Confronting the Historical Foundations of Educational Inequity: An Exploration of Teachers' Encounter with an Antiracist Professional Development Design

Steven Lasean Becton Sr

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CONFRONTING THE HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS OF EDUCATIONAL INEQUITY: 
AN EXPLORATION OF TEACHERS’ ENCOUNTER WITH AN ANTIRACIST 
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DESIGN

by

Steven L. Becton, Sr.

A Dissertation
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the 
Requirements for the Degree of 
Doctor of Education

Major: Instruction and Curriculum Leadership

University of Memphis

August 2021
Dedication

What an incredible journey this has been. My wife, Stephanie, has endured the most, so I start this dedication with a salute to her. Thanks for the encouragement, the personal sacrifice, and even the pushing. My children Michele, Steven II, and Khortlan inspired me as well, as we had heated and informative family discussions about the very issues that I raise in this dissertation. Then there is my mom, Yvonne, who has always been my biggest cheerleader. Thanks family, and to God be the glory for the things He has done and empowers us to do! Lastly there is a special person to add to this dedication posthumously. Dr. Leon Bass was a Black WWII veteran and a career educator who spent his postwar life sharing his story of being a Black soldier fighting Nazi Germany, being willing to die for his country, while experiencing the humiliation of racial segregation and violence back home. Dr. Bass once asked me, “Why don’t you get a doctoral degree?” After I gave him all the reasons why I could not do this he gave me the one reason why I decided to do it: because I could. Dr. Bass would always tell people everywhere he went that they were “good enough.” There are a lot of Black and Brown children that get messages that they are not good enough. I hope this work will help to confront that lie.
Acknowledgements

There are so many people who have been a part of this journey, as it takes so much support to do a dissertation. Dr. Beverly Cross, thank you for your relentless desire to see your students succeed! Dr. Cross, I add you to do the list of amazing Black women who refused to let me fail alone—along with my wife, Stephanie; my daughters, Michele and Khortlan; my mom, Yvonne; my Aunt “Tee”; my fourth-grade teacher Mrs. Currie; and my female football coach, the legendary Shirley McCrae.

I also acknowledge my siblings, the late Darryl, Vicki, and Sandra, who all were so proud of their little big brother. I acknowledge my remaining siblings, Anthony and Kiva, from whom I the share humble beginnings of a single-parent home that was full of all the love and challenges that shaped me and inspired this work.

I acknowledge my colleagues at Facing History who also endured with me, encouraged me, did proofreading, prayed for me, and listened to me pontificate. Thanks to the Memphis crew, Rachel, Marti, Michele, Sarah, Lauren, and Dr. Eryka. A special thanks to these three incredible people who helped me to dot my i’s and cross my t’s: Isabel, Regan, and River. The Teaching for Equity and Justice Professional Development Model modules that are at the center of the research are fruit of their labor. Thanks, Dennis and Anna, for allowing me to explore your research to surface these new and important findings.
Abstract

One of the great failures, so far, of the United States experiment with democracy is the failure to ensure that every child receives an equitable educational experience. This study was conducted to contribute both to scholarship and to educational practices aimed at correcting years of disenfranchising Black and Brown children through oppressive educational practices. It is not a study of despair, but one of hope that, when professional development opportunities for teachers are designed to disrupt White supremacy in schools, there will be a greater chance that educators will think more critically about their own dispositions and enact more culturally responsive and antiracist practices. In the interest of that pursuit, this researcher explored the findings of how a field-tested professional development model affected teacher understanding of how race operates in schools so that they could be more intentional about disrupting its impact on the learning and experiences of Black and Brown children in an impoverished community. The findings suggested that when teachers engage in the Teaching for Equity and Justice Professional Development Model, they become intentional about implementing more equitable educational practices in their classrooms and engage in more culturally mediated practices in the classroom. Teachers in this study became more effective in developing a vision for their classrooms as socially and emotionally safe spaces that mitigate the impact of racism and historical inequities on students. The teachers developed more trusting, personalized, and respectful relationships with their students and created more open, inclusive, and student-centered classrooms.
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Research Question:

- How does teachers understanding of antiracist teaching change when they engage in the Teaching for Equity and Justice Professional Development Model?
Chapter 1

Introduction

This dissertation is about the persistence of racial inequities in secondary schools and the role that antiracist professional development for teachers could play in mitigating these inequities. How can a nation with an abundance of resources continue to miseducate generations of Black and Brown boys and girls? It is a question that troubles me as an education researcher. School failure is even more disturbing when it is examined in the context of discipline policies that continually lead to the disproportionate suspension and expulsion Black and Brown children, for the same infractions that their White peers commit, feeding the pipeline to prison. Other critical measures of success (e.g., high school graduation rates and matriculation to college) also reflect racial prejudice and the failure on school systems’ part to educate for equity. Long lasting and troubling narratives have shaped these inequities. The most troubling of these narratives is the falsehood that children of color are biologically and intellectual inferior (Gould, 1996). It is a preposterous statement. Of course, it is untrue, but lies and myths are treated as truth when unchallenged. With a critical race theorist focus, the researcher in this dissertation examines the impact of the Teaching for Equity and Justice (TEJ) Professional Development Model. In the study, the researcher explores the impact of this professional development model on teachers who teach primarily Black and Brown children. The research was conducted from a critical race theorist’s perspective.

In the review of literature, the researcher explores the scholarship of researchers whose work is about dismantling the impact of systemic racism in the larger society, particularly in schools. The review of literature begins in the context Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s by looking at key frameworks that were aimed at mitigating the impact of White supremacy culture
on Black and Brown children in schools. These scholars were committed to exposing and
countering the failure of schools to meet the needs of Black and Brown boys and girls. This
effort included countering the fact that, even after legal desegregation, school administrators
continued to support hegemonic Eurocentric approaches to curriculum, pedagogy, and
assessment.

The review of literature begins with the scholarship related to the birth of ethnic studies
in the midst of the fight for racial justice (Anderson, 1990). The field of ethnic studies became
the forerunner of the field of multicultural education, which produced some of the most
courageous and important scholars in the field of educational research. These scholars, who were
mostly Black, were determined to take a social justice approach to educational research. The
limitations of multicultural education gave birth to a generation of scholars who set the
foundation for *culturally responsive education (CRE)*. Both culturally responsive pedagogy and
culturally responsive teaching frameworks were designed to counter approaches to curriculum,
pedagogy, and assessment that not only ignored the culture of Black and Brown children, but
even worse, further perpetuated myths of racial inferiority and legitimized White supremacy
ideology (Gay, 1997; Ladson-Billing, 2000).

In the review of literature, the researcher shows how ethnic studies, multicultural
education, and culturally relevant education are foundational to understanding antiracist
education, a more recent framework. The researcher also synthesizes in the review of literature
the scholarship related to frameworks like Grit, social emotional learning, unconscious bias, and
poverty frameworks in ways in which those frameworks could *reinscribe* White supremacy, even
as they claim to be antiracist in nature. Finally, the review of literature explores the historical
roots of critical race theory (CRT) in law and the applications to education.
The review of literature was used to construct the scholarly foundation for a critical race lens to analyze the impact that the TEJ Professional Development Model had on teachers in a small charter school district that primarily serves Black and Brown children.

The TEJ Professional Development Model was designed to affect teachers’ mindsets and the resulting practices as they explore how unchallenged racist ideology about Black and Brown children could lead to deficit thinking and result in oppressive pedagogy. The researcher uses a CRT lens to explore the impact that the model eventually had on teachers’ attitudes and practices. The researcher found that the TEJ Professional Development Model is beneficial to teachers as they have an encounter with the way that race has shaped the way in which teachers view Black and Brown children. Many teachers unconsciously believe that some children are intellectually inferior, which results from racial and cultural stereotypes (Kozol, 1997). How is it that this deplorable idea has taken root and now has such a lasting legacy? This is a question of historical inequity, and present-day professional development models should expose this injustice that has been perpetuated on the Nation’s most vulnerable boys and girls. To truly understand the implications and the impact of race on schooling, teachers must have professional development experiences that explore historical racism and White supremacy and its impact on curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment. Such a historical contextualization could make professional development more effective in preparing teachers to educate Black and Brown children. Thus the researcher asks the following questions:

- Does the TEJ Professional Development Model lead to antiracist ideology and practices?
- What is its impact on teachers who teach Black and Brown boys and girls?

These questions are at the center of this research question:
• How does teachers’ understanding of antiracist teaching change when they engage in the Teaching for Equity and Justice Professional Development Model?

**Problem Statement**

The belief that boys and girls with racialized identities fail in school because of deficits in their race or culture comes largely from historical lies and myths about Black racial inferiority that have over time been applied to other people of color with racialized identities (Anderson, 1990). These myths of racial inferiority serve a White supremacy agenda. Teachers’ failure to confront these vicious and false myths has a profoundly negative impact on the Nation’s most marginalized children. When professional development does not focus on historical racism, it follows the status quo, which is to focus on equipping teachers to manage students’ behavior rather than challenging them as young learners and critical thinkers. Effective antiracist professional development should be situated in the historical context of White supremacy, which could lead to more antiracist-centered decisions and practices in schools.

**Purpose Statement**

The core purpose of this study was to examine the impact of the TEJ Professional Development Model on teachers in a small public charter school district in an impoverished community in Memphis, Tennessee. The middle and high school teachers in this district have attempted to take a serious and more equitable approach to education. In the study, the researcher will examine the impact of this particular professional development on them as they seek to understand how the idea of race and historical racism affects their work.

In a public address, Ladson-Billings (2006) offered a comprehensive analysis on the state of education. It is relevant to this study. Among Ladson-Billings main points was the idea that the term “racial achievement gap” unfairly constructs Black and Brown children as defective and
lacking, and admonishes them that they need to catch up. Ladson-Billings also suggested the term education debt. Repositioning the achievement gap as a national debt supports the notion that historical context matters. The racial achievement gap is yet another false indicator that Black and Brown children are in some way defective and lack the innate intellectual capabilities of their White peers. If, as a nation, Americans continue to hold test data up as conclusive evidence of intellectual ability, the country will continue to fund policies and enact practices that are ineffective to bring about real education reform. The educational debt cannot be paid by blaming the children to whom the debt is owed (Ladson Billings, 2006). This debt has been built on racist epistemologies that must give way to other ways of thinking. This researcher reveals that an encounter with historical racism as part of professional development can counter practices such as behavioral management and oppressive, teach-to-the-test, pedagogical practices. The researcher’s aim in this study was to discover how professional development that surfaces historical injustice and White supremacy in schooling might affect teachers. This revelation could lead the majority, White female teaching core to practice self-examination, shift their negative thinking about Black and Brown boys’ and girls’ abilities, and move away from behavior management and oppressive pedagogy. In this study, the researcher explores the impact of this particular model to make meaning of its validation as an antiracist approach and to make meaning of its impact on teachers.

Why the TEJ Professional Development Model be privileged? This model was created with the expressed intent of being uses as an historical approach to professional development and to data collection, for the implementation of this model comes directly from the schools that face the challenges of educating Black and Brown boys and girls more equitably. The original data collectors did not examine the research because they were not collecting the data to conduct an
academic study, but only to share the findings with the schools and providers of the training to draw their own conclusions regarding development. Therefore, this researcher revisits this very rich archival data to explore a very specific research question.

Research Question

- How does teachers’ understanding of antiracist teaching change when they engage in the Teaching for Equity and Justice Professional Development Model?

Significance of Study

In this study, the researcher explores the findings regarding how a field-tested professional development model affects teacher understanding of the way that race operates so that they can be more intentional about disrupting the impact of race on the learning environment. Thus, the researcher asks the following questions:

- What would it mean for secondary teachers if they had a working knowledge of the historical context of racism and its impact on schooling in the United States?
- Could this professional development experience, that centers taking a historical examination of the impact of race and the notion of White supremacy, move teachers to more antiracist mindsets and practices?
- Could a deep historical examination lead to a greater understanding of the impact of race on schools?
- Could a deep historical examination also lead to a disruption of the narrative that some students are intellectually inferior based on race?

These are all questions raised in the TEJ Model that is the center of the research.
Theoretical Framework

This researcher has taken a CRT approach to examining the Grades 6–12, TEJ Professional Development Model, which has been field tested in a small school district in Memphis, Tennessee. Of particularly interest in this study is the way in which this TEJ Professional Development Model adds value to teachers’ understanding of antiracist teaching, while exploring the historical myths and lies about the academic and intellectual capacity of children of color. A critical race theorists’ framework is effective for analyzing this professional development model and its impact on teachers. The TEJ Professional Development Model was designed to confront a Whiteness orientation, while advocating for teachers practices that are more antiracist. The framework of the CRT is crucial for examining the impact of the TEJ Professional Development Model. Therefore, the researcher has applied CRT to the TEJ Professional Development Model to make sense of the model’s impact on educators’ mindsets and practices.

From its inception in legal studies, CRT has been concerned with foregrounding race as a major factor in keeping the status quo of a White supremacist society. Critical race theorists criticized the field of law for ignoring race as a determinant of justice (Bell, 1992; Delgado, 2001; Sensoy, 2017). Critical race theorists have not stopped at critique, but have advocated for changes in practices and policies that continue to create inequities. The review of literature shows the way in which CRT could expand from law to being applied to other disciplines. For this study, the researcher’s focus has been on the application of CRT to schooling. Keeping with CRT means that there is a social justice aspect to this study. Exposing historical epistemological injustices regarding the intelligence of Black and Brown children should lead one to seek justice for those who have been damaged. Likewise, professional development models that address
historical racism might spark teachers to seek justice by resisting mindsets and practices that support a deficit approach to Black and Brown children. Critical race theory is an appropriate framework to explore the way in which racism and White supremacy continue to have a major impact on educating Black and Brown children, and whether this professional development can mitigate that impact. In the spirit of CRT, professional development should have a social justice aim; it must be concerned with dismantling the legacies of racism and White supremacy.

Critical race theorists are clearly in the tradition of the founding critical theorists of the 1930s. Critical race theorists bring the struggle for racial justice to the law. In the tradition of critical social theorists, critical race theorists would critique conventional legal norms for their failure to recognize race and racial injustice in the legal system (Bell, 1992; Delgado, 2009; Stefancic, 2001). Similarly, this study was conducted in the context of all the efforts to enact antiracist practices in education, yet schools still serve the needs of the most privileged, especially when professional development does not address historical racism. Critical race theory is a useful framework for examining the best way to challenge narratives of White supremacy in schools. Critical race theory is an appropriate framework to help illuminate race as the key factor that has been used to shape a narrative of Black inferiority and White supremacy in American society. Racism is an integral, permanent, and indestructible component of this society (Banks, 1993; Bell, 1992). Bell (1992) and CRT challenges us to face this reality in all spheres. Education is a sphere in which educators must face the persistence of racism to mitigate its impact Black and Brown children.

**Organization of Study**

The dissertation is organized by applying CRT through a constructivist–interpretivist lens using case study methodology. Constructivists–interpretivists contend that knowledge is
constructed by individuals who make meaning of it from their own experiences (Baden & Major, 2013). Researchers who come from this philosophical perspective (e.g., Stake [1995, 1996] have a strong desire to discover meaning and to understand particular experiences in their context. This constructivist–interpretivist approach is suited for this study because it is situated in a small school district that serves Black and Brown boys and girls. Coupling constructivism–interpretivism with the case study methodology provides the intellectual framework for exploring the research question in this small school district.

Case study research can be traced to LePlay (1829), a French economist, who used it to examine the economic realities of the working class (Baden & Major, 2013). Case study methodology is a way of investigating a phenomenon in its specific context (Yin, 1994; Baden & Major, 2013). Yin (1964) and Stake (1995) later brought case study methodology into the field of education. Yin’s (1964) work was particularly linked to descriptive case study rather than exploratory study. The researcher has used a case study approach that was mostly focused on description (i.e., descriptive, analysis).

