to those people of color (Okun, 1999). This culture is reproduced and practiced by institutions, particularly, educational systems (Okun, 1999). According to Mica Pollock (2008), being brought up white typically involves learning to believe that they are smarter than those who are not white. On the other hand, being brought up colored often means the fear of being judged less intelligent than those who are white (Pollock, 2008, p. 10).

Based on Pollock's research the culture of "Whiteness" needs to be dismantled through training pre-service teachers in anti-racist teaching and giving in-service teachers the opportunity to implement an anti-racist curriculum. Both Pollock (2008) and Truss (2019) state that implementing an anti-racist curriculum will greatly benefit white students also in removing problematic biases and misconceptions. In the system of White Supremacy, *Whiteness* is the ideology and way of being in the world. As Picower (2021) states, "Within this system of White supremacy, *Whiteness* is the ideology and way of being in the world that is used to maintain it. *Whiteness* is not synonymous with *White people*; instead, it is the way in which people-generally White people-enact racism in ways that consciously and unconsciously maintain this broader system of White supremacy" (6). There needs to be an in-depth self-examination and reflection on how issues of race, class, and identity play out in pre-service teachers and their understanding of others to be able to prepare themselves as anti-racist teachers (Picower, 2021, p. 13).

White Ideology and Curriculum

White supremacist ideology shapes educational opportunities for students of color in which the likelihood of marginalized populations can achieve success at levels far from those of European decent (King et al., 2001). Whiteness exists as a historically and socially developed construct (Allen, 2002) and holds power over others (DiAngelo, 2018).

By the end of the 1800's, the racially public school system in the United States had unequal resources for students of color and schooling opportunities were not comparable to those of European American cohorts (King et al., 2001). The construction of the educational system is full of inequalities and exacerbates the challenges found within race rather than helping students of color (King et al., 2001).

Students of color have less to begin with and are given less at school also. Educational institutions are designed to benefit those who share the cultural ways of European Americans, not those students of color. Maintaining this ideology influences teacher-student relationships, the structure of curricula, student assessment, disciplinary practices, and education reforms (King et al., 2001). To address questions to improve the schooling experience of all students, educators must engage in open discussion about how racism and discrimination work, engage in discussion on diversity that unveil their own biases and prejudice towards students of color (King et al., 2001).

Picower (2021) also discusses how racism in classrooms and curriculums reflect systemic racism. Curricular choices perpetuate white supremacy and educators who recognize them can disrupt them. Picower (2021) claims that to disrupt the white curriculum will depend on how racially literate teachers are and if they can recognize the depth of racial problems in their own classroom. Another problem can be is that teachers can be so oblivious and not see how the "Tools of Whiteness" can or are embedded into their own curriculum.

The purpose of the "Tools of Whiteness" help white people maintain racial hierarchies and these tools help derail conversations on race and avoid talking about the subject (31). The Curricular Tools of Whiteness facilitate the job of maintain and supporting the thoughts, language, and ways that uphold structures of white supremacy (26). As Picower (2021) explains the Curricular Tools of Whiteness:

- **White Out:** Not including people of color at all (27).
- **No One is to Blame:** Avoid assigning responsibility to White people for historical atrocities (30).
- **Not that Bad:** Teachers that downplay the horrific nature of past oppressions by promoting a sanitized picture of history, thereby maintaining White innocence (35).
- **All things being Equal:** Whiteness requires us to buy into the false narrative that all things are equal. It would require conversations and actions such as affirmative action, reparations, and other equalizing measures that those who benefit from current arrangements aggressively resist (39).
- **White Gaze:** Everyone should see the world through a "White" perspective (43).
- **Embedded Stereotypes:** This tool relies on a hidden curriculum to socialize students to develop racial stereotypes by camouflaging them in lessons on unrelated academic skills. Teachers may teach a lesson that appears to be on a neutral skill, but the content relies on mainstream or historical stereotypes (49).
- **Racist Reproduction:** Provide students practice in reenacting historical racism through role-plays, skits, games, and simulations (54).

The Curricular Tools of Whiteness is used to avoid teaching the accurate history of the United States (27). Teachers unconsciously and consciously use these tools to preserve white ideology. Teachers can make students feel insignificant through their curriculum and teaching style (James, 1994). When White teachers resist confronting their racial assumptions, they can also abandon the needs for students of color, reinforce white racial knowledge, and dismiss the effects of racism (Galman, Pica-Smith, & Rosenberger, 2010; Leonardo, 2008).

The effect of white supremacy ideology, as I argue, has continued to negatively impact students of color. We need to change what we teach also means to change how it is taught. There is a need to design a pedagogical framework that fits all the needs of children, regardless of their demographic background.

Failed Large Scale Attempts to Improve Teacher Education

Mary Dilworth (1992) explained that many teacher education programs are typically designed to prepare middle-class, European American candidates to teach middle-class, European American students in mainstream schools; however, this does not fit the demographics of schools today, specifically in urban areas. For teachers to carry out multicultural education, Ford (2013) describes ways to help eliminate racial injustices and racial harmony:

- All curricula must be analyzed to ensure accuracy and completeness. They must be examined to determine how they (re)cycling and supporting oppressive societal and cultural conditions.
- All subject and content areas must be presented from multiple and different (even opposing) perspectives. Students must be encouraged to think critically about the curriculum: Whose voices are they hearing and not hearing?
- Teachers must be prepared in colleges, professional development, and scholarship to foster a culturally responsive classroom climate for all students.

Jeffrey M. R. Duncan-Andrade (2005) claims that urban schools need to rethink their approach to teacher development. A space is needed to make sure successful teachers can reflect on their practice and share with less successful colleagues. Duncan-Andrade's study looks at student-empowering social justice pedagogy. He questioned how urban schools can create a formal space for teachers to question their philosophies and beliefs and learn from colleagues who provide the relevant and socially transformative instruction. He found that there needs to be a better understanding of teacher philosophies and practice and to also put a system in place to support professional growth of teachers. He states that teachers and school personnel must appreciate the changing demographics of their students and respond by:

- Changing curriculum and instruction to reflect and affirm diversity.

- Understanding that racially and culturally diverse students often must overcome social ills such as poverty, racism, prejudice, and stereotypes that disrupt their motivation and inhibit equal and equitable learning opportunities.
- Advocating for culturally diverse students.

In connection to Dilworth's claim, Zeichner (2016) also claims that college and university teacher education programs may include work in multicultural education; however, researchers have shown that there is still an overwhelming bias of "Whiteness" that frames discourse and practices in these teacher preparation programs (Sleeter, 2001). In addition, another issue that reflects contradiction between the commitment of social justice and teacher education programs is the realities of practices of whose knowledge counts in the education of teachers.

Overall, many researchers claim the necessity of implementing an effective anti-racist curriculum and advocating for students of color. In addition, it is necessary to make sure teachers can reflect on their practice and have a better understanding of creating a curriculum that supports all students and where teachers are able to reflect upon their practices. Many researchers describe the necessity of implementing effective anti-racist curriculum, but collectively, there needs to be an understanding of how to help pre-service teachers develop and implement an effective anti-racist curriculum when they arrive in the classroom.

Implementation of an Anti-Racist Curriculum in Teacher Education

There are many relatable terms: multicultural education, social justice education, cultural competency, and anti-racist education that all are used interchangeably. Based on the key terms, multicultural education can be defined as learning about and becoming allies with people from other cultures; whereas, social justice education is about distributing resources fairly to all students. Yet, cultural competence requires one to respect the ways in which others live (Starck, 2020); However, the focus of dismantling white supremacy culture begins with the solution of implementing an anti-racist strategies. Anti-Racism is defined as the approach to combat racism and focused on creating equal opportunity and to produce equitable outcomes for racially marginalized groups (Kailin, 2002). Antiracism is the constant struggle to move towards greater equality (Gillborn, 1995, p. 246). Antiracism challenges racism and the power of whites to gain, even unwittingly, from the exclusion and oppression of other people (Gillborn, 1995, p. 249).

Referring to Pollock (2008) and Truss (2019), state that implementing an anti-racist curriculum will greatly benefit white students also. Anti-racism is defined as an approach to combat racism and focused on creating equal opportunity and to produce equitable outcomes for racially marginalized groups (Kailin, 2002). Anti-racism is the constant struggle to move towards greater equality (Gillborn, 1995, p. 246). Anti-racism challenges racism and the power of whites to gain, even unwittingly, from the exclusion and oppression of other people (Gillborn, 1995, p. 249).

