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White Teacher Attitudes Towards Their Experiences With Anti-Racist Initiatives

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WHITE TEACHER ATTITUDES TOWARDS THEIR EXPERIENCES WITH ANTI-RACIST INITIATIVES

by

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DISSERTATION

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Approved By:

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Advisor   Date

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my adored family people, Matthew, Vivian, Simone, Marcus and

Kelvin. You inspire me daily to work for positive change in the world and continue to teach me

the greatness and power of love and belonging, the most precious gifts that all students deserve.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

'The anti-racist training was not a well-received topic; part of it is that we are all white and many don't have a sense of how different it is to be a person of colour. It was brushed off like it is not important, and it is not talked about by administration.'

Local Windsor area- Secondary High school teacher

Thanks to God '…that we are different from the United States, and we don't have the systemic deep roots they have had for years.'

Provincial -Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario

'I was representing a client in the magistrate's court in England. I attended court… and three times that day I was mistaken for being a defendant. The court security at first asked for my full name so that he could tick my name off the list of defendants. I explained that I was there as a barrister. Another legal representative told me to leave the courtroom and wait outside to sign in for my case. When I was in the courtroom trying to speak to the prosecutor, the court legal advisor shouted at me to get out of the courtroom.'

International-Alexandra Wilson, Black barrister in England

Regardless of the context, the truth behind the past and present racism in Canada and internationally is evident in the opening quotations. Racial perceptions have become part of every generation in every setting. Locally for some, it may seem simple to avoid, when overt forms of racism are most associated with the media and Canada's neighbours to the South. Racism seeps into multiple aspects of everyday living, through actions, behaviours and thoughts. The teacher

quoted above provides an example of the experience of working amongst white educators who do not feel affected by racism in their everyday lives.

On too many occasions to count, I have heard racial slurs towards Black and Asian cultures at my children's bus stop. I witnessed a white parent, who had discovered a dent on the back of his car, blame a 'n-----' for having done it. I was confused as he had just said he was unaware of when it happened, and then he confirmed that he did not see the person that did it. I walked away feeling completely deflated.

The tendency to forget or ignore the dark history of racial discrimination in Canada or the notion that widespread racism stops at the border is also highlighted by words of our leaders and political figures. As racial tensions rose during the COVID-19 pandemic, leaders of Canada started acknowledging the pressing need to talk about racism. In a similar address to the one of Doug Ford above, Francois Legault, the Premier of Quebec, stated 'I don't want us to compare ourselves to the United States. We have not experienced slavery and the history of the United States.' Slavery commenced in the 1800s in Canada and black bodies have suffered from continual discrimination, systemic barriers to employment and education and ongoing racial trauma well into the 20th century. Whether the words of Canadian leaders represent ignorance of the history of slavery in Canada or an active choice to present it as minimal, it highlights the pervasiveness of racism.

Alexander Wilson's description of being a Black barrister mistaken for a defendant, represents the social and historical constructions of race wherein exists the assumption that a Black individual would be unlikely to become a professional and furthermore be criminalized. This construction of the Black race biologically and ethnically presents the black body as being more threatening, more capable of violence and more likely to require force to control than a white body of similar size (Kendi, 2019). This long-standing social construction of race is evidenced from

1631, with Captain John Smith's description to the first English colonizers of New England that evil was incarnate to the black body (Davis, 1957). The legacy of racist power has continued to persistence in recent claims that black bodies make up the core population of those in the criminal justice system (Kendi, 2019). Discrimination in policing contributes largely to the overrepresentation of Indigenous and Black people in Canadian prisons. Indigenous adults represent around 3% of the Canadian population, yet Indigenous women make up 38% and Indigenous men make up 26% of provincial and territorial sentencing. It is important to note that these averages are higher because the Western provinces, such as Saskatchewan (78%) have a much higher incarceration rate of Indigenous people than Ontario (12%) and further east (Government of Canada Department of Justice, 2019). Shifting focus, Black people make up 3.5% of the general population, yet almost 9% of the prison population is Black (Morgan, 2018). In the United States, Blacks make up 12% of the adult population yet a striking 33% of the prison population. As a comparative statistic, 64% of adults are whites and they account for 30% of the prison population (Gramlich, 2019). This construction of race has inequitably laid the consequences of violence on Black individuals throughout history.

Anyone that takes the time to speak with a First Nation or Black Canadian about their reality of racism will uncover that it is consistent and persistent, leading them back to memories of childhood and comments at the end of a primary soccer game such as 'I don't want to shake your hand because it is Black' (Alberta elementary school student). The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada established in 2008 has pushed Canadians to come to terms with the history of the country with First Nations and to listen, to watch and show respect. This education can be a factor in the growth of empathy and contribute to the dismantling of racial oppression for First Nations individuals. The commission took six years with nearly 7000 heartbreaking stories, and

94 calls to action for a brighter future and avenues of healing for First Nations victims and their families (Fee, 2012).

Educational institutions have an incredibly important role in addressing and eliminating racism. Recognition of privilege, openness and cultural awareness is part of the important mission to educate Canadian students about Canada's history of institutionalized racism. It is with this approach that students can develop their own courage and challenge themselves to continuously learn and break down their own racialized notions. This development of global awareness, interconnectedness and democracy can become forces to overturn institutionalized structures that imprison or oppress marginalized students (Shields, 2009). Guiding and empowering students to advocate for social justice is in the power of teachers and administrators, yet there are many barriers to the realization of this opportunity.

A predominantly white teaching force can provide active protection of white supremacy through silence of racial issues and limited response to racial comments. The issue of how to transform ideologies of white teachers or how to inspire them to engage in difficult racial discourse is critically relevant (Picower, 2009). The avoidance of the concept of white privilege can equate to denial and the active shut down of conversations regarding race. White privilege is an individual experience rather than a social construct and provides an avenue for equity achievement (Vaught & Castagno, 2008). This difficulty in talking about race is defined by DiAngelo (2011) as white fragility and identifies white people as beneficiaries of inequity and segregation. A deeply internalized sense of superiority and unawareness or difficulty in admitting this causes many white people to become fragile in racial conversations. The notion of being associated with racism can arouse anger and defensiveness and maintain the racial status quo (Vaught & Castagno, 2008).

Education can create awareness that supports social change and thus is the key to breaking down the barriers of institutional racism. The perceptions that all teachers have regarding racism and their attitudes towards dismantling stereotypes perpetuated throughout history, is of the essence to establishing social justice.

Background

Historically, racism in Canada reveals issues of the under-teaching of generations of racial trauma for many. In an ever-increasing globalized world, Canada is often regarded as a country that is more open and embracing of pluralism than many others. It reflects a multitude of ethnocultural, racial and religious groups migrating for study, work and refuge. With multiculturalism manifested in the constitution through guarantees for religious churches, status of Aboriginals and immigration and integration strategies, inclusivity and progressiveness seem apparent, yet society perpetuates the status quo engrained in structural racism. Thousands of years before the well documented founding of Canada by Great Britain and France, the Aboriginal peoples named Canada as their ancestral homeland (Carr, 2008). They are now called First Nations for this reason, a title that ensured them countless stories of mistreatment over many decades rather than the deserving pride of the land they nurtured with their own hands.

Point Pelee National Park in the West corner of the province of Ontario provides an example of the hardships First Nations people endured. For 10,000 years, First Nations inhabited and built on that land, only to be evicted in the start of the 1920s (Fee, 2012). Today tourists can read a quotation on a placard in front of a home that highlights the perseverance of Canada's past: '*my mother was there when they were evicted, in 1922… they were all told to leave, not take anything, just their children."* Circumstances for the First Nations people worsened with the development of, and governmental support for residential schools, beginning in the 1830s.

Residential schools destroyed many families, leaving generations of trauma and needed healing lasting decades after their closing in 1996 (Kaspar, 2014). With a purpose to eliminate all aspects of Aboriginal culture and isolate students from family ties, residential schools persisted with a strict regime, inflicting physical, emotional, and sometimes sexual abuse on thousands of children (Kaspar, 2014). As noted by Elias et al (2014), the Indian Residential School System commenced a cycle of trauma that is passed on and currently affects four generations of Canadian First Nations Residential School Survivors.

Stepping further back into history, in the 1800s, slavery was established for people of colour in the North (Canada), resulting in ongoing racial discrimination for Black Canadians. The history of slavery is downplayed despite it being a large part of the nation building process. This history is deep yet not fully understood or accepted by mainstream Canada, despite continued issues for Black Canadians of discrimination in education, employment, segregation, over representation in prison and racial profiling (Carr, 2008). Canada has been led by the power within the construct of whiteness, wherein the perpetuation of inequities persists. Although racism is addressed both socially and politically, it is not commonly presented in the context of Canada as being the systematically debilitating barrier that it is.

Race is a social construct, and it is only through understanding and acknowledgement of this that we can address the barriers of structural racism. If the social construct of race is not identified, it remains invisible and persistent. We must understand that this part of history has profound significance in all aspects of our lives. Categories of race are '…fundamentally power identities because race is fundamentally a power construct of blended difference that lives socially. Race creates new forms of power: the power to categorize and judge, elevate and downgrade, include and exclude (Kendi, 2019, p.38).

Education is meant to be the provider of equity for all nations. In fact, as Mann asserted, 'schooling was to be the 'great equalizer' of human conditions…. and the creator of wealth undreamed of…' (Oaks & Rogers, 2006, p.7). Educational institutions have provided consistent advantages for white and wealthy citizens and disadvantages for those who are marginalized and with lower incomes (Oakes & Rogers, 2006). In the Canadian context, racial inequalities persist in additional funding for after the most desirable schools and neighbourhoods through the ability of families to fundraise for technology and equipment and because of increased access to quality teachers and facilities. Although funding is more equalized in Canada than in some parts of the United States, the demographic area within which a school resides in Canada leads to additional possible fundraising led by and supported by families who are financially capable. Racial inequalities beyond this are relevant when statistics of student graduation rates, discipline or dropout rates are examined. Despite Ontario's provision of excellent public education, racial minorities statistically perform lower and are at higher risk of dropping out. Toronto, Ontario students who are Latinx and Black have graduation rates of 76% and 77% respectively, while their Asian and white counterparts have graduation rates of 96% and 86% respectively (Wallace, 2019). The graduation rate of Black students does show improvements since The Toronto District School Board's 2007 publication of statistics reporting that the Black dropout rate is 40% (TDSB, 2017). Standardized testing lacks culturally relevant material and benefits the white bodies in school buildings who come from moderate or higher socioeconomic families (Eizadirad et al, 2016), leading to the reality that Black students have the lowest scores on the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test. The elimination of academic streaming in September 2021 is one example of the initiatives taken to improve graduation rates for racial minorities (TDSB, 2019). The perpetuation

of inequities between schools and communities is attributed to oppression through colorblind policies.

Racism is a systemic belief that maintains white supremacy in social contexts, and it thrives on the foundation where society is organized to the detriment of some and the benefit of others. The maintenance of this social status quo protects white dominance and secures their place in the hierarchy of power (King, 2016). King (2016) describes that pervasiveness of racism and implicit bias taking on a wide presence among communities across the globe.

> The construct of race not only speaks to the ways in which people are defined by their perceived skin color, but rather the systems of thought, control, and oppressions/privilege that are associated with that skin color. Our notion of race is one that is highly flexible and malleable to the needs and desires of a white oriented world (p.6)

The ability to overcome the power of the constructs of race is held within individual ability to critically reflect and the ignition of this lays within the realization of the many layers of racism and a desire to overcome it.

Problem

The attitudes of white teachers become a critically important aspect of racism and its dismantling. They work within the institutions that have power to inspire and empower students and they have the tendency to hold the structures of the dominant society within their every behaviour and action. Discriminatory behaviours and actions become normalized with underlying white dominance; yet the ability of teachers to be cognisant and morally courageous to work towards social change is the key to social justice. Teachers are typically supportive of cultural diversity and there is little evidence to show that they want to sustain hegemony, yet there is a gap in the literature connecting anti-racist interest with effective action (Forrest, Lean & Dunn, 2016) for white teachers.

In identifying as white, it is important to not perpetuate the social construct but rather to recognize race as a shifting context and not a biological one. In the eyes of critical whiteness studies, white teachers need to understand the socio historical construction of race and be able to recognize the role that whiteness plays in everyday society (Lynch, 2018). A healthy anti-racist white identity can be developed by actively and consciously acknowledging the need to dismantle the constructs of race with a mission to create an equal experience for all. The silence of educators on racially charged topics is a legitimation of whiteness and a display of fear in having critical conversations that point out racism and inequitable distributions of power (Costagno, 2008). Breaking the silence by tackling topics of race is a necessary avenue to explore teachers' resistance to anti-racism and advocate for anti-racist action in education.

The ministry of education in Ontario Canada developed a plan to address the racially charged climate in schools that became highlighted in the spring of 2020 largely because of police brutality and rising racial tensions during the COVID 19 pandemic that highlighted the history of marginalization and discrimination against Black people (Egede & Walker, 2020).   The implementation of anti-racist education mandated by the Ministry of Education in Ontario began at the start of the 2020 school year professional development, in continued recognition of the important role that teachers have in creating environments to nurture and facilitate best outcomes for all students.

As indicated at the beginning, not all white teachers embrace the need for anti-racist initiatives and exploring white teacher attitudes towards such training could provide direction in inspiring educators towards the adoption of anti-racist initiatives. Teachers that operate through a lens of deficit thinking and therefore the perpetuation of white hegemony are less open to anti-racist initiatives in education. Silence in or avoidance of dialogues regarding race allows one to

ignore the historical reality and therefore continue with preservation of white power (Castagno, 2008). Critical self-reflection is needed to truly realize that race is 'neither an essence nor an illusion, but rather an ongoing contradictory, self-reinforcing, plastic process subject to the macro forces of social and political struggle and the micro effects of daily decisions' (Lopez, 2000, p.165).

Teachers are in a position to either replicate and sustain social patterns of white hegemony or act as agents of change in combat of racism. Acknowledgement, support, and action for social justice through critical reflection and dismantling of the manifestations of white privilege within the classroom are a must in the twentieth century. Through the exploration of white teacher attitudes towards anti-racist initiatives, work can be exposed that is needed to be done to dismantle the identity of white as a position of power protected through colonialism, slavery and oppression. In turn this can foster respectful relationships that support excellence and belonging in education institutions.

Research Question and Design

This study will embrace a mixed method research design to explore the racial awareness of teachers in addition to the attitudes that white high school teachers have towards their introduction to anti-racist initiatives. The study participants will be teachers in Southern Ontario, and it will examine how white teachers feel about professional development concerning racism. The following is the subset of research questions that will help guide the study:

1) How do white teachers define racism?

2) Do white Teachers describe a prevalence of racism in education?

3) What are white teacher perceptions of anti-racist training and/or initiatives?

4) How comfortable are white teachers talking about race and racism?

5) What are the experiences of teachers in implementing anti-racist initiatives?

Personal Positioning

My interest in this topic is influenced by personal feelings and experiences. I am a white, cisgender woman who has always been sensitive to marginalized groups within communities. In my journey of cultural exploration, I have taught in six countries overseas. One of my overseas teaching experiences was in the Middle East and while there, during Ramadan and school breaks, I travelled to countries like Bangladesh, India and Jordan. The supervisor of visa approvals at my international school told me in jest that people vacation to places like Paris, rather than Dhaka. We shared laughter over my 'holiday' choices, and I told him that his suggestions were sterile and well-travelled, and that I wanted to better understand and experience things I did not know well, including the lived experiences of those who face oppression. Having white skin does not guarantee that one will have an easy road, but it will not be the reason for struggles in life. Black, Indigenous, and other marginalized individuals endure countless experiences of discrimination and barriers in education, employment and society, wherein people see their body before their character and allow the influence of racial constructs to dictate thoughts and behaviours.

In 2014, while living in Australia, my partner's colleague got on Flight MH370 and left this physical world with the greatest mystery in aviation history. This hit very close to home as this colleague was the father and husband of an expat family, just like my partner. The pilot had an Arabic name and theories of pilot suicide and other tragic explanations rapidly developed as we followed closely hoping or an answer. Every time a devastating story makes breaking news, I fear the inevitable effects on the rest of the population, if the name and face attached to the list of suspects is someone from a marginalized population. When Black, Indigenous or Middle Eastern people are pictured in the media in negative ways, it is easy for the audience to forget that they too

make up many of our world's productive contributing members of society. The portrayed media images perpetuate social constructs of race.

I am inclined to be empathic to marginalized populations in my role as an educator. I have been exposed to the struggles that marginalized students face. I have seen first-hand that it is difficult for them to make friends, find jobs, and deal with comments and looks based on initial judgement and negative assumptions that remain the foundation of structuralized racism. I have seen in my community the strong hold that racism has on white individuals who have not taken time to self-reflect and acknowledge the social patterns of white hegemony. I have heard numerous references towards Mexicans and their purpose to do work for white people, towards Asians and their delivery of disease and inability to communicate, that it is no wonder cultures tend to keep to themselves, where exposure to the debilitation of overt racism is not endured. I have two neighbours from China who have lived in Canada for many years. One family told me that in 20 years of living in Canada, they have been to a Canadian's home two times, and both were mine: one when my last son was born, and the other was my 40th birthday. The mother of the other Chinese family, who moved in in 2019, knocked on my door at Christmas 2020 to deliver some homemade sushi and say Merry Christmas. I was incredibly moved by this and delighted in the evidence that my efforts to make them feel welcome have been successful, not to mention the deliciousness of the sushi that my family enjoyed. I have treated these neighbours just as I do all my neighbours, with a smile and conversation, if they seem interested. I find it touching that these simple friendly gestures have meant so much to them, while I feel sadness that such treatment has not been a common experience for them.

Overview of Methods

Data were collected and analyzed with a mixed method approach through surveys, semi-structured interviews and existing literature. I set out to gain an understanding of white teachers' perceptions of and resistance to anti-racism training.

I first conducted research through distribution of a survey. A Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS) was designed by Neville et al (2000) to measure awareness of racial privilege and institutional discrimination. This provided insight into the racial attitudes of educators. I incorporated the likert scale data analysis connecting possible age, years of service, ethnicity, and other demographic points with tendencies to be more or less aware of racism in general. From the survey participants, I selected interview participants who represent a varying degree of racial awareness, according to the survey responses.

Building on the results obtained on the survey, I proceeded with qualitative research through semi structured interviews with eight white teachers. These two data sources, in addition to a critical look at the literature, provided a unique understanding of the perceptions that teachers have regarding the relevance and importance of actively dismantling racial constructs and the incorporation of anti-racist practices into their professional and personal lives.

Conceptual Framework

This study is viewed through a constructivist lens as I set out to establish an understanding of white teacher perspectives of anti-racist initiatives and how these perspectives influence actions and behaviours through the sharing of experiences, contributing to co-construction of knowledge (Bhattacharya, 2017; Creswell, 2018; Flick, 2018). Furthermore, this mixed methods study, where inferences will be made across qualitative and quantitative databases, is informed by the sensemaking theoretical framework, as well as Critical Whiteness Studies (Creswell, 2018).

Sensemaking is the process of making meaning based on personal experiences and influences. This ongoing process throughout life, continues to shape and rationalize individual's behaviour and understanding of the world. This allows one to find knowledge produced by the unique sensemaking processes of individual white teachers (Kapucu, 2007). Various contexts and identities lead to teacher construction of meaning and directs how they define and take action with different issues. The sensemaking theoretical framework will help to understand white teacher racial attitudes, perceived understanding of its relevance and how this affects behaviour in school buildings.

Critical race theory is a paradigm of research that assumes racism is permanent and pervasive and challenges the dominant cultures claim to neutrality. The goal of Critical Race Theory is the elimination of racial oppression in society structures and institutions (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006). An offshoot of this paradigm is the theoretical lens of Critical Whiteness Studies. Whiteness carries a historical high value, and this is still the case for those who identify as white. The significance of race is found only in social constructs, rather than having any biological relevance. Critical Whiteness Studies is based on the problem wherein white and whiteness have been made normal and superior and thus depreciated the value of those who identify with other racial categories.

Whiteness provides to those who possess it some invisibility, in a racial context. Whiteness is the norm rather than a race. Social identity affects self-esteem, social status, and attitudes towards other groups. Critical Whiteness Studies is committed to disrupting racism by revealing the invisible structures that produce and reproduce white supremacy and privilege. This lens assumes a connection of racism with white supremacy. It examines the meaning of white privilege and advances the importance of high alert and awareness of whiteness and white privilege among

white people while examining the complicit role of white privilege in racism (Matias & Mackey, 2016).

Critical Whiteness Studies supports my methods and helps to conceptualize my approach and develops questions that are unimposing and effective at understanding white teacher attitudes towards anti-racist initiatives. An engagement with this theory, in addition to sensemaking roots my questions in sociological constructs that can help to connect data from three resources.

The ontological relativist perception of reality was a key foundation in the search for meaning within an educator's unique personal position. This conception of reality leads to multiple versions of reality, created by the shaping of how individuals see things through life experiences (Burrell & Morgan, 2017).

Overview of Literature

'If you want to understand my career addressing anti-Black racism you need to understand the experience of Eighteen-year-old me in a class with Professor Rushton [in the late 1980s] telling me that you are genetically inferior, you are intellectually inferior and no one challenging him.'

-Dr. Notisha Massaquoi

Professor Rushton at the University of Western Ontario perpetuated the cycle of oppression by articulating his theory of racial inferiority in a time when a student's right to question and challenge racial constructs was not realized or executed. Dr. Notisha Massaquoi was at the time the only black student in her section of the class. This occurred in the 1980s, but this emergence and continuation of blatant and systemic racism has been a part of Canada's history for hundreds of years.

In overviewing the history of racism in Canada, it is important to cover the years between the start of the 1800s and the 1980s, where many children as young as four years old were taken

from their families and sent to residential schools across Canada. With the goal of assimilation, parents were threatened to never see their children again if they fought the governmental mission. The occurrences in these residential schools are a disgrace to the history of Canada and the stories of survivors are filled with accounts of psychological, physical, emotional and sexual abuse (MacMahaon, 2017; Backhouse, 1999; Denis, 2020).

Much literature exists such as 'A North Side View of Slavery' revealing the hideous treatment, bodily torture and deprivation of civil rights that make up the deplorable situation of slavery in Canada, setting the foundation for hundreds of years of extending and perpetuating oppression (Drew, 1856). The history of slavery in Canada normalized mistreatment of Black Canadians and socially constructed inferiority and superiority among races, void of biological relevance. Perpetuating these constructs of race allows for white supremacy to dominate and facilitates the lack of dialogue around race and racism. If silence exists, the suppressor continues to maintain power.

Racism affects the perception that educators, law officers and general citizens have of marginalized people (Dancy, 2018). It affects the way they approach and treat Black Canadians, First Nations, Middle Easterners, Latinx and Asian populations, with tendencies for various forms of discrimination including increased force, lower expectations, and language ineptness. Although race has no inherent meaning, its integral part of power relations, struggle and oppression clearly indicate the prevalence and effects of a system of advantage rooted in race in Canada (Marx, 2006; Mullings, 2016).

Developing and acknowledging an awareness of white privilege facilitates the acceptance of responsibility to work towards fairness and shared humanity. Whiteness was constructed more than two centuries ago during colonialism when the Europeans colonized many countries with a

successful desire for assimilation to European values, and we see the deep-rooted affects today (McLean, 2013). Marginalized populations suffer from greater discrimination and inequity within education (Dumas, 2016). Anti-Blackness in the context of COVID-19 and the reoccurring rise of the Black Lives Matters movement in response to white police brutality reverberates the power of white hegemony that needs to be realized and dismantled.

A deep internalized sense of superiority creates difficulty in willing to acknowledge what maintains power and therefore fragility to the threat of racial discourse. White fragility is a response to an unwelcomed connection to racism (DiAngelo, 2015). Passive behaviours towards racism go hand in hand with a common claim to not be racist, yet the steering clear of such topics only perpetuates the hierarchical divides in society (Kendi, 2019).

White teachers in particular need to be able to enter a conversation and examine their fear, confusion and hope around race (Lynch, 2018). Prior research supports the need to set goals and implement approaches that promote equity. Guiding an empowered sense of self for students is in the hands of educators. It takes moral courage to come to terms with white fragility, challenge the status quo and face forward for social change so that marginalized students can be promised a better future (Shields, 2009). More specifically, whether a teacher works in a diverse school setting, their attitudes and views towards racism and awareness of anti-racist action are critical factors in achieving equitable education for all (Escayg et al, 2017). Bringing anti-racist dialogue into classes of a predominantly white building is critical in itself as it shows and models to all students, the collaboration that is needed to make social change.

Without efforts to fill the gap in educational research about how to connect white teacher attitudes towards the importance of anti-racism with their approaches within school buildings, a world where we are unaffected by socio historical constructs of race cannot be attained.

Definitions

In this section, the use of terms pertinent to the study will be defined. These include whiteness, white hegemony, white fragility, systemic racism, deficit thinking and anti-racism.

Whiteness is the social construct that is associated with dominance and superiority that white fragility helps to protect. Norms of whiteness play out in the role of a teacher all throughout educational institutions in Canada. With the goal of education being improved learning for all students, educator development needs to include the naming and acknowledgement of whiteness, to find value in anti-racist initiatives within school buildings (Lynch, 2018).

White hegemony describes the notion that people of white skin colour take on a role of dominance over all other races, as a product of structural racism. White hegemony is represented by observations within society of how white men and women benefit from racialized norms by their greater presence in career pathways that require education, provide benefits, and offer reasonable time off (Carr, 2016). White hegemony is an integral part of the literature and background to this study, as it describes the influence and dominance of white norms as they contribute to the perpetuation of oppression for marginalized people in education and society as a whole.

White fragility is an individual's tendency to shy away from admitting or acknowledging their skin colour related privilege. It is a key contributor to the maintenance and persistence of white hegemony in that avoidance of racially charged issues allows for the continuation of status quo according to white norms (DiAngelo, 2015). This concept plays out when white teachers perceive anti-racist initiatives to be unimportant and thus ascertain a disinterest in speaking of white power and affecting the beneficiary social structures.

Systemic racism shows up across all areas of society including employment, education, the representation of marginalized people in prisons and discrimination in areas of housing and healthcare (Kendi, 2019). Racism is developed through creation of thinking a hierarchy of race exists and it is maintained and protected by giving power and preference to one race over another. This plays out in classrooms when culturally relevant curriculum is not in place to connect to the experiences and worldviews of diverse students. It plays out when teachers respond minimally or remain passive with issues of race as well as when they themselves do not critically reflect on perceptions of marginalized students, influenced by social constructions of race because of Canada's dark history. The system of hierarchy is perpetuated by discrimination in all areas toward races deemed inferior.

Deficit thinking is a product of structural racism and an integral part of maintaining white supremacy by wrongly associating lesser ability and value to marginalized races (Valencia, 2012). The notion that marginalized students do not do well comparatively in school due to their families having deficiencies that affect their learning is deficit thinking. Deficit thinking of teachers can connect with resistance to anti-racist initiatives. In a similar way, dismantling racial thoughts of inferiority connects to acknowledging the value of racial discourse and anti-racist work in education.

Racism is based on a socially constructed system of advantage and therefore should not be passively dealt with, but rather challenged. Racism is rooted in the belief that different races have distinct characteristics and abilities, distinguishing them into a perceived level of inferiority or superiority (Carr, 2008). Teachers are in a critical position to take on responsibility to address and explain the historical roots of systemic racism. Refraining from making racist comments is not sufficient, but rather an urgent need exists to advocate and push for anti-racist approaches and

action by speaking out when racism is observed as well as speaking out even when it isn't. Understanding how to encourage and nurture the development of anti-racist educators is a critical factor in moving towards an equitable society where fear is evaded and empowerment universal.

Limitations and Delimitations

A delimitation of this study is that it drew participants from white teachers who are connected to the social media 'Teachers Helping Teachers with Technology' group and thus neglects possible significant teacher perspective differences within one area. Analysis of data from white teachers from this specific group will not access all teachers who could positively contribute to the research process. I only interviewed teachers who are not connected through self-identity or culture to Black, Indigenous, Asian or Middle Eastern students. Any conclusions drawn from this study are also made with an awareness that all participants *self-identified* as white and volunteered to participate. Regardless of the noted limitations, the survey data in conjunction with eight sets of interview data provided significant data to analyze.