The limitations of case studies lie in the reliability of the findings, for case study is challenged regarding its scientific significance. Therefore, the researcher addresses this issue in Chapter 3. There are a couple of other limitations in doing case study research. The first is sample size. Such a small sample size (a district of five, relatively small schools) makes it difficult to generalize the findings to larger schools and school districts. Second, case studies can also be largely subjective because the analysis of the data relies partly on the intuition of the researcher. One should note for reader context that the researcher identifies as a Black male scholar conducting this research and bringing 20 years of professional experience to both designing and teaching professional development with middle school and high school teachers.
The dual role of researcher and practitioner is one that enhances this study. One should also note that the raw archival data was gathered independently of this study and has not been examined through the lens of the research question that was explored in this study.
Chapter 2
Review of Literature

Introduction

This review of literature was compiled in the interest of preparing to study the effectiveness of and the impact of the Teaching for Equity and Justice (TEJ) Professional Development Model on teachers. TEJ Professional Development Model was designed to mitigate the troubling impact of White supremacy ideology on teachers who primarily educate Black and Brown students in an impoverished community in Memphis, Tennessee. The research question was,

- How does teachers’ understanding of antiracist teaching change when they engage in the Teaching for Equity and Justice Professional Development Model?

In preparation for this study, the review of literature was used to trace the evolution of professional development and school reform practices that were aimed at transforming schools to educate children of color, starting with the 1960s Civil Rights Movement. With the review of literature, the researcher examined emerging educational frameworks that were designed primarily by race conscious scholars (e.g., multicultural educators, culturally responsive educators, and antiracist educators). These frameworks in themselves are direct affronts and responses to notions of White supremacy, for they address systemic issues in schools that hinder the academic experiences of children of color. Each of these frameworks can also be viewed as social movements with which to counter the impact of racism and White supremacy narratives on schools. The review also takes a critical look at some popular professional development approaches that are implemented by school administrators to improve the academic achievement of children of color.
In this review of literature, the researcher takes a critical race theorist approach to tracing the way in which scholars since the 1960s (who were themselves marginalized) challenged school administrators to move to adapt approaches to meet the needs of children of color rather than maintaining approaches that uphold (a) White supremacy ideology, (b) the privileges of White children, and (c) this fictitious narrative of the racial inferiority of Black boys and girls in particular and all children of color in general.

Critical race theorists would agree that challenging dominant narrative epistemologies by exploring the historical impact of race is essential to understanding how any of our key institutions operate, including schools (Bell, 1992; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). In essence, the review of literature was used to trace the origins and impact of the epistemological injustice that constructed a narrative of Black intellectual inferiority, White supremacy, and Black resistance. These lies, myths, and libels of Black inferiority are yet present today. Through a critical examination of the impact of racist ideology and epistemologies on Western ways of thinking about intelligence, one can see how Western dominant narrative thinking created pessimistic views of African American students’ academic potential and led to the need for multiculturalism, culturally relevance, and antiracist approaches. Such an examination is critical to the research question:

- How does teachers’ understanding of antiracist teaching change when they engage in the Teaching for Equity and Justice Professional Development Model?

**The Foundations of Multicultural Education in Ethnic Studies**

The literature shows that the multicultural education movement is actually directly linked to the early ethnic studies movement that was birthed by scholars such as DuBois (1935) and Wesley (1935), Bond (1939), and Woodson (1968). In fact, each of the key multicultural
scholars, including also Gay (1971), Banks (1973), and Grant (1973) were found to be greatly influenced by the work of African American scholars in the ethnic studies movement. The literature shows that other scholars who would shape multicultural education also were grounded in ethnic studies, including Sizemore (1972), Boyer (1974), and Hilliard (1974). All of these scholars were particularly focused on African American children, but other scholars focused on different ethnic groups. These ethnic studies scholars also were significant in the foundation of multicultural education, for they focused on other marginalized identities, including Mexican Americans (Cortés, 1973), American Indians (Forbes, 1973), Puerto Ricans (Nieto, 1986), and Asian Americans (Sue, 1981). These ethnic studies scholars are important to cite in the context of multicultural education in that it was their efforts that paved the way for the first phase of multicultural education which was primarily about content integration. These ethnic studies scholars were the first to initiate pressure on institutions to include in their teacher curricula ethnic studies approaches, setting the foundation for multicultural education (Banks 1989). What soon emerged from this early phase of multicultural education was a realization that merely inserting ethnic studies into the curricula was not enough to bring about true educational equality for diverse populations of children. Multicultural teachers took educational reform further in its second phase by advocating structural and systemic changes (Banks, 1993, 2004). Multicultural scholars were among the first to advocate for school reforms that were not limited to merely diversifying curricula, but also to rethinking the entire school design to make it more suitable for a diverse body of students. Multicultural educational scholars who were concerned with other victims of White dominant schooling would emerge, including feminist scholars and those concerned with children with disabilities (Banks & Banks, 1993). The final and most lasting iteration of multicultural education called for the development of theory and practices that would
serve to surface the connections between race, class, and gender (Banks, 1993, Grant & Sleeter, 1986).

**Multicultural Education and Social Justice**

The major goal of multicultural education was to reform schools so that students from diverse races, and ethnic and socioeconomic groups could experience educational freedom (Banks, 1989). The literature shows that multicultural education in itself emerged as not just school reform, but also as a social action campaign of African Americans and other marginalized groups who challenged the discriminatory practices in the 1960s at the peak of the American Civil Rights Movement (Banks, 1989; Davidman & Davidman, 1997). Teachers, parents, and community members considered schools a place where there was great hostility towards the idea that all races are equal at the same time that the larger society was fighting to end the dehumanizing effects of Jim Crow Segregation Laws. They focused their efforts on trying to get more cultural representation in schools. The battle ground for racial justice in schools for multicultural teachers was the demand for curriculum reform that reflects the diversity of the student population of public schools. What largely emerged in Kindergarten–Grade 12 (K–12) schools was a variety of programs and practices that primarily focused on moderate changes or extensions to the more Whiteness-focused curriculum.

By the 1980s, multicultural education had emerged as a progressive body of scholarship that was largely the work of Banks (1981). Banks became highly regarded as the pioneer of multicultural education (Ovando & McLaren, 2000). Banks (1981) examined schools as social systems from a multicultural context. If the school was to maintain a multicultural environment, then all aspects of the school had to be reimagined, including policies, educator attitudes, materials, and teaching styles (Banks, 1981, 1989). This approach would prove to gain great
momentum as other scholars built on Banks’s (1981) work. These scholars included Sleeter (2001), Gay (2000), and Nieto (1992). They would collectively be credited for developing frameworks that were grounded not only in diversity, but also in ideas of equal educational opportunity for racialized students. Sleeter (2001), Gay (2000), and Nieto (1992), in particular, pushed for moving well beyond only slight curricula changes to an examination of structural and foundational inequities in schools. These brave scholars took on the issues of tracking, standardized tests, school funding, and other systems of oppression in schools.

As the field grew in the 1980s, multicultural educational scholars continued to focus on developing new approaches to education that would challenge White dominant norms. The approach that emerged was focused on social justice, critical thinking, and equality (Gay, 1990; Nieto, 2004; Sleeter, 2001). The approach that had originally been only small changes in the curricula had morphed into a framework of the critique of not only schools, but also the societies that supported the inequities. Multicultural teachers came to realize that, as long as schools would continue to operate within the existing social relations of the larger society where the ideals of freedom, democracy, and equality have not yet been fully realized, there is good reason to believe that racism and social injustice within the public school system would continue to pose a serious threat to democracy in the greater society, and that the dream of social equality would then remain largely unrealized (Ovando & McLaren, 2000). Therefore, the researcher underscores the point that schools should be places where ideas of freedom, democracy, and equality are realized and even practiced, for if schools cannot operate in the context of social justice, the larger society stands little chance for transformation.

Thus, one can see an important shift in the focus of multicultural education in that it is aimed to address larger the social and political contexts in which education happens. In other
words, multicultural education did not stop short of addressing inequities in schools, but was expanded to eliminate inequities in society as a whole. This makes considerable sense, for schools and society are intrinsically linked to one another. Therefore, the researcher contends that schools mirror injustice in society. Multicultural education was begun to attempt to address these injustices through a five-dimensional approach.

**The Dimensions of Multicultural Education**

In the seminal work, Banks (1993; 2004) laid out what has become known as the dimensions of multicultural education. The first dimension is content integration in which teachers are intentional about representing the diversity of students in the content (Banks, 1993). Thus, one can see the early foundations of multicultural education, which was largely concerned with diversity in the context. However, this beginning approach did not address the more systemic issues that were contributing to the marginalization of students of color.

The second dimension moves closer to addressing systemic inequity in that it addressed the way in which knowledge was constructed in the learning process (Banks, 1993). In more oppressive practices, learners are merely passive receivers of information. Thus, one can see that, in multicultural education, learners were being asked to raise questions and to think critically about what was being taught to them. This phase moved multiculturalism even closer towards challenging systemic practices that created inequities in schools and upheld Whiteness as the ideal model. Students are now finding their voice and challenging the traditional curriculum for its epistemological injustices. In the third dimension of multicultural education, Banks (1993) called for a shift in the focus of the educational process to focus on prejudice reduction and cross-cultural understanding. One can see that each of these dimensions progressively built on each other. The educational process was becoming more transformative and liberating. It also
now requires teachers to employ pedagogical practices that resist the idea that all students learn the exact same way. The concept is emerging is a contention that schools must be responsive to students’ diverse cultures. With Banks’s (1993) fourth dimension, which was focused on equitable pedagogy, and fifth dimension, in which students and teachers become more critical of inequities in education, one can see a move towards culturally responsive teaching. With this approach, the teachers become more aware of cultural differences to the point that they tailor pedagogical practices to meet the needs of students of all of the cultures represented in the classroom. In addition, the classroom becomes a space for critical analysis and for challenges of more hegemonic ways of learning and constructs of knowledge. Banks’ fourth and fifth dimensions become the basis for culturally relevant teaching.

**Culturally Relevant Education**

A new movement in education emerged with an even greater focus on effective teaching of diverse students. Phrases such as *culturally appropriate* (Au & Jordan, 1981), *culturally congruent* (Mohatt & Erickson, 1981), and *culturally responsive* (Cazden & Leggett, 1981) began to emerge in the academic literature. From these foundational terms emerged the work of two pioneers: Ladson-Billings (1994, 1995a, 2006, 2014) with the emphasis on culturally relevant pedagogy and Gay (2002, 2010, 2013) with the emphasis on culturally responsive teaching and teacher practices. Some researchers use CRE or culturally relevant education as a framework to include the scholarly contributions of Ladson-Billings (1994, 1995a, 2006, 2014) and Gay (2002, 2010, 2013; see Dover 2013). A common thread of CRE is that of social justice education and the idea that the classroom is the place to nurture and practice social justice.

Gay (2010) defined culturally responsive teaching as “using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of references, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make
learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them” (p. 31). This shows a shift from its roots in multicultural education and looking at curriculum to a more intense focus on instruction, putting the responsibility on the educator to connect to students. This connection is critical to dismantling systemic oppression and White dominant approaches to education.

Gay (2013) pointed to four essential actions to implementing culturally responsive teaching. The first of these actions was to replace the deficit perspectives of students and their communities. This action was a very critical addition to the literature in that these deficit perspectives were deeply rooted in historical narratives of White supremacy. In the second of these actions, Gay suggested that teachers come to understand the resistance to culturally responsive teaching from critics so that they are more confident and competent (Gay, 2013). Thus, Gay (2013) suggested that teachers see themselves as critical thinking, change agents who would proactively stand up against systems of oppression and White supremacy approaches. In the third of these actions, Gay suggested that teachers understand how and why culture and difference are essential ideologies for culturally responsive teaching given that they are essential to humanity. With this particular action, in my estimation, Gay appropriately pushed teachers to think about being culturally responsive as not only as a strategy for teaching, but also as part of humanizing the lives and experiences of students. Again, this is a necessary practice for dismantling long and troubling historical narratives about the racial and cultural inferiority of students of color. Lastly, Gay suggested that teachers must make pedagogical connections within the context in which they teach. Gay again promoted more student-centered practices that make connections to students’ realities. Thus, Gay made a direct affront to the assertion that marginalized students’ cultures are inferior and that they are, therefore, not worthy of being brought into the context of the learning. In fact, Gay stated the opposite position: that for
teachers to have success with culturally diverse groups of students, the entire learning process must be contextualized in the students’ culture and not in the teachers’ culture.

The other key scholar who has made the field of culturally relevant education as popular as it is today Ladson-Billings (1994, 1995a, 2006, 2014). A look at the contribution of Ladson-Billings (1994) to the literature provides a great overview of the origin of the literature on this topic, for the author is probably the most cited scholar in this review of literature. Ladson-Billings (1994) defined culturally relevant pedagogy as one that “empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically using cultural references to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (p. 16–17). Ladson-Billings (1995a, 1995b) described a framework for culturally relevant pedagogy with three components. Ladson-Billings contended that culturally relevant teachers should be focused on long term academic achievement and not merely on end-of-term tests results. The end-of-year tests that often force teachers to resort to simple pedagogical approaches do not allow space for students’ critical thinking or expressions. Teachers must take a social justice approach and resist these oppressive practices even in the face of high stakes testing. Ladson-Billings (1994, 1995, 2006) also suggested that culturally relevant pedagogy should be focused on cultural competence by helping students to value their own cultures, while connecting to the wider culture. Thus, Ladson-Billings advocated that teachers help students to move from home to school, successfully navigating both spaces. To do this, teachers must resist the idea that students’ home cultures are inferior compared to the school culture. Students are more astute than some teachers realize and they will often shut down their learning because they feel dehumanized and offended by the devaluing of their home culture. Lastly, culturally relevant pedagogy should seek to develop critical consciousness, which means that teachers should find ways for students to recognize, understand, and critique current and
social inequalities (Ladson-Billings, 1995b, p. 476). If teachers are to equip students to dismantle and overcome systems of oppression, they must bring those issues into their classrooms. Classrooms should be places in which students can practice critical thinking and develop their agency for creating social change. Culturally relevant pedagogy aids in this process.

Together, the work of Gay and Ladson-Billings have created a great foundation on which other culturally responsive teachers can build as they try to improve not only the academic outcomes for students of color, but also increase their chances of being successful in a society that still privileges their White peers. Gay and Ladson-Billings have provided frameworks that resist the maintaining of oppressive pedagogical strategies. As the researcher has duly noted, the history of racism in the United States has led to a blaming of students for school failure. Myths and lies have been perpetuated. One example is the narrative that some ethnic groups, particularly Black and Brown people, do not value education and, even if they did, they would be intellectually inferior in their learning capability. This pessimism has led to the disproportionate tracking of children of color into special education courses, another legacy of White supremacy’s impact on education. Antiracist teachers would challenge the proponents of multiculturalism and cultural responsiveness to affront racism more directly.

**Antiracist Education and the Disruption of Multicultural Celebration**

In the brilliant work, *How to Be an Antiracist*, Kendi (as quoted in Schwartz, 2019) stated:

To be antiracist is to think nothing is behaviorally wrong or right—inferior or superior—with any of the racial groups. Whenever the antiracist sees individuals behaving positively or negatively, the antiracist sees exactly that: individuals behaving positively or negatively, not representatives of whole races. To be antiracist is to deracialize behavior, to remove the tattooed stereotype from every racialized body. Behavior is something humans do, not races do. (p. 105)
Kendi’s (as quoted in Schwartz, 2019) work has profoundly shaped how both scholars and practitioners think about race in the 21st century. Applying the above quote to education inequities, Kendi drove home a critical reflection that challenges the long-held belief of White supremacy ideology concerning the inferiority of Black and Brown people in general and Black and Brown boys and girls in particular. Deracializing the behavior of children is an important step to ending racist practices and policies throughout the school. For example, the well documented school to prison pipeline could be disrupted by doing as Kendi suggested. If teachers were to deracialize behavior, one could for example see a huge reduction in the disproportionate percentage of Black and Brown boys and girls being referred to the office for the same infractions that their White peers would not be referred to the office. Relevant to this study, exploring the impact of the TEJ Professional Development Model on how teachers understand the role of racism in schools could lead to findings that such professional development could counter the narrative of racial inferiority of Black and Brown children and disrupt some of the racist policies and practices in schools. The brave work of Kendi (as quoted in Schwartz, 2019) reminds everyone that that “There is no middle ground. Actions, ideas, and policies are either racists or not.” This approach is such a critical addition to the scholarship, especially in the context of the education Black and Brown children, because it challenges teachers to give up neutrality or to abandon ideas like color blindness or school as a meritocracy. The antiracist educator is one who engages in antiracist practices instead of practices that essentially cater to the comfort and “possessive investment in whiteness” (Lipsitz 2006).