Teacher education is a place that gives aspiring educators the opportunity to learn the art of science of teaching; however, there is potential to disrupt ideologies of white supremacy that exists in the teacher education curriculum. Teachers create curriculum that flows from their ideology. In other words, educators teach what they believe (Picower, 2021, p. 13). Gay (2004) describes how teachers can present subject matter through reality, representation, and relevance.

Through reality and representation, school curriculums need to include equitable representations of diversity. Through relevance, Gay (2004) claims that many ethnically diverse students do not find schooling inviting and they often feel unwelcomed where many diverse students see what is taught does not necessarily reflect who they are. Students of color are more likely to be engaged in learning with groups they are familiar with.

Students of color are constantly aware of the color of their skin, as I was clearly made aware twenty-years ago. This has not changed. When teachers say that they do not see color, it neglects the fact that a child does not recognize themselves for who they are.

Research from Welton, Owens, and Zamani-Gallaher (2018) state that educational institutions commitment to racial justice is “just talk” because any type of action would cause the institution to break away from the norms of education and the benefits of it. To achieve the racial equity, there needs to be a shift in individual mindsets and institutions to an anti-racist ideology, which should start at the pre-service level.

Addressing racism and discrimination is not a comfortable subject to navigate, especially for teachers to facilitate the discussion of the diverse realities and identities found in a classroom. Too often, educators steer away from discussing the reality and history of racial inequality as I have even witnessed in first year and veteran teachers; however, it is necessary to prepare students to enter a world to see color as a factor and contribution to their own success and abilities. Improving equity in schools and implementing an effective anti-racist curriculum can potentially improve individual lives and the need for equity and justice in society.

On the other hand, Stengel (2008) believes that anti-racist language will provoke fear and disengagement from white students and even educators. Stengel (2008) states that the term will cause white students to shut down and disengage. Stengel states, “They (white students) don’t want to think of themselves as personally guilty of moral evil that is racism. They don’t want to be forced to be held accountable for an acknowledged social evil (Stengel, 2008, p. 70). There are scholars that favor anti-racist pedagogy and give suggestions on how to implement it into the classroom at the individual level (Young & Laible, 2000, p. 25). Much of the literature sees that educators are not prepared in their preparation program to be able to facilitate these types of discussions focusing on race as the implementation of multicultural education into practice is difficult (Ladson-Billings, 1995). In addition, Ladson-Billings (1995) states that teacher preparation programs need to look at the admissions process, reassess curricula, restructure curricula and field experiences, recruit and retain more people of color.

Regardless, all students need to be exposed to an anti-racist curriculum to understand how to combat racial biases. Anti-racist values need to start with pre-service teachers so that in-service teachers will have the opportunity to implement an anti-racist curriculum. Through the implementation of an anti-racist curriculum in the secondary education classroom, it will heavily influence students. It begins with teaching students how to have an anti-racist attitude towards people of color.

As stated previously, the United States is made up of many racial groups; however, the curriculum found in schools focuses on “White Anglo-Saxon Protestant” (WASP) groups (Leiding, 2006, p. 58). Much of the curriculum has negative consequences where racism is reinforced and perpetuated in schools and society (Leiding, 2006, p. 58). Leiding (2006) explains the negative effects of a mainstream curriculum:

- False sense of superiority

- Denies white students the opportunity to view their own culture from the perspective of others
- Influences culturally diverse students by marginalizing their experiences and cultures that do not reflect their hopes, dreams, and perspectives.

A solution to this as Leiding (2006) argues for implementing a curriculum that reflects all cultures and can combat racism (59).

Conclusion

As I think back to my painful experience as a sixth grader, I was treated differently and labeled as a “minority.” I noticed how my teacher acted toward me and how she acted towards other students of color. At that specific moment, it was damaging to my own identity, and I still carry it with me today as I strongly believe in the need for teacher-preparation programs to do a better job preparing pre-service teachers and in-service teachers to face issues and situations of racism and to help students also understand racism.

Based on the literature synthesized in this review, there is little attention with the ongoing daily injustices that students of color face. With the correct support, students are able to succeed, yet, teachers continue to underestimate students’ abilities with a curriculum that still focuses on “White Anglo-Saxon Protestant” (Leiding, 2006). Much of the curriculum has negative consequences and racism is still reinforced where anti-racist education needs to be more present in school curriculum, policies, and practices. By no means is ‘anti-racism’ a single entity that can be dropped into pre-service teaching curriculum, but it should be developed to help pre-service teachers when they become professionals.

Methodology

I used a phenomenological qualitative research design to capture the perceptions of first-year teachers and their experiences in connection to an anti-racist framework. Phenomenology is a research methodology that seeks to describe “basic lived” experiences (Creswell, 1998). It is described as a research method that provides a tangible representation of lived experiences and an insightful consideration of the experience from the perspective of the research participant. The purpose of the phenomenological approach is to illuminate the phenomena and gather deep information and perceptions, often through interviews and discussions.

Merriam (1998) describes five characteristics of qualitative research that support my selection for this type of methodology:

- 1) The researcher is studying participants and their perspective.
- 2) The researcher is the primary instrument for data collection.
- 3) Qualitative research entails fieldwork, and the researcher must interact with participants to collect data.
- 4) An inductive approach is used where themes, categories, and concepts are constructed rather than theories.
- 5) Qualitative research is descriptive. The researcher describes certain things rather than using statistical data alone to convey information.

Theoretical Framework

My study was guided through the theoretical lens of Critical Race Theory (CRT). The critical race theory movement is a collection of “activist and scholars engaged in studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power” (Delgado & Stefanic, 2017).

Beginning in the 1970’s, after the Civil Rights era, many critical race theorists realized that new theories and strategies were still needed to combat racism (Delgado & Stefanic, 2017, p. 4). In addition, CRT highlights the ways in which race and racism are key concepts that help understand how educational and legal theory are used to perpetuate the subordination of people of color while maintaining white supremacy (Solorzano, 1997). In 1994, Ladson-Billings and others used CRT as a framework to assess the inequities in education (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). The purpose of critical race theory is to analyze race and privilege that exists in U.S. society (Parker & Villalpando, 2007).

According to Delgado & Stefanic (2017), the six basic tenets of CRT are:

1. **Ordinariness:** Racism is not ordinary, not aberrational – “Normal science” (8).
2. Racism is difficult to discuss because society does not acknowledge it.
3. **Interest Convergence:** The notion that whites will allow and support racial justice or progress to the extent that there is something positive in it for them (9).
4. **Social Construction:** It is the fact that racism is in our daily lives and is long-lasting and that race and races are products of social thought and relations (9). The concept of race exists because society lets it exist. This concept has been one of the main mantras in CRT.
5. **Intersectionality and Anti-essentialism:** Race has its own origins and ever-evolving history (10). No one person has a single identity.
6. **Unique Voice of Color:** This urges black and brown writers to recount their experiences with racism and the legal system to apply their own unique perspectives (11).

The overall goal of CRT is to have equality and to look through the lens of the oppressed. Critical race theory also can be used to see how race and racism directly and indirectly affects minorities as white supremacy pervades and shapes behaviors in educational institutions. CRT examines racism through group and individual phenomenon.

Parker and Lynn (2002) argue for the three objectives of CRT:

1. Present stories about discrimination from the viewpoint of people of color.
2. Acknowledge that race is a social construct.
3. View injustices experienced by communities.

Based on the tenets and perspective of what constitutes critical race theory, I used this theoretical framework throughout my study. One of the most important concepts is using storytelling and counter-storytelling. This gives my participants the ability to share their experiences, narratives, and share their own truths. (Delgado, 1995). Through this lens, I want to use storytelling and counter-storytelling to highlight the inequities of curricula in the U.S. educational system, specifically for my own research focusing in on secondary education.

One use of CRT was to understand the issues and controversies over curriculum (Delgado & Stefanic, 2017, p. 7). For example, scholars have discussed the rise of biological racism in education theory and practice and have urged attention to the resegregation of American schools (Delgado & Stefanic, 2017, p. 7). Students of color are part of a system that puts them at a disadvantage. School curriculums are infused with mainstream white and middle-class values; hence, the importance of my research question, “How can we make anti-racist teaching happen more regularly, more dependably, and more systematically?”