Significance

This study emerges from a cultural and social context within unprecedented times of a global pandemic where the pervasiveness of racism has become more apparent as a part of society at large. The deep racial and socioeconomic divides across the continent of North America, has inspired needed attention and change to approaches of educators in the foundations that build our societies, our educational institutions. This study, therefore, is both timely and contributes to literature related to white teacher perceptions of racism and its presence in school settings. It could help to understand resistance to critical discourse on anti-racist action, and how to work towards it becoming an integral part of all educational institutions.

This exploration contributes in important ways to educational research and our understanding of how to transform socially justice minded teacher beliefs into actions of advocating for marginalized students through anti-racist action. This study inspires the need for white teachers to acknowledge the invisible embodiment of white hegemonic power and work towards the dismantling of systemic racism.

My research will help the school board by providing data that can inform development of the most effective Professional development regarding the critical issue of race and what teachers have successfully done to interrupt the silence that nurtures systemic racism. This research can be used to improve the effectiveness of the school board's efforts to support change and bring social justice to all students.

I hope to inspire critical racial discourse that can lead to emerging themes and subthemes that can effectively inform future professional development. Silence is the largest factor in facilitating the strength of systemic racism and my work and ambition is to advocate change in this so that all learners and specifically those who are marginalized, have a safe and equitable learning experience.

Issues of inequality need to be addressed on a greater scale so that individuals become more comfortable addressing their own inner feelings. Racialized identities are constructs which play into all aspects of our socialization. This study may help to identify ways to make schools more inclusive and improve social and academic experiences. It brings light to the need for a shift from white discomfort to anti-racist behaviour and encourages scholarly discourse that can effectively contribute to inequity awareness and action for necessary social change.

CHAPTER II: THE REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Literature Map

This map connects a societal system of barriers within healthcare, employment access and education to the important role that high school teachers have in educating and normalizing racial discourse within secondary education institutions. This discourse has the power to break the very silence that strengthens racism while empowering, educating and strengthening the voices of up and coming contributors to a socially just society at large.

Systemic Racism

Pervasiveness of Racism in Canada

Inequality and Implicit bias

Canada's History of racism

First Nations   Black Canadians

Need to Acknowledge

White privilege   White Hegemony   Whiteness   White Fragility

Racism

Importance of White Teacher Attitudes Towards Anti-Racist Initiatives

Beliefs - Dismantle - Action
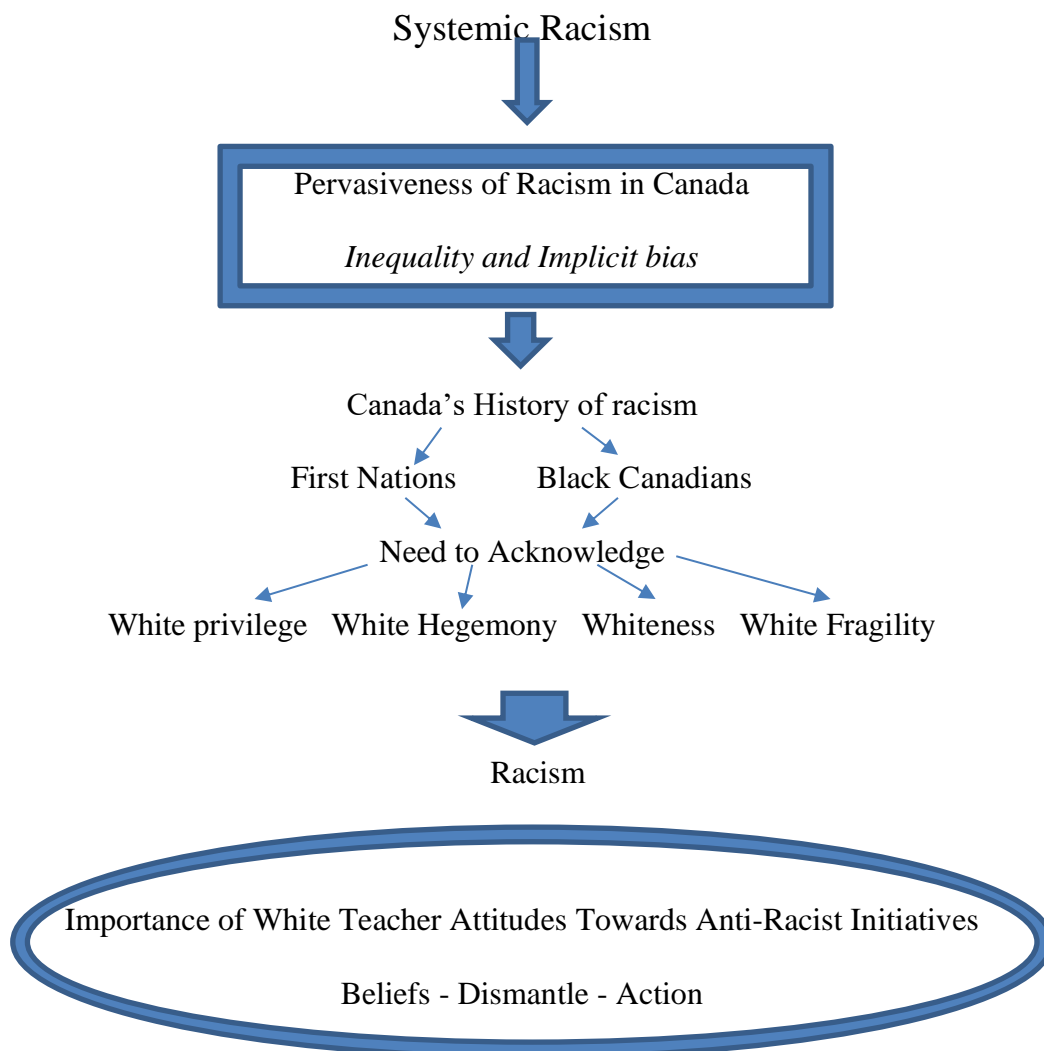
Systemic Racism

Historically, racism has contributed to economic functioning through the disenfranchisement of marginalized members of society and the enrichment of their counterpart dominant groups. Racialization forms the foundation of social significance and constitutes a prominent feature of society connecting thought, knowledge and how we come to know things with Whiteness and White Privilege (Carr, 2017). Ladson-Billings and Tate (2006) describe race as a significant factor in determining inequity and as a way of referring to and disguising forces, events, and expressions of social decay far more debilitating than biological factors ever could be. Race as a theoretical lens for assessing social inequality has profoundly impacted the thinking of society (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006; Giroux, 2008; Lynn & Parker, 2006). A portion of the literature reviewed going forward is American based as it sets the precedent for the situation of slavery in North America. Based on the much larger population of the United States and the more deeply entrenched and long-standing history of slavery, literature is readily available, and it connects to and mirrors many of the dynamics within the history of Slavery in Canada.

The racial caste system in the United States named Jim Crow, represented the legitimization of Anti-Black racism. This racial caste system operated in southern and border states between 1877 and the 1960s. Jim Crow was a series of rigid Anti-Black laws which delegated African Americans to second class citizens. This social construct of race was actively promoted by Christian ministers who taught that whites were chosen, and Blacks were cursed to be servants. The church perpetuated this furthermore by actively claiming that God supported racial segregation (Pierce, 2017). Historically, all major institutions reflected and supported the oppression of Blacks (Woodson, 2006; Suzuki & Valencia, 1997; Mansfield & Kehoe, 1994).

Under Jim Crow laws, social interactions were regulated by placement of signs to indicate what facilities Blacks and whites could use. Black facilities were either not available or far less cared for and social etiquette was expected to include demonstrations of admiration for white individuals and admittance of inferiority for Blacks (Talley & Rajack-Talley, 2017). This power hierarchy brought violence and threats to society that have persisted into the 20th century. To drink from the wrong fountain or try to vote could put a black man's home, job, and life at risk (Ritterhouse, 2001).

Ritterhouse (2001) explores the emerging violence under Jim Crow law where whites could beat Blacks who had little legal support within a white dominated court system. Violence was used as a method of social control to supress potential that was seen in Black members of society. Lynchings were public violent murders by mobs between the 1880s and 1968 and 3500 out of 5000 lynchings held Black men and women as victim. Lynching was a strategy to keep newly freed Blacks from emerging out of their hierarchal socially constructed place in society.

The oppressor does not realize or acknowledge that race is a socially constructed reality, and a lack of self-examination leads to more oppression. Education and stories can help the oppressor to self-reflect on passive or active racism. Delpit (1988) examines the experience of a Black graduate student who teaches in a predominantly Black community and attends a predominantly white institution.

> There comes a moment in every class where we have to discuss 'the Black issue' and what's appropriate education for Black children. I tell you, I'm tired of arguing with those white people, because they won't listen. Well, I don't know if they really don't listen or they just don't believe you. It seems like if you can't quote Vygotsky or something, then you don't have any validity to speak about your own kids. Anyway, I'm not bothering with it anymore, now I'm just in it for the grade. (p.1)

A colourblind approach is a way of thinking that implies that racial classification has no effect on one's opportunities (Marx, 2006). In this quotation, reference to the 'Black issue' indicates an acknowledgement that colour matters, yet the disregarding of the student's own colour and personal experience and knowledge to have validity in the matter suggests colour blindness on the professor's part. The possible colorblind approach of this student's professor coincides with a tendency to oversimplify race or naturalize whiteness to eliminate the notion of difference and thus perpetuate the pervasiveness of racism. Colorblindness shows up in all aspects of society when people claim to not see colour and therefore do not acknowledge barriers that people of colour experience in education, health care, legal systems, and all aspects of life. This takes a detrimental toll on the experience of marginalized individuals who are left in the hands of a white dominant society, wherein white norms and expectations are presented in both curriculum and educator thoughts, actions, and sensitivity to non-white counterparts (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006; Mullings et al, 2016; Marx, 2020).

The depth of racial issues historically is examined in the book 'The Miseducation of the Negro', and described by Woodson (2006):

> The same educational process which inspires and stimulates the oppressor with the thought that he is everything and has accomplished everything worthwhile, depressed and crushes at the same time the spark of genius in the Negro by making him feel that his race does not amount to much and never will measure up to the standards of other peoples. (p.10)

It is clear that race matters and that racism is engrained in North American life rather than it being excusable as isolated acts. Even at the same social class level, studies show that in Canada Blacks underperform compared to whites and furthermore in school buildings, Black males are suspended more often for non-contact violations such as wearing clothing inappropriately (Mullings et al,

2016). This integral part of our society has detrimental implications on society as a whole and on the well-being of marginalized individuals.

Racism evolved from the detriment of slavery to a reconstructed system where public school perpetuated the racial privileges of the white world while dehumanizing conditions of the Black world. Caste codes that were once 'dressed in Jim Crow clothing' continue today in schools, prisons, heavily policed communities, courts, housing, and health systems (Pierce, 2017). Ladson-Billings & Tate (2006) call out the caste system on equal terms as the ongoing educational debt. Schools manage and produce social life and there is little documented evidence to show intention to change the economic competition between white and non-white worlds as an ultimate product of systemic racism. Robinson (2000) describes in detail that:

> The conflicts between American creed and reality, the contradictions of American society, the distortions of its social structures and political institutions ensued from its dependence on slavery and would resound throughout the system into the twentieth century. Slavery, then, was not a historical aberration, it was not a ''mistake'' in an otherwise bourgeois democratic age. It was, and its imprints continued to be, systemic. (p. 200)

In a Canadian context, the same evolution exists from slavery to a world of socially constructed racial privileges, creating the persistent ongoing barriers that bring challenges to the everyday lives of marginalized individuals. In the late 1850s, an influx of African Americans emigrated from California to escape the Jim Crow laws. Not long after settling on Vancouver Island and other small communities in Canada, did deep racial discrimination persist by banning Blacks from restaurants, turning them away from hotels and limiting their access to equal opportunities for work and homes (Henry, 2010). The escape to Canada in those times did not end up offering the true freedom individuals were seeking out but rather just freedom in the sense of official independence, alongside the burden of persistent racial discrimination.

Pervasiveness of Racism in Canada

Racism is a pervasive and destructive social force in Canada and internationally. Many know what racism is in a Canadian context but do not think of it as the destructive force that it is (Ghosh, 2008). Interviews conducted by Marx (2005) revealed white individual attachment to racism yet a desire for distance from the topic and even hostility towards the verbalized idea of racism. Minimization of racism or a belief that it is no longer a strong influence in society is a significant phenomenon. An exploration of the historical effects of racism and acknowledging that little work has been done to oppose it, validates the need to address racism in a direct manner.

Historically, Black workers in North America could not earn as much, attain decent jobs and they lived farther away from where they worked (Reich, 1971; Syed & Hill, 2011). Layoffs and recessions hit Black workers harder, and they coped with inferior housing, higher insurance, less access to public facilities and harassment by police and the law. Encompassing all of that, the North American empire was founded on racist extermination of American First Nations, financed by profits from slavery, and was extended by interventions throughout history supported by white supremacy (Reich, 1971). This history, in addition to assumptions of a genetic basis of inferiority and cultural accumulation of deficits, perpetuates the current day social constructs of race (Valencia, 1997). There has been academic recognition that racism was overcome in the 1960s when the civil rights legislation in Canada made racial discrimination illegal (Tatum, 1999), yet today it is an enduring issue.

Racism has increasingly been recognized as immoral, yet progress is slow as barriers to racial equality are embedded in cultural values and policies. After the civil rights legislation, empathy for Blacks was something many 'normal' whites experienced. A dominant racist or blatant bigot could easily be described yet the claim to be non-racist coincided commonly with

sympathy, agreeance of equity and implicit bias that deems others as inferior (Divido, 2008).

Codjoe (2001) relays the narrative of a Black Canadian student in Alberta:

> What I always did, especially in class, was I'd always want to be the best or do the best in the classroom, disprove all those beliefs that Blacks can't do this, can't do that. A lot of cases, I'd come up with the top mark and a lot of students would be surprised. I remember in one of my math classes, I had one of the highest marks, and this one girl came up to me and she goes, 'You got the highest mark'. I'd go, 'Yes I did'. She goes, 'I didn't think that was right'. 'Why not?' She says, 'I thought you were dumb originally, and stupid'. I just laughed but I just brushed it off. [These incidents] always make me try to do my best and disprove that Blacks can't be smart like whites. (p.350)

The reality of racism in Canada and the scars it leaves on the lives of Black individuals can be realized with a closer look at how the institution of law behaves with impunity towards Black citizens. Throughout history, the law has acted to oppress rather than protect people of colour (Thornhill, 2008).

The psychological damage, emotional pain and personal humiliation of racism leaves an impact on lives that is underestimated. A person's own identity is not regarded with the pervasiveness of racism. An individual who identifies as Canadian is often forced to take on a racial identity for the consistent reminders that society provides to them. How one is viewed inevitably has an effect on self-identity. Racism permeates every aspect of life therefore it is critical to consider meaningful social reproduction through schooling (Codjoe, 2001; Mansfield & Kehoe, 1994). Educators must engage students in topics of racism and produce an educational climate to address difficult issues and raise awareness for the development of socially equitable theory and practice that is anti-racist.

Diversity in Pedagogy

The dominant teaching paradigm in Canadian classrooms is cultural assimilation for socialization of minority students into mainstream culture. Histories and cultures of diverse

students need a greater representation in curriculum and classroom practice (Codjoe, 2001; Ghosh, 2008). The historically euro-centered school system has perpetuated the social constructs of both inferior and dominant races. This in connection with present day white dominated media production of Anti-Black racism guarantees the reproduction of racism through over representation of Black violence to feed public skepticism and fear of the Black body (Mullings et al, 2016). Amongst the arduous challenges in the fight for equity, Roman (1993) describes the critical importance of education in dismantling negative racial implicit biases and fighting the pervasiveness of racism:

> White educators have a responsibility to challenge and work with racially privileged students to help them understand that their (our) attempts to assume the positions of the racially oppressed are also the result of our contradictory desires to misrecognize and recognize the collective shame of facing those who have been effaced in the dominant texts of culture, history, and curricular knowledge. (p. 84)

It is through critical reflection of one's own thoughts and biases and realization of the oppression that society is based on for those who are marginalized, that will lead society as a collective to attaining true diversity in classroom pedagogy.

First Nations in Canada

For years, many Canadians remained or still remain unaware of the terrible treatment of Aboriginal people and the acquisition of their land through anything but official channels. Between 1874 and 1996, 150,000 students were forced to attend 141 residential schools, often run by main-stream churches, such as Roman Catholic, Anglican, or United Churches. This punitive school system was intended to assimilate Aboriginal people and destroy their language and culture. Aboriginal students endured abuse and deplorable treatment and for years and it seemed like Canada just simply ended the chapter with their closing in 1996 and moved on (Fee, 2012). Of

these students, only just over half lived into the 20th century and 80,000 lived beyond 2012, indicating an immense continuation of mental and physical challenges that drastically affected life span and life expectancy. It is important to acknowledge these ongoing effects as First Nations need to continue to be supported in an equitable manner. With a high exposure to trauma and dysfunction, First Nation communities deserve the right to a higher degree of support and guidance to help overcome and heal from their past, to ensure that future generations can be set up for success.

The Missing Children Project emerged with intention to document the children who died in residential schools by malnutrition, suicide, disease, fires, and accidents and successfully did so for over 4000 children. The reality of suicide for children is echoed in many aspects of the official Truth and Reconciliation document (TRC, 2015).

> Distressed, neglected, and abused, some students killed themselves. [One survivor] spoke of a boy who hung himself for fear of discipline at the File Hills school in Saskatchewan. The poor youth was in some kind of trouble which was not so terrible but apparently it seemed that way to him. (p.3)

Official documentation stopped in 1917 as an attempt to silence the horror of government approved treatment to Aboriginal peoples. Dr. Peter H Bryce reported a death rate of 24 % for all schools and as high as 75% for one school in 1909. No action was taken for serious health and medical conditions and his reports were no longer required after 1917. Bryce continued to document and wrote a book 'The Story of a National Crime' as his way to make the truth public. As an amendment to the Indian Act, Indigenous peoples were prevented from hiring lawyers between 1927 and 1951 and being denied this normal route caused many to give up. Churches began to apologize in the late 1980s, but some thought insincerely so as an attempt to shut the emerging stories of Canada's dark present and past (Fee, 2012). Residential schools led to a stark

overrepresentation of Aboriginal children in foster care and young men and women in prison. This has left traumatic effects on families and lives on in generations well beyond the victims themselves (MacMahaon, 2017).

Stephen Harper, the Prime Minister of Ontario between 2006 and 2015 made an apology for residential schools in 2008, yet since then, the government has spent far less per capita on education for Aboriginal students in comparison to other students (Dorell, 2009). Within school buildings themselves, lessons have not traditionally focused on this history, therefore students have been taught little about Aboriginal peoples. In a dedicated effort to remedy years of silence, the Truth and Reconciliation of Canada was active from 2008 to 2015 with a mission to document the experiences of victims and to inform all Canadians about what happened in the Residential schools (Niezen, 2017). Survivors received $10,000 for the first year they suffered in school and $3,000 for subsequent years. Some received up to $275,000 for physical, emotional and sexual abuse. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission set out to change Canada's resistance to restorative justice, 'for the child taken, for the parent left behind. It might also add: 'For the Canadians kept in the dark.'' (Fee, 2012, p.6). Findings throughout the Commission explicitly prove that there were never any established standards or regulations to ensure health of residential school students. The schools were not adequately funded, and thousands of students went to school and never returned to their families. Families often had no recorded information of what happened to their loved ones nor where they were buried, if at all (TRC, 2015). There is to date still much work that is needed to be done to uncover the unanswered questions of many families, but the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is the first National effort to start this process and has set the path for an equitable direction for First Nations in Canada.

MacDonald & Steenbeek (2015) note that residential schools have impacted all aspects of Aboriginal life, including health, cultural roles, economics, living conditions and access to services and equity. The reality of today is broken families and discrimination. The experiences of parental loss, lack of medical care, forced acculturation and bullying of Aboriginal students have led to mental health challenges and countless facets of social marginalization due to racism and lack of opportunity to retain or develop Aboriginal culture (Barnes & Josefowitz, 2019). It is important to raise awareness of the historical, political and social circumstances of Aboriginal peoples as well as Black Canadians, to understand the barriers that society has put in place from the intersection of socially constructed racial perceptions, experiences of trauma and debilitating inequity.

Treaties between the First Nations population and colonial governments were meant to provide a framework for a respectful co-existence on the land we call Canada where Indigenous people had lived for thousands of years. Over centuries, the relationships desired by the treaties eroded through greed of land acquisition by non-Aboriginal peoples. Numbered treaties 1 to 11 were made post confederation from 1871 to 1921, for the purpose of inter-tribal trade alliances, the development of peace and friendship, and the agreement to share resources. This intention for the reciprocity of respect between First Nations and new settlers was never attained or maintained. Treaty violations occurred as new settlers moved onto Aboriginal land and the government shifted from focus on the promises created within the treaties to financial gains (Krasowski, 2011). The implementation of treaties distorted and minimized the rights of Indigenous peoples and therefore contributed largely to colonization and oppression as a foundation for the sufferings of racism for First Nations (Starblanket, 2019). Still today, much former indigenous land is considered "unceded" as it was never included in formal treaties.

Black History in Canada

It is indicated in documents that the first African slave arrived in Quebec, (New France), Canada in 1605 and the first recorded sale of an African slave in Canada was in 1628. The deplorable situation of slavery in Canada is described by oppression of labourers to the extreme of complete deprivation of civil and personal rights, including bodily tortures, complete control of actions, and an overwhelming experience of injustice. Fear and force were used as restraints and disobedience led to facing torture and death (Dew, 1856). Although the institution of slavery declined in Canada into the 1820s, enslaved people were still freed by the Emancipation Act passed by the British Parliament in 1833. Canada was part of the British Empire and a society with slaves, rather than a slave society, as one could describe the United States. By the time of the Emancipation Act, slavery had continued to grow immensely in the United States and thus the end of slavery in Canada created the only free land in the continent (Henry, 2010). That being said, and despite the continuation of Black and African Americans seeking out the land of Canada for a free life, the perpetuation of socially constructed notions of race have extended the oppression of slavery to modern day through the persistent existence of racism.

The Black education experience in Canada has not historically been a priority in mainstream Canadian education. Systemic racism acts as a barrier to Black academic achievement and in order to address issues like underachievement, racism needs to be the top priority. Codjoe (2001), demonstrates the effects of racism as he relays the experience of a Canadian born Black student:

> To this day, it [racism] still affects me. It was a big hindrance. I dropped out twice as a direct result of that and other stuff, like problems in high school with security guards and principals, and when one Black person does something the whole Black population in the school gets to go to the principal's office and stuff like that. You get fed up and want to quit. (p.351)

The long history of Indigenous colonization, white settlement policies and settlement of people of colour frame the many facets of racialized immigration policies. Western hegemony is leadership dominance by one social group underpinned with a myth of innocence when it comes to racism. Dua et al (2005) note that policies have worked hard to create structures keeping non- white Canadians marginalized socially, economically, politically and culturally. The notion of a peacekeeping nation lends to forgetting about or never having learned about the history of colonization and slavery. Canada is perceived as a nation that consists of a collaborative and cohesive collection of cultures that harmoniously get along, yet in reality the same stories of blatant racism and discrimination that are heard from the United States are experienced daily by minorities in Canada.

Dancy (2018) stated that crucial to the maintenance of American society is the fictional concept of a non-white body as property. Anti-Blackness is so ingrained in society that a white police officer can be videotaped murdering a Black body without consequence. The intersection of COVID 19 and the tragedy of George Floyd's murder brought focused attention to the impacts of racism in North America activating another Black Lives Matter movement (Egede, 2020). This resurgence of attention needed to support an equitable existence for marginalized individuals comes sadly from countless stories of injustice where the legal system in both Canada and the United States clearly discriminates against Black individuals and puts them continuously at risk of harm and death.

White men are implicated in terrible crimes, yet Blacks remain the focus of criminalization. Paul Bernardo with his girlfriend, Karla Homolka, raped 18 women and killed three others; and Robert Pickton murdered 49 Aboriginal women, yet in minds of whites, implicit bias leads to

thinking that Black bodies represent the tendency for violence. Lacking self-reflection in this area allows Canadians to deny the fact that they live on occupied territories stolen from Aboriginal people (Mullings et al, 2016). 'At the heart of racism are the attempts of the perpetrators to deny knowledge of themselves as violent aggressors, morally destitute, even barbaric.' (Mullings et at, 2016, p.4). This very denial of violence, theft and occupation does not deter Canadians from thinking themselves different from Americans in this regard.

Need to Acknowledge

A need to acknowledge the reality of racism and social constructs of race is at the forefront of select leadership styles such as transformative leadership. This approach to education relies on dialogue and explicit naming of difficult issues like racism. Education is an important agent for social change. The ongoing presence of disparity in educational achievement between white students and their minoritized peers represents inequitable access and ongoing marginalisation, discrimination and racism. The effects of racism follow these students into later life resulting in disparities in outcomes after formal schooling (Shields, 2009). There is a great need for educators to acknowledge issues of power and privilege so that they are capable of fostering spaces for difficult conversations, and to facilitate bringing together and mediating conflicting perspectives. Giroux (1994) describes a phenomenon that was accurate prior to the 20th century as well as today:

> Within the next century, educators will not be able to ignore the hard questions that schools will have to face regarding issues of multiculturalism, race, identity, power, knowledge, ethics, and work. These issues will play a major role in defining the meaning and purpose of schooling, the relationship between teachers and students, and the critical content of their exchange in terms of how to live in a world that will be vastly globalized, high tech, and racially diverse than any other time in history. (p. 280)

Educators hold with them the opportunity to speak with passion on issues of race, equity and cultural history and awareness, and they should not underestimate the possibility of reaching a

student and opening up their minds to prioritize and recognize the true meaning and importance of equitable experiences for all.

Canadians are quick to criticize the prevalence of and racial tensions in the United States and yet many deny that Black Lives Matter protests have a place in Canada (Mullings et al, 2016; Gosine, 2003). The historical racism in Canada has been demonstrated in many ways over the years. Some examples of this include the extermination and assimilation of Indigenous peoples, slavery in Canada, the fixed fee charged to each Chinese person entering Canada and more recently, continued violence targeted at Black bodies often leading to injury or death. This treatment of marginalized groups has been and is played out under eyes of Canadian lawmakers and officials (Mullings, 2016). The need to acknowledge the true scope of racism in Canada is pertinent to working towards equitable social change.

The African Canadian legal clinic (ACLC) is Canada's legal aid service mandated to address Anti-Black racism. Prejudice stereotyping and discrimination that is directed at people of African descent, is rooted in their unique history and experience of enslavement (Mullings et al, 2016). The need to acknowledge the severity of racism in Canada is supported by how deeply entrenched racism is in Canadian institutions, policies, and practices to the point that it is either normalized or invisible to the larger white society.

Anti-Black racism in Canada continues historical segregation, economic disadvantage and social division and it transcends to lack of opportunity, lower SES, higher unemployment, poverty presence and overrepresentation of Black bodies in the criminal justice system (Pon et al, 2011). Evidence of this is present in the act of carding, where police arbitrarily stop, question and collect information from innocent Black people not suspected of crime involvement. In Toronto, African Americans were the target of 25% of carding stops between 2002 and 2008. Between 2008 and

2012, the percentage of Blacks carded was 3.5 times higher than their percentage representation in the population. Furthermore, from 2005 to 2015, the population of Black Canadians in federal prisons increased by 77% and the white population decreased by 7%. Blacks entering prison directly into solitary confinement has grown at a faster rate than the percentage of them in prison. In the Toronto District School Board, Black students make up 12% of students yet are over-represented in suspension rates, accounting for 31% of all suspensions. Nova scotia and Quebec also reports similar signs of and prolonged effects from Anti-Black racism (Mullings, 2016). Although the perception in Canada that racism is subtle and not accompanied by overt racial slurs or prohibitive legislation, the reality is quite different and raising awareness to make addressing anti-racist approaches in education is a top priority.