Another important contribution that Kendi (as quoted in Schwartz, 2019) brought to the conversation and scholarship is debunking the idea that racism is a about one’s personal character. Kendi (as quoted in Schwartz, 2019) stated, “White supremacists have won the
rhetorical battle by successfully positioning the term racist as a personal attack, that being racists makes you a bad person.” This thought is profoundly important in the literature particularly for an educational application. Most teachers would deem themselves good people, and they would associate racist people as bad people; therefore, they would resist the thought they might harbor racist ideas that could lead to racist practices. This resistance becomes particularly critical if the educator is Black or Brown and the children are Black or Brown. Kendi bravely explained how, as a Black high school student, the author gave a speech essentially condemning Black students for their failures, while also claiming that the author was opposed racism. In other words, Kendi was supporting a White supremacy argument of anti-Blackness, while self-proclaiming to be an antiracist. This critical addition to the literature shows that all teachers can examine whether their rhetoric and practices match their claims of being antiracists.

Kendi’s (as cited in Koenig, 2020) scholarship has provided a modern-day framework for how to be an antiracist educator. Among Kendi’ demands are that educators teach an antiracist curriculum and create antiracist learning environments. Antiracist learning curricula and learning environments not only center on, but also privilege Black and Brown students’ identities and demonstrate love for Black children. An antiracist learning environment does not criminalize Black children and does not equate Black with misbehaving. Kendi (as noted in Koenig, 2020) went on to say that the most important aspect of being an antiracist educator is to make sure to be intentionally antiracist. Kendi (as quoted in Koenig, 2020) stated it thus:

If we as individuals are really ensuring that we are being antiracist as individuals, then that’s going to come across in how we act as an educator. That’s going to come across in how we teach our students.

Again, this is a critical addition to the literature, for Kendi (as quoted in Koenig, 2020) placed the burden on the adults to hold themselves accountable for being antiracist rather than diverging to the age old and oppressive practice of blaming the children. The works of these
authors are essential literature for this study in exploring the shifts in teachers’ attitudes when exposed to antiracist professional development. A final reflection on Kendi’s (as quoted in Koenig, 2020) work is that the author challenged teachers to rethink the way in which they think about intelligence: “I don’t consider intelligence or how we assess one’s intelligence based on how much a person knows. I assess one’s intelligence based on how much one has a desire to know.”

Antiracist education distinguishes itself from multicultural education and its offspring, cultural responsiveness, in its laser focus on racial injustice and placing the burden on White people to own and dismantle racist practices. In fact, antiracist teachers would consider multicultural education as a discourse that takes the focus off race by taking a more superficial approach that could actually perpetuate racism (Niemonen, 2007). Multicultural education itself was created to be an affront to White dominant school culture, but antiracist teachers found it to be celebratory, and that it failed to bring about the real encounter with privilege that White people needed to have. According to antiracist teachers, “celebratory multiculturalism” that is found in many classrooms today must be replaced with a “liberation of people of color” approach that would eradicate racism by a direct encounter with what it means to be White (Akintunde, 1999; Bonnett & Carrington, 1996; McLaren, 1993). Multicultural education to the antiracist does not radically contest White supremacy in schools; on the contrary, it promotes White dominance by decentralizing race and the specific experiences of Black people in the United States (Akintunde, 1999; Bonnett & Carrington, 1996). To the antiracist, multiculturalism would not lead to a dismantling of systemic oppression, for it does not insist that White people own their culpability.
Antiracists have a very specific way of defining racism and the best way to eradicate it.

In the context of antiracist ideology, Hilliard (1992, as quoted in DiAngelo, 2012) defined racism as a system that encompasses economic, political, social, and cultural structures, actions, and beliefs that systematize and perpetuate an unequal distribution of privileges, resources, and power between whites and people of color. This system is historic, normalized, taken for granted, deeply embedded, and works to the benefit of whites and to the disadvantage of people of color. (Ch. 1, p. 1)

When applying this definition to educator practices, antiracists call for the type of critique of pedagogy similar to Freire (2013). An antiracist, Freire (2013) believed that pedagogy and curricula should promote equality by intentionally identifying and eliminating White supremacy approaches (Niemonen, 2007). From the researcher’s perspective, this promotion would mean more student-centered and collaborative learning. Far too often, teachers who teach historically marginalized students resort to the banking model, a term that Freire (2003) made popular to describe an approach to teaching that is didactic and demeaning, for it treats students as empty containers for teachers to fill. This oppressive pedagogy fails to recognize the amazing contributions that students of color could add to the learning process when not being stifled by racist stereotypes. Antiracist teachers aim for a more radical and thorough confrontation with racism and White supremacy. Antiracist teachers speak to general issues of social injustice. They claim that race is much more important than social class or other types of disparity (Niemonen, 2007). Antiracist theory seems to be very much grounded in CRT, for it denotes that race is at the core of all institutional inequities.

According the popular, antiracist scholars Akintunde (1999), DiAngelo (2006), and Lipsitz (1995), racism is pervasive and will persist when it is unchallenged. Antiracist scholars challenge the proponents of Western epistemologies, and they deny their right to the privileged status that they claim (Niemonen 2007). The proponents of Western epistemologies have used
their positionality and power to exert themselves as superior to all other epistemologies, including Eastern, Feminist, Chicano, and Indigenous epistemologies. Western epistemologies represent domination by Eurocentric White men (DiAngelo, 2006; Sefa Dei, 1996). Antiracist scholars contend that Whiteness gets to decide what does and does not count as knowledge. Therefore, antiracist scholars are intentional about rejecting hegemonic knowledge that was produced in the context of historical racism. Instead, antiracist scholars write their opposing narratives that stand to eradicate oppressive epistemologies.

Like its predecessors (multiculturalism and CRE), some basic tenets appear in antiracist education. The researcher will discuss the four most critical claims.

Claim 1 is that racism exists today, and that all members of society have been socialized to participate in it (DiAngelo, 2006, 2012). This speaks to the thoroughness and constant presence of race in our society. Race is so baked into the Nation’s DNA that it now operates without the consent of the individual, so that individuals must work to counter it. If race is this present and permanent, teachers must especially be intentional about mitigating its impact and challenging its myths in the classroom.

Claim 2 of antiracism is that all White people benefit from racism, even if they do not intend it (DiAngelo, 2006, 2012). Antiracists are more concerned with impact and culpability than intent. White people, even liberals, often find comfort in being able to claim good intentions. This is especially troubling in schools. For example, in-school suspensions can be seen as good intent in that students are not sent home. But they are often placed in isolation away from their peers, which has far too much resemblance to prison. This might be a good intent, but it is a bad impact.
Claim 3 of antiracism theory is to reject neutrality. No one is neutral; if you do not act against racism, you perpetuate it (DiAngelo, 2006, 2012). This tenet is also critical in the context of schooling, for if teachers do not actively resist oppressive pedagogy and stand up against institutional inequity, they are a part of the problem. For example, teachers who resist “teaching to the test” are acting as antiracist teachers. By contrast, teachers who contend that they are just doing as instructed, yet claim to have the students’ best interest at heart, are still perpetuating racism if they participate in pedagogy practices that they know are irrelevant and disengaging to students.

Claim 4 of antiracism is that fighting racism is continuous, and no one is ever done fighting it (DiAngelo, 2006, 2012). Although this sounds rather pessimistic, it can be empowering to social justice activists. But the larger point is that, in the context of educating students from historically marginalized communities, teachers cannot afford to stop looking for and challenging racist practices until such time when educators have truly achieved equity in the Nation’s schools. Practicing antiracism in the context of systems that were designed to perpetuate racism is challenging, and the stakes are high. By this, the researcher does not mean the high stakes of standardized tests, but the graver stakes of having yet another generation of impoverished children of color leave the Nation’s schools without the skills to navigate a society that historically and presently disadvantages them solely because of their color of skin. One can see, thus far, in this review of literature that the through line to preparing for the research questions was a focus on the impact of historical racism and its resistance in the form of antiracist practices. This type of analysis lends itself well to CRT.
Post-Civil Rights Movement Decentralization of Race

The legal battles won, and the dismantling of Jim Crow Segregation Laws and norms led some scholars to challenge the permeance and pervasiveness of race. As a result, the 1970s saw an emergence of professional scholars who challenged that race would remain central to American political, social, and academic life (Anderson, 1994). The most prominent of this type of work was Wilson’s (1978) *The Declining Significance of Race*. Wilson claimed that the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s had succeeded in eliminating the physical barriers of racial injustice. Wilson’s idea was that, now that buses and other public spaces were legally desegregated, post-Civil Rights America would usher in a decline in the significance of race in American society (Anderson, 1994).

Wilson (1978) argued that class, not race, would emerge as the most important indicator of opportunity, including educational opportunity. The emerging belief among social scholars was that race had run its course. Anderson (1994) contended that the result of this attempt to decentralize race effectively treated race as an aberration from the normal flow of history, under stating its persistence, centrality, and pervasiveness. This had a critical impact on schooling and professional development, for schools actually moved away from the lessons of ethnic studies and multicultural education toward a narrative of poverty and low socioeconomics as the central cause of school inequities, not racism. The teaching of history and the professional development of history teachers in the 1970s and 1980s reflected this defragmentation of race from the larger narrative of history. The narrative that would emerge was a celebratory teaching of history that was focused on progress, assimilation, and racial harmony (Anderson, 1994). Racial injustice is only taught in the context of discussing slavery, the treatment of Native Americans under the national government, or African Americans under Jim Crow Segregation Laws. In other words,
racial injustice became a fragmented and *siloed* conversation, absent from synthesizing of racial injustice in the larger context of scholarship. Teachers’ training and professional development in the 1970s and 1980s reflected this conversation. Wilson (1978) predicted that interest would be renewed in a Black History Month and other celebratory treatments of the African American experience. One of the most troubling manifestations of this simplistic treatment of Black history would be educators’ unwillingness or inability to examine the centrality of racial oppression on the educational experiences of Black and Brown school-aged children. Anderson (1994) contended that the existing scholarship on race might be rich and diverse, but that it remains largely ostracized and siloed from the more general consensus of American history. Thus, no one should wonder why teachers in the 1970s and 1980s paid very little attention to the impact of race on educational outcomes and experiences of Black and Brown boys and girls (Anderson 1994). It was not until the administrators of federal funding programs started to press for the disaggregation of data by race that these disparities began to drive educational practices and professional development.

**Good Intention, But Bad Impact: Professional Development Reinscribing White Supremacy**

The impact of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 (Klein 2015) has led much of the educational research and literature over the last 20 years to be focused largely on the disturbing academic achievement gap. The achievement gap refers to the disparities in educational outcomes that follow the troubling racial patterns of African American students who underperform compared to their White or more economically advantaged peers (Fredrickson, 1981; Miller, 1995). Since the NCLB Act (2001), school districts, school administrators, and teachers have been held to higher levels of accountability to raise standardized test scores, the
key measure of the achievement gap. This accountability has essentially meant paying particular attention to students who have not traditionally done well in school. (Fredrickson, 1981; Miller, 1995) pointed to many complex issues related to the gap, including educational factors and home factors. Relevant to this study is the amount of research that has been conducted with teachers to determine the nature of their dispositions concerning the reasons behind the achievement gap. An analysis of the literature shows some compelling trends regarding teachers’ dispositions on the sources of the gap. The literature surfaces some troubling themes. Teachers largely point to student misbehavior, poverty, student lack of motivation, and cultural deficiencies as sources of the academic failure of African American students and other students of color. I contend that this deficit thinking is rooted in White supremacy narratives about the African American students’ academic identities and potential. “Throughout American history racial disparities in educational achievement and performance were attributed to innate genetic differences between population groups and were regarded as acceptable and as a natural phenomenon (Noguera 2008). When these negative perceptions of students of color persist among teachers, the school failure of these students is accepted as inevitable or normal. Noguera (2008) surfaced a critical component for achieving academic equity: challenging the normalization of failure. Noguera (2008) described this normalization of failure happens because teachers have firmly established in their minds that the academic failure of impoverished students of color is a normal phenomenon simply because it has been happening for so long. The attitudes and mindsets that contribute to the normalization of failure are most egregious when they are used to justify the gaps in student performance. Noguera (2008) went on to say that, when failure is normalized, it is nearly impossible for outcomes to change; there must be a strategy to overcome the normalization of failure. The normalization of failure reinforces the racist idea that there is a biological link between race and
intelligence. These beliefs must be challenged in professional development to alter the patterns of failure and disparities. The literature also shows that these negative teacher perceptions are also interrelated and difficult to isolate.

Noted educational researchers Gregory et al. (2010) found that the majority of teachers who were surveyed perceived some aspect of student behavior and attitudes towards learning to be key reasons that impoverished students of color underachieve. This researcher contends that these perceptions are often rooted in White supremacy narratives of what is deemed appropriate behavior. For instance, when a student speaks out in class without raising his or her hand, this is often deemed as disruptive behavior, especially if the student is African American, when actually the student is enthusiastic about learning and is responding from their own cultural lens. If the teacher is locked into a dominant narrative of Whiteness, the student is disciplined for enthusiasm which could lead to an office referral, suspension, and missed instructional time.

Miles and Stipek (2006) also pointed out that students’ frustration with the learning environment often leads to what teachers consider disruptive behavior. Rather than reimagining the classroom environment or the lesson itself to reduce student frustration, teachers hold on to perceptions that students are disruptive and simply do not want to learn, thus the achievement gap is the student’s fault. This unexamined prejudice and racism are largely rooted in White supremacy narratives, for these dispositions are often directed towards African American students from impoverished communities. Dee (2005) argued that these negative perceptions of the behavior of students of color are particularly prevalent when the teachers and the students come from different races or ethnic groups.

In another study of teacher perceptions, Uhlenberg and Brown (2002) discovered that teachers (regardless of their race) tend to associate student failure with parents’ income and
parenting skills. This is particularly troubling for teachers who teach in economically impoverished communities, for if those teachers correlate academic failure with parents’ income, they are, in effect, taking a deficit approach that is rooted in White supremacy. The White supremacy narrative would claim that the poverty itself is because of the racial inferiority of the impoverished, not systemic racism. Therefore, White supremacy narratives would claim that the academic failure of impoverished African American students is predictable because they are genetically inferior and more likely to be impoverished.

In a similar type of study of classroom teacher perceptions, Bol and Berry (2005) found that teachers in their study too largely pointed to student deficits. Teachers in Bol and Berry’s study listed student lack of work ethic, low motivation, and impoverished family support as the underlying reasons behind the achievement gap. This correlation of income, student motivation, and student behaviors have been the themes across much of the research in the last 20 years. A myriad of studies show that teachers perceive that impoverished students (mostly African American) are not as capable as their peers from higher socioeconomic homes (Auwarter & Aruguete, 2008). Considering that the vast majority of African American students in public schools are taught by White teachers or teachers of color who are not from their communities, this is a troubling narrative. If teachers are not confronted with this bias, the soft bigotry of low expectations will continue to rule in urban classrooms that serve the Nation’s most vulnerable students.