Collectively and working across disciplines like law, education, political science, Critical Race Theory is a framework that researchers, practitioners, and policymakers can use to approach educational inequities and structural racism to find solutions for justice. Race has historically and continues to be a significant issue in American society; this is especially evident in education where racial inequities persist and even appear to be widening. CRT guides my study to examine and dismantle the systems of inequality. Racism is a normal feature of society and is embedded within systems and institutions. A critical piece of CRT is finding a way for people of color to share their experiences. I am interested in listening to pre-service teachers and for them to share their experience. For racial equity in education to happen, the mindset of individuals needs to be changed.

Through the lens of CRT, the focus of questioning moves towards understanding the dominant culture of white supremacy in the United States and how it shapes individuals and institutions involved. White supremacy culture needs to be examined and dismantled to support equitable educational experiences for all students. The need for an anti-racist ideology and curriculum is necessary to dismantle white supremacy culture.

Methods

I examined first-year teachers' individual perspectives on anti-racist teaching. I conducted a convenience sample of 6 participants between the ages of 24-32 years old and each participant did not have more than three years of professional teaching experience with a valid teaching license. My sample was intentionally targeting first-year teachers. I interviewed three male and three female teachers. My hope with this is that I wanted to unravel new information through these face-to-face interviews to better comprehend their understanding of anti-racist teaching.

I recruited my participants using convenience sampling. Using this method, participants were selected based on their willingness to take part in my study and based on their availability. Through this type of sampling, useful results can be obtained, but results are also prone to bias because participants who volunteer may be different from those who choose not to take part in my study.

Ethical Considerations

Since my sample size consisted of six individual participants, I completed DePaul University's exempt Institution Review Board (IRB) and I was granted permission to run my study. Once IRB was approved, I emailed potential participants based on convenience sampling to solicit their agreement for my study. When the participant agreed to take part in my study, the participant was sent via email a more detailed information sheet. I assured the participant that participation was voluntary, and that the participant did not have to answer any or all the interview questions. I further voiced that if the participant was uncomfortable at any time, the participant can stop the interview. In addition, the participant had the choice to be audio recorded.

Setting of Study

Each interview was done face-to-face in a public setting, a coffee shop, that took 30-45 minutes of open-ended questions that was recorded with a password protected iPad. The first interview had 15 questions that gave me the opportunity to get to know the first-year teacher. The second interview consisted of 8 questions, that took 15-20 minutes that gave me the opportunity to better understand anti-racist teaching practices. To protect the identity of each participant, I used pseudonyms throughout the study. I transcribed the data after each interview and sent the transcript to validate the transcription to all my participants.

Research Question

My research question was:

- How can we make anti-racist teaching and pedagogy happen more regularly, more dependably, more systematically?

The purpose of the first round of interview questions was to get to know my participants more in hopes that they would feel comfortable speaking with me. To this end, I asked the six (6) participants these interview questions:

Background Information:

1. Pick a pseudonym: First and last name.
2. Please state your age.
3. What are your identifying pronouns?
4. How would you best describe your racial or ethnic heritage (Race)?
5. Describe the racial demographics of where you grew up.

Teacher Information:

6. What is your role at your high school? Please describe what you do.
7. How did you become a teacher?
8. How many years have you been teaching and how many years have you been teaching at this high school?
9. What do you like about this high school?
10. What do you wish were different here?
11. What do you believe about the ultimate purpose of school?

Anti-Racist Work:

12. What terms are you comfortable with: Equity-Oriented Teaching? Multicultural Teaching? Inclusive Teaching? Culturally Relevant Teaching? Explain why?
13. In what ways does your school support students of color?
14. What do you know about anti-racist teaching?
15. How do you use anti-racist teaching practices in your own classroom?

The second round of interview questions that I asked the six (6) participants in my study were:

Implementation of Anti-Racist Work:

1. Is teaching for equity important to you?
2. Have you observed anti-racist practices implemented here at the high school?
3. Does your administration work with teachers to implement anti-racist teaching practices in their classroom? How so?
4. How does your school support anti-racist work?
5. What opportunities exist to enhance lessons with students' funds of knowledge to offer authentic representation that affirm students' identities and experiences (mirrors)?
6. What opportunities exist to enhance lessons with students' funds of knowledge to learn about and from diverse cultures of perspectives (windows)?
7. How have you planned opportunities for students to make choice during learning, to have voice, to see the relevance of their learning, and to take action to address inequity?
8. How routinely do you examine and adjust materials to ensure they are free of bias, oppression, racism, and underrepresentation?

Validity and Reliability

1. Interviews were audio-recorded so that the researcher can refer to the audio for reliability. All participants agreed to be audio-recorded.
2. Member check involved taking data and interpretations back to where it was derived from: the individual participants (Creswell, 2009). I confirmed my participant responses by emailing them a copy of their transcripts. I ensured the words and phrases reports were what I interpreted. I asked that each participant, if needed, to return any corrections or additional comments within one week.
3. I developed each interview question that would not elicit any participant bias.

Creating Codes and Themes

Interviews are given more clarity using “coding.” This process helped me label and organize information. In addition, it helped me find the relationship between multiple interview responses. When the coding happened, it allowed me to assign labels to phrases that were significant during the coding process.

To help better organize my six participant responses, I assigned a specific word or phrase to their responses. Interpreting their responses, I used inductive coding where themes and analysis were used to help better understand the participants’ lived experiences. Data that was gathered through these interviews is necessary to build credibility as the qualitative researcher.

I transcribed the interview and read and re-read the transcripts. Notes were made and emergent themes were created from the interviews. This was repeated for all individual participants. I checked original transcripts to assess whether the themes were supported by sufficient evidence.

As I collected data, I analyzed participants’ responses by listening to recorded interviews. I analyzed participants’ answers through the lens of educator beliefs found in the “Teaching for Equity” framework. The framework provides potential participant beliefs and responses as described in the chart below. While analyzing data, I looked for common themes through inductive coding. Phenomenology is the type of methodology I used in my qualitative research. Across interviews, I found common and central themes, along with outliers. My goal was to understand and conceptualize what took place in the lives of my participants.

Upon the conclusion of my interviews, I developed a total of eight codes. The included codes are:

- Curriculum
- Anti-Racist Teaching
- Supporting Students of Color
- Teacher Responsibilities
- Purpose of School
- Culture
- Pre-Service Years
- Comfort

Leading Educators Framework

Leading Educators is a non-profit corporation that aims to change students' lives by looking for solutions to disrupt the opportunity gaps that students of color face. Through this corporation, they have developed a framework, *Teaching for Equity*, that is designed to guide teachers to reflect on their own practices and to live out their commitment to anti-racism. The framework guides teachers to reflect on their practice, see connections across areas of research to support wholistic student development, and to live out to the commitment of anti-racism (Leading Educators, 2020). *Figure 1* shows the framework at-a glance:

Figure 1: Teaching for Equity Framework



This framework describes five strands of teacher beliefs, practices, and resources (Leading Educators, 2020). Based on the Anti-Racist Curriculum & Standards, the framework focuses on lessons that integrate academics, anti-racism, and social, emotional, cognitive, and identity development that support learning, well-being, justice, and joy (Leading Educators, 2020).

For teachers to be able to utilize the framework effectively, teachers need:

- 1) **Inner Resources:** Values, beliefs, and practices that support the personal well-being and fuel reflection and growth.
- 2) **School & System Resources:** Resources, policies, and learning conditions in schools and districts that create foundational support for equitable teaching and learning.

As the researcher, even though there is a need for the two other strands, I only focused on one: Anti-Racist Curriculum & Standards. Through this specific strand, it provides teachers with the opportunities to reflect on their instructional practice through guiding questions.

Leading Educators provides guiding questions for teachers as I adapted some of these questions for my own research. These questions that were given gave my participants more opportunities to reflect on their own pedagogical practices.

The framework suggests that classroom teachers can reflect on their instruction, discuss what they have heard from students, and further reflect on what they have seen in their own classrooms. Based on their reflections, teachers can look at their strengths and areas of opportunity with specific guiding questions from the framework:

- What do I believe about the ultimate purpose of school? Does my definition go beyond academics to include development for students' well-being (e.g., social, emotional, cognitive, and identity development) and to recognize the power of education to disrupt inequity and transform students' lives, communities, and the world?
- What opportunities exist to enhance lessons with students' funds of knowledge, to offer authentic representations that affirm students' identities and experiences (mirrors) and/or to learn about and from diverse cultures of perspectives (windows)?
- How routinely do I examine and adjust materials to ensure they are free of bias, oppression, racism, and underrepresentation?
- How have I planned opportunities for students to make choices during learning, to have voice, to see the relevance of their learning, and to take action to address inequity?