White Privilege and White Hegemony

There is a distinct connection between whiteness, power and privilege in education that needs to be analyzed. As shown frequently in literature, society does not function as race neutral, but rather is structured to sustain white supremacy and disadvantage non-whites (Mullings, 2016; Carr, 2016). Recognizing that white is a colour of skin is the first step to self-awareness. Most white people are not aware of their own color until they come in contact with or come to understand the experience of those who have been discriminated against, oppressed or excluded based on the color of their skin (Syed & Hill, 2011; Roman, 1993). Acknowledging this awareness of white privilege or protection from oppression, facilitates the acceptance of responsibility to work towards fairness and a common sense of shared humanity. Changes in our attitudes towards race can be rooted in the educational experience.

The impact of white supremist systems is present in all aspects of North American life. Marginalized populations suffer from more discrimination and inequitable access to education

(Dumas, 2016). Anti-Blackness in the context of COVID 19 and a resurgence of the Black Lives

Matters movement in response to continual accounts of excessive force by white officers on

unarmed Black and Brown bodies, echoes the power of white hegemony that needs to be realized,

accepted, dismantled and healed. The foundation of the power of white hegemony is described by

Carr (2016) in stating that:

> Race matters because of the lived experiences and historical realities that have placed racial identity at the center of how countries and peoples have been organized in relation to socially constructed racial hierarchies that have always placed the white race as the pinnacle. (p.54)

Without biological relevance, the social constructs of race and their creation of the superior

experience of white privilege and thus white hegemony creates an unjust experience for

marginalized populations and a critical need to address the deeply rooted problem of racism.

White Fragility

White fragility causes one to feel challenged as a moral individual when confronted or

exposed to racial views that they claim to not be part of. White fragility is a response to an

unwelcomed connection to racism (DiAngelo, 2015). Passive behaviours towards racism go hand

in hand with a common claim to not be racist, yet the steering clear of such topics only perpetuates

the hierarchical divides in society (Kendi, 2019).

In understanding that there is a need to acknowledge white privilege and the realization

that educational institutions are a place where social change work takes place, it might be

considered surprising that we are not further along on this journey. Part of the delay in progress

can be attributed to challenges that come along with the identity of whiteness which induces stress,

frustration or anger. Suggesting that a white person's viewpoint comes from a racialized frame can

threaten white racial innocence. Other experiences that can cause a white person to feel stressed

can include marginalized people speaking about their experiences with racism and acknowledging that access is unequal between racial groups (DiAngelo, 2015). DiAngelo (2015) named the tendency to defend, minimize, ignore, or push back to maintain racial position and dominance as white Fragility. Despite these difficulties, such dialogue can be liberating and emancipatory for all of society (Carr, 2016).

In leading many discussions on racism, white privilege, and white supremacy, DiAngelo (2015) found that white people 'have extremely low thresholds for enduring discomfort associated with challenges to our racial world views' (p.4). A deep internalized sense of superiority creates difficulty in willing to consciously acknowledge what maintains power and therefore a sense of fragility to the threat of racial discourse. A challenge to racial worldviews can be perceived as a challenge to identities as moral individuals and an unwelcomed connection to racism (DiAngelo, 2015). The prevalence of violence in larger Canadian cities like Toronto often perpetuates the cycle of oppression by enforcing stereotypes of marginalized populations. Mullings et al (2016) notes a response to reported violence that is heavily focused on enforcing stereotypes:

> If you pick up the paper or turn on the computer after reports of a shooting, stabbing or violent robbery, chances are the face staring out at you will be Black. Black on black violence is a disfiguring stain on the face of the city's multicultural success. It is as uncomfortable truth that, as a welcoming and liberal city, we prefer to ignore. The political class won't talk about it for fear of being labelled racist. (p.25)

This paints the picture of legitimate police action with an emphasis on criminalization of Blacks rather than on their lack of opportunities and abundant discrimination as a result of systemic racism that has hindered successes and led to association in these circles. This overall repetitive cycle perpetuates the perceived violence and fear of Black Canadians and connects to avoiding realities of race and thus the experience of white Fragility, in order to protect the dominant position in society.

Whiteness

Thinking about whiteness is critical in the dismantling of systemic racism and contributing to tangible action for social justice. History has made race a powerfully salient aspect of society as a whole and addressing values, racism and lived realities can work to mitigate hatred and differentiated outcomes demonstrated in social inequities (Carr, 2017). Institutions, laws, and societal norms were developed by whites with an advantage for the perpetuation of white hegemony, therefore revealing a foundation of racism with great depth (Glay & Othman, 2020). Since white is the norm, it would be unusual for greater proportions of white individuals to drop out of school, to be imprisoned or to live in poverty than First Nation peoples, Black Canadians, or other racialized people. This is evidence of the historically informed social construct of whiteness and its dominant place in comparison to the social constructions of all other minorities.

A deep internalized sense of superiority creates difficulty in being willing to acknowledge what maintains power and therefore fragility to the threat of racial discourse. It is widely known that students come to know and understand their social significance of race and values through multiple contexts of parental, peer group and societal influence (Escayg, Berman & Royer, 2017). In an in depth look at Canadian children and race, Escayg (2017) observes the early effects of racial attitudes in children's play where Black dolls are excluded and less desired than white dolls. Although there is no biological validity to racialized constructs, the experience of a white-dominated society perpetuates racism and barriers for Black bodies without age discrimination (Dei & Simmons, 2010). Society is organized to reinforce white norms that facilitate constructions of socially preferred thoughts, actions, and behaviours, creating an experience for marginalized people without protection from oppression.

Racism

Negative attitudes and thoughts underpin systemic discrimination towards minorities in all spheres of society. Constant attention is brought to this through Critical race theory as it offers a race conscious approach to examining the law and legal system and its implications for the racialization of marginalized people. Critical Race Theory helps to make voices of marginalized people heard so as to highlight the reality of systemic racism and direct practice for social, political, economic and legal norms (Mullings et al, 2016).

There is no denying that individual whites benefit from the hegemonic distribution of resources. Generally, even if a person of color sits at tables of power, decision-makers will be white. Systemic racism is not the cause of problems for those with white skin, but it is for those who experience an intersection of experiences of discrimination and a system of unequal institutionalized racial power (DiAngelo, 2015). In order to understand the functionality of racism, power relations between groups of people must be highlighted. This systemic control provides white North Americans to live in a social environment that is protected from racialized persecution. Society has been organized to reproduce and reinforce white norms that facilitate and protect constructions of socially preferred thoughts, actions and behaviours. In an entirely racialized world, the seeds of systemic racism allow for whites to live with an unracialized identity, protected from oppression and systemic barriers to societal access.

Importance of White Teacher Attitudes

Educators are in a position to bring positive influences to their school's community and share their values through thoughts and behaviours. Teachers have the ability to frame the context in which topics are addressed and to make connections to history and the oppressiveness of racism in a manner that speaks to the curious student (Carr, 2016). White teacher attitudes can reveal

structured racial inequity within school buildings which in turn indicate on a larger scale, structural racism. White teachers who might feel that anti-racist initiatives are not necessary or relevant to them, are an example of the invisibility or pervasiveness of racism within our society. Expressing that racism is not an urgent issue can be found in connection with a lack of realization or a disinterest in Canada's history of oppression and the socially constructed ideas of race that have long persisted (Frie, 2020). If racial oppression is not addressed, equity between superiorly and inferiorly perceived races will never be equalized. To be able to realize, as a white educator, the personal position of being a beneficiary of historical discrimination, and to realize one's own position of participating in a system of racial injustice is critical to understanding that we operate based on racist social practices.

White teachers in particular, need to be able to enter a conversation and examine their fear, confusion and hope around race (Lynch, 2018). Lynch (2018) points out the tendency for white teachers to feel uncomfortable saying 'Black students' which indicates how race is conceptualized with negative associations and superiority. White teachers need to bring the issue of race into their privileged space in order to acknowledge racial trauma and act against the strength of white hegemony. Ignorance to what is going on is the foundation of privilege and therefore it is important that work to dismantle institutionalized racism must come from the suppressor.

It is in the ability of the white educator, the one who holds the historical power, to work to mitigate effects of implicit bias through sustained reflection, thoughtful engagement and a mindful deliberating process. Critical reflection through interrogation of one's own learning and identity can empower the dismantling of racialized stereotypes (Kempf, 2020). Teachers do not simply pass on knowledge, but rather they frame the context of information. Anti-racism should be integrated into all aspects of curriculum and be addressed in an ongoing manner with high priority.

Anti-Racist Initiatives

Throughout history, society has evolved in empowerment of self-assertion of the white race and disenfranchisement of Blacks (Pierce, 2017), First Nations and other minoritized individuals. Critical discourse on racism can be an intimidating exploration, yet the only way to deal with fear is to name the fear and face it completely. Race will otherwise remain a fundamental social reality with whiteness engrained in the values, habits, and the social and political order of institutional arrangements (Carr, 2017; Dancy et al, 2018; DiAngelo, 2015). Initiatives that are directly targeted to dismantle the construct of whiteness, white hegemony and thus provide equity for marginalized populations, are critical to the mission of breaking down systemic racism.

Professional development in the teaching profession sets out to support teachers to be better able to create successful opportunities for all students. Teachers continue to learn and refine their ability to lead students through critical thinking, problem solving, effective communication and self-direction. Research shows that although much professional development is not effective, it can be if there is a focus on content with an incorporation of active learning (Lu et al, 2019). Two additional necessary aspects of effective professional development are collaboration and expert coaching (Darling-Hammond, Hyler & Gardner, 2017). Each of these aspects can be applied to professional development focused on developing and nurturing anti-racist mindsets in educators. An educator's racial identity influences their actions and intersects with their understanding of racisms sustaining role in oppression. Effective professional development must support teachers in understanding this as well as provide tangible supported avenues for equitable racial movement. For this to be successful, the entire organization has to actively engage to ensure implementation of anti-racist practices as a continual process, with a focus on addressing the reality of racist ideologies in educators (Welton et al, 2018; Diem &Welton, 2021). Professional Development that

addresses racism in one session without follow up, fails to deal with the critical aspects of teacher behaviours that perpetuate white supremacy and lacks a responsibility for authentic action (Leonard & Woodland, 2022; McManimon & Casey, 2018). In order to make progress in teacher mindsets around racial discourse and to provide positive role models for students that are developing their own thoughts and perceptions, critical teacher reflection and effective communication are necessary.

Critical self-reflection is needed to connect where we have come from to where we are going and can facilitate collaboration to effectively respond to racialized hegemony. Indigenous de-colonialization and anti-racism work needs to be examined to expose the structural ways that white supremacy and privilege continue to exist. Disrupting white power and privilege requires continuous measures, actions and realities, both implicitly and explicitly (Kempf & Dei, 2020). The acknowledgement of power and power relations must be central in education for democracy and in support of the social justice process.

The emphasis on Black history and culture, anti-racist education and decolonizing the classroom become powerful players in resistance to reproducing racial, gender and class-based inequalities in society (Carr, 2016; Kempf & Dei, 2020). If action is not taken explicitly in this direction, Canadian students like the one quoted by Bailey (2016) will continue to suffer:

> I walked into class one day and the professor is doing a slide show, talking about different survey questions and his example question of what a scale question is, was 'on a scale of one to a hundred how much do you like Aboriginal people?' I put my hand up and said, 'Is there a reason that you used that question?' It doesn't have to be a race of people, and this is a classroom of three hundred [students] that are just writing this down like zombies. (p.1270)

A focus on anti-racist initiatives harbours an increasing sense of responsibility to sensitivity for student needs. Self-examination of one's own white teacher privilege and the drive to unlearn

racism within a community is most appropriate in the context of Canada's growing diversity and

in understanding the needs and aspiration of all Canadians.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

The ambition to become proficient in the collection and analysis of data in mixed methods research, requires a thorough thought process in selecting the appropriate context specific approach. A specifically selected research methodology is dependent on a researcher's perspectives and guided by carefully selected and actionized excellence in coding (Saldana, 2016). Regarding interview data, qualitative research has become a multidisciplinary concept and there is great variance in the approaches.

In this chapter, the purpose and questions will be reviewed, and an overview of the methodology will cover the mixed methods approach in this research. This incorporates the relativist conception of reality in which humans ontologically perceive their world through creation of multiple meanings. Human perceptions are influenced by feelings and experiences and this very concept is the guiding epistemological theory of knowledge. This research is led by the constructivist lens, to find meaning through participant perceptions. Chapter three explores my personal standpoint as a researcher before proceeding into the details of the specific methods in selecting participants and the research site. Data collection through surveys and interviews is explained and the procedures for analysis through coding are clearly laid out. To secure the reliability and validity of the methodology in this research, this chapter closes with a focus on these two concepts as well as consideration of ethics.

Review of Purpose and Questions

White teacher attitudes are critical in the dismantling of racism. Whiteness is a fundamental construct in understanding the perpetuation of whiteness and the need for this to be challenged in order to equalize the experience of all races (Lynch, 2018). White teachers work within the institutions and thus they hold power to inspire and empower students. This power to inspire and

empower is challenged by their possession of the structures of the dominant society within their every behaviour and action. Normalization of behaviours with the basis of white dominance requires strong cognisance of privilege and a desire to fight for social change. Understanding white teacher attitudes towards anti-racist initiatives, can help to determine direction for the gap in literature between perception of anti-racist initiatives and motivating implementation of desired efforts in action (Forrest, Lean & Dunn, 2016).

The ability to sustain or interrupt social patterns of white hegemony lies in the hands of educators. As a force of teachers, there is great power in the acknowledgement, support and action for social justice through personal critical reflection. This is the only effective pathway to dismantling the manifestations of white privilege within the classroom and thus society as a whole. Race as a silenced dialogue allows one to ignore the historical realities and their implications to marginalized individuals and therefore perpetuate the power of whiteness (Castagno, 2008). The exploration of white teacher attitudes towards anti-racist initiatives, can expose work that is needed to be done to facilitate the dismantling of white power, rooted in colonialism, slavery and oppression. Tackling topics of race is a necessary avenue to explore the purpose of this study, which is to understand white teachers' resistance to, as well as endorsements of, anti-racism and to advocate for anti-racist action in education.

The study addresses the following questions:

1) How do white teachers define racism?

2) Do white Teachers describe a prevalence of racism in education?

3) What are white teacher perceptions of anti-racist training and/or initiatives?

4) How comfortable are white teachers talking about race and racism?

5) What are the experiences of teachers in implementing anti-racist initiatives?

Overview of Methodology

Developing a comprehensive understanding of white teacher attitudes towards anti-racist initiatives can be done by using different sources of information and methods. A mixed methods sequential approach using various methods to answer my developed research questions, helps me to collect and analyze data through surveys, semi-structured interviews, and existing literature. This leads to a complete picture of white teachers' perceptions of and resistance to anti-racism training. This mixed methods research design draws partially on sociology and the humanities (Creswell, 2018); therefore, it is well suited to exploring white teacher resistance to anti-racism training and initiatives.

With a powerful mission to recognize and confront oppression through acknowledging history, life experiences, and an educator's personal position, the ontological relativist perception of reality becomes a key foundation to the search for meaning. The relativist conception of reality recognizes multiple versions of reality that are created by how individuals see things. Such realities are influenced by personal feelings in that 'the individual is seen as being born into and living within a social world which has a reality of its own' (Burrell & Morgan, 2017, p.4). These very 'worlds', experiences and interactions shape the way that white teachers perceive anti-racist initiatives.

Crotty (2015) describes epistemology as the theory of knowledge 'embedded in the methodology'. A constructivist paradigm (lens) is built on the foundation where knowledge is co-constructed and developed or produced by engaging in and sharing of experiences. As a researcher in this study, I am inherently involved in the research with an ambition to co-construct meaning and understanding with the participants regarding white teacher perspectives of anti-racist initiatives and how these perspectives influence actions and behaviours. With a constructivist

worldview, 'the researcher seeks to establish the meaning of a phenomenon from the views of participants' (Creswell, 2018, p.17) and thus the identification of white teachers and the exploration of their attitudes within the specified context is a valuable and suitable approach. The values of constructivism hold a depth of rationality, humanism and contextuality, and therefore provide a suitable theory of knowledge for this qualitative research design that will gain understanding of the way white teachers feel about racial discourse.

This mixed methods methodology is informed by the sensemaking theoretical framework and Critical Whiteness Studies. According to Weick (1995), sensemaking is socially constructed through a shared process, formed by cues and values, and situated in a broad context of what is viewed as acceptable actions and behaviours. The sensemaking of white teachers leads to how they define issues of race and informs perceived appropriate actions and behaviours in response to them. Teachers exist in various contexts and identities where they construct meaning of, define and take action with different issues. The sensemaking theoretical framework helps to understand white teacher attitudes to racism, their perceived understanding of its relevance and how this affects their behaviour and manner in school buildings.

In a racial construct context, whiteness provides a sense of invisibility. Social identity is composed of many factors and affects the self-esteem of an individual as well as attitudes towards other groups. Critical Whiteness Studies holds a main objective to reveal the invisible structures that produce white supremacy and privilege and in turn, dismantle racism. With an assumed connection between racism and white supremacy, critical whiteness studies explores the realities of white privilege. In addition to this, it progresses the importance of urgency to become aware of whiteness and privilege among white people alongside the examination of and introspection regarding one's own complicit role in racism.

A mixed method sequential research design with a focus on the interview qualitative aspect, built on the described foundation of Constructivism, is led by common goals of researchers. This includes to better understand human behaviour, human experience and individual processes to construct meaning and describe what those meanings are (Bogden and Biklen, 2007). With a goal of promoting social change, I engaged in dialogue with participants regarding the relevance of anti-racism in school buildings and hoped to inspire willingness to partake in critical discourse alongside acknowledging the power within the social construct of whiteness and a desire to dismantle it.

Personal Standpoint

From an epistemological stance, I position myself as an insider to this research, since I will be interviewing and distributing surveys to other white educators. My privilege of being born in Canada to a middle-class family with white skin, has led me on a journey, though not without troubles, but without the lived experiences of being affected by systemic racism. My personal experiences in various social, cultural and political contexts in both developed and developing nations, have led me to develop a genuine care and concern for the well-being of marginalized populations and a realization that race must be dealt with head on in order to make way for social change. Teacher attitudes and perceptions of the importance of anti-racist action requires critical attention in order to gain direction for that social change. I am a mother, daughter, sister and wife, all subject positions, which contribute to my empathy and fuel my drive to create critical discourse to inspire self-reflection in other white educators.

I took part in reflexive practice by keeping journals of my research journey. This helped me take time to think about things and process the information in order to act in a thoughtful manner, rather than in a manner clouded by emotions. Reflexivity is also effective in considering

how personal experiences can shape interpretation of results (Creswell, 2018). I was faced with some apparent and subtle examples of racist ideologies throughout my research, but I depended on a reflexive approach to help self-regulate my reactions and strategies along the way.

Specific Methods

The processes of participant recruitment, participant selection and site selection were carefully selected to set the stage for data collection for effective exploration of white teacher attitudes towards anti-racist initiatives in education.

Call for Participants

I employed a mixed method design that begins with established contact with the administrator of the social media group 'Teachers Helping Teachers with Technology', which was established in spring of 2020 to provide a supportive space for teachers while navigating the online learning environment. This group has more than 2000 members, many of whom are from the Windsor, Ontario region, where the group originated. Following the approval of my IRB, I shared my call for participants recruitment post on the support group to recruit teachers with a description of the research project's intent.

Participant Selection

The idea of qualitative research is to purposefully select participants and sites that will help to understand the problem and research questions. In contrast, random sampling is used in quantitative research when larger sample pools are sought after for numeric data collection. Four aspects of data collection in qualitative research include the setting, actors, events and process (Creswell, 2018). For the purpose of this research study, these four aspects are the school buildings that employ willing participants, the interviewees themselves, a focus on white teacher attitudes to

anti-racism and the participants' description of attitudes and how they play out in actions and behaviours in the classroom.

Purposeful sampling was carried out for this study, as teachers across Canada were invited to complete the survey and white teachers specifically were sought out for the interviews. A post was made to the group describing the research project objectives with a general call to invite teachers to click on the link to complete the survey. This COBRA survey seeks to understand individual's perception and awareness of blatant, passive and institutional racism. This provided insight into what leads individuals to feel a certain way about anti-racism. If a problem is not largely identified according to a teacher, then action to work towards effective social change will not be successful.

The participant recruitment post called for interested white teachers to take part in one semi-structured interview in spring 2021. A second interview was initially considered, if data was insufficient in answering the research questions. I employed the strategy of maximal variation in the sample size, allowing me to 'integrate only a few cases, but those which are as different as possible, to disclose a range of variation and differentiation in the field' (Flick, 2018). At the end of the survey, teachers had the opportunity to send their email addresses if they were interested in participating in an interview. I planned on selecting 8-12 white teachers with varying degrees of awareness of racial issues and institutionalized discrimination, based on their survey results. I settled on eight interview participants with a range of perceptions to obtain a thorough and in depth understanding of white teachers' attitudes towards anti-racist initiatives.

Purposeful sampling helped to achieve the study goals as this population represents a pathway to the knowledge that is intended to be produced (Fraenkel et al, 2019). Participants were informed about the background, problem and purpose of the study and an incentive of a $25 gift

card was offered for those who end up participating in the interviews. This offered a sense of compensation for teacher time and potential teacher vulnerability, in an attempt to dialogue openly about personal racial attitudes in the interview. This also contributed to a void or lag in willing participants coming forward while easing the continued progressive flow of my research work. This purposeful sampling best helped to answer the research questions of how white teachers define racism, conceptualize its relevance, and to come to understand their attitudes towards anti-racist initiatives and anticipated action.

Site Selection

The criteria for participation in the interview portion of the study are self-identification as a white educator who is connected to the social media support group. These are teachers predominantly in the Windsor region, but they do span across Ontario and Canada. Participants needed to still be working at the time of data collection in spring/ summer of 2021. I chose the media support group for this research as it was a very active group from March 2020 until September 2021, to support educators through the continuous closing and re-opening of schools through the uncertainty of the COVID pandemic. It provided a space for guidance and comfort in helping teachers navigate the challenges of online learning. It continues to provide access to teachers across Canada and thus offered the potential of leading to rich and varied data as different regions provide varying degrees of exposure to diversity. Predominantly white institutions host educators who have had the least exposure to marginalized students and thus are buildings likely to perpetuate behaviours and actions of white hegemony. These buildings themselves were created, run and housed by predominantly white people. These schools as well as diverse schools where outward forms of racism are more present, both need educator cognisance of the social constructs of whiteness and the perpetuation and harmful pervasiveness of oppression.

Data Collection

Data collection requires the identification of the setting, the type of data collected, and the procedures for securing data for analysis. As noted by Bogdan and Biklen (2007), the term data 'refers to the rough materials researchers collect from the world they are studying; data are the particulars that form the basis of analysis' (p.117). Within this study, data was collected using two methods. These include a racial attitudes scale survey and semi-structured interviews. I collected and gathered the sources of data for this study after successfully receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board of Wayne State University. These steps are key in meeting the requirements of the human subject study even though there is minimal risk to participants.

Survey

I administered the CoBRAS survey with Qualtrics through a social media post to teachers who are a member of 'Teachers Helping Teachers with Technology', a private group on Facebook. This survey was created and initially validated in 2000 by Neville, Lilly, Duran, Lee and Browne and was published in the Journal of Psychology. It is composed of a set of questions that deal with social issues in the United States, that are strongly prevalent in Canada. I contacted the authors of this survey to formally ask for permission to use the survey and alter all written 'U.S' mentions to 'Canada.' The survey includes statements such as 'Racism may have been a problem in the past but is not an important problem today' and 'race plays an important role in who gets sent to prison'. Participants are asked to record how much they agree with the statements, from a or strongly disagree to a six or strongly agree. Prior to beginning the survey, when willing participants clicked on the link in the post to partake in the survey, preliminary questions were present, asking participants if they have taken anti-racism PD, how many sessions, and how long they were. Following this, the racial attitudes scale survey begins. All of these are formatted as drop-down

menu questions. After the 20 racial attitudes scale questions, participants were asked what district they work for followed by a series of demographic questions. These include questions pertaining to ethnicity, gender, how long they have been teaching for and what content area they teach in. The questions present ranges that each participant can select, and the race and ethnicity questions will list individual identities.

Distributing the CoBRA survey to teachers provided insight into the racial attitudes of educators. Collecting survey data from all races can provide data for future further analysis. This future analysis could include comparing responses of those who are white to those who are not. This survey distribution to participant teachers across the board provided data that helped to understand participants' overall comprehension of race as social constructs and the effects that they have on societal functioning.

The total number of survey responses depended on participant willingness but was not limited by a minimum or maximum. Teachers who were willing to take the time to complete the survey contributed to the pool of data for analysis. The likert scale survey data was analysed to connect possible age, years of service, ethnicity and other demographic factors with tendencies to be more or less aware of racism in general. The purpose of surveys is to describe the characteristics of a population (Fraenkel et al, 2019), such as in this case, attitudes or resistance towards anti-racist initiatives.

Interviews

After obtaining results on the survey, I proceeded with the qualitative aspect of the research through semi structured interviews with eight white teachers who agreed to discuss issues around anti-racist initiatives. Teachers had the option within the posted recruitment piece to click on a link to complete the CoBRA survey and had the option at the end of the survey to leave their email

address if they were interested in taking part in the semi-structured interviews. Eight self-identified white teachers were selected based on my intention to attain teacher participants with varying degrees of awareness of blatant racism, institutionalized discrimination and racial issues. The selection of interview participants was based solely on survey responses. Semi-structured interviews consist of a series of questions designed to explore in this case, white teacher attitudes towards anti-racism and how these transcend in teacher classrooms. Data collection with this method obtained information from participants that can be compared (Flick, 2019). These methods of data collection relate to my research questions and helped me to find knowledge produced by the unique sensemaking processes of individual white teachers (Kapucu, 2007).

Data collection through interviews holds both strengths and weaknesses. The researcher maintains some control with semi-structured interviews and holds the power to intuitively probe more or less depending on how the interview is progressing. As this varies from interview to interview, compatibility of responses is reduced. Interviews present other limitations as they can invite both researcher and interviewee bias, limiting self-perceptions and they run the risk of salient topics being omitted or avoided (Fraenkel et al, 2019). In the case of racial dialogue this latter risk is of greater importance.

Interviews ranged from 45 minutes to 1 hour and 40 minutes. With global uncertainties amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, rising cases and lockdowns, online interviewing was the optimal avenue for data collection. Online interviewing also had the advantage of easing time constraints and creating a more comfortable experience for those who feel uneasy meeting in person. Overall, it simplified participant recruitment (Flick, 2019). Synchronous online interviewing with video over zoom comes as close as possible to the experience of conversational exchange in a face-to-face interview. Below are the interview questions that were asked:

1. How do you define racism?

2. How relevant is racism to your life? Discuss your exposure to it.

3. What is resistance to racism?

4. Describe the prevalence of racism in education.

5. What is your perception of anti-racist training and/or initiatives?

6. What does a successful anti-racist initiative look like?

7. How, if at all, have you tried to implement anti-racist initiatives? What challenges did you encounter /why not?

8. How comfortable are you in speaking about racism?

Data was recorded using the record option within zoom. The audio files were saved on my computer and downloaded into Otter for transcription. The Transcripts were imported into Dedoose in preparation for coding analysis. Files are stored on my password protected devices, as well as on an external hard drive, with confidentiality. After data analysis, the files need to be kept for a reasonable period of time and then discarded so they are not wrongly used (Creswell, 2018). I will keep the external hard drive and hence the data locked in a cabinet for five years before discarding permanently. Both data sources as well as a critical look at the literature, provide a unique understanding of the perceptions that teachers have regarding the relevance and importance of actively dismantling racial constructs and the incorporation of anti-racist practices into their professional and personal lives.

Data Analysis and Procedures

The survey data was examined to identify the relationship strength between teacher's degree of racial awareness and demographic factors were evaluated. This quantitative data analysis led into the interview stage of the research. The aim of qualitative data analysis is to describe a

phenomenon, which in this case is the subjective concept of white teacher attitudes towards anti-racist initiatives. Analysis was completed through interpretation and coding of all data, the evidence and clues (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) to the phenomenon at hand. Bogdan & Biklen (2007) describe analysis as the organizing of data into units, then coding and synthesizing the data to search for patterns. A pattern is a 'repetitive, regular, or consistent occurrence of action/data that appears more than twice, [and they] demonstrate habits, salience, and importance in people's daily lives' (Saldana, 2016, p.5). Fraenkel et al (2019) further describe analyzing data as 'reducing' the information that is found from various sources into a coherent explanation of what the researcher has discovered.