This researcher does not suggest that poverty, parenting, or student engagement are not important factors in a student’s education. In fact, recent researchers have found real correlations between family income and the development of students. However, these researchers did not point to deficits in the abilities, families, or motivations of impoverished children, but rather
more accurately to the privilege that comes with more income. Kornrich and Furstenberg (2013) noted that more wealthy families could spend seven times more money on their children’s academic and social development. In addition, the fact is widely known that children from more affluent families have more opportunities for informal learning and even more access to books (Reardon, 2013). Therefore, socioeconomics is a factor, but teachers must be careful not to develop negative perceptions of impoverished African American students on the basis of systemic racism and the impact of White privilege. Impoverished African American students are no less capable of learning or no less motivated to learn than their peers. Impoverished African American students are also no more likely to misbehave than their peers. Any teacher perceptions to the contrary are rooted in a White supremacy narrative that even well-meaning teachers might hold. The narrative of White educational supremacy is so historically prevalent that it often operates not as overt racism in schools, but as unconscious bias. Nevertheless, the impact of teachers’ negative perceptions of impoverished African American students is profound and must be challenged in professional development. Noguera et al. (2015) argued,

> Although policy makers have not called attention to the fact that the effort to eliminate racial disparity in student achievement represents a repudiation of America’s past views on race, teachers at the center of this effort often find that they engage attitudes and beliefs that are associated with vestiges of racial attitudes from the not so distant past. (p. 27)

Thus, Noguera et al. articulated a primary justification for this researcher’s research question. Noguera et al. amplified that many teachers perceive that children of color are not as intelligent as their White peers. However, this researcher contends that since race remains a persistent indicator and predictor of school success, having teachers deeply explore historical racism and its impact on education will be a critical best practice for achieving educational equity as they move towards antiracism. Fortunately, an increasing number of scholars are rejecting the deplorable idea that race is biological and are acknowledging it as a socially constructed category (Omi &
Winant, 1994). In keeping with this view, if racial categories are indeed social, then teachers should be able to eliminate the predictability of outcomes founded on race by challenging the ways in which racial patterns can become entrenched in schools. It is important to note that researchers have shown that student motivation, systemic poverty, and parental involvement are factors in student achievement. However, what is problematic is that teachers use these factors as an excuse for normalizing failure; therefore, they abdicate their responsibilities to do something different.

As urban school districts all across the Nation work to close the highly scrutinized academic achievement gap, the proponents of professional development models are at least claiming to address issues that are related to mitigating the impact of racism in the classroom. What is compelling for this researcher about the most popular professional development models is their failure to address deeply enough the source of the negative perceptions of impoverished students of color. The designers of various professional development models do recognize disparity, but they generally do not recognize the historical roots of educational disparities. Grit, Unconscious Bias Training, Frameworks for Understanding Poverty, and Social–Emotional Learning are among the most prevalent professional development frameworks that, in some way, claim to help counter the disenfranchisement of students of color to experience success in and outside of the classroom. An analysis of the literature show that these models have several themes that this researcher has found to be rooted in White supremacy ways of thinking about professional development: (a) reinforcement of stereotypical narratives about students, (b) treating students as if they need saving, (c) asking students to overcome barriers rather than removing them, and (d) finding cultural deficits in students and in their communities. What led to the influx of professional development models that were aimed at reducing racism and
prejudice? As aforementioned the NCLB Act (2001) became a catalyst for disaggregating data so that schools had to recognize the academic failure of subgroups which revealed the dastardly act that students of color were in fact being left behind.

**Grit and Growth Mindsets**

One of the professional development approaches that emerged was training teachers to develop in students the characteristic that has become known as *grit*. A seventh-grade math teacher, Duckworth et al. (2007) found that some of the students were outperforming others; however, in comparing the students’ Intelligence Quotient (IQ) Test results she found that some of her students with lower IQ Test scores outperformed the students with higher IQ Test scores. Therefore, Duckworth et al. set out to discover why some people in various settings are successful and why some are not successful, asking the question: What is the key characteristic for success? After conducting studies across many industries Duckworth et al. concluded that the characteristic that prevailed was that of grit. Duckworth and Quinn (2009) defined grit as a characteristic of someone who displays a great deal of passion and persists to achieve what seems to be an unachievable goal. However, Duckworth and Quinn soon discovered that Stanford University professor Dweck (2007) was conducting studies that were centered on the way that fixed beliefs about one’s ability to succeed could be the culprit in keeping students from experiencing academic success. Dweck developed the notion that the key to academic success was to teach students to have growth mindsets when faced with challenges. Duckworth and Quinn (2009) combined the ideas of grit and growth mindsets and concluded that grit could actually be developed by having a growth mindset. What is relevant here is that these became popular approaches in the early 2000s as a way to educate more effectively students who historically experienced failure (i.e., impoverished Black and Brown children). On the surface, it
makes sense that professional development that is aimed at helping teachers to develop grit in their students through encouraging growth mindsets would be great for students. However, when this approach reinscribes White supremacy ideas about students of color, the impact might not mirror the intent. Asking adolescents, who are in fact suffering from historical and institutional racism, merely to have a growth mindset and be more persistent is paramount to blaming the victim. In one of the studies, Duckworth (as cited in Perkins-Gough, 2013) stated, “Grit is not just having resilience in the face of failure, but having deep commitment that you remain loyal to over many years” (p. __).

In asking marginalized students to be resilient and remain loyal to their commitments for many years suggests that the responsibility is on children to overcome institutional barriers to their achievement. By not foregrounding institutional racism and historical inequities in professional development teachers will continue to resort to stereotypical explanations for students’ failure, including finding fault in the student’s culture. Professional development that is aimed at helping teachers to develop grit moves the responsibility from teachers to create more student centered, culturally mediated, and engaging learning environments to asking students to persist in spite of these learning environments that are not conducive to their intellectual or social emotional growth. It is not that teachers do not need professional development aimed at helping their students to persist, but that the training needs proper context.

**Frameworks for Understanding Poverty**

One of the prevailing questions that surfaces in professional development literature is, “What is the best way to prepare teachers to navigate the issues of poverty?” Popular among the professional development models in the same period of the “grit” training was Payne’s (2002) Framework for Understanding Poverty. In the framework, Payne surfaced problematic themes
similar to the Grit framework: (a) the framework reinforces negative stereotypes, (b) claims cultural deficiencies in the student community, and (c) is associated with saviorism. In the popular framework, Payne detailed the differences among students according to their socioeconomic class. The goal of Payne’s professional development was to help teachers to be more effective in working with children who live in poverty. Payne’s work has been widely used by school districts in both the United States and Canada. However, Gorski (2006), Ng and Rury (2006), and Osei-Kofi (2005) reviewed Payne’s (2002) work, and their consensus was that Payne’s work is not based on reliable research, but is, in fact, built from a deficit model that reinforces negative stereotypes. These researchers suggested that Payne’s framework reinforces long held stereotypes of impoverished students as viewed from a deficit perspective. Osei-Kofi (2005) pointed out that Payne (2002) cited few sources and did not present her work as a researcher, but as a generalist. Therefore, great criticism has been voiced from academia regarding the validity of Payne’s framework, for it does not meet the standard of academic research. Nevertheless, the framework is highly popular among urban teachers; therefore, it is worthy of this analysis of professional development literature in the wake of the NCLB Act (2001).

Fundamental to Payne’s (2005) framework is the minimization of the focus on poverty as a systemic problem of racial exploitation. Rather, Payne focused on frames of references that speak mostly to class rather than to systemic poverty. Payne suggested that understanding patterns within the different class groups is an effective way to understand how to educate students in poverty. Relevant to professional development for teachers, Payne helped teachers to understand what the author called the hidden rules of impoverished students’ communities so that they could more effectively reach students. Payne believed that this approach would help
teachers to develop what is called *social bridging capital*. According to Putnam (2000), social bridging capital is individuals whom one knows who are different from one because they can affect one’s thinking if mutual respect is present. In essence, once teachers understand what life is really like for students in poverty and develop mutual respect for them, they can be more effective in educating them. This researcher sees in this framework patterns that are similar to the Grit framework. Payne’s (2002, 2005) framework relied on generalizations about students in poverty and, because generalizations are often rooted in historical stereotypes and are single narratives, one runs the risk of thinking of impoverished children of color through a deficit lens. Payne minimized the systemic issues of poverty to focus more on class behavior, which in-effect left the educator to see that the barriers to achieving were attached to the student’s community, rather than to their own pedagogy and practices, which is a result similar to that of the Grit approach. Furthermore, Payne’s framework could lead educators to taking a “savior” approach in educating, a feature of White supremacy education, rather than empowering students who live in poverty.

**Unconscious Bias**

Another popular trend in post-NCLB Act (2001) professional development is unconscious bias training. According to Staats (2015), unconscious biases are the stereotypes that affect one’s beliefs and actions without one realizing it. The idea behind the unconscious bias training for teachers is that, if they are made more aware of their biases, that awareness might mitigate some of the factors that contribute to the academic failure of students of color. However, consistent with this researcher’s analysis of the Grit and poverty frameworks, the authors in the literature show that unconscious bias professional development for teachers is
largely ineffective in changing their practices, for many educators resist owning their bias as a fundamental problem in favor of believing the stereotypical narratives about their students.

According to Okonofua and Eberhardt (2015), under several conditions, individuals are more likely to operate in unconscious bias. These conditions include teachers’ claims that they frequently face time constraints, tiredness, or feeling overwhelmed. Given that teachers daily find themselves in these spaces it is easy to say how they can operate in unconscious bias. Staats (2015) conducted a school related study of unconscious bias in school discipline and found that because ambiguous infractions (e.g., disruptive behavior or making noise) are so subjective that educator unexamined bias often leads to disproportionate punishing of children of color. One might ask, Why? Historical narratives about children of color, especially Black boys as inherently bad, produce the bias. Therefore, rather than teachers turning the microscope on their own biases, they often point back to the student and situate the problem there. As with Grit and frameworks of poverty, this researcher does not see evidence that unconscious bias training by itself is effective in affecting educator practice, for it falls short of contextualizing the training in White supremacy and historical inequity.

A popular feature of much of the unconscious bias training is the Harvard Implicit Association Test that debuted in 1998 (Okonofua & Eberhardt, 2015). The Implicit Association Test is used to assess both attitudes and stereotypes towards groups. The test helps teachers to become more consciously aware of some unconscious biases that they might have towards their students. This awareness is crucial to helping teachers to ensure that their good intentions of helping all their students succeed is not undermined by their own unexamined biases. Researchers have also suggested that, if teachers were exposed to counter narratives, the exposure could also reduce bias. According to (Staats 2015) exposure to narratives that challenge
negative stereotypes could effectively mitigate existing biases. Furthermore, this researcher would contend that not only would exposure to counter narratives reduce bias, but also exposure to the how, over time, White supremacy narratives have shaped these biases about impoverished African American students would reduce bias. Moreover, this researcher contends that, even after teachers have an encounter their biases, they are not likely to change their behavior if they actually do not have a deep understanding of the roots of the bias. Thus, unconscious attitudes towards particular racial groups have become known to affect discipline decisions. The extensive research of Okonofua and Eberhardt (2015) documented implicit associations that link Black boys to criminality. Like other modern professional development models, when unconscious bias training fails to challenge White supremacy narratives, the educator likely returns to the same deficit thinking that previously prevailed.

**Social–Emotional Learning**

When exploring professional development literature since the inaugural NCLB Act (2001), this researcher found that social–emotional learning (SEL) has emerged as one of the most widely adopted practices of institutions that are challenged with reaching more effectively disenfranchised children of color. This researcher also found in the literature similar themes related to student deficits. SEL refers to a process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary (a) to understand and manage emotions, (b) to set and achieve positive goals, (c) to feel and show empathy for others, (c) to establish and maintain positive relationships, and (d) to make responsible decisions (CASEL, 2003). SEL as a field that has evolved from research on prevention and resilience and that found its roots in Gardner’s (1993) *Multiple Intelligences* and Goleman’s (1995) *Emotional Intelligence*. The proponents of SEL deemed these prosocial skills as the key to students’ success
in and out of the classroom. Zins and Elias (2007) claimed that SEL has positive effects on students’ academic performance, improves citizenship, and reduces the risk of maladjustments, interpersonal violence, substance abuse, and unhappiness. For these reasons, many schools nationally have adopted SEL professional development for teachers as a centerpiece to their efforts to help impoverished children of color experience greater success in school. The issue with SEL is that it often used as a tool for behavioral modification of students of color, making it more in line with the deficit approaches rather than addressing White supremacy narratives. The pressing question for the field of SEL as a professional development model is the way in which it addresses specifically the SEL needs of youth from historically marginalized communities without (a) reinforcing negative stereotypes, (b) citing cultural deficits, (c) placing the burden on youth to overcome systems of oppression, or (d) moving teachers into the savior role. For example, one of the key components of SEL professional development is to increase educator capacity to aid students in their development of self-awareness. The components of self-awareness include culture values, community identity, and socioeconomic status (Jagers et al., 2018). When engaging with students from marginalized communities’ teachers must be critically conscious of making deficit assumptions about students’ cultural values according to prevailing negative stereotypes that are rooted in White supremacy narratives. As with Grit, frameworks for poverty, and unconscious bias training, teachers who engage in SEL approaches can unconsciously over punish students of color or perhaps even disempower them by taking a savior approach. As students are developing self-awareness it must be encouraged in a context free from stereotypes and preconceived notions about who students are and what they are capable of doing.
SEL professional development is also rooted in teaching to self-manage or to practice self-control. As noted, the roots of SEL are in White supremacy school system; therefore, the approach tends to favor White middle-class culture (not to be mistaken for White skin color) and biases have a way of showing up. When students' cultural orientations do not match those of their teachers, this idea of self-control could create conflict. This conflict could lead to youth of color having to navigate discrimination that comes from this mismatch of cultural norms that determines how one practices self-management (Jagers et al., 2018). Therefore, teachers must be sure to place explicitly these cultural mismatches in the context of historical inequity. In other words, they must be very intentional about recognizing that American society privileges Whiteness so that they will not burden their students with assimilating.

Of course, students need to practice self-control. However, who decides what is self-control? This is a potential faultline in SEL practices, as with the other models that this researcher has reviewed the in the literature. For example, in many the cultures of people of color the notion of speaking out without raising one’s hand or of talking over each other is an acceptable practice. However, in a typical classroom such behavior might be deemed as lack of self-management or loss of self-control. If even well intended teachers view students as not having self-control, this can lead to lower expectations, disproportionate office referrals, and missed instruction time.

**Foundations of Critical Race Theory**

Critical race theory is a framework or a set of basic perspectives, methods, and pedagogy that seek to identify, analyze, and transform those structural and cultural aspects of society that maintain the subordination and marginalization of people of color (Solórzano, 1997). “Researchers began to be called critical race theorists with the seminal work of Derrick Bell.
Early on, Alan Freeman and Richard Delgado joined Bell” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 4). The first conference was held in Madison, Wisconsin, in the summer of 1989. The result emerged was a shared set of beliefs among critical race theorists.

Belief 1 of critical race theorists is that racism is ordinary (not aberrational) normal science and that it is the usual way society does business with most people of color in the country (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). This thought remains controversial, for the people in power are reluctant to believe or to admit that racism is pervasive. Rather, the power bloc ascribes to the belief that Americans live in a meritocracy, and that privilege is earned.

Belief 2 of critical race theorists is that the American system of White-over-Color ascendancy serves important purposes, both physical and material (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001), for those who benefit from it. “Because racism advances the interests of both White elitists [materially] and working-class people (physically), large segments of society have little incentive to eradicate it” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 7). This belief is critical to this study in that schools have historically contributed to serving the interest of the wealthy majority at the expense of the impoverished minority. These first two principles of critical race theorists lead to some troubling, but important to note, conclusions: (a) racism has been normalized, and (b) there is little to no incentive for those who benefit from it to do anything differently.

Belief 3 of critical race theorists is the social construction thesis, which holds that race and races are products of social thought and relations (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Lawrence, 2002). Western dominant scholars have created a narrative—in the face of evidence—that race is biological and that it is merely a social construct. Critical race theorists contend that society frequently chooses to ignore scientific facts, create races, and endows them with pseudopermanent characteristics (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Tate, 1997). This is how racism
works: Racism says that people of color have certain physical, psychological, and even personality traits that make them a member of a permanently inferior race. Critical race theorists understand the impact of these claims, especially as justification for institutional racism.