Having the opportunity to adapt some of these questions into my own research, it is unfortunate that many standard-aligned curricula that is currently in use are not yet built to support anti-racist teaching (Leading Educators, 2020).

Theoretically speaking, using Critical Race Theory, one of the most important concepts is to use storytelling and counter-storytelling where people can share their experiences and narratives (Delgado, 1995). Using CRT and adapting questions from the Leading Educators "Anti-Racist Curriculum & Standards," I was able to capture stories from my participants and my participants were able to reflect on their teaching and how it relates to anti-racism. Found below are a description of participants along with multiple participant's responses that fit into several themes that emerged from their transcript. Each participant is labeled along with their response.

Participants

Using Critical Race Theory, it gives people the ability to share their experiences, narratives, and share their own truths (Delgado, 1995). Through this lens, I used storytelling and counter-storytelling to highlight the inequities of curricula in the U.S. educational system, specifically for my own research focusing in on secondary education. One use of CRT has been to understand issues and controversies over curriculum (Delgado & Stefanic, 2017, p. 7). Students of color are part of a system that puts them at a disadvantage and school curriculums are infused with mainstream white and middle-class values. To gather stories and counter-stories, I sampled both white and non-white participants. I sampled six first-year teachers, identifying as three male and three female.

In *figure 2*, it provides each participant's age, identifying gender, and race. The order of participants in the chart does not reflect with the participant number found in the participant responses.

Figure 2: Table of Participants

Age	Male/Female	Race
24	Male	Hispanic
31	Male	Hispanic
32	Male	White/Caucasian
24	Female	White/Caucasian
28	Female	White/Caucasian
29	Female	White/Caucasian

Participant Responses

Found below, each theme is shown with a question and a follow-up question, if applicable, that each participant answered. Each theme was generated after all interviews were transcribed. Participant responses are shown below that fit under each theme. Each response was taken directly from the transcript.

Curriculum

***Question:** What is your role at your high school? Please describe what you do.*

***Follow-Up Question:** How do you, individually or as a team, develop your curriculum?*

PARTICIPANT ONE: (P1)

“In terms of lesson planning, if you are teaching the same thing as your colleague, it is easy to bounce ideas off each other versus teaching alone. Then, I have to reinvent a lot of things.”

PARTICIPANT TWO: (P2)

“I think there’s so many holes in the curriculum-I came in with the curriculum being set so I didn’t have much conversation about it. To collaborate and to meet the students to see if it is reflective of their values and interests. I think that would have been beneficial. I could utilize more actual distinct practices-this is how it is executed versus the general approach.”

PARTICIPANT THREE: (P3)

“Some of it is using the resources from other teachers and what worked for them. Obviously, I am just so new-so I am not reinventing the wheel. I try not to be bias and try to make sure I use various texts where I touch upon authors of color, and I am intentional in that way. I want to make sure students see themselves in the text.”

PARTICIPANT FOUR: (P4)

“On the spectrum, from following the script versus go wild, I am closer to the do whatever you want to do. There is still the team aspect-if I am not doing something my team is doing, then I have less collaboration. Or questions you can ask if someone has read the material before. It is the balance-if I stay aligned with what the team is doing, the more I can learn from them.”

PARTICIPANT FIVE: (P5)

“It is very open-ended with what I teach. I do not think there are any restrictions. All the teachers are open to letting other teachers do their own thing. The team leader does not expect us to be on the same books or same stories. I have a lot of freedom.”

PARTICIPANT SIX: (P6)

“As part of the sophomore curricular team, we do collaborate with one another, but we also have the freedom to choose what we want to teach. I will tell you one of my favorite things I did last year during the pandemic was “Turning Points in History.” I looked at three different waves of importance: Feminism, LGBTQ Communities, and the Civil Rights Movement. I try my best to

make sure my students are represented through the curriculum, but at the same time I feel that I have underrepresented my students and I have done that unintentionally. It is my own ignorance and my lack of experience also.”

Anti-Racist Teaching

Question: What do you think about anti-racist teaching?

Follow-Up Question(s): Have you observed anti-racist practices implemented at this high school? Does your administration work with teacher to implement anti-racist teaching practices in their classroom? How so?

PARTICIPANT ONE: (P1)

“All those words are buzz words. It is a word that I hear a lot. You know, I will be honest, that word is not really something I am familiar with, and I have never really used. Maybe I need to do more research. I will have to say, my school is predominately white, but I feel like the population resists the word.”

“There are so many buzz words and language you use that you have to be careful. We’re invested in our political identities- well, everything is made to be political. I associate the word with politics.”

“I have not seen any anti-racist practices at my school because I don’t know what it looks like. Administration does not talk about it.”

PARTICIPANT TWO: (P2)

“I don’t know if the language is different, but I think the execution is different based on where you are teaching.”

“I think anti-racist teaching is a crucial part to teaching. I think it is needed everywhere. I think there’s a social push that we need to be invested in this type of teaching. I think it’s important that it is unfortunate that has only been slowly emerging for the past decade. To me, it was a process of learning rather than being taught and trained in it.”

“I think they use the term that it is a school-wide policy and expectation, as far as like we support the school, but I have yet to see it brought to the departments and to the individual level. I think their expectation is that it is being done.”

“I think it would be beneficial to be observed in a non-critical or judgmental format. I would like to see it as a way for them to look at your teaching and say “here’s a move you could have made.” Something that can be offered from administration to teacher or from peer to peer. I think that these would be beneficial practices, but I have not experienced it here. I am confident that with my peers, it is something that they value.”

PARTICIPANT THREE: (P3)

“For me, anti-racist action is what is present and the actions I take in the classroom and how I respond to students. I think a lot of what makes an anti-racist classroom is the interactions you have with students every day. In the bigger picture- a lot of what it is how you present yourself.”

“In my pre-service program, I learned that it is important to establish norms at the beginning of the school year. Thinking about the texts we are reading- the way we speak and how I respond to it can be controversial, but the way we structure those conversations are so important also.

“I have a sense of how my school uses anti-racist practice. For example, they use an equitable and anti-racist practice where we are required to give students the lowest grade of a 50%. This comes from a book called: “Grading for Equity.” Our administration put that into practice. It is meant to be equitable where we are not allowed to give students a zero anymore. It helps students really reach that D or C: where it wasn’t attainable for them before.”

“My administration does not work with teachers in regards to anti-racist practices. It was something dashed during my interview, but that was the only time it was really brought up. There has not been any check-ins about it.”

“I think the way I envision it would be that administration has leads or someone who is trained in some way- I don’t know if admin has the time, but they can have a paid or volunteered position- to help within our curriculum or do a cross-curricular team where someone helps all of us and we are learning about different practices and how it works. That has to come from admin, but I don’t think they have to be the ones, but it has to trickle down.”

PARTICIPANT FOUR: (P4)

“I know it is another buzz word. It lives in the land of theory and teaching theory-its delightful, but not useful to me. I am still learning how to take attendance, learning when the bell rings, I am hoping some day that I will have enough practical theory to teach, but it is not enough for tools or tricks to have. It feels so disconnected. I think the response to that is that it is foundational, you cannot just add it on top. It has to be from where the ground grows. It has to be from the bottom up- the foundation of where it grows. It’s like the books I bring I are those that I know. I just don’t bring things in that I don’t know.”

“I think that it kind of works like this- we have a professional development day, we talk about it, we say it is important, and that’s it. It’s more like a check but that, hey we talked about it. That’s it.”

“I think that anti-racist work is its own category, the way it is implemented it also overlaps to student voice- you want students to respond to it and identify with. I taught a short story to a bunch of Hispanic kids and they responded well to it and made connections to it. But I do not know if I was able to do anti-racist work beyond that.”

“At a certain point, we can’t just keep talking about it in professional development until we really do it. I don’t want it to be a check-list of like, “Oh I did it,” check.”

PARTICIPANT FIVE: (P5)

“I think anti-racist teaching is, in my understanding, is becoming more aware of the pre-structures you were born into. As a result, it is necessary to dismantle the structures you are being placed into and as you engage with them.”

“I think that one way is to actively engage with your students in an anti-racist style of teaching because you acknowledge their different cultures and the different expectations, they have of getting their day started.”

“I have not seen any anti-racist activities implemented.”