Data was initially organized into two different types: survey data and semi-structured interview transcription (Creswell, 2018). Following this, data was looked at and read. This delivered a general sense of collected information and the overall meanings of participant responses. The tone of ideas became prevalent, and I began by writing notes and ideas in my research reflection notebook as I read through the data to develop my initial thoughts and possible categories.

Coding

Making connections between each participants' answers is the first step in finding themes and sub themes. Flick (2018) describes coding as the 'relation of materials to categories used in analysis' (p.423). Charmaz (2014) further identifies coding in greater detail as 'naming segments of data with a label that simultaneously categorizes, summarizes, and accounts for each piece of data (p.111). The objective of coding data is to fracture, conceptualize and integrate data for the production of new knowledge pertaining to the phenomenon in study (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, Fraenkel et al, 2019).

Creswell (2018) describes the thinking of codes as falling into three different categories. These include codes that are expected, a surprise, and those of unusual interest. As the researcher, I will let codes emerge during the data analysis, rather than use predetermined codes. The emergence of codes is most suitable for social sciences whereas the use of predetermined codes is more likely to be utilized in the field of health sciences (Creswell, 2018).

Coding the data began by associating words or possible themes to particular parts of the data (Tesch,1990). These themes were used to label aspects of the survey and interview data. As themes became clearly identified, sub-categories began to be identified by using the same method. A description of themes then was developed, and this includes for example, a detailed explanation about a similar type of event that has influenced teacher attitudes towards anti-racism. Representation of the data was developed as each category or theme emerged with substantial data to make it a credible area of focus. A network of codes was created for data presentation in a way that enhances the analysis procedure and strengthening of the codes and interrelationships (Bhattacharya, 2017). All coding for the qualitative data was completed and stored on Dedoose and will remain there for the duration that data is kept confidentially, before being deleted. I discovered common themes around how racism is defined, the relevance and prevalence of racism according to teachers and their feelings towards how useful anti-racist training can be. I explored themes around the varying degree of comfort that white teachers have when dialoguing about race related issues as well as their attempts at creating an anti-racist educational experience for students.

Winnowing of data

Winnowing of data is the slimming down of information collected and was applied throughout the data analysis so as to determine a manageable amount of data to draw parallels among and connect with various themes (Creswell, 2017). Winnowing of data for a particular

study could leave less connected data to the direct objective of the current research for future study and analysis. As themes began to emerge, and I persisted with going over collected data to find the strongest and most emerging themes, I was able to eliminate or collapse some less relevant or repeating data points. A theme is represented across the data. Some uncommon pieces of data were used for a frame of reference in offering a varying point, and to set the stage for possible future exploration in that particular area. Other data points that seemed disconnected and unsupported were collapsed from the emerging themes, but only after thorough consideration and repeated reviewing.

Survey Analysis

The relationships between teacher racial awareness and categories such as age, ethnicity and length of service were evaluated with the survey data. In addition to identifying descriptive statistics, the analysis of all data shows outliers as well as associations among the data points specified by each particular question. Following this I read all survey responses and wrote down ideas throughout, identifying first initial thoughts that held potential to develop into themes or categories, as patterns emerged across the quantitative data. I took note of the tendency or lack of tendency of teachers to express awareness of racism within society, their personal lives and institutions.

Interview Analysis

Tesch (1990) describes eight key steps in the coding process that I will follow for analysis of interview data. I read all transcriptions carefully to gain a sense of the data and write down ideas throughout the first reading. This practice of recording important insights alongside the initial thinking process is key in the development of ideas that can lead to prominent themes. (Bogdan &

Biklen, 2007). I then selected the shortest interview to re-read and assess what it is about, writing down ideas once again with the Dedoose data analysis program. After doing this for all interviews, I created a list of possible themes and grouped the similar ones together, identifying which are stronger and which are weaker themes. I then shortened the theme descriptions into codes and went back through the data to label codes where appropriate, keeping an eye out for new emerging codes. The themes then needed to be developed into categories where interrelationships can be identified. A simplified description for each category was developed. All data that belongs to each code was placed together for a first official analysis and as this process continued, recoding was done when needed. Bogdan & Biklen (2007) emphasize the importance of noting reoccurring words, events and circumstances for the productive development of speculating meaning. The continuation of this throughout contributes to critical thinking that evolves and connects to knowledge within the literature.

Triangulation

The objective of triangulating data is to lead to knowledge that comes from differently angled information sources. Triangulation of data uses multiple sources of data in order to achieve a fuller understanding of the phenomenon in study. Interviewing in different ways will not achieve this, rather using a different type of method, such as the survey used in this study will help to attain data on different levels (Flick, 2018). The CoBRA survey in this study aims to gather knowledge around a teacher's implicit biases and racial attitudes that aren't typically explicitly stated, but rather communicated through opinions on social statements such as 'Racial and Ethnic minorities do not have the same opportunities as white people in Canada'. The survey data was used to understand the degree of implicit bias individuals have and this was compared to the in-depth coding and themes that were found in the semi-structured interviews.

Triangulation in analysing data was done by looking for interpretive patterns in the interviews with teachers by comparing all interviews and looking for thematic coding. Interpretation is finding understanding in the data by finding out about teacher's experiences with racism, their thoughts, feelings and social practices, and connecting them to the literature and broader concepts (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Interpreting teacher perceptions and possible resistance to racism training was further explored in triangulation through in-depth coverage of literature, helping to produce knowledge that is validated and thorough.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are of utmost importance in all studies and in this endeavour to understand white teacher attitudes towards anti-racist initiatives, ethics remained as a top priority through participant recruitment, data collection and analysis and reporting of data. Ethics are of great importance in the production of knowledge and must be kept in the forefront of thinking when a researcher is present on site where data will be collected and when interacting with participants after they have offered to share their time for the benefit of research (Creswell, 2007). As noted by Ping (2000), 'research is a form of disciplined inquiry that holds at its core certain principles and aims to contribute to a body of knowledge or theory 'as carefully and accurately as possible [to] develop knowledge for, in and of society (p.143).

When conducting research with human subjects, there are two minimum guidelines to follow. These include informed participant consent and protection of participants from harm (Bogden & Biklen, 2007). The participants in this study presumed their position voluntarily with full understanding of the nature of the study, what the study methods look like and their obligation as participants. They understood they can decide to no longer participate in the study at any

moment. In addition to this, the participants understood they will not be assuming any reasonable risk that is greater than everyday living.

Gaining entry to sites that allow communication with white teachers across Canada requires strong attention to ethical standards. Teachers working under the Ontario College of Teachers license and registration and other provincial registrations, themselves have strong standards of ethics that guide their practice. Going into school buildings or as a required modification due to COVID, accessing communication with participants through online video calls was dependent on the implemented purposeful sampling process. Teachers selected in this study self-identified as white and were interested and willing to dialogue about racism in a school context. The importance of these two qualities was stressed in the participant recruitment post made available to teachers who are members of the 'Teachers Helping Teachers with Technology' support group that originated in Windsor, Ontario.

The information shared during the data collection process is of a sensitive nature due to the concentration on race related thinking and issues. I remained cognisant of this sensitivity and participant's possible varying tolerance of speaking in depth with racial discourse. As an example, if a teacher participant seemed uncomfortable with further explaining a possible perception of the irrelevance of anti-racism in their predominantly white classrooms, I did not push for further information directly. As an advocate for inspiring anti-racist ways of thinking by acknowledging and dialoguing about racism, data collected that is not in support of this will only inspire further my desire to open minds of students and teachers by connecting racism to subject matter and pursuing dialogue.

I made it clear to all participants that my ambition in this research and knowledge production was to complete my Doctor of Philosophy studies. I was not interested in putting any

one school or participant in the spotlight for perceptions that don't align with social justice, but rather to contribute to the overall understanding of the importance professionally to contextualize whiteness and understand its place in the institutions that greatly influence student social development. Only then can we speak of and truly work towards anti-racism.

Additionally, and with great importance, all participants were made aware of the benefits of this study. Inclusive of the data collection from surveys and semi-structured interviews, my intention is that results contribute to the gap in research regarding how to connect white teacher attitudes to the importance of anti-racism with their approaches in school buildings. Teachers have the primary, and incredibly important role in the creation of environments that nurture best outcomes for all students, and this can be done through teaching with a focus of dismantling socio-historical constructs of race.

Trustworthiness

Triangulation of data is the collection and analysis of data from a minimum of three sources of information to test validity and increase confidence in results (Bush, 2007). Bogden and Biklen (2007) note that the original meaning of triangulation of data is simply 'verification of the facts.' In this study, triangulation is employed as consideration of the in-depth literature review, survey responses and interview answers analyze and compare connections between the perceptions of racial privilege and teacher attitudes towards anti-racist initiatives within the school system.

Standards of Validation

This research design helps to identify the goals to be achieved in this study. Linking the theoretical frameworks and methodology to the research question, leads to conclusive generalizations with strong consideration of validity. The concept of validity regards whether or

not what the researcher understands, is what is happening in reality (Flick, 2018). Fraenkel et al (2018) note that 'validity refers to the appropriateness, meaningfulness, and usefulness of the inferences researchers make based specifically on the data they collect' (p.413). With more than one strategy for validation of results, greater meaningfulness is achieved.

In order to establish validity, member checking, or additional involvement of the research participants for a follow up meeting or conversation is valuable. Member checking is a review of the final conclusions with participants and not a check for accuracy (Creswell, 2009). This took place in the fall of 2021, after the interview, transcription and initiation of analysis. An informal conversation was held at the participant's convenience regarding the developed themes and general viewpoint of each. The interviewees had the opportunity to agree with the content that has been realized by the interviewer as well as an opportunity to update them on their experiences. No further data were attained through these conversations. In the research process, this presented an opportunity to validate the study and provide details that may offer greater understanding of white teacher attitudes towards anti-racist initiatives.

When conducting a study, it is necessary for a researcher to use procedures to check for accuracy and ensure trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Flick, 2018; Fraenkel et al, 2018). Using more than one method of data collection when focusing on societal aspects can help to do this. In this study, I use triangulation, which allows for three sources of data collection to enhance the validity of results (Bogden & Biklen, 2007). Finally, I also recorded my own personal thoughts while conducting interviews so as to take note when answers seem like they could benefit from being checked later against other remarks. This also helped to process my thinking as I worked through all of the data.

In this mixed method research design, the quantitative survey data is purposed to inform the qualitative data collection portion of the research. Through data from the administered survey, teachers across a range of racial awareness could be identified, therefore informing the selection of semi-structured interview participants. This provided perceptions that represent teachers across the range from low to high racial awareness. Through the data collection and analysis procedures, careful consideration of trustworthiness and validation were prioritized to produce an ethically sound study.

CHAPTER IV: RACIAL AWARENESS AND ANTI-RACIST INITIATIVES

Valuing and including ethnic and cultural practices into education has been noted to have influence on determining students' sense of belonging and persistence in education (hooks, 1994; Carr, 2008; Castagno, 2008; Dancy et al, 2018; Kendi, 2019). Understanding the reality of and historical duration of oppression for underrepresented populations facilitates full respect and inclusion and is an important first step for white teacher progression in racial awareness. This chapter examines the findings of this study related to white teacher attitudes towards anti-racist initiatives in education. Thus, this chapter provides an overview of the educator participants and the overall range of racial awareness among education professionals. To ensure confidentiality, the site and participants are described in terms designed to not reveal identifiable information.

The primary focus of this study was to understand teacher attitudes towards anti-racist initiatives after receiving relative professional development training. In order to do so, teacher responses were studied, and the data within this chapter address the following research questions:

1) How do white teachers define racism?

2) Do white teachers describe a prevalence of racism in education?

3) What are white teacher perceptions of anti-racist training and/or initiatives?

4) How comfortable are white teachers talking about race and racism?

5) What are the experiences of teachers in implementing anti-racist initiatives?

The survey data was descriptively explored in the first part of chapter four. An overview of the quantitative survey results provided insight into the overall range of racial awareness of educators; therefore, validating the range of perspectives expressed during the interviews. I then provided the background and relevant personal experiences with the first interviewee, Jason. Following this is a similar section on each of the seven remaining participants, leading into an

analysis of common and emerging themes. All names used are pseudonyms to maintain the confidentiality of each participant. An overview of the participants is provided in Table 1.

Table 1: *Overview of Participants*

Participant	Gender	Years in Education	Main Teaching Area	Effective Training?	Current School Demographics
Jason	M	16	9-12 English	Yes	Predominantly white to more diverse
David	M	19	9-12 English	Yes	Predominantly white
Greg	M	20	11-12 Physics	No	Predominantly white with influx of Arabic students
Alison	F	10	9-12 History and Law	Yes	Predominantly white to more diverse
Michelle	F	14	9-12 Visual Arts	Yes	Somewhat Diverse
Angela	F	18	Grades 4-8	Yes	Predominantly white with French Immersion
Blake	M	10	9-12 Special Education	Yes	Somewhat Diverse
Louise	F	23	9-12 Science	Yes	Somewhat Diverse

Out of the teachers that started the survey, fourteen did not complete it. This could be due to their limited time, the teachers feeling the weight of the topic of racism, or possibly that they clicked on the link only out of curiosity with little intention of doing the survey.

Plenty of teachers who completed the anonymous survey, left their email to express willingness to participate in an interview. When it came down to booking interviews, more than half of the willing participants did not respond to three email follow ups. This could, like the survey incompletion, be due to limited time, teachers feeling mentally drained or a general discomfort when the opportunity presented itself in following through to take part in race related discussions. The total number data gathered from the two sources are represented in Table 2.

Table 2: *Data Collection Procedures*

Number of Teachers who Started the Survey	Number of Teachers who Completed the Survey	Number of teachers who left email to be interviewed	Number of teacher interviews (those who responded to email)
61	47	17	8

Using teacher survey results and quotes from participant interviews, the findings summarize each teacher's story of personal experiences that shape how they view the world and form attitudes towards anti-racist initiatives.

Educator Survey: Connecting Racial Awareness to Anti-Racist Initiatives

The Survey, titled Colour-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale, was created by a team led by Dr. Helen Neville, a professor of African American Studies in Chicago, Illinois. This survey originally included a set of questions that deal with social issues in the United States, but I was granted

permission to alter it to a Canadian context. It is based on a six-point scale regarding how much one disagrees or agrees with each statement. Some questions have reverse scoring, so it is a more discrete scoring method. The lower the score is per question; the higher the individual's racial awareness is. Overall, the possible scoring ranges from the highest racial awareness of 20 to the lowest racial awareness of 120. Following the 20 social issue questions, there are six questions that request information on the individual's school district, ethnicity, gender, age range, level of education and years of service teaching.

The eight participants who interviewed for this study scored a range of 24 to 74, but the overall range of survey participants was 20 to 74. The lower the score, the higher the individual's racial awareness is. The scores are represented in Table 3 along with descriptive survey data.

Table 3*: Racial Awareness Score Presented with Descriptive Survey Data*

Name	Racial Awareness Score	Highest Degree	Age Range	Years Teaching	Area of Teaching
Greg	74	Bachelor	45-54	26-30	Physics
Angela	49	Bachelor	35-44	16-20	Grade 4/5
Blake	42	Bachelor	35-44	6-10	Spec Ed HS
Jason	34	Bachelor	45-54	16-20	Eng & Hist
Alison	32	Bachelor	25-34	6-10	Social Sci
Louise	31	Bachelor	45-55	26-30	Science
Michelle	30	Masters'	35-44	11-15	Fine Arts
David	24	Masters'	45-54	16-20	English

The objective in administering the survey was to attain an overall idea of white teacher racial awareness and my hope was to interview participants ranging in racial awareness. Specifically, my intent was to interview two or three participants who scored high (60-120) on the survey, indicating a low racial awareness, two or three participants who scored mid-range (40-59) on the survey and two to three participants who scored low (20-39) on the survey, indicating high racial awareness. Although 10 survey participants scored a low racial awareness of 60 and above on the survey, only one of those participants came forward and offered their email address to be interviewed. Collecting qualitative data throughout a pandemic could have limited participant numbers due to ongoing uncertainties in participant lives. Alternatively, the reason for low interview participation from those with lower racial awareness could be attributed to less comfort in racial dialogue and less exposure to marginalized communities. Each participant who interviewed, including Greg with low racial awareness, showed some level of comfort in speaking about racism. Although I did not attain the numbers I wanted spanning across a range of racial awareness, the survey was very effective in helping to select interviewees with participants across a range, although heavier in the higher racial awareness end.

There were some notable trends from the survey, including teaching years correlating with racial awareness. With the exception of Louise, all survey participants who have been teaching for 26 years or more, scored higher on the survey, indicating a lower racial awareness. Although the sample size is small, at 47 survey participants, this does lean to indicating that teachers who are older and have practised for longer might be more inclined to have perceptions further steeped in systemic racism and avoidance of acknowledging privilege in skin colour. An older age of teacher, however; does not indicate more years of service. According to the survey data, racial awareness varied within each teacher's age range. This means that teachers who are younger, scored from

high to low racial awareness and teachers who are older also scored across the range. Teaching is sometimes a second career; therefore, years of service, age and racial awareness are not always aligned.

All participants in the survey have a bachelor's degree and 12 of the 47 participants have a masters' degree. Although there was not an overall trend of higher education leading to a higher racial awareness, the two participants who scored the lowest on the survey, indicating highest racial awareness, do have a masters' degree. Also, looking at specifically the interviewees (see Table 3) the two lowest scores are the only interviewees with a Masters' degree. The third lowest score is by an interviewee with a bachelor's degree who only scored one point higher than the interviewee with the second lowest score, who has a masters' degree. The difference in scores between bachelor and masters' holders is minimal; however, the trend does suggest that a higher education might lead to a greater racial awareness.

The descriptive statistics for the survey data show a mean of 43, a median of 41 and a mode of 42. Twenty-four of the participants scored below 40 on the survey, while only ten scored above 60, therefore leading to the concentration of descriptive statistics close to 40. According to categories that I created, equating cut offs to low, medium and high racial awareness, 21% of the participants scored low racial awareness, 28% of the participants scored medium racial awareness and 51% scored high racial awareness. Although half of the participants showed evidence of high racial awareness, the survey data clearly indicate that there is much work to be done to improve white teacher understandings of the pervasiveness of racism.

Personal Journey: Shaping Experiences and Arriving at Today

The following section provides an overview of each participant's personal journey. Each section is comprised of varying information based on what the participants were open to sharing

based on their relevant experiences. Some participants spoke of their marriage, their children, their family history or their experiences at various stages of their lives. Each subsection is meant to provide an overall idea of the participant that can then be connected in varying ways to their attitudes towards anti-racist initiatives. Participant coverage is ordered from lowest racial awareness to highest racial awareness, according to the survey data.

Greg: My White European Grandparents Struggled Through it; They Can Too

> You know my family came here; they went through it. It's their turn: I've heard that before but not too often. I don't know if that's white privilege or that's privilege for being here before everybody else.

Greg describes himself as coming from an Italian immigrant family and having attended a predominantly Black grade school. He remembers that noticeable differences made people stand out, whether it was colour, language, or accent. His noticeable differences were accent and language, and he holds strong memories of even his teachers calling him 'whop', as well as using derogatory names for his Black and Chinese friends. He recalls people from the older generation when he was young being specifically inappropriate: 'Your mom can't speak English; what's wrong you can't speak English, why do we let you into this country?' To this day, his mother does not speak English and he doesn't see any of this type of judgement or discrimination anymore. As Greg himself headed into high school, these incidences no longer occurred and in his teaching career today of 28 years, he says he has not been witness to overt racism. He teaches Physics in a predominantly white high school with an increasing number of Arabic immigrants, and he does not 'see much of it anymore'. Greg shares that he knows it exists, but perhaps people are more polite about it. His son is married to a Black woman from the Caribbean and when she speaks of occurrences that indicate racism, Greg describes it as questionable because sometimes what people say gets interpreted differently from what they intended on saying.

Angela: Generational Differences in Perception and Education

Angela is the daughter of immigrant parents from Portugal who have a grade five education. They never went to school and Angela attributes education to being an important factor in racial awareness and acceptance of others. Her childhood as well as adulthood holds many memories of her dad and uncles speaking about minorities and making fun of common stereotypes, such as cultural smells, unique eating tendencies, and cultures perceived to be inferior by them. They would talk about associating India with smelling badly and 'make fun of their turbans or the Chinese eating cats and I could go on as there was a lot of that kind of thing; they would talk about it all the time.' The consistency of hearing these dialogues have presented Angela with a platform of the importance of personal experience in shaping perceptions. She has had to continuously process, think and develop her own opinions, against the forces of the influence of hearing these dialogues for many years as an impressionable young girl.

In her own subdivision in Southern Ontario, there is an abundance of diversity, including many families from India. In a community forum, some members started complaining about the men who would often sit with Turbans on a bench at the park, and how they were leaving no place for others to sit. They were seemingly targeted due to their cultural differences, in the sense that white men sitting on the bench would likely not have been brought to the forum. Angela describes the majority of response as being in defense of the men, which she found to be refreshing. Through her exposure to racism in her upbringing and into adult life, she continues to try to make sense of the many dynamics that diversity brings and how to incorporate an inclusive curriculum to her intermediate classrooms.

Angela has been teaching for 18 years, predominantly in grades 4,5,6, and 7. As of late she has been teaching in the French immersion program where there is quite a bit of diversity in the

classes including families from Barbados, Jamaica, India, Poland and Armenia. Outside of the French immersion program, the school has always seemed predominantly white.

Blake: Shaped by the Experience of Being the one White Man on the Court

Blake played basketball growing up as well as throughout university. He describes basketball as a predominantly Black sport and was therefore around Black people consistently throughout his youth. Blake feels that this led him to growing a decent understanding of a Black person's lived experiences.

His time with his teammates gave him an understanding of oppression and their experiences of racism in subtle ways such as challenges when applying for jobs. He communicates this relatively clearly without speaking explicitly about it. His lived experiences in closeness with the Black community through sports has shaped his perceptions of race and the way that he makes sense of the world, likely having encouraged Blake's willingness to participate in the interview.

Blake's journey in understanding the Black community was not always with complete ease. 'Growing up playing sports, the Black guys I used to play with would generally refer to themselves with the N word. Just in passing, as you know, a term of endearment with each other, so that was always a kind of weird thing.' He describes this as an uncomfortable yet common experience as this was very much the culture when he was on teams from the age of 10 years old and up. Blake feels like in current times, the Black community is trying to get away from that as the world evolves with racial awareness and sensitivity.

Blake has been teaching for 10 years and specifically in special education for the last five years. He never thought he would do special education, but after experiencing it for a short period of time several years ago, he started to like it. Blake then got into learning support which he

describes to be like a hybrid between actual special education with more evident diagnosis and students that have learning difficulties.

He taught for several years at the most diverse high school in his local region, with a large population coming in from the Middle East. This high school has a very developed ESL (English as a Second Language) program throughout all of the subject areas and as additional support in language acquisition. He finds that some of the students do struggle more than others. 'I find maybe it's because they are immigrating to Canada, and they don't have the requisite background to be successful in North American schools. They do struggle, whether it's the language initially but it's always an uphill battle for them.' The size of the ESL program could contribute to student struggles. Students can effectively exist within small communities of their heritage in the Middle East, speaking the language and exhibiting their home cultural social norms with supported resistance to discrimination.

Jason: The Importance of Lived Experience in Racial Awareness

There is this Black student that I went to school with in 1982. Me and him were friends despite all of the things that my father said, like you are not supposed to like this kid. At the end of the school year, we were all going into grade one and then after summer, my Black friend is still in kindergarten. When I asked him what happened in the playground, he said they held me back, they said I wasn't picking up the information.

This student and life-long friend of Jason's referenced in the quote above became a teacher and is now in administration and thus in a position to prevent those situations from happening to others that held himself back so many times. This quote encompasses Jason's early questioning and thinking of the operations of racism, without being able to identify at the time, the naming of oppression.

Jason was raised by a white supremist father who was an Irish man growing up in Montreal in the 1940s and 1950s when Montreal was exploding with immigration.

He was pretty specific in parting on me that Black people are going to take our jobs, we have to as white people, be fervent in keeping our culture, our heritage. My childhood was riddled with racism. Just hearing these stereotypical tropes and as a kid you know I was like yeah dad, okay. That's how it is.

Jason learned in life that when people tell him something, he is better off to go out and find for himself the truth. His dad taught him this indirectly by showcasing dishonesty that ruined his parent's marriage. Jason then no longer trusted his dad and thus began to question all of his strong white supremist opinions. Following this revelation, Jason would listen to his father's stories regarding friends and the KKK; 'the clan is here to protect us from Black people, who are trying to threaten our livelihood' until he made the necessary decision to cut ties with his father completely. This personal background provides a strong foundation for the racial awareness that Jason conveyed in both his interview and survey.

Whether it was social influences or an inherent drive, Jason has become a strong advocate for social justice. In Jason's childhood he was told to read several books, but he was not interested in reading any of them. He stumbled upon an exception when he discovered the children's biography of Malcom X: 'This dude has lived the life. I want to read; I want to read about this.' Even though he continues to learn on his journey of racial awareness, Jason certainly seemed to be ahead of the time for critical thinking as a young child. Not only did he learn to question his father's truth, but he made distinct decisions in life that explicitly clashed with the teachings of the man he no longer speaks to.

Jason went on to marry a Black woman and they are raising biracial children. With young children, their family has already experienced a significant amount of inequality within careers and education.

Personally, because I am married to a Black woman, I have kids that will be known as Black, even if they identify as white. My daughter kept coming home and saying that she

was being sent out into the hallway for 15 minutes, so I asked my friend who has a daughter in that class if he was having issues and he said yes, that's the same, I have the same issue.

The friend's daughter is Black as well, so together, they began asking parents of white children if this was happening with them, and they were not having the same issue. This is one of the many stories Jason mentioned as he frequently referenced his Black wife throughout the interview with both pride and authentic second hand understanding of the lived experience of oppression. The incident above provides a small glimpse of many issues themed in discrimination that his family deals with on a regular basis. Growing up a poor kid, he has had many opportunities in adult life without having to worry about safety, security, judgement and microaggressions. His wife cannot walk around not being Black and it is something that she must address daily, while building strength to combat the constant chipping away of oppression. Jason describes his wife as 'an incredibly brilliant person who will challenge the system because she went through a system that was designed to make her fail.'

Jason 'grew up a poor white kid in a poor town that has a history of racism and inequality.' Being fascinated with history, he worked at a local museum which expanded his exposure to racial inequality, prior to pursuing his history degree in African American/ Canadian studies and his English degree in African American/Canadian literature. In attending predominantly white schools, 'you can only understand it as much as the institution is going to give you that information', so a lot of his learning in the education field has come from allying with Black education professionals. In a staff of 70 educators, there are only two Black teachers, leaving an undesired misrepresentation of the growing number of minorities in the community. Of those two Black teachers, one recently took the Equity Lead job at the Board office and the other one is now a guidance counsellor, so as of Sept 2021, not one Black student will have a teacher that looks like

them. Jason continues to see the effects of racism into his career that he began observing as a young child.

Jason began his teaching career 16 years ago and has taught predominantly English and Media Studies. Jason works in a Southwestern Ontario city, in an area that serves two high schools. He remembers the year 2009 specifically, where the referenced 'Black' Highschool saw a significant experience of white flight, with many students moving to the predominantly white high school. With a history of segregation in this city, he noted the depths of the challenge in breaking old habits in a hard to shift system. In the last five years, the latter high school, has become much more diverse, resulting in close to equal demographics and diversity among the two.

Alison: Acknowledging the Interconnectedness of Racism and Privilege

Alison went to the University of Toronto for teachers' college and her practice teaching was at an inner-city school. Although the school was very diverse, most staff were still white. This was the first diverse school she had been exposed to and therefore the first opportunity to reflect on the lack of diverse teachers for the particularly diverse student body. She shares:

> I had gone to a predominantly white high school and my teachers were predominantly white; I didn't really think anything of it at the time and then once I started teaching kids that didn't look like me, I realized all of their teachers looked like me and there was kind of a disconnection that was happening, and I still see that in my high school now where I work

Alison's explanation encompasses racism within the system that creates education, employment and social barriers for marginalized individuals and its interconnectivity to the privilege that white people have in frequently seeing teachers, leaders and people in successful roles that look like them.