The CRT principle of meritocracy challenges claims that policies and practices that have been shaped around the dominant ideology are neutral and colorblind (Sleeter, 2016; Yosso, 2005). For example, applying this CRT principle helps to explain the presence of such a dominant White teaching force. It dispels the myth that systems cannot find more qualified applicants of color. The problem lies in a supposedly neutral and colorblind interviewing processes and instruments such as the Praxis test. The Praxis test has been criticized for failing teacher candidates of color at much higher rates than White teacher candidates (Sleeter, 2016). Of course, in a colorblind discourse, one might logically conclude that this is an indicator that White teacher candidates are better choices and that they make better teachers. Goldhaber and Hansen (2010) statistically compared the interaction between Black students’ average achievement scores, teacher race, and teacher candidates’ scores on the Praxis. They found that Black students achieved better with a Black teacher who failed the Praxis than the same students achieved with a White teacher who passed the Praxis (Sleeter, 2016). The relevance to this researcher’s study is that the Praxis is yet another example of the way in which racism thoroughly permeates the American education system and reproduces cycles of oppression that must be challenged in antiracist professional development that is aimed at eradicating the impact of White supremacy on the Nation’s schools.

Critical race theory is essentially about the intricate relationship between racism and levers of power (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). To understand these relationships, CRT can be
understood through five basic tenets. For the purpose of this study, it is essential to connect these basic tenets to the marginalization of the academic identities of Black and Brown children.

1. The Centrality of Race and Racism in Society: The proponents of CRT assert that racism is a permanent component of American life (Solórzano, 1997). The review of literature showed the successful efforts of scholars who support racist epistemologies, from the birth of the Nation, to assert racism in all critical areas of American life to include schooling. Critical race theory is a tool with which to examine the lasting negative impact of the permanency of race in schools and to make a case for exploring this impact in antiracist professional development.

2. The Challenge to Dominant Ideology: The proponents of CRT challenge the claims of neutrality, objectivity, color blindness, and meritocracy in society (Solórzano, 1997). White supremacy narratives, with their beliefs in inborn ability, would claim that students of color fail because they are a permanent lower class and that the more superior race would achieve higher because of natural abilities (Terman, 1917; Herrnstein & Murray, 1996). This idea would give validity to fixed mindsets and the practice of tracking. Critical race theorists challenge this dominant narrative. Professional development must include a challenge to colorblind and meritocracy educational approaches that continue to disadvantage scholars of color.

3. The Centrality of Experiential Knowledge: The proponents of CRT assert that the experiential knowledge of people of color is appropriate, legitimate, and an integral part of analyzing and understanding racial inequality (Solórzano, 1997). The power bloc largely ignores the experiences and knowledge of people of color by shaping their discourse. They fail to legitimize people of color as having unique and rich
experiences that could contribute to constructions of knowledge. This epistemological injustice is evident in K–12 professional development models when those models do not acknowledge the way in which people of color’s experiences have been historically devalued in the learning process because of racism.

4. The Interdisciplinary Perspective: The proponents of CRT challenge the ahistorical and indiscipline focuses of most of the analyses and insist that race and racism be placed in both a contemporary and a historical context, using interdisciplinary methods (Solórzano, 1997). This challenge is extremely important to this researcher’s study in that the researcher surfaces the importance of exploring historical racism as a means of understanding today’s racial inequities in schools.

5. The Commitment to Social Justice: The proponents of CRT believe that the theory is a framework by which its proponents are committed to a social justice agenda to eliminate all forms of subordination of people (Solórzano, 1997). As an emerging critical theorist, this researcher is committed to the principle that professional development should equip teachers to eradicate inequalities in schooling by first understanding its historical root.

Critical Race Theory and Interest Convergence
According to Sleeter (2016),

The CRT tenet of interest convergence posits that people do the right thing when it is in their own interest. This means that White people will support the interests of people of color only when they converge with White needs. (p. __)

Given that the vast majority of the faculty in teacher education programs is White, the proponents of interest convergence would suggest that these programs might not be committed to antiracist frameworks. Sleeter (2016) also stated,
The dominance of White perspectives has huge ramifications for what happens in teacher education programs: how curriculum is designed and what is taught; how students are recruited and selected; how new faculty members—and who those new faculty members are—are recruited, hired, and supported; how urgently a program works to address race and ethnicity; and the extent to which faculty members who work with race are supported. (p. 155)

Critical race theory helps to explain the presence of such a dominant White teaching force in secondary schools. It dispels the myth that their systems cannot find more qualified applicants of color. This finding speaks to the racial implications of using the Praxis as such a key measure of teacher readiness, particularly assuming it is a colorblind merit-based assessment. According to Sleeter (2016), “This test, like many others has been criticized for failing teacher candidates of color at much higher rates than White teacher candidates” (p. 160). Of course, in a colorblind discourse one might logically conclude that White teacher candidates are better teachers. This is critical in the context of this study, for racist barriers such as the Praxis Test continue to contribute to the growing White teacher force, while public schools are becoming increasingly Black, Brown, Asian-Pacific Islander, and Indigenous. Why is this important? Goldhaber and Hansen (2010, as cited in Sleeter, 2016) statistically compared the interaction between Black students’ average achievement scores, teacher race, and teacher candidates’ scores on the Praxis. Goldhaber and Hansen (2010, as cited in Sleeter, 2016) found that Black students achieved better with a Black teacher who failed the Praxis than the same students achieved with a White teacher who passed the Praxis. Thus, CRT helps educators to see that the failure rate of teachers of color on the Praxis continues to deny Black students access to teachers who will do a better job of educating them. This is interest convergence at its worst manifestation.
**Critical Race Theory and Curriculum**

As noted, CRT is largely about applying race and racial theory as an affront to traditional notions of social inequities (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Critical race theory in educational inequity conversations is an important but rather recent phenomenon in the scholarship (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Tate, 1997). Although the CRT relationship to law is highly documented, its application in education is lesser known yet critical to understanding the racist barriers that Black and Brown children face. Several scholars of note have addressed the importance of CRT in the context of educational equity. Critical race theory is a useful lens through which to view to connections to important equity issues such as school funding (Kozol, 1991) and school desegregation. However, in this researcher’s study, the goal was to amplify the literature related to the way in which CRT serves as a way both to analyze and to critique the key aspects of schooling that affect racial equity, including curriculum, instruction, and assessment (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, Tate, 1997, Taylor, 1998).

When viewed through a CRT lens, the school curriculum understood as a tool with which to maintain the current social order (Apple, 1993; Swartz 1992). Through the curriculum the voices of the racially marginalized is silenced and legitimacy is instead is given to dominant, White, upper-class voices as the privileged knowledge that students should be learning. In essence, Black and Brown children’s perspectives and experiences are not only omitted, but also are often dismissed. Swartz (1992) referred to this practice as mastering scripting (i.e., the script that is privileged and standardized in the curriculum). From CRT perspective, Swartz contended that that the dominant voice that privileges Whiteness must be reshaped before it can become part of the master script. The impact of this master scripting is that the stories and voices of people with both racialized and marginalized identities are muted. This muting of voices is often
subtle (King, 1992; Swartz, 1992). It is in the narrative of the curriculum, for example, that Rosa Parks was merely a tired seamstress rather than a strategist to end bus segregation. This narrative is not a complete omission, but it is a subtle distortion that robs Park of her voice, agency, and brilliance as a woman of color. Critical race theory challenges the epistemological injustices in the curriculum. Professional development could greatly benefit from this CRT lens. The proponents of CRT in education also take issue with the quality of the curriculum. Kozol (1991) observed that impoverished Black and Brown children are often confined to the basic education, while their White, economically advantaged peers are engaged in more critical thinking. Of course, the obsession with testing further subjects Black and Brown children to remediated curriculum.

Lipsitz (2006) argued that Whiteness is as a tangible property that entitles White people over those who do not own it. School curriculum is a way of investing in the property of Whiteness and denying its benefits to Black and Brown children in their Blackness and Brownness.

**Critical Race Theory and Instruction**

Critical race theorists Haberman (1991), Ovando & McLaren (2000), and Sleeter (2016) also challenge what is often referred to as the pedagogy of poverty. These scholars referred to a basic mode of pedagogy that Black and Brown children often experience and that consists mostly of teacher-focused lessons during which the teachers share the basic information, and the students are merely asked to regurgitate it. According to Haberman (1991), the cycle is one of giving information, reviewing information, testing, scoring, and handing out grades as rewards or punishments. Haberman went on to describe the quality teaching as engagement with important issues, and allow space for critical thinking, feedback, and reflection. From a critical race
Theorist’s perspective, the difference in such experiences is that Black and Brown children are more likely to experience the “pedagogy of poverty” (Haberman, 1991, p. 292), while more privileged children receive the more rigorous and engaging pedagogy. Ovando & McLaren (2000) and Ladson-Billings (1995a) and other critical theorists call for a more critical pedagogy. This critical pedagogy would be a transformative approach to instruction that values students’ input, and in which knowledge is coconstructed, the learning environment is shared, and instruction is conducted in larger context of society (Haberman, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 1995a; McLaren, 2000). Scholars of CRT seek to expose pedagogy that is racialized and does damage to Black and Brown children. Critical race theorists in education challenge teachers to consider the social context of their work and to resist oppressive structures that harm their most vulnerable students (Gay, 2010; Haberman, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 1995a).

**Critical Race Theory and Assessment**

From a critical race theorist perspective, the tests that Black and Brown Children take serve typically only to legitimize the racist idea that they are intellectually deficient. When one adds together the aforementioned, impoverished curriculum along with the oppressive pedagogy and teachers prepared in an impoverished manner—all in context of limited resources—of course Black and Brown students will underperform on assessment tests (i.e., standardized tests) that are certainly not objective and do not accurately measure students’ knowledge. Standardized tests, from their inception until now, have long been used to not properly assess, but to legitimize racist notions that Black, Brown, and Indigenous children are intellectually inferior (Aleinikoff, 1991; Gould, 1996). The current emphasis on accountability has cemented these deplorable standardized tests as necessary components of student assessment.
The George W. Bush Administration further legitimized that standardized testing would help to “leave no child behind” behind; however, this claim along with the high-stakes accountability policy places pressure on even well-meaning teachers to engage in oppressive teach-to-the-test pedagogical practices to somehow increase the probability that Black and Brown students would score well, compared to their White peers. From a critical race theorist perspective, the current testing strategy continues to reproduce inequity and to validate the privilege at the expense of the underserved (Bourdieu, 1997). Standardized testing from a critical race theorist perspective must be continually exposed and even resisted. Crenshaw (2002) pointed out that the negative stereotypes of Black and Brown people serve hegemony by furthering the myth about racial inferiority of people of color, while they create an illusion of White superiority that is intersectional in nature, for it also cuts across ethnic and gender differences. In essence, the application of CRT can serve as a catalyst for mitigating the troubling impact of testing on children. A CRT approach could lead teachers to resist teaching to the test, and rather to engage their students in critical pedagogy. The challenge is that teachers are so often trained in the context of hegemonic, Eurocentric contexts that they are not preconditioned to practice critical pedagogy; therefore, professional development models will serve teachers well when those models are constructed through a CRT, antiracist framework.

**Conclusion**

In this review of literature, the researcher explored the modern the roots of antiracist approaches to educating Black and Brown children. African American people have persisted in their resistance of White supremacy narratives through education and scholarship. The fields of ethnic studies, multiculturalism, culturally responsive pedagogy, and antiracism are all frameworks that are led by scholars from marginalized backgrounds who have dedicated their
research to mitigating the impact of White supremacy. Therefore, this researcher contends that professional development models today could more explicitly position these frameworks as a response to the long history of racism in schools.

Additionally, in exploring these issues post-NCLB Act (2001), the most prevalent professional development models have been revealed to have troubling themes, including (a) a reliance on stereotypical narratives about students of color, (b) a tendency to see Whiteness as a standard and Blackness as something from which to save students, or (c) an even more troubling trend of expecting students to overcome systemic racism through grit or resilience. These well-meaning models could actually reinscribe racist ideology and practices. In essence, this review of literature builds a compelling case for my contention that teachers who serve historically marginalized students, with racialized identities, need professional development that will increase their efficacy in adopting more antiracist practices. Thus, this researcher’s review of literature makes this research more compelling.

- How does teachers’ understanding of antiracist teaching change when they engage in the Teaching for Equity and Justice Professional Development Model?
Chapter 3
Methodology

Case Study Methodology

This study was conducted as a case study of a group of teachers from five schools that serve mostly Black and Brown children in an impoverished community in Memphis, Tennessee. In qualitative research, case studies can take on several distinct forms and natures. They can be exploratory, explanatory, or descriptive in nature (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 1994). Relative to the research question, this case study is descriptive in nature to capture whether the experiences of the teachers move them to a greater understanding of antiracism in education. In this study, the researcher used archival data to analyze and describe how teachers in the study experienced the Teaching for Equity and Justice (TEJ) Professional Development Model, which was created to expose teachers to the roots of racist ideology and its impact on teachers’ mindsets, and eventually on their pedagogical practices. The archival data, gathered from teacher responses on longer surveys and shorter exit tickets, was coded to search for themes related to known antiracist practices. By analyzing the data thematically and looking for patterns, the case study was the most effective methodology for doing the analysis to explore the research question:

- How does teachers’ understanding of antiracist teaching change when they engage in the Teaching for Equity and Justice Professional Development Model?

In this case study, the researcher examined and described how the TEJ Professional Development Model affects teachers understanding and practices as they are exposed to the historical understanding of systemic racism and notions of White supremacy on schooling, which is part of the TEJ Professional Development Model. This model could prove to affect teachers in a way that shifts their mindsets and practices toward being more antiracist. If so, the study would
have surfaced a critical conclusion: if racist foundations are addressed in professional development, that action could mitigate the impact of racism on secondary teachers’ mindsets and practices. However, the opposite might also be true, that is, students of color will continue to suffer inequities if racist foundations in schools are not addressed in professional development. Therefore, in the study, the researcher analyzed the impact of the educator’s experiences with the TEJ Professional Development Model from an interpretivist approach, while constructing meaning.

Application of Case Study

Yin (1984, as cited in Ebneyamini & Moghadam, 2018) defined case study research method as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are clearly evident; and which multiple sources of evidence are used” (p. 2). Yin further contended that the true essence of a case study is that it serves to examine a set of decisions:

- Why were these decisions made?
- How were the decisions implemented?
- What was the resulting impact?

Therefore, in this case study, the researcher examined the impact of the TEJ Professional Development Model either implicitly or explicitly on teachers who teach all Black and Brown children in an impoverished community, thus, investigating the experience in real life context as Yin suggested. The impact of the professional development on teachers is thematically explored through Gorski and Swalwell’s (2015) Five Equity Literacy Principles developed, looking for evidence in the findings related to the research question. These equity literacy principles are grounded in CRT, the chosen theoretical framework, to determine the impact of the TEJ
Professional Development Model on these particular teachers. This research is consistent with case study research in that case studies are focused on understanding the dynamics present within a single setting, and then comparing or making inferences to similar settings (Eisenhardt, 1989).

Case Studies can be used to provide description, to test theory, and to also generate theory (Eisenhardt, 1989, Baden & Major, 2013). In this case study methods were used to provide a detailed description of how antiracist mindsets and practices emerged in the educator experience with TEJ Professional Development Model.

Case studies methods have some remarkable advantages that are pertinent where useful in this study. Case study method is flexible, allows for deep investigation, is thorough, responsive, and has wide appeal (Baden & Major, 2013). The flexibility of case study made it conducive for a critical race theorist theoretical framework applied from a constructivist perspective. Analysis of the data through a CRT lens helps to make meaning of the way in which the professional development helps teachers better understand antiracism in education. Operating from a constructivists approach allowed for an analysis of the data from the researcher’s professional experience and knowledge. Using Gorski and Swalwell’s (2015) Five Equity Literacy Principles as a thematic and analytical tool provided a field-tested framework (one grounded in CRT) to ensure that the findings were actually grounded in antiracist practices.

Case studies also allow for deep focus on a limited number of subjects. Eisenhardt (1989) However, what is unique about this study is that only five schools are in the study, but the vast amount of data consistent of 1,269 unique responses over a 4-year period. Case studies are usually presented in some type of narrative format; therefore, they are highly accessible. As Merriam (1988) suggested, case study is also heuristic, meaning that it illuminates the reader’s
understanding of the subject. One stated goal of in this study was precisely to illuminate an understanding of the impact of the antiracists’ professional development.