“I think it should come from the administration down. Teaching is a busy job and there are so many moving parts. It is almost that putting weight on teachers to do anti-racist teaching is not a good way to implement it across the board, but I think if a teacher wants to do it, they can make it happen. It is just difficult to make it happen on a day-to-day basis.”

“Administration lets teachers know that they can approach their teaching any way they want, but when it comes to training as a first-year teacher, I can count it on one hand that we did some living mosaic project to understand the different backgrounds in this school and appreciate the different students we have, but even that in itself is not a way to teach anti-racist practices in the classroom.”

“I think it is one of those topics that maybe principals are checking a box and contributing in that way, but in the trenches in teaching that much of it is up to the teacher to make or break how they want to create an anti-racist classroom.”

PARTICIPANT SIX: (P6)

“This was at the tail end of my experience. I graduated in 2020. I taught a little bit about anti-racist teaching last year with my classes. There isn’t much support here even for critical race theory. It was such a risk talking about it. If my teaching philosophy is all about equity- I have to talk about this. Backlash may happen, and I was so nervous about even talking about this because my school demographics is predominately white. I needed to take the risk and follow my philosophy.”

“I have not seen anti-racist teaching in other classrooms. There are blanket statements, but nothing executed. Those are all general things. There isn’t a set curriculum that centers around anti-racist teaching.”

“Reflecting on how well I look at curriculum through an anti-racist lens, I need to look more carefully and reflect. I fall short in my reflection section and need to be more thorough on what I can improve. As a course team and department team, we do not have conversations about anti-racist teaching.”

Supporting Students of Color

Question: In what ways does your school support students of color?

PARTICIPANT ONE: (P1)

“Honestly, I do not think so. Well, not that I am aware of.”

PARTICIPANT TWO: (P2)

“I can’t say that I have observed or something that has been offered through the administration. I think I naturally use it in the classroom based on the cadence that I have with the students in regard and respect for them, but it is not formally seen in the school environment.”

PARTICIPANT THREE: (P3)

“When I was interviewed here, one of the questions I was asked, “How do you embody the ideals of an anti-racist educator and what would you do in your classroom to promote anti-racist teaching?” From that interview, it seemed as if it was something the school was focused on. Day to day, one thing I did notice, being an English teacher, that a lot of the texts we read- we read a lot by authors of color. Thinking about that and thinking about students seeing themselves in texts is so important. Also, our school uses restorative justice for disciplinary practice and I think that connects a lot with how we support students of color. I mean all students, in general.”

“I think new teachers are scared of students running to their parents and then parents running to administration talking about a specific teacher. For me, I want to speak about conversations, but I am scared to do that and have that happen to me.”

“I think that as a new teacher, if I had regular check-ins with a meeting with an administrator or some sort of teacher that is from training-they can say hey these are lessons that we are putting into place or strategies and show me how does anti-racist strategies or practices align with things in my classroom. It would be helpful to have someone who has had training or someone who is an expert. It sometimes feels like we are just figuring things out as we go.”

“My teaching philosophy- I believe that student voice is an important thing in my classroom. I do a lot with student choice also from picking a list of projects to do, essay prompts, to choosing a particular question in their essay. I believe that it is important that my voice is the least heard and that students hear themselves more than my own voice.”

PARTICIPANT FOUR: (P4)

“I know my school does it in blanket way. They do help students individually, but not as a whole. Kids have IEP’s, but I do not know if we have a systemic support.”

“I think a lot of it is being able to talk about it. But that also means that adults can have time without the kids to talk about it until we feel comfortable talking about it.”

PARTICIPANT FIVE: (P5)

“Students are engaged in after-school clubs and activities- it lets students engage with their culture. Other than that, I do not know how super supportive they help students during the day.”

“I think the majority of teachers always make the kids feel welcomed and give them a safe space. I know they provide that especially for minorities or different cultures in the school and I think it’s sad that it does not take place between the hours of 8-3pm.”

PARTICIPANT SIX: (P6)

“I think that teachers in different departments make sure that is at the forefront. At my school, we have done fundraiser and made shirts to support students of color. For example, we have supported students of color by wearing shirts that say: “Black Lives Matter.” “Stop Asian-American Hate.” There are so many groups that are discriminated against, but this is what they have done at my school. I do know administration has stated that they are supporting teachers who promote this. We want to make sure equity is at the forefront. But the irony behind a lot of this is that the majority of my students in higher level classes are white versus my lower-level classes are more diverse. I think there is something we have to do about that. We haven’t talked about the reason why. We could be doing more to match differentiation. We must fill the gaps because school systems have failed our students of color.”

Teacher Responsibilities

Question: What is your role at your high school? Please describe what you do.

Follow-Up Question: How routinely do you adjust materials to ensure they are free of bias, oppression, racism, and underrepresentation?

PARTICIPANT ONE: (P1)

“As educators, and as people, we have to watch our own biases and thought patterns. When you’re with students, you have to really ask yourself what kind of discussions do you want to have with your students and what kind of text are you choosing to have those type of conversations with them. The material is there to guide your conversations to help the students be open-minded.”

PARTICIPANT TWO: (P2)

“My course team meets weekly to discuss content about what is working well and what isn’t. I think when it is relevant to the discussion we discuss that. We are moving to a rhetoric unit that will allow discussion for different types of topics to give students to explore. It is intermittently about it but it is not dedicated to it.”

“I think as generally as a white educator, I think it would be helpful to have more professional development around this. No matter how much I think I am aware of it, and speaking to it, I could always do better. It was something I would value if I had this opportunity versus it just coming up as it occurs. I can tell you from experience that I didn’t dive deep with my class, but they said that another teacher is so racist and I asked, “Why would you say that?” They mentioned that they treat the one black kid differently versus the others. I was so appalled, and I had no idea how to respond and I just dropped the conversation. So, I think having more professional development would be helpful.”

PARTICIPANT THREE: (P3)

“I think school is there for students to have the opportunity to expose them to various identities and I think English allows for that to happen. When you think big picture, the purpose of school is to prepare kids for the outside world. I think school is a place for students to discover themselves and my job is to help facilitate that.”

PARTICIPANT FOUR: (P4)

“I don’t know how to talk about racial issues, political issues, in class with kids. It is not why I am a teacher, but being a human is also part of it. I don’t know how to have those conversations, but I would love to have more training on that, and more verbal repeated support in having those things from the people who would- I don’t know that I wouldn’t get in trouble or from who would have my back if I talked about these things with kids.”

“Certain topics have slowly evolved. The same time even thinking about politics-it has shifted. What is politics and what is not.”

“There’s two ideas: one, here are the repercussion of the grapevine- a kid tells another kid, and that kid tells his or her parent and that parent tells the assistant principal. Some of it is also the fear of also sounding stupid. Some of these things are so hard to talk about. Nobody has good words to say. Thinking out loud there are so many difficult topics that you want to put your foot in your mouth.”

“Less often than I have. In part because I am working on material that is not one. So, why would I even look at these things? It is hard being a first-year teacher and it is overwhelming. There’s so much more I am so concerned about. I am still learning the bell schedule. I am still learning how to take attendance. I am still learning how to input grades. What is harder for me is not that I can show you a book, we can answer questions, but really, how do we approach these difficult questions and conversations?”

“I think we talk about SEL, but we really haven’t talked about making connections with students and really we focus on what content we are teaching.”

“The PDs are great, but I think it is important that we see it in the classroom. And maybe accountability has to happen. I’ve gone through PD and then I’ve never been asked what I have done with whatever we are speaking about.”

PARTICIPANT FIVE: (P5)

“Now that I am teaching, I find myself trying to balance out our curriculum discussions we have and it is very, very different because teaching is a day-to-day service and grad school is not the same day-to-day intensity you get as a teacher. Now that I find myself teaching day-to-day, and having to come up with five lesson plans for 40 weeks straight, I find myself hanging on to the concepts we discussed, because again, I believe that acknowledging and creating an environment that accepts differences is really important.”

“My task as a teacher is to take all the philosophical discussions I had in undergrad and grad school and kind of mine them into usable lessons and activities.”

PARTICIPANT SIX: (P6)

“I am a full-time teacher, secondary English. This is my second year. First year in the classroom. I feel like a first-year teacher. Twice a week, I meet with cross-curricular colleagues and then I also meet with my course team.”

“My philosophy is rooted in SEL mental health and different issues of equity. Also, upon realizing that when I went to a public university, I did not have many opportunities or experiences with inequity because I was predominately the ones being served in my communities.”