Alison is married to a Hispanic man and although she herself has never been denied anything because of the tone of her skin, she has seen many examples of nuanced racism with her

husband, which she describes as a subtle but 'dangerous' kind. In using the term dangerous, she is referring to the ease of delivering subtle racism and the difficulty due to its discrete nature in calling someone out or advocating for oneself in the moment. This continuous circumstance can be debilitating over time. Being married to someone who experiences oppression regularly has been an eye-opening experience in her journey of racial awareness; she explains a scenario that she herself would never experience:

> He is always screened at the airport, always. It doesn't matter where we are going, he will always get pulled aside for extra screening and it's because his last name is an extremely common Latin name and so he always has to be screened to make sure he's not wanted, you know. They're doing their job, but I don't go to the airport with the intention of needing to be there early for screening. He always knows that we have to be at the airport two hours earlier because he knows that we have to go through a special security process with him.

In addition to such formal procedures, he experiences routinely, Alison has endless stories of the general public making rude comments. She went on to speak of a time in Miami where her husband was speaking to a waiter in Spanish and the white woman at the next table looked over and said, 'you know you should really try to learn English'. When he responded in flawless English, the woman had little left to say.

Alison has been teaching for almost 10 years now. She started in adult education and is now teaching high school. In the last few years, Alison has noticed that there are more students from Southeast Asian decent and students who are Black coming into the school boundary. They distinctly stick to each other so 'they don't necessarily integrate right away with the student population; it's very obvious that at lunchtime or spares they choose to stay together.' These students don't have any apparent academic struggles, but rather challenges with social adjustment.

Louise: The Art of Practicing Heated Racial Debates with Family

Louise started teaching in 1998 and thus has been in the profession for 23 years. Although she has predominantly taught Biology and General Science in Highschool, she also taught automotive technology in her earlier years.

The school she works at has gotten more diverse over that last 12 years while she has worked there. As a general observation, Louise feels that some minority students such as those who are Black 'have trouble advocating for themselves.' She feels as though some minority students don't ask as many questions. With those who struggle, in the context of COVID-19 and online learning, it would commonly show up in ways such as their 'internet connection is unstable'. Louise was conscious of generalizing when speaking about diversity and struggles and noted that any example she gives is not intended to 'paint a brush with each group'. One thing she did clearly say was that 'white students have no problems reaching out to me', which alone echoes a history of oppression and deflation for minorities.

The concept of racism is very relevant to her as there are a lot of Black students in her classroom and she feels like she has been 'ignorant for too long'. Only in recent years has she genuinely realized that there is so much more work that is needed to be done. This is to the degree that she admits 'it's my primary thought process when I am teaching now.' She does however find it challenging to navigate with few people that she can dialogue with regarding racism and how to best support students. She details this challenge by saying the following:

> I would say a quarter of my family are racist and three quarters are anti-racist, so it hits home at family gatherings; we actually had a very big argument discussion a week and a half ago, as it comes up regularly because of the opposing viewpoints

Perhaps viewing the stark difference in racial awareness within her family, motivates her to mirror the pathway that appeals to her, which is being anti-racist.

Louise's brother is teaching a course at a University in Toronto, Ontario, on anti-racism, where students are working on projects to create a system where immigrants can access professional jobs as they adjust to Canadian life. In the heated family argument, they discussed the challenges that immigrants face with job access and her sister responded with: 'there is no racism. If she is really an accountant, she should be able to just write the test and work as an accountant and so she doesn't see the difficulty. I go in there and tell her 'you're white'. Louise describes her sister as being on the other end of racism as she believes people do not have pre-set ideas about others, therefore she does not acknowledge barriers that marginalized people face in order to reach the same success as a white individual. She doesn't see that 'they have to walk up and over two mountains, whereas we just have to walk five steps ahead.'

Louise goes on to describe how her in laws regularly use terms like negro and the N word. 'They will see the look on other people's faces and respond immediately with, oh, I don't mean that in a racist way.' With the use of such an overtly racist word, opportunities are endless to address racism and the need to build moral courage with her three teenage children who hear these words also from family. This language has been common for over 30 years from her in laws, as her first memory of acknowledging what racism was, was in her late teens when she was dating her now husband. His father referred to the Brazil nut as the toe of a Black person, using the N word. Louise describes her reaction: 'I was shocked like oh my God that's a bad word, and then he kept saying it' Her father-in-law has not changed the way he speaks in 30 years, creating quite the contrast of racial awareness and views within her family. He began University but did not finish the first year and thus she draws a possible connection between less education and less racial awareness.

Michelle: The Perpetuation of Systemic Racism in the Art Curriculum

Michelle grew up in a neighbourhood that was predominantly white and Middle class. As a general observation, people did not typically struggle. She can recognize that she has experienced a lot of benefits due to being white including the way she is treated in everyday life and her living situation. She mentions her Italian father-in-law who immigrated to Canada with a thick accent and who over the years became very frustrated with being treated differently or poorly. He has developed resentment due to barriers socially and professionally. In considering the European immigrant, it is important to realize that from a visible standpoint, they do not have the added layer of being a visible minority, therefore can avoid the amplifying the frustration and poor treatment that one can experience.

Michelle has been teaching for 14 years with a focus in Visual Arts. In additions to that she sometimes teaches Religion, English as a Second Language and Learning Skills. Michelle was teaching at the most diverse High School in the region but moved to a new school in the fall of 2020. With the continuously changing school year between in school, online and hybrid without requirement to have cameras on, she really couldn't speak to the diversity at her new school.

In her previous school, many of the students were newcomers, therefore dealing with a plethora of challenges from language to culture, to social norms. At her previous school she did find that some of the students with ethnic backgrounds do struggle, but she was unsure as to whether it was socioeconomic related or race related. This past year, there was also the general range of thriving to struggling students, but without cameras and an online platform, it was difficult to attain an understanding of student's situations. Some students were online learning with a phone or lacked effective resources that would put them in a position to be able to best achieve. Resources are available from the schools, but that doesn't mean that every family went through the simple

steps to attain them. 'There's a disparity between the students who seem to have technology and the things they need versus students who don't know.'

David: A Drive for Equity at all Levels

So, it's not enough to go through life personally behaving in a way that you believe to be not racist; we have a responsibility to be anti-racist. When you go through school you interact with, connect with, and synthesize the cultural reference points that you are being exposed to. Do you ever have to ask that question, why is my cultural background not being presented here? We definitely function in a society where the dominant cultural reference points are rooted in European and colonial structures and we are only just beginning to see the integration of Indigenous, Black, LGBTQ references. We are becoming more aware that they are also reference points that we need to value.

Growing up in a very culturally diverse neighbourhood, David has no memory as a child of understanding how racism functions. In looking back at memories of kids getting teased regarding what their parents did for a living, he can now make connection to the structures in society that create barriers to the building of generational wealth.

With 19 years of experience teaching grades 9 to 12, David currently works in a predominantly white County school but has taught in two of the most diverse High Schools in the system. In fact, he has 17 years of experience in diverse schools, therefore working in a building with mostly white students has been a unique experience for him. David recognizes that in his earlier career days, he did not examine the role of privilege in addition to the concentration on Eurocentric cultural reference points in the curriculum and the impact these have had on students. He hadn't reflected on how privilege functions in our education system to disadvantage minority students, yet he saw many examples of it throughout his career.

White Teachers Define Racism

There is a noticeable connection between each participant's score for racial awareness on the survey and their articulated definition of racism. In the interviews, I first asked a set of

preliminary questions that helped to create a picture of participant personal journeys. I then began the core of the interview questions, guided by the research questions and Critical Whiteness Studies, by asking what their definition of racism is. In looking at the data from this area of my research, there is an evident evolution of definitions from Greg, who scored 74 on the survey, to David, who scored 24. Twenty is the lowest score possible, indicating high racial awareness while sixty and above on the survey, I have categorized as an indication of low racial awareness. As participants score a higher racial awareness on the survey (lower numbers), their descriptions of racism become more articulate and encompassing of the many ways that racism shows up in society.

As an older teacher with much experience in the profession, Greg's main frame of reference of racism connects to his family's experience of immigrating to Canada from Italy. Although his family experienced discrimination with their limited language and he felt he was identified as different due to his accent, his focus on these differences falsely deemphasizes the impact of systemic racism on people who are visibly a minority. He notes:

> Racism, you know so it's very…. that's a tough question, because I know as a kid, I didn't speak the language and if you even look different or if you stick out in anyway, whether it's language or looks, you're the minority and they're going to look at you differently right.

Greg has no shortage of racial dialogue within his family as his son married a Black woman. He sees her as the successful woman that she is and does not want to acknowledge the oppression and barriers that she has battled through over the years, despite the many arguments with his son pointing out the realities of systemic racism.

Like Greg, Angela is a first generation Canadian, coming from a European family that immigrated to Canada. She defines racism with more of a focus on visible minorities:

> I feel like racism is when you intentionally try to put down another person or set of people, based on whatever your reasons are, whether it's their color of skin or what group they're affiliated with or religious affiliation. Just a general like hate or how you perceive that these people are because of whatever reason you have. Just generally not being nice to other people.

Angela's definition speaks indirectly of racial profiling and the concept of an individual's identity being lost in negative group association. It is a possibility that her family did not experience as much discrimination as Greg feels his did, or perhaps Angela's younger age has exposed her more to social justice matters in society at large. Both of these could play a part in impacting her definition of racism and increasing her racial awareness, in comparison to that of Greg's.

Blake has an interesting approach to defining racism currently. He acknowledges that he would have always stated that it was purely blatant discrimination, but he is beginning to see the invisible barriers that minorities experience in society. That being said, other than acknowledging that his perception is evolving, he still proceeds to define it based on overt racism:

> Not just like someone walking up and down the street and calling someone you know, a racist name or something of that nature. That used to be what I thought. I would just say right now to me racism, if I had to immediately give an answer, to be more overt discrimination toward an ethnic group. I'm starting to understand more the covert but right now I define it more as the overt discrimination of a particular group, based on skin color or things of that nature. But like I said it's evolving, for me, based on the times.

Blake continues to do work on his own understanding of race and oppression, through his expression and willingness to participate in the interview. As personal a journey as this is for anyone, his openness and vulnerability are a strong indicator of his growing moral courage, a key attribute for the evolution and improvement of racial awareness.

Jason's confident answer in defining racism is fueled by his personal experiences with growing a diverse family. He has had much exposure to racial ideology through personal studies in addition to the lived experiences of raising biracial children. He extends his definition of racism

by describing the myth of white supremacy as having to 'protect what we have, because if we don't protect it, we are going to lose it.' This was in the words of his white supremist father. He explains racism by the following:

> Just power. Who has access to that power, how that power is wielded and the inequalities that come as a result of that power imbalance? As an educator, I don't think I realized how prevalent it was until I started looking because just being a white person, I'm going to have blind spots.

Jason spoke with zero hesitance. The value of lived experience is strong in his case, influencing his attitudes and perceptions of the reality and operations of systemic racism.

Although Jason's verbal expression of racism was without hesitance, having scored 34 on the survey indicates that he hesitated on the impact of various aspects of oppression, for 14 points worth, as the highest level of racial awareness is a score of 20. He is the participant with the most racial lived experience, being married to a Black woman, therefore it is surprising that he ranked fourth lowest in racial awareness out of eight interview participants.

Alison and Louise discuss the reality of racism as being a lack of opportunity based on your skin tone. Although Alison acknowledges that a lack of opportunity could be broad, she goes onto list what it might encompass, such as a lack of opportunity in feeling entitled to apply for a job or scholarship or feeling safe in one's own neighborhood during dark or daylight hours. She finalizes in summary by saying 'to me that really is it; it's the lack of opportunity of safety, the lack of opportunity of advancement.' Louise shares the same sentiment in different words by expressing that:

> Many people don't understand or have the background knowledge of the underlying things that are preventing people of color from access. My parents believe everybody is equal, they do, they don't hold any animosity towards anybody of color but, until recently, especially with George Floyd, they didn't understand all the things that are hindering people who are Black from what we say pull up your bootstraps and do better. They didn't realize there was more going on than just work hard

Louise goes on to discuss the concept of racist people who don't believe people are equal and then racist people who are ignorant and do not understand that it is not even playing ground for all. It may seem harsh to label the latter as being racist, but as backed by Kendi (2019), there is anti-racism in which one's voice and moral courage advocate for marginalized members of society and there is racism, where one can perpetuate systemic racism even by the simplicity of silence.

Michelle defines racism as 'not only recognizing differences but also using them to make judgements or discriminate against an individual.' She speaks of varying situations and strength in using one's strong voice to deal with issues of racism.

> There are situations that can be quite complex. It can be difficult to manage. And I think that that can be a lot to ask of people at times it's very difficult, it is a very difficult thing to be an advocate at all times in every situation. It really is because you are asking a lot. It really is one of the most self-sacrificing situations and it's not always straight forward what the right or wrong thing to do is. If you hear racial comments or if you're kind of around something sometimes it is absolutely easier to not engage. It's not always the best decision, but at the same time sometimes you know that it won't improve if you do something about it.

Michelle spoke about the concept of certain situations where attempting to advocate and be an ally do not change the way that someone thinks or feels within their own bias. It feels not worth the expenditure of energy, and this again is a privilege of having white skin; those with white skin can chose when to engage or advocate, whereas minorities have to deal with perceptions and microaggressions in their everyday life.

Racism is becoming increasingly relevant in David's life in terms of a growing sense of responsibility to gain a deeper understanding, thus his articulation in defining it represent his dedication to this personal growth. As an educator he feels an additional responsibility to begin to disrupt ideas and actions that perpetuate racism. Although it is not relevant to him personally, the

broader picture and understanding how society functions within a system of white supremacy is critically important to him. He speaks of racism in the following way:

> Racism is a process of structures and systems that serve to advantage certain groups, while simultaneously harming or disadvantaging others and those groups that are disadvantaged are outside of what is deemed cultural norms predominantly rooted in European white colonial structures.

In living out the reality of a white male, David speaks about never being in a position where he has to question whether the way he is being treated is because of the way that he appears. Acknowledging his privilege and an eagerness to learn from mistakes has led him to a high level of comfort in racial discourse and awareness. 'This defensiveness we have as white people around what whiteness means and how it privileges us, that notion of fragility and that somehow we're being victimized by being asked to develop a wider, deeper perspective', in itself, defines white fragility. David shares that it is very hard work for people to think and reflect on this, because society has historically never asked that of us but rather expected us to carry on without thinking about it.

White teacher definitions of racism present a range of opinions on the depth and reality of racism in Canada. The personal experiences of each individual are significant contributing factors to the development of personal ideas in regards to what they have observed or personally experienced. These perceptions are not eternal as they will continue to evolve as each individual continues to experience life both personally and professionally.

Comfort in Racial Discourse

Each of the participants demonstrated a comfort in racial discourse by simply offering to be an interviewee and then following through with it. I commend the latter of these two things as several participants offered their email address for an interview but did not respond to several

follow up emails. In this section, relevant data and quotes are drawn in support of each of the following categories, where possible.

Low Level of Comfort

Although some survey scores indicated low racial awareness in interview participants, each interviewee, from low to high racial awareness demonstrated some level of comfort in speaking about racism, discrimination, and the invisible barriers to access for minorities.

Although at times throughout the conversation with Michelle, she seemed to be quite comfortable, she communicated that she was not very comfortable at all. Michelle discusses her lack of ease with speaking about racism by first addressing that she struggles with terminology and knowing what is appropriate and what is not. She does not want to offend anyone within any ethnic group and feels as though terms and language change so quickly and so frequently. If she had what she calls a 'toolkit' of appropriate language, she could 'approach the subject without getting a little anxious even just thinking about it.' Michelle explicitly states that she is afraid to discuss certain topics about certain ethnicities for fear of saying the wrong thing.

Michelle opens up about the dynamics between a diverse group of friends that her and her partner have. They call her stereotypically the 'spoiled white girl' and make other references that are for them, innocent, but touch on common racial constructs. After sharing some vulnerability within this story, Michelle shared that she was 'so uncomfortable.' I checked to see if she meant right then, and she most certainly did. After further discussing racism in recent news, she concluded with the sentiment that:

> Sharing this kind of personal feeling and journey and their own history that's involved in some of the questions can be really hard because it's heavy stuff. What you are doing right now is extremely important and it's very difficult at the same time. It is the hardest most important work right now.

She conveys her general interest in the subject area and the sentiment of genuinely desiring to grow and get better herself in navigating racial discourse and cultural sensitivity.

Similarly, to Michelle, Angela spoke openly throughout the interview but shared at the end that she feels like she has a lot to learn. She teaches her children to be kind, apologize when necessary and reflect on how we all can do better. On the explicit topic of racism, she feels however that she isn't sure where to start, yet teaching primary aged kids makes it a little easier despite being afraid to use the wrong terminology. She admits that she is 'not that comfortable' overall and if she had to teach high school aged students, she would feel even more insecure. She feels comfortable speaking with friends, but beyond that sphere, she desires to grow confidence with the use of culturally acceptable and sensitive language alongside a greater frequency of addressing racism.

Medium Level of Comfort

With the comfort of family, Greg debates frequently about racism. He and his son 'argue all the time. We always talk about white privilege which does exist right, but I told him I think that the worst thing is not coming from a good family. He said no. He automatically thinks that racism' is the biggest factor in lack of access to advantages in life. Greg persists that 'disadvantaged people come from bad families' in which he is indicating broken families, drug addiction, lack of family support and other similar factors. Although these conversations are frequent and he displays comfort in racial discourse, his articulation and avoidance of the use of racial terms shows that his comfort is somewhat lower outside of family conversations.

Another example of medium level of comfort in racial discourse is demonstrated in the interview with Blake. Blake shared that 'racism is there, and I don't have any issue talking about it'. When asked if his comfort level changes with different audiences or social settings, he

reiterated that he doesn't have any issues in speaking about racism because 'it's better to be okay with it.' He feels he doesn't have any reason to hide anything and therefore can speak openly. His words convey a reasonable level of comfort in racial discourse, which coincides with willingness to participate and openness in the interview about wanting to better understand the effects of deep-rooted racism.

Louise shares the sentiment of a deeper discomfort when around those who are overtly racist rather than those who are more subtle with their thoughts seeped in deficit thinking. She explains that she feels intimidated and possibly threatened around overt racism, with a desire to get better and grow moral courage. She openly acknowledges how if this can be threatening for a white person, 'what it can only feel like' to be Black and grappling with the heavy task of being anti-racist. In her desire to speak out and morally stand up for an equitable experience for all, more often than she would like to admit, she remains silent, thus perpetuating systemic racism.

High Level of Comfort

As individuals continue to break the silence and speak about the many facets of systemic racism, both globally and nationally, we as a human race, will make progress. Some participants spoke of the ease we will attain in addressing oppression and racism in the future and demonstrated an active comfort in racial dialogue. Perhaps this phenomenon of backwards design can inspire advocacy within individuals as they practice the strength of their voices, for a more promising equitable future. The reference of low to high comfort in racial dialogue is relevant specifically to the range and participants in this study, rather than to the range in society as a whole. Alison speaks of a 'purposeful' approach to racism with both her son and her high school students. By this she means addressing the reality of oppression with students and the differences in families with her

young son. Although she actively and comfortably addresses these topics, she did admit that in some scenarios she chooses not to.

A common theme occurred when speaking about comfort with racism where the presence of a personal connection makes advocacy harder. An example of this given by Alison is a racial stereotype referenced by a family member at Christmas dinner, which she describes as 'exhausting to me'. She goes on to explain this struggle:

> I don't want to launch into a tirade about why what you're saying is offensive. Sometimes I fail because you know what, it's Christmas dinner, you're ignorant, you're not going to understand why I am upset about this, and I don't feel like launching into an argument with you about it right now.

Social justice advocacy has been expressed to feel harder when personal connections are involved, in comparison to an academic perspective within the classroom. This avoidance in some scenarios can indicate a lower personal comfort, but it demonstrates the continued heaviness of breaking the silence that nurtures racism. In reality, with some days and occasions, the layers in one's own life leave less energy to tackle the depths of oppression.

Jason expresses his reflected comfort in racial discourse through his honest and open approach to all interview questions. His personal experience with racism including the questions his wife gets asked at the grocery store or doctor's office paint a clear picture of the many realities of white privilege. 'Are those your kids?' or 'your son looks pale; have you been feeding him?' are just some examples of the microaggressions that relay an assumption that his Black wife has done wrongly or that she is not deserving of her situation. This reality for Jason has made racial discourse a very normal occurrence that he feels more at ease discussing it than he feels dealing with the reality of combatting racism.

David has become less defensive within racial dialogue as he reflects on an issue of discipline with a Black student where he was accused of being racist. At the time this happened, he remembers a 'visceral reaction and defensiveness that came with the accusation because I had always thought of myself as not racist.' Looking back, he feels he would deal with that differently today. If you are not racist, then you must be part of the solution, which in reality requires one to be anti-racist. Being impacted by the ease with which a white male can navigate culture and the educational system, working through problems with an anti-racist lens pushes the agenda of asking uncomfortable questions to advocate for racial awareness. He reflects on this incident:

> This is about me in this moment, but it is probably not about me specifically. This is a lived experience that that student has had. This is a question the student has had to ask themselves, time and time again. Am I being treated this way because of how I look? So really is not about how I might be hurt by that accusation. It's indicative of a far bigger question that we need to be asking ourselves right, so that comes from a place of, I suspect, a whole host of experiences that students had in their life.

Reaching this level of awareness with continuing to ask difficult questions creates space and time for voices to be heard and contributes to an overall increased understanding of non-white perspectives.

David acknowledges that it is easier to talk about racism with white people. He has lived his life as a white male and although he feels he has a pretty developed sense of how race operates in our culture, he has no lived experience with racism. In approaching a conversation with somebody who is racialized, 'you have to be prepared for a lot of what you think and believe about yourself to be really progressive and well developed, to be challenged.' This is admittedly a difficult concept when one identifies as somebody that is anti-racist who tries to engage is actions and behaviours that demonstrate that. It is important to keep sight on the fact that you are still

coming from a place of privilege and that 'our attitudes and values are not universal,' making it hard to really understand how race operates with a set of life experiences as a white individual.

The overall analysis of participant comfort in racial dialogue shows that the range from low comfort to high comfort is apparent throughout the interviews. The reference of this range is specific to the parameters of this study only, and thus a participant with high comfort would not be equal or comparable to an individual in the greater society with a high level of comfort in racial dialogue. In comparison to society at large, high comfort in this study would be more equitable to a medium level of comfort in racial dialogue. Additionally, participant ranking in low racial awareness on the survey does not correlate to a low comfort in racial dialogue. Contrary to this, those who scored a high racial awareness on the survey, did provide interview data indicating also a high comfort in racial dialogue. The comparison of these data points indicates that the greater an individual's authentic awareness is of racial realities, the more comfortable they are likely to be in dialogue as they hold the confidence and knowledge of how oppression and discrimination make way in so many lives.

Discussing the Prevalence of Racism in Education

The following section will discuss the themes that consistently showed up throughout the interviews. Within each theme, varying and sometimes opposing participant views are shared in order to present an overview of the data collected for examining white teacher attitudes towards anti-racist initiatives.

The Invisibility of Racial Barriers: Oppression

When teachers were asked about the prevalence of racism in education, a significant contingency demonstrated a hesitant validation of racism and a focus on racism being the blatant

acts and language that were once mainly associated with it. Angela shared that if she were asked about racism in education 18 years ago, 'I'd say no, but I think that there is, I think it's still there. I don't see it as much like where I'm at right now.' When asked the same question, Michelle only addressed blatant racism by stating 'I don't think any educators are standing up there and saying awful things to their students.' Blake reflects from his personal life in saying 'it's just not like something that we ever really kind of talk about, we don't address it. It's neither here nor there really. Now it's actually a real thing but it doesn't affect my day-to-day life.' Racism has no direct impact on these educator's lives because of the colour of their skin and it becomes an easier position to assume that things have gotten better, but we think it is there, if we dig deeper. This is a grand underestimation of the existence and impacts that systemic racism has and has had for hundreds of years on many lives. Based in only positive intent, there is a nonchalant attitude portrayed in these responses, facilitated by the privilege of not having to address or reflect on racially charged experiences, but rather only doing so if or when one feels like they have the strength to tackle it.

Further along in the interviews, more references began to emerge regarding non-visible aspects of racism. The positive intentions of teachers were mentioned alongside the desire to eliminate the issue of racism. Michelle reiterated again that educators are not acting in racist ways, but in society in general, regardless of education, that there are issues of racism that definitely still need to be dealt with. She shares her thoughts on systemic barriers:

> It's not always something that you know it's not like a visible thing, it's more like you know who has access to technology, who has access to a good role model, who has access to money, it has a lot to do with even just those primary and those simple things.

The invisible barriers she references may start small, but their reality of existence grows extreme in the experiences of many marginalized individuals.

A deeper commitment is needed in order to achieve an equitable experience for all learners within our education system. David, who scored the highest racial awareness of all interviewees, expresses that not being racist as an educator is the easy part. He goes on to explain that challenging the structures within education that continue to perpetuate the privileges of whiteness and then accepting the sacrifices that come with it, is the hard part. This is something that minorities face every day of their lives, without choice. As a minority, disruptions and challenges in relationships, are placed upon the core of their existence because of the racial constructs and systemic barriers so deeply rooted in history. White folk can pick and choose when they address racism, while minorities are faced with daily challenges of oppression. If one stops at not individually being racist, they continue to be part of the problem.

Although there are without a doubt, educators that hold personally racist ideas, David sees the broader problem as follows:

> It doesn't come from a personal sense of viewing certain races as inferior and others as superior; it comes through a process of a lack of examination of those structures that perpetuate racism and the feeling that you're somehow being inconvenienced, or you're being disrespected, or you are being victimized because you are being asked to examine the structures that have allowed you to benefit.

This echo of inconvenience comes in forms such as a sigh in having to listen to the address of race and racism, resistance to Black Lives Matter by pushing that 'all lives matter' and other approaches that represent lack of acknowledgement of the inequitable experiences that minorities have always dealt with. This challenging reality is shown in the lack of diversity of professionals in public education. David lives in a diverse area but the teaching, support staff and administration positions hold very few non-white employees.

The lack of diversity in education careers can have an impact on the educational outcomes of diverse students. Jason, the father of two biracial children, discusses the benefit of students

having access to teachers throughout their career that they can identify with and that look like them. With concerns for progressing forward, he shares:

> It is a situation where people are not entering the profession for certain reasons; it is the vetting process at the board level. There is something inherently biased that hasn't been examined; there's something happening that we are not seeing.

One of many key players in breaking down existing power structures would be for diverse students to have access to educators that are like them. This is an empowering experience and an advantage that is normalized for white students. Jason persists that a lot of the trickle down from systemic racism in education is unconscious as it is not something that we have been asked to examine. Due to this overall silence and avoidance, 'we never get to the core of the questions because we are so concerned about how people are going to react' and thus the lack of diversity in educators persists.

David shares stories of experiences throughout his career that reflect the stereotypes of racial constructs. In the predominantly white County school that he works at now, a fight broke out among two white female students, one who had just moved from a city school. A teacher made a comment that this student brought all the fights with her from the city. The deficit thinking within this teacher's comment, rooted in systemic racism, is loud and clear. In David's eyes, 'if you walked a day in those kid's shoes, you might think differently about that comment.' He explains this in more details:

> What I realized now is without saying it what they were really saying is those inner-city schools are more dangerous and its sort of that whole racist trope that inner city neighbourhoods are more dangerous than that because they are filled with more dangerous people and who are those people, well they tend to be more diverse. Not that there are not white people in inner city neighbourhoods by any stretch of the imagination, but so I guess that would be sort of like what we call a microaggression. There is a partial awareness that you are judging the city differently than the county, but what is one of the fundamental differences between the two places, well one is predominantly white, and one is far more diverse. So, when you dig the depth down into that comment, it is clearly a comment based in racist attitudes.