**Critique of Case Study**

It is appropriate to address some critique of case study and how the critiques were mitigated in the study. One popular critique of case study approach is studying a small number of cases limits a researcher’s ability to establish reliability or to generalize the findings (Stake, 1995; Yin, 1984). The depth of the analysis in the end would justify the limited number of schools in the data. Recalling that the chief aim of case study research was to understand thoroughly the complexity of a particular phenomenon (Merriam, 2009; Simons, 2009; Stake, 2006), then having a small number of subjects yet a very large number of responses makes sense.

Another popular critique of case study is the intense involvement of the researcher in analysis. This critique is centered on the constructivists approach to making meaning in that constructivists largely lean on the experiences of individuals in the context of the study making it subjective. As a constructivist–interpretivist, the researcher’s identity could play a role in the interpretation of the data and add value, particularity if the researcher, as in this study, mirrors the identity of the students being served. The researcher’s personal connection added a level of credibility to the analysis. In addition, case studies in their nature do rely on and allow for some researcher intuition to make meaning of the findings. This was part of the appeal of case study for this study.

Case studies are also critiqued as only effective as an exploratory tool or for establishing a hypothesis (Simon, 2009). The problem in this statement is the use of the word “only.” A case study is useful as an exploratory tool and for establishing a hypothesis, but it has other important uses that are pertinent to this study. Addressing the notion that a case study is unscientific, the
reader should note that a poorly designed case study, like any qualitative design, has less
scientific reliability. However, the proponents of case studies contend that there is no better way
to gain an in depth understanding of a particular phenomenon than in a well-designed case study
(Eisenhardt, 1989; Stake, 1985; Yin, 1984). Also, the type of deep analysis and comparisons that
can be done makes case study highly scientific when done with fidelity.

Finally, the critique that case study is only useful to explore or establish a hypothesis
denotes a limited understanding of case study or a prejudice against it. Yin (1994), one of the key
proponents of case studies, makes it clear that a case study can also be explanatory and
descriptive. Ladson-Billings (1994) provided one of many great examples of how case studies
can be deeply descriptive and explanatory. Ladson-Billings used a small group of culturally
responsive teachers not merely to explore, but also to describe and explain what was happening
with these amazing teachers. Ladson-Billings brought the author’s own personal experiences and
insights to the analysis making it even richer. This is the strength of case study: thorough
descriptions, deep explanations of a particular phenomenon, and experiential informed analysis
that makes the research real and accessible. One key to a powerful and effective case study
approach lies in the data collection and analysis which is described later in this chapter.

Application of Critical Race Theory as Theoretical Framework

According to Baden and Major (2013), critical race theorists hold that research should
involve an interpretation of existing power structures and seek to transform the lives of those
who are oppressed by these structures. Critical race theory served as a useful framework for this
study in that one of chief aims of the study was to explicitly validate the need for educators to
become more antiracist professional development, combatting oppressive pedagogy and
transforming the experiences that Black and Brown children are having in school.
Critical race theory as a theoretical framework is useful for the study to make connections to the point that race has a constant presence in America and has a continued impact on structures such as schools so that those who are most negatively affected are Black and Brown children. When Bell (1992) described the permanence of racism, the author was not merely aiming to enlighten, but to dismantle oppression. Bell (1992) said the following: “The continued viability of racism demonstrates that racism is not simply an excrescence on a fundamentally healthy liberal democratic body but is part of what shapes and energizes the body” (p. 10). It is that kind of analysis that makes CRT an ideal philosophical paradigm for which this study was based. The racism that Bell described is prevalent and pervasive in schools. This racism shapes teacher attitudes and practices, and thus, the academic experiences of Black and Brown children.

Critical race theorists assert that racism is an integral, permanent, and indestructible component of this society (Banks 1993; Bell 1992). Bell (1992) challenged educators to face this reality in all spheres, including education. In light of this permanence of race, this truly examines how the TEJ Professional Development Model affects teachers’ mindsets and practices to find shifts to more equity and antiracist-focused dispositions and principles. Relevant to CRT in the context of education, the study looks at how teachers approach curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment (i.e., What kind of experiences are they shaping for Black and Brown children in the face of the indestructible presence or racism?) If one were to find that the TEJ Professional Development Model has an impact educator’s mindsets and approaches to teaching Black and Brown children from a CRT perspective, this model could be a contribution to dismantling oppressive and racist practices in schools. Critical race theory is a useful framework for examining how to challenge narratives of White supremacy in schools.
Critical race theory is an appropriate framework to help illuminate race as the key factor that has been used to shape a narrative of Black inferiority and White supremacy in American society. Education is a sphere in which we must face the persistence of racism to mitigate its impact on Black and Brown children. By examining the TEJ Professional Development Model through Gorski and Swalwell’s (2015) Five Equity Literacy Principles, which are grounded in CRT, the researcher sought to make meaning of the impact of the professional development on mitigating racist ideas and pedagogical practices. Critical race theory is a framework or set of basic perspectives, methods, and pedagogy with which educators seek to identify, analyze, and transform structural and cultural aspects in schools that maintain the subordination and marginalization of people of color (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solórzano, 1997). When uninterrupted educator mindsets and pedagogical practices will continue to lead to structural and systemic subordination of Black and Brown children. Therefore, in this study, in the hope of finding patterns of reduced racist view which would lead to more equitable pedagogy, the researcher examined how the TEJ Professional Development Model affects teachers.

A relevant belief of critical race theorists is that the system of White-over-Color ascendancy serves important purposes, both physical and material (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001), for those who benefit from it. “Because racism advances the interests of both White elitists [materially] and working-class people (physically), large segments of society have little incentive to eradicate it” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 7). This is critical to this study in that schools have historically contributed to serving the interest of the wealthy majority at the expense of the minority and impoverished. Racism has been normalized in schools through the curriculum, pedagogy, and deficit mindsets of some teachers. This study is conducted in a way to apply CRT to an analysis that hoped to find evidence that this particular professional development model
could lead to shifts in schools that counter this normalization of racism. The analysis of the impact of the TEJ Professional Development Model on teachers in the study would perhaps find evidence that the model confronts what Lipsitz (2006) described as the possessive investment of Whiteness, a key concern of critical race theorists.

Critical race theory holds that race and races are products of social thought and relations (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Western-dominant scholars have created a narrative that race is biological in the face of evidence that it is merely a social construct. Critical race theorists contend that society frequently chooses to ignore scientific facts, create races, and endows them with pseudo-permanent characteristics (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Tate, 1997). This is how racism works. To support racist policy, racism says that people of color have certain physical, psychological, and even personality traits that make them a member of a permanently inferior race (Kendi, as cited in Koenig, 2020). Critical race theorists understand the impact of these claims, especially as justification for institutional racism. In schools that serve mostly Black and Brown children, this constructed myth of racial inferiority has led to oppressive teacher practices. This analysis of the TEJ Professional Development Model has brought a CRT lens to examine to what extent the model challenges myths about the supremacy of Whites and the inferiority of Black and Brown children, and how the training might lead to more equity and antiracist focused approaches.

Critical race theory challenges claims that policies and practices shaped around the dominant ideology are neutral, colorblind, and based on true merit (Sleeter, 2016; Yosso, 2005). Teachers of Black and Brown children are both educated and socialized to apply color blind approaches along with the myth of meritocracy to teaching. This study looks to make meaning of the impact that the TEJ Professional Development Model has on teachers’ views in a hope that
they challenge colorblind and meritocracy approaches to their work. Black and Brown students in the district will greatly benefit if the professional development model leads teachers to a shift from colorblind and meritocracy approaches so that this change could lead to teachers taking a critical look at curriculum, pedagogy, and even their own mindsets as potential negative impacts on students’ educational experiences, rather than blaming Black and Brown children for a lack of interest and effort in learning.

**Critique of Critical Race Theory**

Critical race theory can play a key role in understanding the patterns or racial subordination in many areas of public policy, but it does have its opponents. One popular push back against CRT is the claim that thinking about racism, as a fundamental part of American societal structure, is unproductive when one simply needs to move on from it. Therefore, this researcher would argue that educators are not living and working in a postracial society; therefore, colorblind approaches will only lead to further marginalization and in schools that mean the continued miseducation and mistreatment of Black and Brown children.

Another popular critique of CRT is that blaming racism has the potential to remove personal responsibility and efforts from those who are failing in schools. Of course, this is the merit-based, bootstraps argument. Ironically, many of Black and Brown students do not have boots! Furthermore, the review of literature shows that the historical and lasting impact of racism in a courageous exploration of the impact or racism on teacher mindsets and could help well-intended teachers today to mitigate the impact of racism on children.

Critical race theory is an appropriate framework to help illuminate race as the key factor that has been used to shape a narrative of Black inferiority and White supremacy in American society at large, and more particularly in schools. Racism is an integral, permanent, and
indestructible component of this society (Banks, 1993; Bell, 1992). Bell (1993) challenged educators to face this reality in all spheres. Education is a sphere in which educators must face the persistent racism to mitigate its impact on Black and Brown children.

**Methods: Thematic Analysis through an Interpretivist Lens**

Constructivists–interpretivists contend that knowledge is constructed by individuals who make meaning of it from their own experiences (Baden & Major, 2013). Researchers who come from this philosophical perspective, like Stake (1995, 1996) for example, have a strong desire to discover meaning and to understand particular experiences in their context. Therefore, in this study, the researcher analyzed how a group of teachers made meaning of the TEJ Professional Development Model experience, using a constructivist–interpretivist approach to the data analysis. The TEJ Professional Development Model training is designed for teachers who teach primarily historically marginalized students of color, in this case study overwhelmingly Black and Brown children. Therefore, the researcher asked, “What experiences did the teachers have that could be interpreted to be shifts in mindsets and/or practices that are more antiracists?” The examination of the data was conducted through a constructivist–interpretivist perspective.

As a constructivist–interpretivist, Stake (1995) acknowledged that the researcher not only constructs knowledge, but also plays an important interpretive role. In this interpretative role, the researcher constructs knowledge from their analysis of the data with some intuition guiding the analysis. Interpretative views allow that there are multiple realities, and that those realities are subjective to the subjects’ own knowledge and meaning (Baden & Major, 2013). Relative to this study, applying an interpretative lens to the data allowed for two important influences on the analysis: (a) the personal experiences of the researcher as a Black man who was educated in a
similar context from which the data was gathered and (b) the professional experience of the researcher as a facilitator of antiracist professional development.

**Contextualizing the Study**

As noted, the study was centered on looking at the impact of a particular professional development model and assessing how this model affects the mindsets and practices of teachers who primarily teach Black and Brown children. The TEJ Professional Development Model was designed to counter to expose teachers to some of the historical underpinnings of racial stereotypes of Black and Brown children in hope that this exposure would affect their practice. However, the original researchers did not analyze the data through a CRT lens, as did this researcher in this study. This study, contextualized in CRT, has resulted in teachers challenging epistemological injustice that only serves the needs of institutions at the expense of Black and Brown children. The data analysis shows that the TEJ Professional Development Model leads to teachers becoming more critically conscious of their own practices as opposed to focusing on perceived deficits in the students, which is a significant conclusion in that it could lead to a predominantly White female teaching core practicing more self-critique rather than situating education failure in the students. Historically informed professional development could facilitate this shift from blaming children for adult failures to challenging Western middle-class ways of teaching and learning. Therefore, the researcher asks:

- What does it mean to challenge Western middle-class constructs in professional development?

Professional development, even development that claims to have an equity lens, often takes a colorblind approach (i.e., what is good for one group of students is good for all students), regardless of race. I have heard the statement from many teachers that good teaching works for
all students and that all students are the same. It is critical for teachers to recognize that colorblind approaches to professional development are not in the service of historically marginalized scholars. I contend that grounding professional development in the historical context of race and racism would lead to an encounter that challenges colorblind approaches. Professional development would serve scholars when White middle-class dominant epistemologies are exposed for supporting marginalizing views of Black and Brown intelligence. Antiracist professional development could expose the sources of epistemologies that have served to marginalize students of color. Therefore, in the tradition of critical theorists Savin-Baden and Major (2013), the researcher’s aim in this study was to examine a professional development model which was designed to expose and challenge White dominant narrative epistemologies regarding the academic abilities of students of color and to move teachers to antiracist ideology. Thus, the researcher theorizes that, as the TEJ Professional Development Model was designed to dismantle the history of race and the roots of White supremacy, it will serve to dismantle oppressive educational policies and practices. Challenging White dominant narrative epistemology in professional development means being intentional regarding disrupting long-held myths and stereotypes. Professional development that is in the interest of marginalized students gets to the root manifestations of epistemological injustices. Exposing these rather troubling epistemic injustices is crucial for understanding the epistemological justifications for claims that scholars of color are intellectually inferior to their White peers. Inherent in this historical contextualization of antiracist professional development is a deeper understanding of how race and racism operates.
Teaching for Equity and Justice: Professional Development Model

This study was centered on examining the impact of the TEJ Professional Development Model that was designed the better to prepare teachers to work with Black and Brown children in an economically impoverished community in Memphis, Tennessee. These teachers have a tremendous responsibility: teaching content, cultivating their students’ social–emotional skills, and preparing them to be informed and active global citizens, to help create a more equitable and inclusive society. They do this in the context of high stakes testing and the challenge of closing the academic achievement gap, which is proven to be racist construct in itself. These courageous teachers in the study and some across the country are facing the fact that the schools themselves—both the practice of schooling and the outcomes students are achieving—are by design inequitable across lines of race and class. The TEJ Professional Development Model is a direct confrontation with the historical impact of race on teaching and its lasting impact today on educator mindsets and practices. The TEJ Professional Development Model was designed to be implemented in reflective, safe, yet courageous and honest professional learning spaces. The intent was for teachers to safely and bravely acknowledge the impact of racism on schooling without facing derision. Therefore, the approach begins with an examination of self, individual bias, and the impact of stereotypes. This type of self-reflection prepares teachers for a brave and honest exploration of the historical roots of school inequities.

After creating brave and identity-safe space, teachers examined past racist decisions concerning who would be educated and for what purpose in the history of American education. They further examined how those decisions have legacies and are tied to current systems of inequity. These systems, when uninterrupted, continue to this day to privilege some students and
communities over others. In exploring these historical roots, the researcher hoped to lead educators to shifts in mindsets and teacher practices.

The TEJ Professional Development Model was designed to take teachers on a challenging, empowering, and intellectual journey. The researcher hoped that the shifts in policies and practices would ultimately lead to more equitable student interactions and outcomes. The researcher also hoped that teachers would move to more culturally mediated and equitable practices through which all students could find their voice, become critical thinkers, and be more engaged in their education. However, the designers of model and the evaluation team had not explored the impact of the TEJ Professional Development Model through the lens of CRT and proven antiracist and equity literacy principles. Therefore, for context, the researcher presents a summary of the four modules of the TEJ Professional Development Model experience.

**Module 1: Establishing Brave Space for Centering Equity**

Module 1 provided an opportunity for teachers to consider their own identities and experiences in the context of educating from an equity lens. It is critical to promote social and emotionally safe learning environments where participants can, as Amaechi (2012) described, “take chances and make mistakes without fear of derision and ridicule” (p. __). These spaces can be called brave spaces. In this module, the designers were intentional about cocreating this brave space. The intent was to resist a tone of name calling, labeling, blaming, shaming, and othering. Instead, the designers sought to promote a tone of self-reflection, humility, calling in, inspiring change, grace, and collaboration. The claim is that proper tone setting creates space for one to push through one’s own discomfort and engage in difficult authentic conversations. Module 1 also explores teacher identity and begins to examine how and why teachers might or might not connect best with their students. What is it about the educator and their own background and
experiences that is both helpful and a potential hindrance to educating all students equitably? As teachers explored these identity questions, they were grounded in an understanding of what, exactly, educational equity is and what it means to commit to it.