“I want students to feel accepted and challenge students to think critically about different demographics and issues about equity, but I want to do that in a class where I can reach all students.”

Purpose of School

Question: What do you think the ultimate purpose of school is?

PARTICIPANT ONE: (P1)

“The school I am at, it feels like school is just there to give you a diploma. I wish it was not like that. I want school to be meaningful for students.”

“It is so easy to be jaded by the system and you can be swallowed by things. It’s the system and you want to be the change.”

PARTICIPANT TWO: (P2)

“To give students the opportunity to explore and understand their identity and to give them a direction of where they want to go in life. I hope that as education evolves that there is more place in realism and practice and curriculum that will help them move forward that will help cultivate their more independent lives.”

PARTICIPANT THREE: (P3)

“I think school is there for students to have the opportunity to expose them to various identities and I think English allows for that to happen. When you think big picture, the purpose of school is to prepare kids for the outside world. I think school is a place for students to discover themselves and my job is to help facilitate that.”

PARTICIPANT FOUR: (P4)

“I think we are trying to build a society where people can live and exist together and where we can have conversations and listen and hear each other and support our ideas with evidence that is fact based. It is about relationships and knowing yourself and knowing other people and living in a society that cares about all these people.”

PARTICIPANT FIVE: (P5)

“It is to have a front row seat to high functioning adults. School is a great way to model an adult life to students-showing up everyday, being prepared, interacting with other teachers and students in positive ways.”

PARTICIPANT SIX: (P6)

“I know what I want it to be versus what it is. Right now, the system makes it so that it is training kids to behave, good workers, listen to people in power. It is teaching students that there is a hierarchy- people in charge won’t ever admit that. I mean look at how we structure classrooms.- there’s definitely an understanding that when this system was built, it was like the teacher is your boss and you sit and wait until you’re called on. There are still so many subtle cues that this is the system of school. Should it be like this- no, but are we trained like this, yes.”

Culture

Question: What do you like about this high school?

Follow-Up Question: How would you describe the racial demographics of the student body?

PARTICIPANT TWO:(P2)

“I like that this student body is diverse. I have worked at other high schools where the student body is specific to a singular demographic and there was not a lot of diversity for my experience.”

“At my previous school, I worked with a community that was predominately Latino and Black, and so walking in there coming from an extremely white community, Christian community, that was very Catholic, very insular, it was a great learning experience- I was exposed to a lot and was exposed to different cultures in a different way than how it was projected to me, previously. My students had a lot of questions for me about my background and why I wanted to be there and why I was there. They were very skeptical. Race was always brought up during the beginning of the year and it was always important to have that conversation.”

“I think equity is important and you want to make sure that they know that their voice is heard and valued. I think it is something that should always be prioritized and planned for and executed by all teachers. If not, I think it is a disservice to the students because you won’t always know their perspective on things because students are not always willing to share, but they are always thinking and feeling things.”

PARTICIPANT THREE: (P3)

“I see there’s a huge disconnect between administration aims and goals with the day-to-day expectations.”

“I don’t see administration out in the school community as much and I don’t see them walking the halls as much or popping into classrooms. As a new teacher, I can’t speak for veteran teachers, but

I have very little lines of communication so they may not reach out to me as much. Maybe they have so much going on and on their plate”

PARTICIPANT FOUR: (P4)

I think there is also a difference in generation of immigrant. Higher level classes have parents who have been here in America a generation or two longer.”

“So much of it is visibility-seeing adults who look like you doing things that are plausible. You do not know things exist until you see them, until you talk about them. So much of my work as being a teacher is being visible for who I am and what I stand for. Having people of color as teachers is seeing that they are great people versus seeing people of color in the media and how they are portrayed.”

“In a land of English and History- I feel like we can make those connections versus chemistry and algebra and it is hard to talk about race. I don’t know how much people are using that as a shield to avoid talking about it.”

PARTICIPANT FIVE: (P5)

“Touchy subjects that may be they’re questioning why we are focusing on such a negative subject. And that’s a really good point of learning where you can teach them to value of reading difficult to digest literature.”

“I think that having a diverse class is essential to being able to talk about these different topics because like I said, everyone’s experience is different.”

“Different cultures have different ways of getting things started. Some cultures are quieter and don’t mind getting things started right away. Other cultures like to have a discussion to get to know you a little bit.”

“I think it needs to come from top-down. It would function so much better if the administration I think would fight a little harder to fight more for anti-racist teaching and I think that would be a good use for meetings. I think sometimes meetings drift into a waste of time versus using our time to talk about important issues like this. I think we need to reexamine this and get support from administration.

PARTICIPANT SIX: (P6)

“I definitely like that there is a sense of community- there are systems in place. We have students in cohorts. It is so nice that students are able to build relationships with each other. Collaboration with teachers is such a nice thing also. When we have the same students, it is so much easier to help students.”

“I wish administration and teachers would collaborate more.”

Pre-Service Years

Question: What terms are you comfortable with: Equity-Oriented Teaching? Multicultural Teaching? Inclusive Teaching? Culturally Relevant Teaching? Why?

Follow-Up Question: Describe what you looked at during your pre-service years.

PARTICIPANT TWO: (P2)

We talked about it a lot in graduate school. I talked a lot about it during my student teaching and during my observations, which was super helpful. It was something that was spoken to, but I never really dealt with until I was in practice. It was more real then. I needed to be more aware of the space I was walking into. I questioned what I needed to do to make sure my students felt safe and respected.”

“In my pre-service years, there was a lot more of data driven and intellectual discussion-like here is the information on this and let’s have a discussion. It was very theory based, very figurative and I couldn’t apply this until I was in practice. When I actually started teaching, I just had to be a student in this way of approaching and learning about anti-racist teaching. I think as time continued on, I had conversations with admin and other colleagues that sometimes it felt like more of a box that is being checked than a practice that is being executed or a culture that is trying to be cultivated. It feels like something that we just do and it has brought me to odds with my own philosophy and experience of how I approach it.”

PARTICIPANT THREE: (P3)

“Three words come to mind: social justice, anti-racist, culturally relevant.”

“These words were present in terms of reading or what the professor was lecturing about.”

“One class, we had the opportunity to create a lesson plan and part of that lesson plan, we had to write a sentence or two of how that fit into anti-racist teaching.”

PARTICIPANT FOUR: (P4)

“I think they used all the good words- all those buzz words. We didn’t get practicable techniques using it. Take the class on racism and how it exists in the system, but it did not feel like it was an education class versus like a history and policy class. Taking those ideas and applying them in the methods class, which was taught by the old white lady, it was never really integrated which I wish it was.”

PARTICIPANT FIVE: (P5)

“Terms such as multiculturalism and hegemony were used a lot.”

“A lot of concepts based around our society were built up the past that did not create a fair shake for everyone in 2022”

PARTICIPANT SIX: (P6)

“One huge thing was differentiation to make sure that we were hitting criteria in a way that helps individual students. There was so many different learning styles and gaps students come into our classroom with.”

“Equity was something that was really emphasized.”

Comfort

There was no specific question that highlighted “comfort;” however, participant five discusses comfort in relation to touchy subjects.

PARTICIPANT FIVE: (P5)

“I definitely feel uncomfortable when speaking about touchy subjects. I am identifying as a male in his early 30’s- my experience with these touch subjects is very one-sided. I am not a 16-year-old female sitting in my class. I cannot really understand where it comes from that area.

Student Teaching

There was no specific question that highlighted “student-teaching;” however, participant three discusses an experience during student teaching.

PARTICIPANT THREE: (P3)

“Back in my student-teaching experience, I was in an urban school where as a white woman, I was teaching to a predominately black classroom discussing Frederick Douglas with them. I was so nervous It was part of the curriculum already. I spent a lot of time talking to my cooperating teacher about how I should approach this. I saw my role really as a facilitator more than anything. So, there were a few times that I offered an opinion. I asked a lot of questions that gave a space to for students to talk about it. I tried really hard not to center myself. I tried really hard not to do that.”