His mention of microaggression is an important one. The constant experience of microaggressions for marginalized individuals, can be deflating and debilitating at any age. The fact that a teacher expressed a seemingly innocent comment about city schools, presents a tiny snippet of the deficit thinking that exists among educated professionals.

Streaming for many years has been an illusion of choice and one of the reasons that it has been removed from the fall of 2021. When students choose their pathway, they are typically not making the choice for themselves. In many cases, it has been made for them very early on, and David shares that 'we know that disproportionately, Black, Indigenous and other racialized groups are streamed into what would be deemed the non-academic pathway.' He summarizes a comment he heard a fellow colleague say framing non-academic students as lacking motivation. If it doesn't come down to ability, but rather motivation, then we need to question what teachers can do better in order to better engage students who are racialized. Grouping students into a category of lacking motivation is problematic on its own, 'but if you look at that through a lens of anti-racism, you know that's coming from a privileged person who has benefited from the very system that has disadvantaged them.' David shares:

> If they're not being motivated, what are we doing about it and that's the whole piece about culturally responsive pedagogy and that's why we have to examine what we do and how we do it right, because if we are continuing to perpetuate the cultural reference points that we're comfortable with and we are predominantly white, then we continue to leave out, so is motivation less a function of some inherent capacity that I think people believe motivation is either you have it or you don't and I think that's a bit of an outrageous argument. I think kids are motivated when they see themselves in their education and if we're persistently not providing opportunities for Black, Indigenous and other racialized students to see themselves in their education, then yeah of course they're not going to be motivated, so it doesn't take very many steps to figure that out.

David does not feel like grouping students as lacking motivation is intended to be a racist argument but expresses that is exactly what it is. In drawing an assumption about a certain group of students, one is perpetuating the social constructs rooted at the core of systemic racism.

Throughout David' years in education, he feels he has become increasingly aware of the impact that racism has on students and tries to be conscious of this to the best of his ability. This stands true for all of the participants but to a lesser degree than David, except for Greg. Louise as an example, feels like she has only had the revelation of the reality of racism and its impact in the past few years, and it has now become a large focus for her. It is hard to pinpoint how racism is impacting a student's educational experience or how it might be contributing to the situation that they are in, and it is critical to be conscious of possible personal bias when proceeding with discipline and challenging issues.

The possibly of personal bias when challenges arise in education can be daunting for teachers on their developing racial awareness journey. Going back several years there were four or five Black boys who were the majority of the diverse students. They were often in trouble at the same time and the teachers involved were very consumed with what they could do differently and how the scenario looked from the outside. Common questions rose such as had they been targeted through the years, how it could be changed, whether there are different and more effective approaches in handling behaviour, and how to connect authentically with parents. As a general observation, Angela feels that certain groups don't necessarily struggle academically, but rather behaviorally. She has also noted that if the family is struggling, the student often does too. Although it is hard to know what is happening at home and the degree to which it effects students, when a student is struggling and parents can't be reached or don't respond or attend interviews, it indicates that things are difficult. Experiences like this group of Black students have provided

much time for critical reflection in Angela's career as she tries to best navigate changing dynamics in education.

Jason speaks of diverse students struggling mainly socially, but 'because they struggle socially, oftentimes that bleeds into the academic component'. In 2019, prior to the hit of the March 2020 pandemic, he told a story of social segregation that echoes segregation post the abolition of slavery. A student from Southeast Asia ran for student council and was elected Prime Minister. Other elected students for Minister of Treasury and Minister of Dance, were white students. The Diverse students on council planned a dance and the 'white students didn't want to associate with their dance, and so they ran a separate dance'. They ran prom this way too; one prom for the diverse students and one for the white students. No teachers or administrators made motions strong enough to end this modern-day segregation and when asked, Jason said he feels like it would still happen this coming school year. He resides in this conservative town where he observes the disinterest among students in getting to know people who look different from themselves; 'they don't really know who they are, nor do they want to associate with them.' This very sentiment bleeds into minority experiences of applying to jobs, success in schooling, and other avenues of access as oppression shows up in many areas of their lives.

Old Materials Perpetuate Racism

On the topic of relevance of racism in Michelle's life, she tries very hard to be cognisant of what her students might be experiencing while acknowledging as a white individual, that it is difficult to empathize what oppression feels like in a 'wholesome way'. In addressing issues of race in her classroom there are always a concern of offending students and that can bring a feeling of being overwhelmed. She doesn't want anyone to ever feel separated or centered out from the group, but she feels addressing some things is very important. Therefore, she feels 'at a crossroads

in terms of how I do approach this and how do I handle it with my groups.' This is a sentiment that most of the participants expressed, achieving the balance of interrupting the silence that perpetuates racism, and approaching topics in an ethically and culturally sensitive manner.

There is traditionally very little interruption within curriculum of the dominant representations rooted in systemic racism. David does try to resist this by bringing in a 'post-colonial lens' to draw attention to the social and political power relationships that drove colonialism and the lasting effects today. He explains that when awareness is heightened, it is obvious 'whose voices are not represented.' Acknowledging the missing voices is the first step to creating change. Michelle adds that 'there are a lot of Western European male white artists that we appreciate, and we study, and I do feel like there's room to be made for an alternative curriculum.' An added complication of this is that Michelle herself, like most teachers in general, did not learn anything but white representations in Art. She feels that:

> There is this whole like learning curve that goes with that and how do I address that without being insensitive and how do I discuss that with my students without sounding completely naïve about it and you know there is that hurdle as well.

In Michelle's expression here, she communicates a need for specific work to diversify Art curriculum, which could span across the board for subject areas. Angela, a teacher of elementary provided an explicit example of navigating the same challenge with younger students.

As an elementary teacher, selecting of literature and books are a consistent task to effectively supplement and enhance the curriculum. Angela acknowledges that racism is relevant in education in terms of the need to really consider what books she is reading to the class. There are so many novels and texts written by white men, focused on the lived experiences of an average white person. These average living experiences were historically facilitated by the maintenance of power through oppressing marginalized communities, such as Indigenous and Black and Brown

individuals. Countless powerful barriers to land access, job access and health care access have trapped generations of Indigenous, Black and Brown individuals, resulting in a present day unjust low number of marginalized people in leading and successful positions. This in turn, negatively effects their younger generations belief in what they can become. Angela considers this carefully in her Junior aged classroom.

> You know we're always looking for ways so that the children can see themselves in what we're showing whether it's in social studies or science and even in math or any videos; we're always trying to find ways that they can see themselves in the future in a successful way. That makes sense. For example, we were listening to a podcast, and it was really cool because the different people in the podcast had different accents. I think that the one little girl in class really connected to it because her mom and dad have a very strong accent and I don't think that she ever heard that or saw that at school ever. I think that made her feel like oh I'm not alone. This is something that you have to be really careful about

Angela goes on to comment on the importance of specifically using visible representation of minorities for her students. Enhancing the curriculum and providing an equitable experience for all, means actively changing the way things have been done and ridding of many traditional texts to find new ones that don't only celebrate and embellish the accomplishments of white individuals.

Decision Making and Disconnection

The hierarchy in education and the main stakeholders in decision making, like in any area of business or societal functioning, are predominantly white. This is an important concept in Alison's expression of how she feels that issues of racism are 'falling apart in a lot of schools.' When stakeholders hold a set of lived experiences from the perspective of a white successful individual, it is unlikely that their decisions and actions are going to equitably consider the experiences and challenges that oppression and systemic racism bring to many. She expresses with passion the following:

> Policies are being put in place by people who work at a board office, and they're not physically coming into the schools to actually look at the makeup of those schools, the

demographics of those schools, you know, the daily interactions. If you want to know what a microcosm for society looks like, go to a cafeteria at lunch. I say that all the time, because you will see the power dynamics, you will see the racism the sexism, homophobia, that all plays out in high school cafeterias. And so I think the problem is that there's a massive disconnect between the people who are making the decisions, and then the people who are being enforced to implement them, which is us as the teachers and the administrators, because on paper it looks good to say yeah we're going to hire more teachers of color, but until we physically see that happening in our classrooms, then we're not seeing things that are actually changing in a concrete way. So hiring is huge to me

Alison's mention of hiring a diverse staff is one that comes up several times throughout the data collected in this research. A predominantly white educator staff appears to be one of the more explicit indicators of racism and the history of oppression, for all research participants, regardless of where they are on their journey in racial awareness and anti-racist advocacy.

Diversity and the Oppressive Reality of Racial Profiling

Although not all may agree, the reality of racism in education, is strong and prevalent. Whether or not teachers have many students of colour in their classes, systemic racism shows through in many ways including selected materials and generational views perpetuated by the dominant structures of whiteness. Louise speaks to the large relevance of racism in her educating experience as there are many diverse students at her school. She feels as though she has been ignorant for too long and feels as though she 'woke up only maybe three or four years ago to realize how much more is needed to be done.' She goes onto express in her journey of racial awareness that it is now her 'primary thought process' when teaching. The school closures throughout the COVID-19 pandemic amplified the challenges in this being her priority with the experience of teaching online as she 'didn't even know who was white or who was Black. Breaking silence on racial discourse should not only be a priority for teachers but for administrators as well.

Some of the participants spoke to the issue of administrators holding racial stereotypes of students when troubles arise. Michelle admitted that she sees more ethnic students having issues in education, yet she does not know the reason. She expresses concern that administrators who may have had consistent experiences with certain students, may tend to lump the entire group within that ethnicity as having tendency to proceed with the identified behaviour. This is again a privilege that white people have, as they are rarely defined by the poor decisions that other white people make.

The experience of oppression is incredibly challenging to navigate at all ages and especially when it effects a primary aged child who is assumed to be with an equitable and trusted teacher. When Jason's daughter was being sent out of the classroom on a frequent basis, along with the only other Black child in the class, Jason had to proceed in having a conversation with the teacher. The teacher used what Jason described as code words, telling him and his wife that his daughter is disrespectful and has a hard time paying attention. Jason and his wife proceeded with patience and inquisition, despite feeling defensive of their child and suspicious of the teacher's possible racial bias playing through in how she was treating the minority children in the class. As the conversation proceeded, the biracial couple continued to see signs indicating that their child was being treated unfairly.

In this difficult position for Jason and his wife, hints of white fragility themed in defensiveness started to emerge from the teacher. The conversation began to lack examples and concrete evidence that their child and the other Black child were genuinely consistently misbehaving. Instead of offering what may have given the parents some ideas with how to help their daughter in class, assuming that was the problem, the teacher felt threatened and started to cry. Her classroom actions showed her perception to be that the only two Black children in the

class full of active seven-year-olds, were the ones causing issue. The teacher expressed that she could sense Jason's wife was getting angry which brought them back to the angry Black woman trope. The teacher's actions defined white fragility with her defensive altering of focus in dealing with the issue of whether or not the Black children were experiencing discrimination. Instead, the issue became the teacher's personal feeling of threat, discomfort and desire to avoid the direct issue. In conclusion, there was no doubt for Jason and his wife that their daughter was in fact being treated unfairly, and both parents of the Black children have since made a strong and successful effort in ensuring that their younger children do not get placed in this teacher's classroom.

Within the past year, much attention was put to the need to work towards social justice in education and 'people really cared about it for about six months', but nearing the end of the 2021 school year, the majority of teachers and students entered survival mode and focused on closing the year out. This is important to note, because of the prevalence of racism in education that Jason speaks of, this short-term focused attention parallels with initiatives that in the past eventually went silent. Jason feels strongly that racism is rampant in education, much of it not being readily visible or apparent to the average white person's eye such as the belittling effects of racial profiling. He has seen many efforts without force through his years, and although progress has been made for racial equity, it is a long cry from what needs to happen in order for minorities to be treated and supported so that they have the same opportunities as their white counterparts to reach high levels of success.

To be white and to think back on a dialogue from childhood, realizing it was rooted in systemic racism, is a common experience among the participants of this study. Although Michelle's explicit experiences with racism have been minimal, a childhood memory echoes the microaggressions so common on the schoolyard that most often go unspoken of. She was friends

with a girl whose parents immigrated from India before she was born. Another friend told her she should not go to this friend's house because it was very dirty there. In reflecting back on this experience, Michelle feels in her gut that the friend's ethnic background was being spoken of, however indirectly. Michelle noted this is her 'speculation' and continued to admit that she is 'guessing and maybe that is part of my own bias.'

Racism in education appears in many different forms, whether between students, between teacher and students, perpetuated through management decisions or embedded into the curriculum through white dominant representation. While working in the past at the most diverse school in the region, Michelle has dealt with a number of incidents where she found racialized vandalism written on desks in her classroom. She found this upsetting and would take sandpaper and work on sanding it off right during her active lesson. She wanted the students to see, in particular the students that wrote it, so they might feel something that would cause them to reflect on their decision and hopefully make better choices going forward. She made a statement that this was not going to be in her classroom in hopes that the student who did it would feel bad. One example that she shared was a swastika being vandalized into the desk.

> They know that it is going to get a rise out of people, that it is offensive and that it's something they can put on a desk, and it is going to be effective in terms of what they are trying to accomplish.

Michelle speaks of racist vandalism and racist vocabulary possibly being not as complicated as we might think. She suggests it could be students trying to get a reaction or push buttons rather than it being completely racially motivated. Regardless of the severity of intentions any such action has underlying deeply racist roots.

Avoidance of Racial Realities

With genuine and lengthy experience as a teacher, perspectives can still hold that racism is no longer thriving. Greg, the participant introduced by the story of his family's immigration from Italy and discrimination against their language and accents, feels as though he does not see racism in education. He shared throughout his interview that he also does not validate the concept of oppression and the generational effects that it has had on many marginalized individuals. He emphasizes in the following excerpt with the word 'don't' many times:

> You know, so I don't see that right, you know and with my daughter in law, I don't see it either, like I said I don't see it. And she's from the Caribbean right so she goes to school here and everything. Anything she says that's you know indicates racism it's questionable right. I don't see much of it anymore, I don't. I know it exists. People are more polite about it, I think.

The experience of his much-loved Black daughter in law is powerful in gifting him the comfort in racial discourse. She has done very well for herself and has had ease of advancing and climbing career wise, in his eyes, more so than his white son. This validates his relaxed views on fading racism and fuels his argumentative tendencies with his family on the topic. Greg's comfort level is incredibly powerful for this research. As indicated by the many teachers that scored similarly on the survey for racial awareness, his perceptions represent those of many in teaching. Greg stands out because of his comfort in speaking, thus providing key insight into the importance of continuous and tiresome work on addressing systemic racism.

Greg goes on to contradict his initial statement that he doesn't see overt racism anymore. He does this by sharing that he sees it 'more against the Muslims than anyone else. But as for Blacks, I don't see it or hear it anymore, I don't. I hear it more towards even the Chinese.' Greg feels that he is exposed to little racism because the younger generation of students are afraid to show it in front of an older teacher. Greg does not discuss the perpetuation of racism within the

realm of barriers to access and oppression in general. On the contrary, he explicitly states that such barriers do not exist based on colour, but rather based on family cohesion and income level, which in some instances intersect with colour. He goes as far as saying that he and his son who is married to a Black woman always argue about privilege.

> The privilege I see is coming from a good family right. I can think of my students who are Black and Chinese; the ones that come from families that are good, they are doing great; they're very successful. The obstacles are like anyone else, but the ones that come from bad families, if they do get hit in the head with some kind of challenge, they don't bounce back. The best privilege is having familial privilege where your family is there for you right? That is the privilege I see.

He maintains that the visible minorities at his high school are treated well and equally, and anytime he has seen derogatory words used in any setting, people fight back. Greg's contribution to this research is incredibly valuable as it provides extension to a perspective that represents many teachers; the perspective that colour of skin is not linked to oppression or lack of barriers. This is a perspective that was made very clear by many survey participants whose score indicated a low awareness of institutional and blatant discrimination, as well as racial privilege. It is these very perspectives that must fuel the need for deep change and critical reflection among many key players, who are white teachers, in the future of our students.

Perceptions of Anti-Racist Training

The importance of teacher perceptions towards anti-racist training is emphasized with the realization that such perceptions connect directly to educator tendency to try to teach through an anti-racist lens. When this type of training is viewed positively, teachers are more likely to be open-minded, humble, and willing to look at personal actions and behaviours with a mindset of how to become more effective.

Highlighting Self- Evaluation as a Pathway Forward

One must question the value of anti-racist training if the focus is not on self-examining one's own views and bias led thinking. People tend to get defensive when asked to reconsider a consistent way of thinking. In this profession of education, David notes that if people aren't examining their views, 'how do we ever expect to get to a place where we are really prepared to engage in anti-racist education?' In discussing the anti-racist training offered in the 2020/2021, David feels that self-examination is such a critical tool that is not promoted among an assumption that everybody understands what work is required. This is not explicitly spoken about, and people are not authentically challenged to think about how their thought processes fit into the dialogue on racism.

Critical reflection and the discomfort that comes with it are an integral part of a willingness to be wrong and a pathway to broadening perspectives. Discourse within anti-racist training should be about perspective transformation, where teachers are encouraged to suspend their own beliefs and try to interact with competing perspectives while working towards synthesizing the two. This way it is not about being right or wrong but rather about openness and growth within racial awareness. This would allow for teachers to identify the unexamined reasons why we identify some students as academic and to reassess our concept of academic ability. On a more macro level, David shares:

> We have to start to break things down, so I think it's wonderful that we're doing a lot of work around anti-racism. I think we are doing it without examining the very structures that perpetuate racism in our education system. I think it's just a real missed opportunity and I don't see typically that a lot of work about examining ourselves, where we come from, why we've benefited, and how we've benefited is being done. Until we're able to do that, I think that this is a starting point for any anti-racist initiative.

Movement for racial equity can be done with changing policies and approaches to students but developing a capacity for self-examination and thinking through attitudes is front and center for authentic effectiveness. Although anti-racist training is being implemented, the right tools are not being offered to unpack one's own experiences and thoughts, to move the organization forward in a social justice manner. Despite this, in David' opinion, the professional development still has been 'the best we have had.'

Some discussion within the anti-racist training in the 2020/2021 year, was focused on streaming from a social justice angle. David spoke positively about this aspect of the training. David shared:

> I wouldn't have said streaming was good or bad, and I always felt a real responsibility to my applied students, because I always felt that they were the group that were less valued in our system. I always have that inherent understanding and I don't know that I would have had the capacity to understand how much harm that was doing in the long run, and to certain groups right so that's (the training) really made me understand that.

The pushback against streaming is rooted in racism, whether people are willing to acknowledge that or not and the anti-racist training has helped to clarify the role of de-streaming in the equitability of educational access. The board mandated training has also helped develop a deeper understanding of the concept of intersectionality and how multiple layers can amplify oppression. Overall, participants felt that the training seemed like a conscious effort by the organization to start to break down preconceived notions that educators have and to ask uncomfortable questions about their own practice. That being said, as previously mentioned, the educator's capacity to do that needs to largely be in question.

To some degree, the professional development in anti-racist training brings about a fear in people of identifying themselves as racist or having done something that is racist. Jason describes racist and anti-racist as a spectrum where sometimes one can trend one way and at other times,

they can trend the other way. Getting teachers to reflect on where they are on that spectrum and where they want to be in the future can be positively instigated from anti-racist training. Encouraging this reflection is very important and Jason has lost friendships in his personal mission in wanting to trend as much towards anti-racist as possible. His life situation does not ensure that this journey is simple by any means.

> I don't get a pass because my wife is Black, and my kids are mixed. I have said and done racist things in the past, you know we all have because if you grew up in a racist system, you are going to espouse racist ideology.

The importance of an anti-racist direction for Jason is possibly more pressing than the average teacher because of his familial situation, but it does not evade the arduous challenge of the journey for him and his family.

In order to dismantle systemic racism in education we have to really look to the students and their experiences and make that a fundamental part of what we do as teachers. Teachers are trained to be the person with knowledge and understanding. Until they are willing to step back from that and acknowledge there is a lot they might not know about the students who sit in their room, progress in racial equity will be hindered. As described by David, a staff within a school building can have 'all the anti-racist training in the world but that isn't going to change how we interact in classrooms if we are not ready to start to self-examine about how we do things.' This holds true for levels systematically, structurally and personally.

Professional Development Deemed Inadequate

Critical opinions emerged regarding anti-racist initiatives throughout the interviews, including the descriptor inadequate. This is the word that Jason used without hesitation in response to reflecting on the anti-racist training in his Southwestern Ontario school board. 'It was inadequate, which is very explanatory in itself.' For teachers that perceive anti-racist training to

be relevant as Jason strongly does, it was noticeable that not long after the training, there became a developed apathy towards anti-racism. Senior administration, principals and thus teachers were very on board initially with anti-racism. Jason describes that Superintendents stopped showing up to the equity lead meetings, and therefore principals and teachers did too. This trickle down of apathy has been very evident, so much that Jason explains 'this is white supremacy once everything goes back to normal. It's this re embedding or reinventing of white supremacy back into the system.' This explanation comes full circle to the word inadequate, in regards to anti-racist training. Angela validates this when asked about anti-racist professional development, by admitting that 'I don't even remember, how sad is that?' It is not long enough, not frequented enough and not in depth enough to make an impact on the majority of educators.

The importance of anti-racist training was made very clear by all participants, despite its perceived ineffectiveness. Louise explained that

> You can't ask one white administrator to present anti-racist training and think that that's going to be effective. I don't think that's the way to go about it, I think it has to be in collaboration with people of color. I think that you need their input, but better yet, they need to create it for us. It needs to be driven by their understanding of race and not ours.

Louise shared that these discussed factors contributed to her sentiment that the training did not have any effect on how she thinks, although she does appreciate that it was being done. She feels like she probably has read more books on racism than the people who created and delivered the training, but that it could have an impact on 'the average person'. Blake added to this overall notion by saying that 'those PDs are hard, because I just I wonder who's listening and who's not.'

Greg addressed the perceived lack of desire of administrators wanting to present the anti-racist training. As he sat and listened to the white presenters, who seemed uninterested and uncomfortable with the material, he found it hard to authentically hear what they were saying. In

addition to this, he felt like throughout the presentation, they tried to encourage guilt in being white and privileged, which then in turn provokes feelings of anger in white people. 'They can make it less blaming and less shame on you for being white.' His perception and reaction of white fragility connects back to the administrators being forced to relay material they themselves do not connect to.

The term anti-racist can make participants feel self-distancing and less engaged because of how 'racism' makes them feel. As Angela describes, 'to me racism is just hate, there is nothing nice, do we need a better word?' She goes on to describe that people may react to the ideal of the initiative or a 'racism course' with avoidance. 'People are going to be like, no I don't want to take that, it sounds so horrible.' The word racism is perceived as a 'horrible' word because it describes many events and actions both historically and present day that are dehumanizing and debilitating. There needs to be a surge of ambition to tackle racism head on rather than a softer word to describe the reality of so many oppressed individuals.

Small Steps Can Add up to Big Change

Although the training was perceived by some as 'inadequate', several positive points about it were discussed. These included the critically important aspect of learning culturally sensitive terms. In the fall of 2020, throughout the training, some teachers spent half a day looking through the slideshow and there were several terms covered that can give teachers the confidence in participating in racial dialogue. They learned the difference between race, ethnicity, and creed. They learned about intersectionality even though Jason didn't feel confident that 'many of them actually knew how it applies in the classroom'. Exposure to the terms and learning them is 'essential and being reflective is the most crucial thing.' This reflection is needed in order to apply anti-racist training to their courses and shift the design towards an anti-racist lens. It can also help

teachers to reflect on whether they treat students in an equitable manner and how to move forward progressively

The anti-racist training was an opportunity to revisit and connect concepts and terms. If it were a school year not affected by COVID, Jason feels like there may have been more opportunity to speak with other educators about the interconnectedness of all things a part of racism.

> It's all about privilege and power and who has the privilege and power and who doesn't. Economic status is tied into gender status, which is tied into racial status and they all kind of play a factor in how students are perceived and how they are treated.

The training was effective in actively reminding teachers of the intersectionality of several factors that correlate with oppression both historically and present day.

The training was for some participants, a source of inspiration, and for others, a stark reminder of the extent of work that is needed to be done. Alison shared that it 'sort of lit a fire that was already kind of there; it inspired me to really try harder to become more aware of the issues.' This in itself is evidence that anti-racism needs to and should be addressed more often. If we leave it in silence, nothing will simply ever change. On the opposite end of feeling inspired and ignited after the professional development, Michelle felt an overwhelming sense of having a 'mountain to climb'. She came out feeling like she has so much work to do with little idea of where to even start. After continued reflection on one's own ideas and actions, this feeling of being overwhelmed in how to navigate an anti-racist journey is a move in the direction of understanding that small steps add up to big change.

Challenges in Anti-Racist Education

There is very little training at the teacher's college level to help teachers learn about systemic racism and how it effects our students at every level. It is not embedded into any of the requirements with a few exceptions across Ontario. Jason feels that teachers typically leave the

College of Education not knowing that there are possibly 'differences and different ways to deal with kids that come from different racialized backgrounds.' A Highschool student approached Jason one day, knowing his involvement with the Equity Committee and shared that his Sociology teacher 'says systemic injustice or institutionalized racism is not a thing.' Jason told the student flat out that this is incorrect. Jason spoke with his administrator about this and was later told by his union that he needs to 'be very careful in who I accuse of being racist, even though the word racist never came into it.' Jason questioned why the issue became him accusing the teacher of being racist rather than the misinformation the other teacher was spreading to young impressionable minds. In addition to this concern is the discouraging reality that an educator believes that racism does not exist. Imagine the feeling of a diverse student, listening to that teaching, despite the fact that they deal with overt or subtle oppression on a daily basis. Furthermore, there is an additional concern of white students taking away a belief in the void of racism and therefore a loss in the opportunity to inspire a young mind to advocate for anti-racism. Jason's follow up experience is the type of encounter that leaves many in silence with racial issues, not knowing how to navigate and thus perpetuating the existence of racism in education.

Jason was informed that what he should have done was speak directly with that teacher first. In concluding another possibly unresolved anti-racist attempt, Jason explained 'so I didn't go through the proper channels to challenge that teacher and that teacher is still teaching that same course and I don't know whether anything has changed'. He shared:

> When the student came to me, I knew immediately it was a problem because it didn't jive with what they've been hearing in my class and in other classes. It turned out I got into more trouble for outlining that there was a problem with the teacher calling systemic racism mythical than that teacher who actually said it and that was only in 2019.

In this attempt of Jason's to be anti-racist, he only pursued it initially because there was error placed on him. This error was not necessarily on what he was advocating for, but rather on how he approached the issue. This shift of focus created a hesitance within the participant, leaving him to wonder if that teacher ever reflected on her approach or if she continued to teach that systemic racism is mythical. Although anti-racism has become of more pressing importance to education and educators since the COVID-19 pandemic officially commenced in March of 2020, the lack of diversity and anti-racist training historically in education is echoed in this teacher's approach in her grade 12 Sociology class. As a result, her actions provide an example of white fragility and the silencing of oppression in teaching that systemic racism does not exist.

Parental backlash to providing inclusive curriculum is common but not often talked about. The data from this research provides valuable insight into some teacher experiences with resistance to anti-racist approaches. Jason administered as assignment on TED talks relating to racism and white supremacy. Students were given the links to 20 TED talks and a series of questions had to be answered on their one selected video. A student refused to do this assignment by expressing 'I don't believe in this stuff, I don't think it is an issue, I don't think this is real.' The student was given the liberty to pick any other TED talk with some reference to racism but refused to do that as well. Jason offered another alternative to the assignment and told the student:

> I hear what you are saying. I don't agree with what you are saying, so you are not going to get out of doing this assignment. English is a subjective subject because it is about how you build an argument, so now is your opportunity to give me your counter argument to the thing that you won't watch, and I can evaluate you on that.

The student ultimately preferred to take the zero rather than investigate his own biases. This emphasizes value in how Jason starts each of his English classes, by using Plato's allegory of the cave. 'We are in a cave, and we see what we see until we are taken out of that cave, where we can

start to see something else, or true reality.' Jason is open about being raised by a white supremist and having been told a lot of the things that some of his students believe. He is confident to say to students 'I am telling you, it's not real' and he always has several books to reference that back up the reality and heaviness of systemic racism. A second issue regarding the same assignment led to a parent complaint to the administrator. Jason's administrator is an Indigenous woman, and she directly told the parent that 'this is going to have to be done, these are the reasons, and this is why the teacher is doing it.' This student also did not do the assignment but there were no further complaints.