**Module 2: Eugenics, Race, and Educational Inequity**

Module 2 was designed to set the historical context for issues of educational inequity. This module is not intended to be a comprehensive exploration of the wide impact of eugenics on society, but a foundational session that gives teachers a more cognitive understanding of the construct of race, the roots of IQ testing, the racialization of academic identity and the resulting racist paradigm that came to be known as an achievement gap. The module is ultimately designed to build a foundational understanding of the dominant narrative or Whiteness as a social construct that shaped the White supremacy views on intelligence and schooling. The module starts with the 1600s construct of race in America and Thomas Jefferson’s espousal of a White supremacy narrative by advancing the idea of Black racial inferiority in his famous *Notes on the State of Virginia* (Jefferson, 1785). Jefferson (1785) and his contemporaries promoted ideas of freedom and democracy, while justifying the evil institution of slavery. This paradox would serve to create a society that values some people over others according to their race and would be later supported by the pseudoscientist claims of the racist American Eugenics Movement. This session was designed as a critical precursor to establishing mindsets for teaching for equity and justice which is Module 3. It is important to note that these modules were designed for the limited time that schools often give for professional development; therefore, Module 2 is not a comprehensive historical journey, but rather a thematic journey that surfaces some of the key moments that contributed to the narrative of White supremacy and it impact on schooling.
Module 3: Developing Mindsets for Equity-Based Work

Module 3 was designed to cultivate mindsets and dispositions for working with students who have been most impacted by inequity in and out of schools. Teachers were invited to consider what it means to develop mindsets that are in the interest of equity and justice in schools. The theory is that if one is to engage in more equitable practices, one must be intentional about challenging the legacies of a long-held narrative that supports the notion that some children are innately intellectually inferior. In this module, teachers explored why they teach and they made connections to their “why” and educational equity. They also explored how the historical narratives of racial inferiority have led to some troubling and dangerous single stories about Black and Brown children’s academic identities. The participants were reminded that the conversation was not to be about individual racism, but about systemic oppression and long held myths. The module is about how to develop mindsets that expose blind spots and challenge myths. Module 3 was also used to explore the problem with solely focusing on the “achievement gap,” which effectively places the failure on the students, and does not place greater emphasis on the “equity gap” or what Ladson-Billings (2006) called the “education debt” (p. 3) that addresses historic and systemic issues. Teachers have a revealing encounter with implicit bias and how it contributes to racial injustice (e.g., the disparities in office referrals and suspension rates of Black children).

Module 4: Antiracist Practices

Module 4 was used to explore the key elements of cultural relevant education, which is not merely about teaching from the context of culture, but it is about combating systemic inequity through student-centered learning environments and practices. The designers submit that the essence of equity-based work is to counter White supremacy pedagogy. In culturally
mediated classrooms, students’ identity and voice come to the forefront as they become curators of their own cultures. Students make their connections to what is being taught rather than teachers making assumptions about where the students’ cultural connections will be. This module theorizes that an equity focused approach to culturally relevant education is not about reinforcing cultural stereotypes, but about creating content grounded learning journeys that allow students reflect, think critically, and self-discover.

The theory is that teachers who engage in this training series will become more intentional about implementing more equitable educational policies throughout the school and more equity-based and culturally mediated practices in the classroom. Teachers gain awareness of mindsets that they might take for granted and increase their awareness of the societal barriers that their students face. This awareness is believed to empower them to raise their expectations for their students, resist negative stereotypes associated with students’ communities, and place a greater emphasis on improving instruction, rather than on citing deficiencies in students when they are not learning.

The TEJ Professional Development Model modules were designed by staff at Facing History and We, a Boston-based international professional development organization (Stoskopf et al., 1999). However, the archival data has not been analyzed through a CRT lens, which is the theoretical framework of this researcher’s study.

Data Collection

The archival data in this study was collected by two professional evaluators who collected the data primarily to continue to improve their organization’s delivery of the TEJ Professional Development Model. Therefore, rather than collecting new data, the researcher sought access to the raw data, completing a data agreement with the organization (Appendix
Exhibit A). The raw data had no identifying markers of the presenters, but consent for analysis (Appendix Exhibit B). The data included surveys and exit tickets from classroom teachers across five schools in the same community who had received the TEJ Professional Development Model training. The data was shared in aggregated form with no mention of individual school names, teacher names, or demographics. There was no identifying information, including addresses. The teachers who participated in the professional development agreed that their data could be shared in aggregate form. In the five schools, on an average, 95% of students are African American, 3% are White, and 2% are Hispanic-Asian. Nearly 100% (98.4) of the students come from economically disadvantaged homes. These schools on average have a respectful 88% attendance rate, but a disturbing 49.6% discipline rate. The latest state reading scores reflect a 13.4% proficient or above achievement rate in reading, 35% below the Tennessee state Average. A thorough view of the demographics is shown in Chapter 4.

Table 1

Data Type, School, and Collection Period by School Number

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data group</th>
<th>Data type</th>
<th>Data collection period</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School 1</td>
<td>Exit Tickets</td>
<td>Nov 2018</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 2</td>
<td>Exit Tickets</td>
<td>Jan 2017</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 2</td>
<td>Exit Tickets</td>
<td>Feb 2017</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 2</td>
<td>Exit Tickets</td>
<td>Jul 2017</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 2</td>
<td>Exit Tickets</td>
<td>Jan 2018</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 2</td>
<td>Exit Tickets</td>
<td>Mar 2018</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 2</td>
<td>Exit Tickets</td>
<td>Apr 2018</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 2</td>
<td>Exit Tickets</td>
<td>Apr 2019</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools 1 and 3</td>
<td>Exit Tickets</td>
<td>Aug 2018</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools 1 and 3</td>
<td>Exit Tickets</td>
<td>Mar 2019</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Exit Tickets</td>
<td>Aug 2017</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools 1, 2, and 3</td>
<td>Exit Tickets</td>
<td>Aug 2019</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data group</td>
<td>Data type</td>
<td>Data collection period</td>
<td>Number of responses</td>
</tr>
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<td>Exit Tickets</td>
<td>Jan 2019</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Exit Tickets</td>
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<td>86</td>
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<td>Exit Tickets</td>
<td>Jul 2017</td>
<td>56</td>
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<td>Exit Tickets</td>
<td>Sep 2017</td>
<td>52</td>
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<td>Exit Tickets</td>
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<td>116</td>
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<td>Exit Tickets</td>
<td>Jan 2019</td>
<td>46</td>
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<td>Schools 4 and 5</td>
<td>Exit Tickets</td>
<td>Aug 2019</td>
<td>43</td>
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<tr>
<td>School 1</td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Fall 2018</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>School 2</td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Jul 2016</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
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<td>School 2</td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Spr 2017</td>
<td>49</td>
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<td>Jul 2017</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Survey</td>
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<td>Survey</td>
<td>Spr 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Schools 4 and 5</td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Jul 2017</td>
<td>37</td>
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</table>

Note. N = 1,269.

**Data Analysis: Thematic**

The researcher analyzed the data that already existed from field tests of the TEJ Professional Development Model. One key element of a constructivist-interpretivist approach is that the researcher both produces knowledge by capturing experiences and interprets it (Stake 1995, 2006). The data analysis was conducted to see what themes surfaced from this professional development model modules, while also bringing a professional lens to the analysis regarding the researcher’s 20 years of experience in delivering professional development. The data analysis
was conducted while keeping in mind Gorski and Swalwell’s (2000) Five Equity Literacy Principles to ensure that the analysis would be conducted through an antiracist framework so that antiracist themes could emerge. Gorski and Swalwell’s (2000) Five Equity Literacy Principles are also grounded in CRT, for they acknowledge the centrality and permanence of race, the disturbing possessive investment in Whiteness, the need to challenge dominant hegemonic narratives, and the need for a commitment to social justice—all tenets of CRT (Degaldo & Stefancic, 2001). In keeping with Critical Race Theory, Gorski and Swalwell (2015) suggest that the practice of eliminating racism must be done in the context of deeply understanding the dynamics of racism in schools and the larger society in which schools operate. The following are Gorski and Swalwell’s (2000) Five Equity Literacy Principles:

- The Direct Confrontation Principle involves having a direct confrontation with racism.

- The Redistributive Principle is concerned with redistributing access and opportunity at every level of the school to be more equitable (Gorski & Swalwell, 2015).

- The Prioritization Principle explores to what extent students of color’s interests are being prioritized (Gorski & Swalwell, 2015).

- The Fixing Injustice, Not Kids Principle calls out the oppressive practice of associating Black and Brown children school failures with the cultures and identities rather than the failure of the institution.

- The Equity Ideology Principle calls for a commitment to equity.

The data was analyzed from a latent content approach which is surfacing the underlying meaning and relies heavily on interpretation (Stake, 1995, 2006). From a latent content perspective, some underlying meaning emerged that answers the research question. The
researcher discusses this meaning in the findings. Latent content analysis created the kinds of thorough thematic analysis that led to some reliable interpretations. The analysis was conducted from a constructivist–interpretivist philosophical background; therefore, it called for the flexibility to make meaning of the data according to not only what the teachers said, but also the researchers own professional experiences with antiracist professional development.

Thematic analysis is a process that enabled the researcher to identify cross-references between the evolving themes collected from different data sources. The thematic analysis was flexible enough to find both inductive and deductive patterns in the data (Frith & Gleason, 2004; Hayes, 2000; Niece, 2010). This flexibility made thematic analysis appropriate for analyzing the data in this study because the analysis could be used to extract information from the data to determine the relationships between the various educator responses (inductive), while also making comparisons across the data sources (deductive). In essence, thematic analysis was very useful for this study, for it facilitated the uncovering and discovering of meaning through interpreting the data. In using thematic analysis, one can believe the study to be reliable in its findings (Marks & Yardley, 2004). Thematic analysis is not simplistic in that it moves beyond merely identifying common words or phrases to identifying implicit and explicit big ideas across the sources (Frith & Gleason, 2004; Hayes, 2000; Niece, 2010).

Thematic analysis was very effective for finding patterns across the data sources, so that the researcher could categorize the themes into key findings that could be related to the research question. In conducting an analysis, patterns emerged that were effective to draw certain conclusions, a key to thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic data analysis involves a great deal of reliance on intuition and sensory cues (Baden & Major, 2013). This is what is relatively unique about thematic analysis; it acknowledges what some research does not
acknowledge: that there is an intuitive nature to data analysis. This intuitive nature is critical to this study in that allowed the researcher to draw on (a) intuition, (b) the researcher’s experiences as a Black male who was educated in an impoverished school district with majority White teachers, and (c) the researcher’s professional experience of having provided antiracist professional development for many White teachers. This should not be mistaken as unreliable research. To protect reliability, the proponents of thematic analysis suggest a constant rereading of the data for greater understanding of emerging themes and for more nuanced reflections.

Constant analysis of the data was conducted across surveys and exit tickets, searching for relevant themes that might be related to antiracist understandings and practices. The continuous analysis of the data revealed what teachers experienced in the TEJ Professional Development Model either explicitly or implicitly.

Using thematic analysis, allowed the researcher to make comparisons of the differences and similarities in how each educator made meaning of the TEJ Professional Development Model and its impact on their mindsets and/or practices. Theoretical thematic analysis involves addressing a specific research question and focusing the data analysis on that question (Baden & Major, 2013). In the context of this study, this would mean that, rather than coding every piece of the text, the researcher coded the segments of the data that pointed to issues that were related to themes in the data and to the research question. Thus, the researcher searched for themes that signaled that teachers were gaining a deeper understanding of antiracism and that their practices could also be shifting toward critical pedagogy. As the researcher made meaning of the available data, while illustrating only the themes that fit into an antiracist framework.

A theme, in its simplest form, is merely a pattern that one can see in data about which one can say something interesting. What makes themes interesting to work with, in the context of
qualitative research, is that there is no clear set of rules about what makes a theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For this researcher, this provided the necessary flexibility to find emerging themes that were related to the research question. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), the importance is the significance of the theme. Thus, as the researcher analyzed the data, a number of unrelated themes surfaced across teachers’ responses; however, they did not show signs of an increased understanding of antiracism ideology or practices.

Using Gorski and Swalwell’s (2015) Five Equity Literacy Principles as a backdrop helped the researcher to keep the data analysis clear and focused on the research question without becoming too broad. This approach increased the reliability of the analysis. It also allowed the researcher to make deeper meaning of the themes and how they relate to each other. This step was critical to the analysis in that many of the themes might have different meanings to different teachers.

**Representing the Findings**

Ultimately this research was about the impact on teachers. Writing the final report was a critical stage for organizing and making meaning of the data. The findings contextualized in real life the experiences of the educator. Descriptive prose was used to collect the richness and the interrelation of the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It was critical here to create a thorough descriptive narrative that would clearly convey a thorough understanding of how the themes, showing various nuanced connections to the research question. The final report was written clearly and concisely, and was organized in a logical manner for the reader to see the relationship between the themes and what various educators experienced through the professional development experience. The final report showed enough evidence that the final themes were relevant to the research question and the theory was driving the study. All the conclusions that
were drawn or the analyses that were made were clearly connected to the collected data and analyzed in the context of the research question.

**Reflexivity**

The researcher’s professional relationship to the model required some self-reflection throughout the process. In qualitative research this self-reflection is referred to as reflexivity. Reflexivity is a process of reflection throughout the study during which the researcher is reflective about how the researcher’s own social background and assumptions affect the research process (Hesse-Biber, 2007; Lather, 2004; van der Riet, 2012). Although the study did not engage human subjects, the researcher’s personal and professionally connection to the context of the study affected how meaning was made of the data. To that end, the research’s voice is in the analysis in a particular way that shows this connection. Rather than keeping a separate reflectivity journal, the researcher’s voice is synthesized in the writings of the findings. According to Ackerly and True (2010), by a reflexivity process, the researcher keeps keenly aware of their contributions to the construction of meaning in a study. This researcher deemed it important to reflect on the researcher’s role as an emerging Black male scholar doing this research. This reflection was evident in the narrative. Educators need more scholars of color to speak to these experiences in academia. Yet, this remains difficult, for the academy is affected by the hierarchical nature of Western culture, causing knowledge to be produced and lived in the context of White privilege a dominant, Eurocentric, colonial knowledge that effectively subjugates the voices of scholars who do not fit that dominant narrative of Whiteness. If epistemology is to avoid racism, sexism, and exploitation of marginalized groups, more scholars from those groups must emerge.
Therefore, as an African American male researcher, this researcher feels especially committed to exposing the way that epistemic injustice occurred in the construction of Western colonial notions of Black intelligence. This researcher is also deeply committed to ensuring that this predominantly White teaching force sees its professional development experience through the lens of its racially marginalized students’ experiences and not through its own lens. As an African American male scholar with shared experiences of impoverished kids of color, this researcher felt a great sense of efficacy in this study. However, it is this passionate connection to the study that requires a reflexivity process so that the researcher could mitigate any researcher bias, while constructing knowledge. Reay (2007, as cited in Palaganas et al., 2017, p. 611) clearly stated that reflexivity is about giving a full and honest account of the research as possible while acknowledging the position of the researcher to the research.

**Conclusion**

An analysis of the impact of the TEJ Professional Development Model through a CRT lens organized thematically through antiracist themes led to some interesting and useful findings that are presented the Chapter 4 discussion. These findings could lead to teachers’ greater understanding of how race operates so that they can be more intentional about disrupting its impact on the learning environment. Tatum (as cited in Delpit & Kilgour Dowdy, 2000) had a metaphor that this researcher has found to be useful in understanding how race operates. This is an example of the kind of examination of race that effective antiracist professional development should take. Tatum (as cited in Delpit & Kilgour Dowdy, 2000) talked about residents of Los Angeles being smog breathers:

They do not want to breathe smog, they are not even aware that they are breathing smog, but, living in L.A., they are smog breathers. Likewise, those of us who live in the United States are ‘racism breathers.’ We do not intend to breathe in racism, we are not even aware that we are breathing in racism. It just happens, and it influences everything we do.
It does not even matter what color we are; beliefs about Black inferiority are so deep-set in our society that they burrow into our subconscious without our consent. (p. 164)

This is how race operates in education. The smog that Tatum (as cited in Delpit & Kilgour Dowdy, 2000) described has perhaps done its greatest damage in the way in which intelligence and academic capabilities are viewed. For example, inherent in the smog of racism is the notion that Black and Brown children are intellectually inferior. This has its most troubling manifestation in the academic achievement gap, which sees children of color lagging significantly behind their White peers in the most critical measures of success including test scores, graduation rates, and college attendance. If teachers, through their professional development, were to gain a greater understanding of how racism works, perhaps they would become more critically conscious and less likely to engage in oppressive pedagogy.