Discussion

To reiterate, the one problem that this study focuses on is that teachers come into the classroom without being fully prepared to teach students of color. From the synthesized literature review, research has shown that throughout the history of U.S. public schooling, minorities have struggled to be treated as equals to their white and majority of peers in the classroom (Spring, 2001; Au, et. al., 2016). Furthermore, research suggest that anti-racist teaching is needed in the classroom for students to understand the origin of racism to disrupt White Supremacy culture. Racial inequities continue to linger in American society and is maintained through public institutions (Bonilla-Silva, 2003, p. 26). If anti-racist work helps students recognize stereotypes and prejudice, why is there no widely accepted inter-disciplinary approach for anti-racist teaching? Based on this question, the purpose of my study was to investigate the connection between anti-racist training for pre-service teachers and the effectiveness of implementing an anti-racist curriculum into the secondary education classroom. I used a qualitative study design, drawing on elements of phenomenology. The research question that this study focused on was:

- How can we make anti-racist teaching and pedagogy happen more regularly, more dependably, more systematically?

Further research is needed to help teachers meet the academic needs of students of color, and I believe that it is necessary for teachers to have the correct multicultural training to be able to implement an anti-racist curriculum. Researchers have argued that racial stigmas affect student-teacher relationships and that a positive relationship positively influences students (Zirkel & Cantor, 2004). However, teachers do not necessarily look at anti-racist teaching and their effects on students.

Based on the research question and my background, I decided to focus my research on first-year teachers. The reason was because first-year teachers are the bridging gap between pre-service teachers in teacher preparation programs and in-service teachers. Since I had the opportunity to interview first-year teachers, I developed interview questions. I decided that two interviews were necessary.

The purpose of my first interview was to make sure that my participants felt comfortable speaking with me. I wanted to make sure that all my participants were candid with me as that was one of the important things I wanted to highlight. I wanted to get the truth from them as that is one of the tenets from Critical Race Theory. The first interview had questions that helped me better understand them as a person, understand their background, and understand them as a teacher. The second interview with my participants was to better understand if participants used anti-racist teaching in their own classroom.

Through this qualitative study design, I drew on the elements of phenomenology. I interviewed six first-year teachers, identifying as three males and three females. Each participant had no more than three years of teaching experience. After reviewing all my participants interview transcripts, I was able to identify eight themes that related to my research question:

- Curriculum
- Anti-Racist Teaching
- Supporting Students of Color
- Teacher Responsibilities

- Purpose of School
- Culture
- Pre-Service Years
- Comfort

Listening to each audio-recorded interview and transcribing each interview, I came up with these eight specific themes and coded specific phrases from my participants that were discussed multiple times. Thinking about anti-racist teaching and the themes that emerged, all themes can fit within the Leading Educator’s beliefs. **Figure 3** states what Leading Educators believe in:

Figure 3: Anti-Racist Curriculum and Standard Beliefs

Anti-Racist Curriculum and Standards
<i>We believe...</i>
(1) The purpose of school is more than academics; our lessons offer the chance to integrate a focus on academics, social, emotional, cognitive, and identity development, and anti-racism to support learning, well-being, justice, and joy.
(2) College and Career Readiness standards are a foundation of equity for all students. Starting from standards-aligned materials helps to ensure students have the opportunity to engage with grade-level content.
(3) Students’ cultures and identities are valuable; lessons offer the chance to affirm and include students’ cultures as scaffolds for learning and to broaden students’ perspectives by learning about other cultures.
(4) Every student deserves both access to grade- level learning and the scaffolds to succeed with it, including scaffolds and extra-linguistic supports for students who are neurodiverse or emergent multilinguals.
(5) Students deserve learning that matters to them and is in service of their goals. Lessons have the power to invite students to make choices during learning, to have voice, and to see the relevance of learning to their lives, communities, and the world.

Using the “Anti-Racist Curriculum and Standards Beliefs” chart found in **figure 3**, I tied in each theme with each belief:

- **Curriculum:**
This falls under belief number two. Curriculum must be aligned to help ensure all students have the opportunity to engage with grade-level content.

Specifically looking at the theme of “Curriculum,” my hope was to better understand how first-year teachers developed curriculum and how they chose specific content. Participant one

explained that it is easier to collaborate with other teachers versus reinventing the curricular wheel.

Yet, on the other hand, participant two states how there are so many “holes” in the curriculum and that there is not much conversation about it. Yet, participant six explained how they choose their content- they base it on important historical concepts to teach. Participant three also speaks about picking authors of color to put into their curriculum.

Relating these responses back to the synthesized literature review, Picower (2021) discusses how racism in classrooms and curriculum reflect systemic racism. Thinking about what first-year teachers had stated about their curricular design, many of them discussed two different ends: having the opportunity to choose what they want to teach versus having a set curriculum, but there is no evidence that any of the first-year teachers discuss anti-racist teaching. Picower (2021) argues that in order to disrupt the white curriculum will depends on how racially literate teachers are. It is clearly evident that none of the first-year teachers I spoke with are racially literate in terms of curricular design.

In addition to curricular design, participants do not speak much about student-teacher relationships. Zirkel and Cantor (2004) discuss that racial stigmas can impede academic performance; however, participants do not speak heavily about student-teacher relationships. Zirkel and Cantor (2004) state the need to encourage positive inter-ethnic relationships to build that rapport with students.

When we think about students, many of them spend the majority of their time at school. Year after year, the school curriculum does not always reflect the demographics of the students, their families, or even their communities. This is a problem. Love (2021) argues that one way to erase students of color is through curriculum (Love, X). It is important that students see themselves. Participants did not speak much about representing their students in the curriculum. Teachers need to make sure student identity is not neglected.

The overall take-away from this specific theme is what participant six claims. Participant six tries to make sure all students are represented through the curriculum; however, due to the lack of experience, participant six admits that the curriculum does not represent all students as this is done unintentionally due to ignorance and lack of experience. It is important for students to feel validated and one way to do so is through representation.

- **Anti-Racist Teaching:**

Anti-Racist Teaching is defined as the approach to combat racism and focused on creating equal opportunity and to produce equitable outcomes for racially marginalized groups (Kailin, 2002). Looking specifically at Leading Educator beliefs, anti-racist teaching aligns with belief number three. Teachers who implement anti-racist teaching into the curriculum gives students the ability to not only see themselves in the curriculum, but it provides students with the ability to learn about other cultures and be open to diversity.

As a segue into the next theme: “Anti-Racist Teaching,” a lot of what was discussed was very general and not profoundly spoken about for various reasons. First off, my participants see “Anti-Racist Teaching” as a buzz word. None of my participants were able to provide concrete evidence that anti-racist teaching is present at their school.

In addition to the “buzz word,” my participants stated that the word was more like a checkbox. It was seen as a “we, teachers, discussed it during professional development-” and that’s

it. No further evidence is stated that first-year teachers took what they learned during their professional development and implemented it into their own classroom. First-year teachers stated that they do not know what anti-racist teaching looks like and to this end, do not know how to implement it either; however, one participant, participant six, was the only teacher that was able to really discuss “anti-racist” teaching. This teacher was able to talk about lessons that hit various controversial topics.

Even though none of the first-year teachers spoke about an “anti-racist” curriculum, it can be inferred that many of the first-year teachers need a better understanding of what an “anti-racist” curriculum looks like. In addition, first-year teachers need to collaborate more with their colleagues and to speak about these topics.

- **Supporting Students of Color:**

Supporting students of color aligns with belief number one. The purpose of school is more than just academics, but it falls in line with offering students the social emotional support and well-being.

In addition to anti-racist teaching, I wanted to better understand how schools support students of color. Participant responses, overall, show no evidence that schools support students of color, but participant six claims that the specific school they are at supports students by wearing shirt to promote anti-hate. Teachers may individually create safe spaces for their own students, but there is no evidence that schools, as a whole, support students of color based on the qualitative data.

- **Teacher Responsibilities:**

Academically, a teacher’s responsibility is to make sure lessons are planned and delivered to students; however, this aligns with belief number four as it states that “Every student deserves both access to grade-level learning and the scaffold to succeed with it.” Teachers have the responsibility to make sure student have access to grade-level material and are able to scaffold it to help students better understand content.

In relation to my research question, “How can we make anti-racist teaching and pedagogy happen more regularly, more dependably, more systematically” relates to my question of asking teachers how routinely they are looking at material that is free of bias, oppression racism, and under-representation. With this question, I asked my participants how often they do it individually, as a course team, and as a department. Across the board, my participants stated that they do this on an individual level, but do not do this with their course team or with their department. It is crucial that teachers look at their own biases and make sure the material they are presenting to their students are free of it also. Participant six highlighted the need to do a better job looking at curricular material not only individually, but also encourage the course team and department to do the same. Participant six claimed that they do things unconsciously and need to check materials so it is important to break the barriers of White Supremacy Culture. What would be helpful for teachers is to use the Leading Educator’s framework and to use the questions to help teachers reflect on their own practices. In addition, it can be adapted into course team meetings.