Participants in this research expressed that it can be hard to know what to do and that oftentimes, it can be easier to not push for a culturally inclusive education. Angela shares an experience as an elementary teacher where it was suggested that her class sings the Huron Carol for a Christmas concert. This is an originally French song that was introduced by St. John Baptist and used to teach the Wendat Indigenous people about the Christian faith. 'Historically from what I know, they all got along pretty well.' With access to YouTube, she taught her students one verse in French, one in English and one in the Wendat language, to present the song at the Christmas concert. Her intention was to honour the Wendat Indigenous people, but this led to one upset parent. This parent had adopted an Indigenous child and shared that they could not sing this song as it would be cultural appropriation; it was a terrible song to pick. As Angela learns the deeper truth to Indigenous communities, she sees why this was an issue, but at the time, her intentions were genuine and heartfelt. Going forward, she has felt hesitant to support and represent cultures without a deeper understanding of them, for fear of making a similar mistake, but she has also learned that among Indigenous peoples, this is also a contested issue that has to be handled with care.

Often times, challenges arise amongst efforts to be anti-racist and although we might assume that a leader will support anti-racist initiatives, there is no guarantee of this. In one school that David taught at, there was a no hat rule for students. Within the school there was a Black group of students that started wearing durags and the principal put a hard stop to them being allowed on the property. David approached the principal and suggested they 'bring a group of parents and students together and sit down and have a panel discussion about what this issue means to them.' The principal wanted nothing to do with this suggestion and this summarized for David that often in human nature, people don't want to hear competing perspectives. A meeting of this sort could have helped all to develop an understanding of what it means to those particular students. Administration might still decide that they are not allowed but at least all voices were heard, and the decision is made with understanding perspectives. Alison also has experienced a lack of anti-racist support from administration. In teaching To Kill A Mockingbird, Alison finds it critical to explain the history of the N word that is used in the book, its origin and why it is so demeaning and offensive. Understanding the heaviness and the context of the word can help to inform a student's decision to proceed with cultural sensitivity. An angry parent called the school, reporting that what she was teaching was inappropriate. The principal dealt with the phone call by supporting the parent. Alison expresses her emotions in this:

> I wasn't angry about the parent calling. I was angry that my principal didn't defend me. I was angry that my principal took the parent's side because it was more convenient to do that and say you know what, I'll talk to Alison, maybe she can reframe her lessons and water them down a bit. I was so hurt, and offended by that, because she didn't want to piss off a parent. And the reality is, you should have stood up for me and said, it's okay that your child's uncomfortable with this. But even if they're uncomfortable, they're not being forced to participate, all they're being asked to do is listen.

Alison was upset by this for a long time. She didn't do anything that was inappropriate or unprofessional but was made to feel like she did. She felt like she was thrown under the bus by

her boss, when in reality, she was effectively educating on the reality of an aspect of the constructs of race historically rooted in systemic racism. She was exhibiting the critical moral courage that is needed by all and especially white individuals, in order to create equitable change.

On an anti-racist journey, damage to and loss of relationships are not uncommon. A teacher who was a mentor to Jason, asked him to look at a billboard display that he had created about Black history month. The display was all about the trauma in Black history; it was never about the accomplishments. When asked for feedback, Jason expressed several things that were wrong about it and then Jason 'never heard from him again'.

> He hasn't spoken to me; he won't walk down the same hallways. He's moved his parking spot; he's moved his office to another part of the building because I challenged him in his way of thinking on something that he's done, and he didn't like it

The friend had asked the Historian at the local museum, and she said it was done well. As a Black historian at the local museum that depends on schools and interest in the trauma of slavery, it is important to not 'rock the boat'. She is a Black woman in a conservative town who wants to keep allies in the schools and speaking out about anything race related brings the risk of losing friends and group associations. In this sense it can be easier to live comfortably and not challenge the status quo. Jason, on the other hand, was very honest with the fact that his mentor's mural for Black history month inaccurately represented the full reality of Black history, because there were no successes showcased.

In a conservative town that was an Indigenous community that became a safe harbour for African Americans, white settlers decided that Black people were doing well in the region, and they would take over. The Black farmers were given pockets of land to still achieve some success but not as well as the white farmers. Some Black community members, like the museum historian that Jason speaks of, feel that they are 'still here', and should be grateful for what they have, and

thus proceed quietly without disruption of the status quo. The historical expectation to maintain silence around issues of racism that is presented here, is echoed in the school board's attempt at an equity committee prior to 2020.

The Equity Committee that was in place in the school board that Jason works for, was created to address as well as interrupt the disadvantaging effects of systemic racism. Principals and some teachers were members of it and when meeting, they spoke of things going on rather than addressing equity issues. It started to feel convoluted for Jason as they didn't really know what they were focused on and eventually, about a year prior to the death of Mr. George Floyd, the committee completely disbanded.

A common theme among participants was an expression of uncertainty in whether an anti-racist approach would be welcomed. Jason has a longer-term ambition to go into administration and would undoubtedly shake things up. This would be inherently good for the system but possibly perceived to be bad as an efforted attempt to disrupt the structures that perpetuate systemic racism. Other participants reflected on their own intentions to take an anti-racist approach by using the words 'terrified', 'very scared' and 'really difficult.' Alison said that 'people shy away from it because there is that discomfort'. She went on to share her view on the high school hybrid model for the 2021/2022 from a logical perspective as a teacher who desires to be anti-racist. Always having some students online and having to record lessons brings 'the end of the quality of my lessons for the time being, because I will be so robotic and worried about what I'm talking about.' Michelle shares the same sentiment that online teaching amplifies the challenge of anti-racism:

> the content of my lessons is going to shift because I'm going to be hyper aware of what I'm saying, even though I shouldn't have to be, because I don't ever say anything inappropriate, but I'm going to be worried like is there a parent at home listening, who's going to take this the wrong way. And now I'm going to have to deal with phone calls for the rest of the night, and not just that but I also feel that if the students in the classroom know that they are being

recorded, whether it's video or audio, they're going to be much more hesitant to ask questions or to engage in those conversations, for the very same reason, because they don't know who's having access to it at home.

The data strongly shows the importance of moral courage in anti-racist initiatives. There is an endless possibility of trials and tribulations with social justice work, regardless of where everyone is in their own personal journey. It is incredibly important to keep pushing forward with louder and more frequent conversations that address history and our current day issues around racism.

Successes in Anti-Racist Education

Jason shares his ultimate mission as an educator: 'Knowing the systems that are in place that are designed to support and reinforce racism and just to challenge them as much as I can.' Jason co taught with a Black female teacher for 10 years. They would plan on the weekends together as to what they would cover and how they would tie in anti-racist initiatives predominantly by breaking the silence of racism and discussing frequently how it is part of every functioning level and organization of society. His co teacher got called down to the office many times, in response to parents calling the school to complain. Jason complained to administration that they are always teaching the same thing and that he is never being called down. 'The response was that there was a clear agenda' and this word kept coming up. Jason would communicate that he has the same agenda, which is critical thinking and challenging racism. It was clear that Jason could get away with this 'agenda', being a white male, but being a Black woman in the education system is doubly hard.

Going forward they would block a portion of time for each week in preparation for a parent calling to complain and they would go down to the office together. The principal had vice principals 'dig for information to almost see if there's anything nefarious going on with our teachings,' but more specifically, her teaching. The administration never once walked by or stood

outside of Jason's classroom during these years, but they very much did so with his co-teacher. Their anti-racist 'agenda' consisted of selecting reading from Black feminist authors such as bell hooks, because students are 'rarely challenged to look outside of their own race', but rather read books that are 40 and 50 years old, written by white male authors such as *Lord of the Flies*. He noted:

> They never really have a full experience of who these authors are so when they get to us, they think that we have this mode of well we're going to teach you something that is completely anti-ethical to all the other stuff that you learn, which is right. That is exactly what we do. We want to teach that there are other voices other than the dominant male white voices that have historically been taught, so with resisting racism, we challenge the students by getting them to read different texts. We challenge administrators by doing these things and saying no. I felt it really important to resist the stuff that students were bringing into the school and parents were downloading onto their kids because I'm a product of that as well.

The resistance that Jason and his co-worker presented to administration is in itself, a successful anti-racist initiative. Their mission together, as a Black and white teacher created a force with support in providing socially just education for their students.

Being anti-racist requires continuous small efforts and this includes creating space for students to recognize the successes of marginalized people. During Black history month, Michelle highlighted a different Black artist every day of one week. Louise shared that she assigned a research project of a non-white scientist. She had a couple students that didn't want to select a non-white scientist, but the expectation was firm, and all students proceeded as required. She told them 'you can go research a white scientist on your own time' but this space in class was to learn about and celebrate the successes of marginalized scientists. She encouraged her students to question why they use textbooks that are missing pieces of history. She taught them that it is important to realize that 'a bunch of white men wrote the book, so they're missing white females, they're missing

People of color' and the importance of being able to recognize work that has been published from a white dominant biased perspective.

Resistance to racism shows up with the work of many different people, and this research helps to provide some details of relevant lived experiences. In the spring of 2020, there was a push to get an Equity Lead teacher to have somebody to help work through the prevalent reality of racism in Jason's school. Jason stepped up and continues to work hard in this area, feeling limited by what the Union will allow them to do. It has been a challenge to get staff on board as the Equity Lead, and this is represented in only ten out of seventy staff who have participated at some point. 'Unless it's mandatory, the people aren't going to do it.' Although the turnout has been less than desired, Jason presents many examples of small steps, which we must trust in to have the capacity to lead to big change. In Alison's school board, following the resurgence of BLM at the onset of the global COVID-19 pandemic, a decision was made to hire an equity officer. One of the many things the school board is setting out to do is look at the hiring practices to get more people with diversity into the classrooms.

Authentic social justice change starts with attention to racial issues and breaking the silence. Jason is described by his friends as someone who 'is never afraid to say' what he is going to say, and he is 'never embarrassed'. He was not like this 15 years ago, and he is prepared on his anti-racist journey, to face the losses and challenges along the way. He stated that he does not care who he offends, and many things have happened over the past decade because he doesn't have a 'filter'. He shares: 'I say something if I see something racist.' Likewise, if he makes a mistake, he learns from it and moves on rather than expressing fragility in his actions.

> I think there are a lot of teachers, a lot of educators, a lot of students that, they're really afraid to touch this subject because they don't want to know where they are at right now, they don't want to know where they were, and they're scared of where they will be.

Jason continues to effectively role model that it is ok to make mistakes and speak up. This is how we learn, grow and trend towards anti-racism on the spectrum of racial awareness.

There is certainly no lack of content available to teachers, but rather it is just a matter of being educated as to what is available and proceeding to access it. In Alison's law class, she has started to use podcasts, such as Cereal, that provide an intersectional look at how law operates and the role that racism can play in the courtroom. Alison finds that connecting to a modern-day reference helps information resonate with her students. As an example, in teaching about the history of lynching, she speaks about Emmett Till, a young man who was wrongfully and completely brutalized in the 1950s. Emmett's mother had an open casket and she showed this picture to the class, letting them know they could look away if they did not want to see it. 'You need to know that this exists.' She followed with the story of Trayvon Martin, a 17-year-old high school student wearing a hoodie, who was racially profiled, unarmed and innocently walking to visit family, when he was shot and killed by a neighbour. She covers these stories to show that even though lynching is not happening in its formal definition, it is still predominantly Black males who are targeted.

Alison has also played the movie 'When They See Us' to talk about five young Black males that were wrongfully convicted of rape and murder with her grade 11 law class. The youngest defendant was 14 years old, and they all went to prison for years. In acknowledging the tragic experience of these young men, she states that:

> it is very important to me with law even though it's not in the curriculum to talk about, racial issues within the justice system, and not just in the States because in Canada we like to think that we're more evolved than the United States, but there's a lot of instances in which we're not. And so, I talk about a lot of indigenous treatment in the penal system

because they're put in solitary in way more numbers than a lot of the white population, so I was like that's a big deal you know we need to ask why that's happening.

She also educates them on the limited access to clean drinking water for Indigenous communities that occurs as close as four hours north of where her school is located. When students hear about these current day situations that carry undertones from history, they start to understand that talking about these issues is critically important in order to make things better and just for all who suffer from the oppressing effects of systemic racism.

As a classroom teacher David introduces different lens with which things can be viewed and analyzed. In introducing a feminist lens and a post-colonial lens for example, he is able to focus on alternate voices in literature rather than the white dominant male voice that permeates all aspects of the education experience. These are important tools for 'kids to learn in terms of how we experience the world and analyze things.' Although this might not explicitly communicate as an anti-racist initiative, it is a significant motion forward in validating voices of marginalized people that historically have been left in the dark.

Research into white teacher attitudes towards anti-racist initiatives surfaces many challenges but also many successes. It is these very successes that showcase fighting back in collaboration, the importance of small steps, the development of equity focused roles and many examples of teachers fighting the forces of systemic racism in their very own classrooms, that should highlight the hope and optimism in the journey for social justice. Education is key in each individual's acknowledgement and awareness of racial injustices, and the data presented here shows that the more these can be exposed by the teacher warriors in our classrooms, the closer we can get to authentic equitable change.

In working through the data from the survey and semi-structured interviews, a foundation is built for implications for the field and directions for future research. Understanding white teacher definitions of racism and their range of comfort in racial dialogue connects to their perceptions of and experiences with the prevalence of racism in education. Teacher perceptions of anti-racist training highlighted a need for self-evaluation, and the important acknowledgement that every small action is a significant effort on an anti-racist journey. Working through the successes and challenges of each participant in implementing anti-racist initiatives in their own classroom, also added value to the overall understanding of how to move forward with resistance to oppressive policies and mindsets for authentic positive change in racial equity.

CHAPTER V: IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE THINKING

In the previous chapters, I have written about the background and rationale for this research, a literature review about the history of racism in Canada to its stark prevalence in education today, the leading questions and the theoretical framework, and the findings based on survey and interview data. In this chapter I briefly review the study so far and then address my overarching research questions with data consideration and guidance from the conceptual framework. I conclude this chapter by identifying findings related to white teacher attitudes towards anti-racist professional development and making recommendations to educators and leaders of all levels in the field.

Overview of the Study

As described in chapter one, I began this study because of informal comments made by Ontario secondary teachers following their participation in mandatory anti-racist professional development at the onset of the 2020 school year. Some of the sentiments that were shared with me included teachers feeling like racial issues are not relevant to them and thus it was not worth their time. One teacher shared that others in their department did not stay and listen to all of the professional development and those who did, engaged in other conversations, with no connection to the anti-racism focus. From these conversations, I saw a distinct acknowledgement of whiteness and the experience of racial domination, whether conscious or subconscious, with a lack of connecting the impact of whiteness on marginalized individuals. Therefore, I began to wonder if studying white teachers' perceptions of a professional development working towards racial justice could help to produce knowledge and insight into what it takes to dismantle whiteness in society in order to achieve equity for all. In this research, a clear connection is maintained between

whiteness and privilege and the oppressive impact they have on black, brown, indigenous and other non-white members of society.

In chapter two, I reviewed the literature connecting the history of racism to current day pervasiveness of racism in schools and society as a whole today. I examined the literature on white privilege, white fragility and the importance of white teacher attitudes towards anti-racism as it relates to being the focus for professional development. The approach I took is explained in chapter three, where I described my personal position, and detailed both my data collection procedures and my analytical strategies. In chapter four, I have told the stories of eight teachers' journey with anti-racist initiatives, and where their experiences, if at all, have led them to on the continuum of moral courage and anti-racist action in education.

This study is informed by years of living, observing, engaging and adapting to the changing world around me. More specifically, it is informed by my personal experience as an educator in several different countries, and as a first-generation university student growing up in a middle-class white community. The lenses through which I view the world continued to evolve as I gained authentic experiences and understanding of ways of living in both developed and undeveloped countries. Every step of my overseas teaching and travelling in nearly 40 countries, in which I spent time often without anyone I knew, was eye opening. This journey pushed me to authentically look at the world I grew up in and recognize the privileges that it afforded me; I was able to achieve a sense of reflection that is easy to avoid in a space and community of comfort. Theoretically speaking, this study is informed by a conceptual framework focused on connection between experience and sensemaking in a world where whiteness suggests invisibility, holds the dominant structures of systemic racism, while imposing a dehumanizing effect on Black and Brown people. I set out to examine and understand white teacher attitudes towards anti-racist initiatives. With

rising uncertainties and racial unrest in the evolving circumstances with COVID-19 from spring 2020 an onward, I wished to learn how educators perceive anti-racism efforts, in order to identify themes that can provide direction in moving towards racial equity.

My specific research questions were:

1) How do white teachers define racism?

2) Do white teachers describe a prevalence of racism in education?

3) What are white teacher perceptions of anti-racist training and/or initiatives?

4) How comfortable are white teachers talking about race and racism?

5) What are the experiences of teachers in implementing anti-racist initiatives?

In this chapter, I draw on my work in chapter four to answer these five questions, using the common themes and patterns from the data collection process to identify research findings. I discuss the major lessons learned from this study based on the educator's definitions of and comfort in speaking of racism, their description of the prevalence of racism in education, their perceptions of anti-racism, and the challenges and successes, if any, that they have experienced with the implementation of anti-racist initiatives. I conclude with future recommendations for ongoing and extended research as well as implications for the field of education.

Reflections on the study

In this section, I bring together my data from chapter four to consider some of the main lessons that can be determined from this research study. I use these data to address the five research questions that guided my interviews while drawing lineage to the value of administering the Color Blind Racial Attitudes Scale prior to selecting interviewees.

Lessons Learned About How White Teachers Define Racism

This was a study in exploration of white teacher attitudes towards anti-racist professional development. At the core of the lens through which they see the world shaped by their own unique set of lived experiences, is their articulation of how they define racism. Each teacher's definition provided a clear division as to whether each participant views racism as a systemic and structural issue or rather as a surface issue demonstrated only by the use of offensive racist language. This difference in perception and understanding identifies a large gap that is inherently a hurdle to the dismantling of racism. As long as racism is not viewed as systemic by any portion of the population, there lacks a comprehensive understanding of history and the longstanding effects of oppression that marginalized people face, and thus a lack of urgency to dismantle the structures that keep whiteness as dominant.

Administering the Color Blind Racial Attitudes Scale surveys initially helped to attain a range of racial awareness as participants received a number score based on questions they answered regarding forms of racism in Canadian society. Participants were selected based on their varied scoring from the survey. In this way, the survey was key to the data analysis process as it was key to highlighting participant racial awareness. Despite the relatively small sample size of only eight participants, diverging ways of defining racism was clearly apparent. Half of the participants spoke to the processes and structures in society that advantage white folks while disadvantaging others in the way of lack of opportunity to safety, education, employment or health care, often based on skin tone. The remaining participants described the likes of intentionally putting someone down or blatant overt acts when defining racism or assuming equality amongst all and thus not acknowledging or realizing the many hurdles that oppression inflicts. This

viewpoint, in addition to wavering on the notion that racism even exists is demonstrated in the following quote from participant Greg:

> If anybody dare say something derogatory towards your race, I see people fighting back all the time. I do. So, it's a good thing. At the school I teach at, most people don't tolerate it right, but they don't. Like I said, the minorities that are visible minorities at our school, I don't see this. I see them treated very well like equally, I really do. I truly do honestly.

Greg speaks of seeing overt racism go hand in hand with people using their voices to stand up against it, while in the same sentence, claims that he doesn't see racism in his school. As he contradicts his own observations, he only credits the visible and auditory forms of racism as existing. If this divide of understanding racism is represented in only eight participant interviews, it indicates a representation of how likely it is that many teachers do not see racism as the systemic access to power and the inequalities that are yielded in result of that power imbalance. This is in direct conflict with the tenets at the foundation of theories such as Critical Race Theory and Critical Whiteness Studies, as well as Mills (1997) 'Racial Contract' where he clearly articulates the epistemological arrival to our racialized society:

> The racial contract is a set of formal and informal agreements between the members of one subset of humans, henceforth designated by racial criteria as "white", and coextensive with the class of full persons, to categorize the remaining subset of humans as nonwhite and of different and inferior moral status, sub-persons, so that they have a subordinate civil standing in the white or white-ruled polities (p.11).

This positioning of whites as dominant is critically important to understand the construct of power that forces non-white individuals to experience discrimination and oppression (Yancy, 2008). An intimate view at white teacher definitions of racism thus provides an authentic look at the reality of mindsets that exist in the classes led by white teachers, with an underlying foundation of complacency in aspects of the functioning of racism.

Lessons Learned About White Teacher Feelings of the Prevalence of Racism in Education

Throughout the analysis of data in chapter four on prevalence of racism in education, there were demonstrations of uncertainty and contradictions from some of the participants. These contradictions align with those amongst the fabric of society that serve to advantage some while disadvantaging others, themed in claims that racism does not occur or has gotten much better. In reality it is burdensome to think of and face the reality of the lack of progress in racial equity. Through the shared lived experiences of participants acknowledging that racist ideologies are perpetuated in ways that cannot be seen directly, along with shared stories of struggling to resist racism with effective learning materials, observations of racial profiling and the tendency to avoid racial realities, there are significant learning points from this area of the research.

Within a structural system of society that holds white norms as morally and politically dominant, it is necessary to reiterate that our individual lens is rooted in our experiences, beliefs and thus assumptions. The attitudes and values of any individual are not universal. When a group of people believe in the universality of their own individual experiences, an immediate downfall is that disadvantages of those with different experiences pursues. When this becomes the base of societal functioning, racism permeates into all aspects of society, especially education.

Equal practices must be mandated within the education system, in a way that they can be authentically deployed. Alison shares her frustration in identifying this need has not been successfully met. She states, "I'm just frustrated by the fact that I'm in a system that claims to be progressive, but I'm not actually seeing concrete ways in which that's being implemented every day." It comes down to the individual educator or leader and the fact that not all individuals realize the oppressive policies and racist ideologies that take a toll on the lives of so many. There is great power in lived experiences of oppression for the development of desire to recognize and dismantle

systemic racism. For white teachers who lack such experiences, reflecting is critical, while questioning how schools as racialized institutions restrict minoritized student preparation for academic mobility (Ghosh, 2008; Lynch, 2018; Picower, 2009). It is important to point out the damaging effects that resisting non-white success continues to put onto students that lack the identity affirming experience of having teachers who look like them (Carr, 2008) Equally damaging, are the efforts to make white norms available to minority students, perpetuating the very dominance that is sought to be dismantled (Radd & Grosland, 2019). The journey forward for progress and equitable change must be led by growing racial awareness and individual questioning of personal viewpoints and biases.

A recent example of positive change is the province of Ontario's shift to de-streaming grade 9 and 10 math classes. This creates space where new high school students have an opportunity to dictate for themselves whether they navigate down the applied or academic pathways, facilitating equitable access to higher achievement, job access and ultimately better life quality (Fogliato, 2017; Pichette et al, 2020). This is a concrete example of action in response to the promise of support from equity-oriented leadership. Although the de-streaming of classes offers no assurance that students will navigate through grades 9 and 10 without oppression and end up on the right pathway, it does offer a space of hope beyond grade eight placements that were rooted in racist ideologies. Racism is endemic to life in Canada and America and critical conversations are essential to bring white teachers on board, and to push the boundaries of a white racial frame for the follow through of authentic equitable practice in education

Lessons Learned About White Teacher Perceptions of Anti-Racist Training

Anti-racist training can take on many different forms, regarding duration and quality. Both the survey data as well as the interview data in this research indicate that all participants'

professional development on anti-racism occurred within a small portion of one full training day, within their school board in the province of Ontario. In some experiences, teachers reported follow up training on a second day in the winter of 2021. Across the board, the training was deemed inadequate, however; it was recognized as a significant step forward as being the first type of professional development of its kind.

Data in this research support that it is hard to get to the core of anyone's questions regarding racism as individuals are often concerned with how people are going to react. The uncertainty in addressing conversations regarding racism is often easier to abide by then to work hard to develop a wider and deeper perspective in racial dialogue and understanding. Antiracist initiatives challenge a comfortable space dictated by white norms, that many have never before been pushed to confront (Forest et al, 2016; DiAngelo, 2015; Castagno, 2008). Although the professional development offered to the participants in this study was not consistent or pervasive enough, it did bring to the surface, racial realities that were eye opening to educators. David expresses his shifting understanding:

> I understand the concept of intersectionality a lot better in terms of how it impacts groups I don't know that I had as well developed a sense of that, so I would say absolutely there are key pieces that I have developed or developed to a deeper extent as a result of the training that we've had this year.

In this sense, every small step has the capacity to lead to big change, as understanding can transfer into action. Educators left the professional development feeling inspired, ignited, and empowered to do better and be better at advocating for social justice. On the contrary, some teachers did feel annoyed or fragile because of the PD, with a sense of victimization in why one should feel guilty just because of their white skin. Greg expresses agitation with the presenter by saying "that person doesn't know what the hell they're talking about; they come from privilege." Greg shared that he

felt the presenter of the PD was focused on communicating a sense of "shame on you for being white." This is incredibly far from what is trying to be achieved, and it summarizes a concept that Love (2021) writes about in her book section entitled White Rage, as an angered response and reaction to issues and experiences in addressing racism.

The shift of focus from antiracism to anti-black racism emphasizes the power that white supremacy holds largely because of the history of anti-black racism. More specifically, slavery and the dehumanization of Black Africans in the continent of North America, lead to the experience of white privilege and whiteness as dominant. This specification allows for a greater capacity to identify and respond to racism effectively (Dumas, 2016). This is by no means a premise for guilt or shame in being white, but rather a teaching of history in order to understand what we are working with and where we need to go. This is where it all began, and this is why we are looking at antiracist initiatives in the 20th century.

People are tired of oppression and discrimination, so change is desired. The data from this chapter highlight these desires for change, challenges faced, and efforts that are being made for continued exposure to our history and current realities. As summarized by Angela in the face of varying forms of racism, "Sometimes I get upset and struggle with saying something. I don't always know what to say, and so I wonder, I am a grown woman with an educated career, and I don't know how to approach this sometimes." This participant comment reiterates a main take away from this research, that no matter how little or big an effort may seem in social justice movement, every influence, reminder, encouragement, or training effort, is a contribution to progressive movement. This type of PD should be stronger, continuous, and more prevalent. Although some school boards have continued to address it, this research is a reminder that as a

whole, the PD was a push in the right direction, setting the stage for continued and more involved work in equity achievement.

Lessons Learned about White Teacher Comfort in Racial Dialogue

The data presented in this research study show that opposing viewpoints on racism exist. The perception that there is nothing more to be said on racism, or criticism towards the feeling of racial fatigue are unfortunately perspectives that some educators hold. For those victimized by racism, however; racism creates an ongoing battle of exhaustion that shows up in every capacity of marginalized people's lives, regardless of where one is going, in any given moment and circumstance (Yancy, 2008; Singleton, 2014; Picower, 2009). Other issues in society are resolved or worked through by talking, and therefore so must the global challenge of systemic racism. In fact, there is no other way, especially when considering the mindsets and perspectives of those who fail to acknowledge the intricacies and pervasiveness of racism both systemically and in the lives of individuals (Vaught & Castagno, 2008; Valencia, 2012). During the interview process, Greg showed considerable disinterest in acknowledging racism and its power, by stating, "here's the problem with the anti whatever you know training here," and later mentioning that non-white students "are not looked at any different than the kids who are white." In referencing the training, he omitted the word racist and referred to the 'anti-whatever' training. In the latter phrased reference, he firmly states that white students are treated like all other students and ended with a confident "I know that." This portion of the interview shows the very mindset that presents history as no longer impacting present day societal organizations as well as a perceived void of systemic racism. When educators feel this way, there is no avenue forward to make the experience of marginalized students better, because there is no perceived problem in the first place. Melissa shares a sentiment about racism that is more subtle than Greg's but highlights the same issue:

> I think there is definitely some indication that some of the students who may have an ethnic background do struggle, a little bit more and I'm not sure if it's socio economic related or race related. I'm not able to speak on that right now because I just don't really have that insight at this point.

The force of discomfort and silence are immense contributors to the perpetuation of systemic racism. For participants like Melissa that don't have the comfort because of lack of knowledge to speak about how racism affects students, there will be no attempted teaching through an anti-racist lens.