- **Purpose of School:**

The purpose of school aligns with belief number one that students are at school not only for academics, but also for social, emotional, cognitive, and identity development.

Based on participant responses, participants do state that they want students to have the opportunity to find their own identity, where they can also have conversations and obtain support from teachers and other mentors; however, as an outlier, participant one states that the students are going through the motions to obtain a diploma and the wish for school to be meaningful to students. Yet, participant six talks about “hierarchy” and “power.” It is so interesting that participant six brings up the fact of what schools should be like versus what schools are like. We are trained to place students in hierarchies and that’s how they are raised- to understand that there is a chain of power.

- **Culture:**

Culture aligns with belief number five, where students should be in an environment where learning matters to them and that they have a voice to see the relevance of learning in their lives, communities, and in the world. This can be cultivated in the culture of the school.

This leads into “Culture” and how this plays a major role in schools. Participant two discusses how the student body is diverse, looking at culture as “race.” Whereas participant three discusses culture in terms of how school is run by administration. Participant three discusses the problem of the disconnect between administration aims and goals with teacher’s day-to-day life. Yet, participant five discusses how culture is the expectations set by administration. Culture is looked at specifically through a teacher’s lens via administration.

- **Pre-Service:**

Pre-service years are times when pre-service teachers can learn theory and pedagogical practices before becoming a professional in the field.

Speaking with the participants and their pre-service years, participants mention that there is a lot of theoretical work done versus practical work. Participants also claimed that a lot of the concepts that were discussed during in-class instruction are looked at as “buzz words.” None of the participants spoke about how these “buzz words” were integrated into practice.

Relating back to Mary Dilworth (1992), she explained that many teacher-preparation programs are designed to prepare middle class, European American candidates, to teach middle-class, European American students, in mainstream schools. This clearly does not fit the demographics of schools today. In relation to that, participant three highlights her experience as a white woman in a predominately black classroom. She discussed how she needed to make sure she did not have any biases walking in and how she consciously needed to see herself as a facilitator of discussion rather than posing her own opinions and perspectives on specific subject matters. She discussed that it is important to make sure teachers are cognizant of their place in the classroom and to make sure they do not have any biases. It is important for teachers to make sure they understand that they should not pose any of their opinions on students.

- **Comfort:**

This is an outlier as participant five really discusses how they feel about talking about touchy subjects. It is deemed that race is considered a touchy subject and it is hard for the teacher to articulate about a certain subject if they cannot identify with the student.

This was an outlier that was found in the interview. I highlight this theme because it gives the perspective of understanding that not all first-year teachers are comfortable with their students and are still learning many things while teaching.

Another concern to highlight that participant four brought up was that they do not know how to have uncomfortable conversations with students regarding race, beliefs, and culture. Participant two explained how they wanted to have more professional development to learn how to carry out these types of conversations. As an outlier, the theme goes back to my understanding of the problem, how first-year teachers are not comfortable speaking about race, beliefs, and culture with students. There is no top-down support from administration, which is another problem that first-year teachers discuss.

The concerns many of the participants had besides not understanding anti-racist teaching was not having support or accountability from administration. There was no top-down support. Many of the first-year teachers shared anecdotal stories that were more about pedagogical and about curricular survival mode.

According to previous data from the Met Life Survey (2009) research states that teachers believe that their expectations can affect student outcomes; however, when teachers do not reflect students in their own curriculum, how do diverse student populations understand their own abilities? Teacher expectations strongly predict students' postsecondary education attainment- but this is not a causal relationship. If teacher expectations are systemically bias, it will continue to contribute to the sociodemographic gaps in education (Curwin, 2012). Even so, Picower (2021) states how racism in classroom and curriculum can reflect systemic racism. Curricular choices perpetuate white supremacy and educators who recognize them can disrupt them. Specifically, when speaking to my participants, many of them did not state that they have routinely reflected on their curricular choices as a course team or department.

Looking back at the literature review, Ford (2013) states ways to eliminate racial injustices and have racial harmony.

- All curricula must be analyzed to ensure accuracy and completeness. They must be examined to determine how they (re)cycling and supporting oppressive societal and cultural conditions.

In this study, all participants claimed they were able to reflect on their own practices, but did not do so as a course team or as a department. One thing that can be done is to encourage course teams to do this and to use guiding questions to reflect on their own material and curriculum.

- All subject and content areas must be presented from multiple and different (even opposing) perspectives. Students must be encouraged to think critically about the curriculum: Whose voices are they hearing and not hearing?

In addition to reflection, it is important for students to see both sides. It would be beneficial for course teams or for departments to be able to show this in many ways. Students who see both sides of certain issues or topics can develop critical thinking skills and to have an open mind about certain issues.

- Teachers must be prepared in colleges, professional development, and scholarship to foster a culturally responsive classroom climate for all students.

My participants had stated that many of their teacher-preparation programs did talk about multicultural education and culturally responsive teaching. However, many participants stated that as first-year teachers, they only saw these theoretically phrases as “buzz words” and that no one held them accountable to use them into practice.

Reflection, collaboration, and accountability are three things that are needed for teachers to be successful in looking at the materials they are presenting to students. In addition, the research from Jeffrey M. R. Duncan-Andrade (2005) also claims the need to rethink the approach to teacher development. He states that a space is needed to make sure successful teachers can reflect on their practice and share with their less successful colleagues. Based on the data that was collected, first-year teachers do not state anything about having a mentor teacher or veteran teacher they are able to reflect with. Duncan-Andrade (2005) also states that the need to of how curriculum should reflect diversity and for more teachers to advocate for culturally diverse students.

Researchers argued that racial stigmas impede academic performance, shape classroom climate and student-teacher relationships, and heavily influence student identity (Zirkel & Cantor, 2004). If the first-year teachers are not discussing their curriculum reflecting their students, then it truly shows that it can heavily influence student identity and affect them.

Overall, aligning with research from Welton, Owens, and Zamani-Gallaher (2018) to achieve the racial equity, there needs to be a shift in individual mindsets and institutions to an anti-racist ideology, which should start at the pre-service level. Through the data, it is evident that many first-year teachers need to reflect on their own practices and be given the opportunity to do so. When teachers have that opportunity, curricular choices can be made that can heavily influence student thinking. In addition, it can positively impact students where they are able to assess their own thinking and look at their own biases in which anti-racist teaching can be a solution for this.

Social Implications

The results of this study are important for future policy, practice, and/or theory. The data that was collected in this study demonstrates that first-year teachers do value education positively and want to make sure students are positively impacted in the classroom through identity development and cultural awareness. Based on the responses from the six participants, it showed that the pre-service training needs to do a better job at taking the theory of anti-racist practices and to encourage pre-service teachers to use it in their own student-teaching before becoming a professional in the field. Participants in this study have struggled to define anti-racist teaching and stated that they have not seen anti-racist teaching put into practice.

As a result of the study, it shows that many first-year teachers are struggling with pedagogical survival. First-year teachers are still learning the ins and outs of teaching; yet, with guidance from a mentor, collaborating with peers, and reflecting as an individual, course team, and as a department, would benefit first-year teachers. In addition, many first-year teachers are yearning for more professional development that would help them carry out these uncomfortable topics with their own students. Lastly, participants claimed they want more support from administration.

It is my hope that educators, students, and parents: all advocates for equity make use of this research to further understand the need for making anti-racist teaching and pedagogy happen more regularly, more dependable, and more systematically to make sure students understand the beauty of diversity and not be a part of a racist system that does not provide support for students of color.

Limitations

A limitation in this study is that findings are only based on six participants who are all first-year teachers. Future research cannot assume that these findings would be applicable across all first-year teachers. The sample size is limited, and this study only reaches out to a small group of educators, not representing an entire population. Using convenience sampling, it is entirely based on self-reporting interviews, not observing the classroom, or looking at student performance. There is no data that will show what teachers are doing in their classroom. Lastly, the data does not show how or if anti-racist practices lead to measurable academic gains.

Recommendations for Future Research

Found below are recommendations for further research:

1. The study's homogeneous criterion was a sample of only first-year teachers; however, a recommendation for future research is to not only talk to first-year teachers, but to also talk to professors, pre-service teachers, and veteran teachers. For this reason, future research may benefit from including a larger sample of participants.
2. Future research may also benefit from quantitative methods such as looking at surveys to also collect data.

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