Participants in this study without a doubt have their students' best interests at heart, yet data shows that not all educators know enough about the impacts of race on everyone's life. Although race is often avoided in dialogue, it is clear that the way forward is continuing to push our comfort levels in discussing the realities of race and racism. This creates a greater consciousness of varying perspectives, and understandings of the implications of history, so that educators can proceed with an informed approach to students and education circumstances all around. As supported in Singleton's (2014) work, agreeing to speak about race and expanding racial consciousness by growing understanding of lived experiences, is the most critical foundation for achieving systemic racial equity in education.

As educators endure discomfort in racial dialogue, it is important for an individual to question why they feel uncomfortable and why they might choose to proceed with silence. It is with this introspection and ability to look at one's own biases and perceptions, with continued engagement in conversations regarding racism, that society as a whole can move forward with better education and information in pursuance of equity.

Lessons Learned about White Teacher Experiences in Implementing Antiracist Initiatives

Pushback is inevitable with regards to social justice work. As shown in the data for this research, this can come in the form of student, parent or colleague backlash, lack of support from administration or simply opposing views to the acknowledgement of systemic racism. There is participant representation in this study of the educator notion that white people 'can't keep being blamed'. This assumed position of white victimization, guilt or shame is one of many roadblocks for social justice work. This sense of white victimization comes from being asked to examine the structures that have allowed whites to benefit. Without knowledge and understanding of our history and its ongoing repercussions for specifically Black and Indigenous students, we lack the foundation for social justice. This foundation is important in shifting the perspective of 'bad' student to understanding how a lack of access, opportunity or support can lead to a student's challenging situation, which bring great hurdles for achievement. Shields (2009) reiterates the reality of the power imbalance:

> In almost every institution, organization, or social group, there are those who are in dominant or privileged positions who have the ability to exercise power and those with less power or privilege who tend to be on its margins; often the deciding factor is an identity category such as skin color or home language. (p. 24)

In writing this, Shields brings focus to the importance of being cognizant of the effect of power structures on marginalized individuals. The more we can authentically understand the movements within a system entrenched in racism, the greater we understand the need to continue or ignite the cycle of rest, dialogue and building up the moral courage and ambition to push the boundaries of racism.

Another ongoing challenge to the implementation of antiracist initiative connects once again to comfort and understanding. As summarized by the participant David:

It's hard to talk about race with racialized people, even if you feel like you are progressive and well developed in terms of your understanding of how it operates because you never really will understand how it operates, because you, largely as a white person haven't experienced it.

This sentiment describes a hurdle that most participants expressed to some degree. This feeling either can lead to an overall notion of feeling overwhelmed, or giving up, or it can serve as a source of motivation and inspiration to try harder to become more aware of issues and how to navigate them.

Positive experiences with the implementation of antiracist initiatives share the basis of looking at courses and course material through an antiracist lens. An attainable way to successfully do so includes involving voices of and materials from marginalized individuals. Historically speaking, African Americans were excluded from literature completely, so as to dismiss that any thought they would have had was not worthy, thus placing prominence on the ideas of European decedents (Woodson, 2006). The inclusion of marginalized voices in class materials is such an important step in pushing back the forces of history and raising up those who have been oppressed. We all need tools and knowledge to proceed with social justice work and broadening the course materials used by an educator can be done regardless of where one is on their racial awareness journey. Looking at successes on a greater scale in shifting the narrative of systemic racism, the motion to de-stream math classes is a key example. There has been significant pushback on why de-streaming is a positive move forward and this pushback in itself is rooted in racism, whether people are willing to acknowledge it or not. Assumptions that have been made about students' capability in the streaming system funnel those who are marginalized into lower streams, closing doors of opportunity, and negatively affecting their self-efficacy. This has had detrimental effects

on the overall achievement of predominantly Black students in Canada, with excessive power in the hands of white educators who have made decisions for them (Shizha, E. et al, 2020).

Regardless of the extent or capacity of the antiracist initiative, feeling like there is a mountain to climb, is not uncommon. As we continue the dialogue to broaden understanding and find ways to navigate the invisible system holding white norms as dominant, the igniting of passion and dedication to social justice is amongst the strongest type of force for working towards racial equity.

This study set out to understand the attitudes of white teachers towards antiracist initiatives within professional development. Specifically, it has examined white teacher comfort with racial dialogue, and perceptions of and experiences with implementing antiracist initiatives. Through this study I have found that teachers are all at a different space in their antiracist journey. Regardless of where one is in their beliefs, biases, and desire to push the boundaries for social justice, it is a timely progress that must be met with curiosity, inquisition, encouragement and ongoing opportunities to learn and self-reflect. No individual is immune to the power of racism and racist ideas. Only with persistent addressing of the issue of racism, will school systems and educators within the buildings be able to negotiate or resist the structures that perpetuate exclusive practices, causing harm to marginalized students.

Educator Critical Reflection is Necessary

This study has continuously connected to an important focus on the power of educator critical reflection. Being critically reflective of how our own epistemologies and positionalities are reflected in the very schooling practices that marginalize minority students, creates a foundation for antiracist work. This foundation can lead to educator ability to then ensure that their own social justice declarations are followed with courageous actions (Diem & Welton, 2021; Carr, 2017;

Forest et al, 2017; Lynch, 2018). When educators and school leaders are cognizant of these important foundations, only then do they encompass the ability to disrupt racial disparities. Internalized racism is a strong force to battle. It is steeped deeply in history alongside perceptions carried on through generations, often part of the socialization of white educators having been raised amongst the norms of white dominance (Drescher, 2009; Kendi, 2019; Love, 2019). Critical reflection can point to the notion that healing for marginalized students must come from a surrounding of love and action, to protect them from further societal harm. In much of bell hooks' (1994) teachings, she raises the power of love and action: 'The moment we choose to love we begin to move against domination, against oppression. The moment we choose to love we begin to move towards freedom, to act in ways that liberate ourselves and others (p.298).' For white educators, this reality must be realized without a sense of fault historically, but rather an ignition of passion to bring equity to the daily moments of those who have suffered endlessly at the forceful hands of oppression.

A call for deep reflection of educators, and the application of one's emotional social skills in doing so, has echoed throughout history from the voices of prominent scholars. Woodson (2006), the 'Father of Black History' in his *Mis-Education of the Negro* book, showed great determination in pushing the acknowledgement of the imbalance of power:

> The so-called modern education, with all its defects, however, does others so much more good than it does the Negro, because it has been worked out in conformity to the needs of those who have enslaved and oppressed weaker peoples (p.4).

Woodson's work, among many aspects of racism, reflects largely on the dominance of white norms and the detrimental effects of having little or no ancestral representation of accomplishment, and thus an inevitable lack of inspiration from void historical stories of ancestral success. When

educators can truly realize this reality and all of the layers that come with the disadvantaged side of the power imbalance, only then can they adopt a positive mindset for social change.

The interrogation of oneself and the ability to talk about the lens through which our lived experiences has led us to see the world, can help educators to resist or negotiate aspects of the functioning of racism. This study has highlighted many invisible barriers to progress in racial equity including fear, tiredness, feeling of being overwhelmed, denial and avoidance of racial references. Critical self-examination is not a skill that we typically require of people. In the face of racism, this study shows that reactions often take the form of defensiveness or offence, an ambition to move the conversation to an area one is comfortable with as quickly as possible, or acknowledgement of the inherent inequities that offer an explanation for why racism persists. We cannot assume teachers are inherently good reflectors and therefore discourse should be about perspective transformation; it should be about the ability to suspend your own beliefs, assumptions, values and experiences in order to interact with competing perspectives. The ability to then synthesize those with one's own experiences produces an outcome of broadened perspectives. This study has shown that this is such a critical piece of effective antiracist education, and it is something that professional development does not put focus on. In David's interview, he clearly speaks to this:

> You have to be willing to accept the discomfort that comes with it; you have to be willing to be wrong; you have to be willing to be challenged and you have to be willing to accept that there are things that you're just not going to understand. And that's okay; that's how you broaden your perspective in order to dismantle systemic racism. We have to really look to the students and their experiences and make that a fundamental part of what we do as teachers. But that's not how we're trained as educators; we're trained to be the person who has background and the knowledge, and the understanding, and we need to be willing to step back from that and say there is a lot that I don't understand about these kids that are in my room.

This participant points out the importance of looking within ourselves, as well as the importance of looking specifically at how students could best learn, based on their lived experiences, rather than a sole focus on how as a teacher, one will present the information. With all of this in consideration, all the anti-racist training in the world isn't going to change how we interact in classrooms if we're not really ready to start to self-examination about how we do things and why.

Critical reflection can help to shine light on the many disparities that we see in education. Students are motivated when they see themselves in their education and if we're persistently not providing opportunities for Black, Indigenous and other racialized students to see themselves in their education, then their motivation could suffer. When student motivation is referenced as a problem, geared towards minoritized students, it becomes a racist argument. In the topic of student motivation, one is often drawing an assumption about certain groups, wherein reality, students who are Black, Indigenous and racialized, have been disproportionately streamed into applied, and often labelled negatively in terms of learning styles and ambition (Fogliato, 2017; Pichette et al, 2020). An educator's critical self-examination can help to connect these progressions of reality to racism and a lack of access to opportunity. Despite this clear value, it is rarely promoted in education as a key foundation to creating a safe and nurturing learning space for all students. All attempts at antiracist initiatives could be better supported if self-examination was at the forefront. Asking teachers to repair the harms of racism through progressive and inclusive initiatives, will not be as effective as it could be without giving them the tools of critical reflection that are necessary to do so (Freire, 2021; Johnson & Lecci, 2003; Shields, 2009).

The capacity to examine your own assumptions, beliefs, values and experiences and how they've shaped your worldview is a critical skill, yet not the kind of reflection that is promoted in education or that can be attained in a single session of PD. Education traditionally promotes

process and product reflection, wherein importance is placed on what teachers have done in the classroom and how to improve outcomes, without attention granted to spaces outside of the underpinnings of white supremacy. When you are white, you are almost never in a position where you must question whether the way you are being treated is because of how you appear or because of the amount of melanin in your skin tone and thus people's preconceived notions about you. For white educators, this is something that over time, is important to become increasingly aware of as well as accepting that being uncomfortable is necessary for change. Through critical reflection, such awareness can become the foundation for authentic directed antiracist motion, accessible for all educators no matter where they are on their journey of promoting equity for students with a historical reality of oppression.

Recommendations

This study has found that all antiracist initiatives offered in the participant's school boards in Ontario have only just touched the surface and in some cases have been able to inspire educator conversation and motion towards teaching with an antiracist lens. This however is not close to enough action or effort for dismantling systemic racism in our education system. This study brings attention to teacher's varying racial awareness, which also calls for a need to address antiracism with more depth and greater consistency. It brings attention to a hard to attain truth of the personal and vulnerable perceptions of white educators who feel they need greater knowledge and exposure to confidently proceed with anti-racist initiatives. This study shows that some white educators are not willing to teach through an antiracist lens because of their own false perceptions, while with others that are, many feel lost at how to proceed effectively, and thus often do little productively towards dismantling injustices in education.

The following recommendations are based on the analysis of both the qualitative and quantitative data throughout this research study. In recognition of the critical importance of white teacher actions in the classroom in making authentic progress towards dismantling aspects of injustice in education, these recommendations for educators and school leaders directly align to the research questions.

In order to achieve racial equity, our educational institutions and personnel within need to be engaged in the mission to dismantle systemic racism. This requires a genuine understanding of the functioning of racism, the ability and desire to listen, lead and change in order to be effectively receptive to training and accountable for one's actions within equitable advocacy.

It is important to recognize that one type of professional development is not going to be effective for all different educators. Professional Development on anti-racism should be action oriented and continuous, providing support, guidance and a mandatory follow up to administration for teacher accountability. Implementation should be expected.

Materials should be used with an ambition is to engage elementary and secondary level classes, such as Canadian short films focused on Black stories and perspectives with a strong theme of anti-racism. Interactive conversations and lesson plans created through an anti-racist teaching lens must be connected to all subject matter. A requirement to use these resources within the school year and to fill out a feedback form for administration once per semester, would produce a rich experience for students and teachers. See Appendix 2

In addition to these measures for teachers, as proven needed by the data, a digital school sharing folder dedicated to supporting teachers with anti-racist materials must be created. This folder should include sub folders for each subject area, so that staff can share resources and materials that support teaching through an antiracist lens. If teachers are supported with films,

books and worksheets that are culturally relevant, they will be more likely to integrate them into their classroom.

Professional development must be focused on identifying subject specific materials to assist teachers with anti-racist initiatives. Antiracist initiatives must have an integral place in the ongoing teacher training agenda for education professionals. Accountability for initiative in teaching through an antiracist lens must be required.

Teachers lack confidence with knowledge of terms and cultural references, and this holds educators back from addressing racism in their learning spaces. All staff should be included in forward initiatives, for an overall goal of improving interactions with students, through building educator knowledge and confidence for anti-racist teaching.

Explicit mandatory yearly training should be administered for all educators, on antiracism. English and Art teachers are required to do WHMIS training every September and show their proficiency, yet they never touch chemicals. Anti-racism training should be a mandatory yearly module, along with concussion and epi pen training, so teachers have an opportunity to learn terms such as intersectionality and gain confidence in addressing systemic racism, while connecting our history to ongoing experiences of oppression. This will better equip educators to teach through an antiracist lens.

Teachers must be provided with opportunities to develop their understanding of the realities of oppression. For antiracist training to be effective, there needs to be opportunity for people to tell their stories, as teachers resonate with personal testimonies, and they are effective in helping educators realize the privilege of their whiteness. The power of personal testimonies can help to shift and progress the racial awareness of all educators.

Additionally, to build relationships and understanding, it is necessary to provide spaces and opportunities for all voices to be heard, especially those traditionally underserved and marginalized. Educational leaders must ensure that these spaces occur. This is part of the background dedication that can work towards making careers and education more accessible for Black, Indigenous, and other racialized groups. School leaders should analyze how much authentic focus is happening inside classrooms on social justice, by visiting and speaking with teachers explicitly about this topic. This presence can ignite a feeling of accountability.

Within each school building, the development of an Equity Committee or allyship group would be beneficial, in order to lessen the lack of support or interest that white teachers perceive administration to have. This will provide space for staff to provide support and grow personally in their racial awareness, where important concepts can be addressed and examined. Staff should examine the worldview that dominates our education system and thus how we deliver certain subject areas, knowing that different cultures hold different meanings in areas of subjects including math and science. Staff need to oppose the idea that we are the best qualified to determine what's best for students. Student lived experiences and an educator's own bias must be recognized.

Educational leaders and supporting teachers must work to provide a club for students where they can safely speak to issues in relation to oppression. Leaders must engage in dialogue with teachers about their experiences with bringing antiracism into their curriculum. Uncomfortable questions about one's own practice are important, and a shift is needed away from little to no dialogue between teachers and administration on antiracism. Educational leaders should provide opportunities for culturally relevant book clubs throughout the teaching year, focused on biographies or memoirs of lived experiences of oppression. Teachers need to be required to take part in one of them. This opportunity for white teachers to read and dialogue about the intimate

details of oppressive experiences can open eyes and minds up to the realities of racism, and this can spark passion for action. This should be mandated as a portion of professional development sessions within the teaching year.

It is not possible to fix a problem without first acknowledging it. Personal educator work is necessary for racial awareness and advocacy growth. Critical reflection and self-examination of actions and practice are important for positive progress in advocating effectively for social justice within the classroom. Educators must be encouraged to realize that the notion of not being racist alone leaves them in the position of continuing to be part of the problem. By not challenging the dominant norms, one still benefits from their whiteness. In order for white teachers to better understand the underpinnings of how racism works, teachers must engage in personal reading that helps to better understand what marginalized people go through, in order to awaken hearts and inspire action. See appendix 2.

Future Research

I have grown my understanding through this research, of the power and potential of a continued effort to examine the ways in which educators perpetuate aspects of racism and I encourage all educators and leaders in education to explore this concept as fully as they are capable of at this time. This study contributes to filling in the gaps in literature of a detailed and intimate look at how white teachers define and feel about racism, perceive ant-racist initiatives as well as a recollection of their successes and failures with attempting to implement them. I have found that although educators represent a varying degree of racial awareness, they largely on their own fill the curriculum requirements how they feel fit, thus all can benefit from antiracist exposure and self-examination of their own relationship to systemic structures of power imbalance.

This study not only developed a more complete understanding of issues within educator beliefs on racism, but it also raised some questions that could be investigated further. These questions relate both to my findings and theoretical frameworks of sensemaking and critical whiteness studies. They include the following:

1) How does anti-racist dialogue with white teachers impact the experience of racialized students?
2) What experiences or influences can positively impact the racial awareness of white educators?
3) How do white teachers perceive the potential power of self-examination in dismantling oppressive societal structures?
4) In what ways have white educators perpetuated the maintenance of oppressive structures in society?

Connected issues are raised for further explanation, including how to facilitate teachers further along their journey of racial awareness, in particular those who feel that racism does not have the pervasive presence that effects and harms the lives of so many. Another issue relates to the lack of accountability in antiracist motion for educators in all buildings, and how an increase in sense of accountability could improve personal passion and ambition for the development of a focus on social justice in one's teaching.

Strategies for further research include personal reflection on one's own responses to the Colour-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale. Only teachers who were open to interviewing left their contact on the otherwise anonymous survey. These teachers could be contacted for a follow up look at their own scoring of racial awareness to identify how they feel about their survey responses and scoring, with an intention to inspire personal reflection. As an alternative to this, such participants could be recruited once again to complete the survey for a comparative analysis of how, if at all, their perceptions and therefore their answers, have changed after more than a year. This could present some interesting data on the personal journey of becoming antiracist, alongside

a follow-up interview to learn about their perceptions of antiracist initiatives and any further experience with implementing initiatives.

Conclusion: Looking Forward

I set out to look at white teacher attitudes towards antiracist initiatives, yet one of the most important focuses of this study became a look at how the lived experience, assumptions, values and beliefs of white teachers impact their sentiment towards anti-racist initiatives and thus their current capacity to focus on social justice in their classrooms. What this study has shown is that white educators need to be met where they are on their antiracist journey, in order to grow their racial awareness and lead with antiracist education in their classrooms. I have examined a full spectrum of attitudes towards racism and how this transcends into a sense of racial justice responsibility in the classroom for white teachers. Teachers are not intentionally racist, but this does not mean that they don't enact racist policy or ideologies in their teachings.

When a student's own lived experiences are not represented in their learning, their racial identity is affected, impacting their learning. On the contrary, white students receive constant reinforcement of who they are. In considering this, I have learned from this study that even the smallest seeming effort to make teaching more inclusive, can be an experience shifting act for marginalized students. Making curriculum relevant, which was the most common effort in antiracist teaching in this study, is a mighty part of the movement in transforming the power of culture. It is therefore countless small acts that we must believe in, as powerful tools to dismantle injustices in education. If a teacher has the power to positively impact the sense of value, worth and belonging of a minority student, antiracist initiatives and teaching must become an integral, consistent, and dominant focus in all of our teaching settings. Education needs to be on the front

lines, identifying how oppression intersects the everyday lives of students, while enacting a passion and drive to disrupt these forces.

This study has shown that the desire to do social justice work, from the experience of multiple societal privileges exists within a range. I have found that there is a relationship between a greater desire to stand in solidarity with those who are oppressed and one's own capacity to self-examine their personal perceptions, biases and reactions. A teacher's ability to critically reflect, helps to draw a direct line between the system and culture of white power that created the outcomes which often label students as less capable or unmotivated.

It is my hope that this study will lead all educators and policy makers to take seriously the importance of antiracist exposure, support in its implementation and accountability, to positively impact marginalized student safety, nurturing, confidence building and learning. It is my hope that they will recognize that fighting for social justice is a choice and therefore enact the necessary means to facilitate white educators on their own personal journey of racial awareness and realization. More specifically, it is my hope that relevant leaders will understand the impact that ongoing antiracist initiatives can have on encouraging and supporting teachers in using the powerful tool of instructing with an antiracist lens as a way of life. This study helps to show that this is critical to integrate all parents and students from minority backgrounds authentically into the education system.

I do not imply that pushing against the power of culture is easy to do, or that it will fully attain the equity all North Americans deserve. I do assert that based on the findings of this study, educators should take seriously the lesson that continuous critical reflection on one's own practice needs to be a way of life. This in turn will support ongoing dialogue and collaboration in teaching to all students, with all different lived experiences. In addition, I argue that the importance of

mandatory revisited learning of relevant history and practices organized by racialized ideas, stereotypes, and inclinations to discriminate, should be a principal priority. It would be my hope that this study will provide a force for educators and leaders to look more closely at the presence or absence of teaching through an antiracist lens in their current schools.   By enacting the recommendations of this study, individual school buildings will gain a greater capacity to break down the structures that create barriers to access for racialized students. Societal experiences of oppression do not go hand in hand with a lack of joy or love. In fact, great joy in life can be coupled with a lack of access or with the experience of privilege, and true can be said for the contrary, as we are all unique with individual situations. However, the burden and barriers of not having equal opportunities for support in preparation, placement and persistence within the lives of racialized students is the structurally supported imbalance of power that creates the very injustices that our collective power can rise up in solidarity to defeat.

APPENDIX

Appendix A: Colour Blind Racial Attitudes Scale

Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale SCORING INFORMATION

Neville, H. A., Lilly, R. L, Duran, G., Lee, R. M., Browne, L. (2000). Construction and Initial Validation of the Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS). Journal of Counseling Psychology, 47, 59-70.

Directions. Below is a set of questions that deal with social issues in Canada. Using the 6-point scale, if you are willing to participate, please give your honest rating about the degree to which you personally agree or disagree with each statement. Please be as open and honest as you can; there are no right or wrong answers. Record your response to the left of each item. Following the 20 questions, there are six demographic questions to complete.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Mildly Disagree	Mildly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

1. _____ Everyone who works hard, no matter what race they are, has an equal chance to become rich

2. _____ **Race plays a major role in the type of social services (such as type of health care or day care) that people receive in Canada.**

3. _____ It is important that people begin to think of themselves as Canadian and not African Canadian, Mexican Canadian or Italian Canadian.

4. _____ **Due to racial discrimination, programs such as affirmative action are necessary to help create equality.**

5. _____ **Racism is a major problem in Canada.**

6. _____ **Race is very important in determining who is successful and who is not.**

7. _____ Racism may have been a problem in the past, but it is not an important problem today.

8. _____ **Racial and ethnic minorities do not have the same opportunities as White people in Canada.**

9. _____ White people in Canada are discriminated against because of the color their skin.

10. _____ Talking about racial issues causes unnecessary tension.

11. **_____ It is important for political leaders to talk about racism to help work through or solve society's problems.**

12. **_____ White people in Canada have certain advantages because of the colour of their skin.**

13. _____ Immigrants should try to fit into the culture and adopt the values of Canada.

14. _____ English should be the only official language in Canada.

15. **_____ White people are more to blame for racial discrimination in Canada than racial and ethnic minorities.**

16. _____ Social policies, such as affirmative action, discriminate unfairly against White people.

17. **_____ It is important for public schools to teach about the history and contributions of racial and ethnic minorities.**

18. _____ Racial and ethnic minorities in Canada have certain advantages because of the color of their skin.

19. _____ Racial problems in the U.S. are rare, isolated situations.

20. **_____ Race plays an important role in who gets sent to prison.**

If you are willing, please fill out the following questions:

What is your ethnicity?

- White
- Native/Metis
- African/ Caribbean/ Black Canadian (or American)
- African
- Latino
- Asian
- Middle Eastern/Arabic

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Trans-gender
- Non-binary

What is your age range?

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44

- 45-54
- 55-64
- Above 65

What is your highest level of education?

- Highschool
- College Diploma
- Bachelor's Degree
- Masters' Degree
- Doctorate Degree

How long have you been teaching?

- 1-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16-20 years
- 21-25 years
- 26-30 years
- 31 or more years

What is your content area of teaching? _____

If you are a White teacher and are interested in participating in a 60-minute semi-structured interview in the spring of 2021 and possibly one follow up interview in late spring of 2021, please submit your email address. If you do participate you will be given a $20 gift card as a thank-you.

Email Address: _____

Appendix B: Resources For Teachers

As per the recommendations, personal testimonies can bring incredible power to the racial awareness of all. An example of an impactful resource is the REEL CANADA livestream program made available for all teachers across Canada. This program provides many testimonies and perspectives from minority populations. The material is impactful and is supported by lesson structure and critical questions. This is one way to collaborate with people of colour, in predominantly white buildings, supported by collective action and reflection.

Self-examination and critical reflection for white teachers can be supported by pursuing personal reading that is informative and insightful into the experiences of oppression. The following is a nonexclusive list of 10 powerful novels, effective in facilitating a journey of increased racial awareness and therefore antiracist teaching: Dog Flowers (Danielle Geller); Indian Horse (Richard Wagamese); Scarborough (Catherine Hernendez); I'm Still Here, Black Dignity in a World Made for Whiteness (Austin Channing Brown); Seven Fallen Feathers (Tanya Talaga); We Want to do More Than Survive, Abolitionist Teaching and the Pursuit of Educational Freedom (Bettina Love); The Vanishing Half (Brit Bennett); From the Ashes (Jesse Thistle); and a youth novel: Dear Canada, These are My Words (Ruby Slipperjack).

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ABSTRACT

WHITE TEACHER ATTITUDES TOWARDS THEIR EXPERIENCES WITH ANTI-RACIST INITIATIVES

by

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Major: Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

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The attitudes of white teachers become a critically important aspect of racism and its dismantling. White teachers work within the institutions that have power to inspire and empower students and they have the tendency to hold the structures of the dominant society within their behaviours and actions. This study embraces a mixed method research design through surveys and semi-structured interviews to explore the attitudes that white teachers have towards their experiences with anti-racist initiatives. Teachers are able to either replicate and sustain social patterns of white hegemony or act as agents of change in combat of racism. As a force of educators, critical reflection and dismantling of the manifestations of white privilege within the classroom, are of utmost importance. This study emerges from a cultural and social context within unprecedented times of a global pandemic where the pervasiveness of racism is blatantly apparent in all functions of society. The deep racial and socioeconomic divides across the continent of North America, has inspired needed attention and change to approaches of educators in the foundations that build our societies, our educational institutions. This study, therefore, is both timely and contributes to literature related to white teacher perceptions of racism and its presence in school

settings. It exposes work that is needed to be done to authentically stand in solidarity with marginalized students through continually contributing to positive racial identities. The findings of the data highlight one's capacity to self-examine personal perceptions, biases, and reactions as a great force in movement for racial equity. Understanding the historical underpinnings of systemic racism has the authentic power to ignite passion to disrupt forces of oppression. There is an imperative need to support white teachers in building confidence with knowledge and terms relating to racism in support of teaching through an antiracist lens. This study inspires the need for white teachers to acknowledge the invisible embedment of white hegemonic power and work towards the dismantling of systemic racism.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT

During my undergraduate degree studying Social Development Studies and Biology, in Waterloo, Canada, I created an opportunity to explore teaching as a profession and took the winter semester of 2001 off to pursue teaching work in San José Costa Rica. When I graduated in 2002, I wanted to grow my teaching foundation before formally attending teacher's college and thus sought out a year-long teaching job in Seoul, Korea. Through nearly the next decade and a total of teaching in 6 countries, across 4 continents, I grew personally and professionally within a unique collection of lived experiences that enhance my capacity to connect with the lived experiences of others. In that time, I also taught in Scotland, United Arab Emirates, Australia and Canada.

The force that leads my career direction is my desire to create a space for healing and growth. In the spring of 2021, my efforts to create an inclusive classroom in support of the LGBTQ community, minorities, and all students in general, were rewarded as one of my students said to me: 'Your classroom is the definition of a safe space.

I took some time off to raise my children, two of which were born during my four years in Australia. A large part of my success in adaptability and living overseas has been leading a balanced life, with a love of movement and the outdoors. During my time in Dubai, I dedicated my spare time to a ten month intensive training program in preparation of the France Ironman race in June of 2009. I have since shifted my focus in extra time to raising my four children, whom I feel are the largest part of my identity. They are the greatest source of my joy and I continue to thrive with inspiring their minds, nurturing their curiosity and growing their sense of adventure.