Perceptions, knowing, truth, and imaginations from Western colonial thought are collective justifications for the continued deficit thinking about what students of color are capable of doing and, therefore, how they should be taught. White dominant imaginations (phantasm) play a huge role in the way notions of intelligence are shaped (Audi, 2011). The way teachers see themselves in relation to marginalized students and the resulting experience shape the way they teach. Traditional epistemological thought needs to give way to alternative models that are not central to White men as knowers and, therefore, as knowing (Audi, 2011). Western teachers have long held perceptions about Black intellectual inferiority that is based less on seeing and knowing but more on phantasms that have led to believe that the story has become not a truth, but the Truth (Audi, 2011).

This notion that Blacks are intellectually inferior has great consequences. It produces the kind of testimonial injustice about which Fricker (2007, as reviewed in Brady, 2009) spoke. Thus, Fricker (2007, as reviewed in Brady, 2009) called it a “deflated amount of credibility”
(p. 22) given to the architects of Black intellectual inferiority. The implications are grave for kids of color. Therefore, one must ask the following questions:

- What kind of school environments should racially inferior kids learn in?
- Does it matter?
- What about pedagogical strategies for intellectually inferior students?

Surely, they cannot be trusted as critical thinkers and coconstructors of knowledge. These are the oppressive conclusions that one draws when operating from a deficit model. Effective antiracist professional development must be very intentional about addressing and correcting these epistemic injustices by tracing their historical roots. The findings in this study support that claim.
Chapter 4

Findings

Introduction

This chapter contains the findings of a case study methodology conducted to answer the research question:

- How does teachers’ understanding of antiracist teaching change when they engage in the Teaching for Equity and Justice (TEJ) Professional Development Model?

The teachers in the study teach exclusively Black and Brown students from a community that suffers from neglect and economic injustice. Therefore, the purpose of the study was to find evidence that these teachers’ understanding of antiracist teaching changed as they engaged in this TEJ Professional Development Model. The hope was to find ways in which teachers could become more antiracist in their thinking and their practices, thereby, creating a better learning experience for the Black and Brown children whom they serve.

The TEJ Professional Development Model is a four-module series that was delivered on site to teachers in five schools. The modules are described in detail in Chapter 3, but essentially, they take teachers through an interactive experience during which they explore the historical construct of race as an idea, particularly its impact on education in the United States. The researcher was particularly interested in the way that teachers, after an encounter with this history and its legacies, would change regarding their understanding of antiracist teaching approaches and practices. Would they prove to understand and embrace better approaches to teaching that would be more antiracist?

The findings were produced by doing a thematic analysis of archival data sources that captured teachers’ responses to the training in exit tickets, surveys, and open-ended questions
over a 4-year period. If it were to be found that the TEJ Professional Development Model had moved teachers from where they were in their thinking and practices to a more antiracist approach to serving Black and Brown children, the TEJ Professional Development Model series could be considered a model worthy of being taken to scale beyond the five schools that comprised the case study.

Demographics of Surrounding Community

It is important to note that the description of the demographics of the neighborhoods or the schools is not included to reinforce negative stereotypes of Black and Brown children or their communities. The researcher is aware that these descriptions can often lack a clear depiction of the strengths and resources in communities. The communities in which these schools preside are historically rich with important landmarks and strong institutions such as community centers and faith-based establishments that have been pillars of the community for generations. Even though rather impoverished, the community consists of many single-family homes that represent first generation home ownership for many poor White and Black families. The community also has a number of small businesses ranging from convenience stores to services such as laundromats and dry cleaning. This community was once rather integrated, but White flight and upward mobility has left it largely Black with a critical number of Latinx families who have arrived mostly in the last 10 years. In the context of this study, the demographics magnify the need for teachers to know and practice antiracism. The schools’ demographics in the study reflect the neighborhood, especially the student population. The specific demographics of the teachers are not depicted here because the data use agreement called for excluding information that could potential identify any of the respondents. However, the researcher has prior knowledge of the schools and
can with certainty say that the school faculties have a slight Black majority with the other teachers being primarily White.

As noted, the historically rich neighborhoods served by these specific schools are largely impoverished Latinx and African American. They also have low rates of education. The median household income in these neighborhoods is $25,111, and 72% of children in these areas live in poverty. Seventy percent of the residents are high school graduates. Just 8% of the residents have graduated from a 4-year postsecondary educational institution. These neighborhoods are 76% African American, 19% White, 1% Asian, 8% Hispanic, and 4% identifying as races not listed. The neighborhood surrounding two of the schools is by far the most impoverished in this study. This neighborhood is by far the most transient of the three neighborhoods included in the study. Just 63% of the residents in this neighborhood live in the same residence as they did 1 year earlier.

**Demographics of School 1**

At the time of data collection, this school had 580 students with a student–teacher ratio of 22:1. It has a high proportion of impoverished students. Ninety-nine percent of the students are designated as economically disadvantaged. The school is also almost all African American in population. African American students make up more than 98% of the student body. Its academic performance also lags far behind state averages. The school also has a punitive disciplinary system, with a 66% discipline rate, as compared to 6% statewide rate.

**Demographics of School 2**

At the time of data collection, this school had 602 students with a student–teacher ratio of 25:1. It is included in the Achievement School District and must serve its local neighborhood students. The student body is 98% economically disadvantaged and 97% African American. Its
performance was at a 31% achievement rate. Its discipline rate of 57% was also much above the statewide average of 6%.

Demographics of School 3

At time of data collection, this school had 369 students with a student–teacher ratio of 18.9:1. The students are 98% economically disadvantaged and 96% African American. It performs at a 29% achievement rate. Its discipline rate of 50% is also quite high compared to the statewide average of 6%.

Demographics of School 4

The school serves 383 students with a student–teacher ratio of 13.4:1. This school’s students are also relatively impoverished, with 98% classified as economically disadvantaged. Its student body is 91% African American. The school has a 68% achievement rate, putting the school 3% behind the statewide high school average. The school has a higher discipline rate (27%) than the state average.

Demographics of School 5

At the time of data collection, the school served 480 students with a student–teacher ratio of 18:1. This school’s students are also relatively impoverished, with 81% classified as economically disadvantaged. Its student body is 99% African American. The school has a 58% achievement rate, putting the school 6% behind the statewide high school average. The school has a higher discipline rate (38%) than the state average. One should note that all school profile information was provided courtesy of the State of Tennessee from the Tennessee State Report data.
Table 2

Demographic Percentages From the National Center for Education Statistics (2018–2019)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>African American</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Two or more races</th>
<th>Economically disadvantaged</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School 1</td>
<td>98.30</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>72.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 2</td>
<td>96.30</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>64.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 3</td>
<td>93.60</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>81.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 4</td>
<td>76.90</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>21.00</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>67.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 5</td>
<td>80.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>18.60</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>86.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Description

This archival data was collected over 4 school years from the five schools described in the previous section. The data represents a total of 1,269 responses from educators who experienced the TEJ Professional Development Model over the 4 years of data collected. Of the 1,269 respondents, 959 of the respondents responded to exit tickets, which are small surveys administered after each part of the professional development experience. Of the 1,269 responses, 310 came from longer surveys that happen at the end of the four-module TEJ Professional Development Model series. The responses are a compilation of the data from each of the five schools maintaining the anonymity of each particular school. The teachers gave no identifying information. The responses were voluntarily submitted. The table below again shows the data collected by school with the data type, the period collected, and the accompanying responses.

Table 3

Data Type, School, and Collection Period by School Number

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data group</th>
<th>Data type</th>
<th>Data collection period</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School 1</td>
<td>Exit Tickets</td>
<td>Nov 2018</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 2</td>
<td>Exit Tickets</td>
<td>Jan 2017</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data group</td>
<td>Data type</td>
<td>Data collection period</td>
<td>Number of responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 2</td>
<td>Exit Tickets</td>
<td>Feb 2017</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 2</td>
<td>Exit Tickets</td>
<td>Jul 2017</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 2</td>
<td>Exit Tickets</td>
<td>Jan 2018</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 2</td>
<td>Exit Tickets</td>
<td>Mar 2018</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 2</td>
<td>Exit Tickets</td>
<td>Apr 2018</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 2</td>
<td>Exit Tickets</td>
<td>Apr 2019</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools 1 and 3</td>
<td>Exit Tickets</td>
<td>Aug 2018</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools 1 and 3</td>
<td>Exit Tickets</td>
<td>Mar 2019</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools 1, 2, and 3</td>
<td>Exit Tickets</td>
<td>Aug 2017</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools 1, 2, and 3</td>
<td>Exit Tickets</td>
<td>Aug 2019</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools 1, 2, and 3</td>
<td>Exit Tickets</td>
<td>Jan 2019</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools 1, 2, and 3</td>
<td>Exit Tickets</td>
<td>Jan 2019</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools 1, 2, and 3</td>
<td>Exit Tickets</td>
<td>Jul 2020</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools 4 and 5</td>
<td>Exit Tickets</td>
<td>Jul 2017</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools 4 and 5</td>
<td>Exit Tickets</td>
<td>Sep 2017</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools 4 and 5</td>
<td>Exit Tickets</td>
<td>Jan 2018</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools 4 and 5</td>
<td>Exit Tickets</td>
<td>Jan 2019</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools 4 and 5</td>
<td>Exit Tickets</td>
<td>Aug 2019</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 1</td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Fall 2018</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 2</td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Jul 2016</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 2</td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Spr 2017</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 2</td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Jul 2017</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 2</td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Fall 2018</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 3</td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Jul 2016</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 3</td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Spr 2017</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 3</td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Fall 2018</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools 4 and 5</td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Spr 2017</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools 4 and 5</td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Jul 2017</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

959

310

*Note. N = 1,269.*
Organization of Data

As detailed in Chapter 3, the study was grounded in CRT as the framework that supports the centering of the teachers’ encounters with race and racism in the professional development. Critical race theory recognizes the centrality of race and its impact on how systems operate, including the education system. It is concerned with how race is a determinant of who is privileged in systems. Race has profoundly shaped the experience that Black and Brown children are having in schools, and too often those experiences have not served them well. In keeping with CRT, the students’ cultures, socioeconomic status, gender, and other identifiers do not alone shape students’ experiences in schools, but rather the researcher shows how these identifiers intersect with race. The impact of racism on education is both foundational and present in children’s educational experiences and must be mitigated. The research question is concerned with examining how teachers’ understanding of antiracist teaching changed over time when they engaged in this TEJ Professional Development Model, making a CRT lens essential.

Furthermore, the emerging themes were aligned with Gorski and Swalwell’s (2015) Five Equity Literacy Principles to assure that the themes were strongly related to equity and antiracist teaching. The following table shows the relationship between the emerging themes and Gorski and Swalwell’s (2000) Five Equity Literacy Principles:
Table 1A

*Equity Principle: Evidence That There Is a Direct Confrontation With Current or Historic Racism*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Evidence that there is a direct confrontation with current or historic racism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Culturally responsive teaching</td>
<td>The respondents discussed balancing between helping students develop cultural capital and focusing more on cultural norms and aspects that have specifically shaped who educators are and how they see themselves today. The respondents also discussed language norms and expanding the reading list to incorporate texts from a variety of cultures so that students would be exposed to and making personal connections to cultures other than the dominant and their own. The respondents also expressed the importance of education, no matter what race one belongs to and the impact of cultural responsiveness on relationship building and the way that children are treated and educated. The respondents also expressed the need for cultural sensitivity training for teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator reflections on the dominant narrative and their role as educators</td>
<td>The respondents expressed that they were leaving the workshop feeling more informed about the power of teaching and their job as educators to disrupt the dominant narrative. They also expressed feelings of frustration with the dominant narrative and the way that it makes them tender towards their students. The respondents discussed overall perceptions and misperceptions of the way that Americans think about and react to the races present in the Nation and their surprise at their own unconsciousness of Whiteness. They discussed in particular the single narrative of people who are Black, but also discussed the importance of not forgetting the large population of Hispanic students that is present in the school and city and the need also to examine <em>intraracial biases</em> that occur because of the demographics of the staff. The respondents also expressed interest in continuing the reflective journey beyond the workshop, including engaging in a self-reflection and an examination of their own biases, and extending the conversation about race, stereotypes, and biases as a staff. The respondents also discussed the importance of keeping an open mind about students regardless of their background, socioeconomic status, or race and of keeping expectations specific to individuals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Themes</td>
<td>Evidence that there is a direct confrontation with current or historic racism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational structure/opportunity, testing, and the impact of the dominant narrative</td>
<td>The respondents discussed the achievement gap and inequities that students of color face in schools, including the denial of educational opportunities because of cultural bias. They discussed historical tracking of students of color for industrial occupations, the systematic denial of college preparatory classes to minorities, and the continued tracking of students as evidenced in Common Core Curriculum. They indicated shifts in understanding the way that race has and continues to affect social status, and questioned a system that continued to oppress minorities, despite all that society has experienced and learned over the past 60 years. The respondents also remarked upon the legacy of eugenics as the negative historical underpinnings of standardized testing and other long-lasting consequences that are still present today. They expressed surprise that IQ tests in the past were geared to White students and they questioned whether the designers of high-stakes tests today involve people from different races and backgrounds in their development. They affirmed that testing should not define the overall abilities of a person, no matter their age, race, or other characteristics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive classroom engagement and student-centered instruction</td>
<td>The respondents indicated that learning how to get a child, who appears to be <em>uninvested</em>, to be invested in the classroom was the greatest takeaway from the workshop. The respondents discussed the importance of being cognizant of how they view their students, of giving their students a chance to show what they know, and of letting them tell their stories rather than grouping them into a preconceived notion or single story. They discussed the importance of learning about the home–family–culture that students are coming from and encouraging them to embrace both their home culture and the school culture. They also asked how they can get students to share about themselves so that educators can know where to meet them equitably and to help them access and engage with the learning. The respondents indicated that culturally responsive texts help students see themselves in history, and that allowing students to write their thoughts or think in silence shows the students that their teachers trust them as thoughtful learners. They also indicated that the ability to relate to the community was the key, and that it was important to strongly advocate for children and families by demonstrating how to overcome systemic obstacles.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Themes

Evidence that there is a direct confrontation with current or historic racism

Social–emotional learning (SEL) and positive engagement within student community

The respondents also indicated they learned strategies for identifying their emotions and de-escalating conflict, and indicated they felt more comfortable addressing inappropriate comments made by students. They also indicated a desire to make “checking” unpopular even beyond the school walls, and to show students how a situation could end up differently depending on which role each player chooses to embrace: bystander, upstander, perpetrator, or victim.

Systemic challenges and positive engagement within educator community

The respondents discussed the history of eugenics as the science of “improving” the human population through forced assimilation or elimination of minority cultures. They expressed shock or surprise at learning about the scale of the assimilation of cultures throughout history. They indicated it was troubling that the construction of a dominant narrative and the idea that Whiteness and who is considered White are fluid concepts that change over time.

Table 2A

Equity Principle: Evidence of Prioritizing and Centering the Voices and Interests of Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Evidence of prioritizing and centering the voices and interests of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Culturally responsive teaching</td>
<td>The respondents discussed connecting classroom to community to support student learning and expanding the reading list to incorporate texts from a variety of cultures, so that students are exposed to and making personal connections to cultures other than the dominant and their own. The respondents also discussed applying the Four Conditions Necessary for Culturally Responsive Teaching to Phredd, a hypothetical student who appears disengaged with learning. They discussed the importance of meeting students where they are rather than treating all students the same and building relationships of trust with students. The respondents also discussed how differences in culture might affect the ways that teachers interact with students and also discussed how cultural barriers that might hinder positive relationship building with students. The respondents also discussed creating more student-centered, culturally relevant projects or tasks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator reflections on the dominant narrative and their role as educators</td>
<td>The respondents indicated that the workshop showed them how much their students need them as their teacher. They also indicated a greater focus on why they teach and named providing consistency and encouragement to students. The respondents discussed the importance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

88
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Evidence of prioritizing and centering the voices and interests of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>of maintaining cognizance around how they are viewing their students and being careful not to give them single stories at the expense of the totality of who they are and what they have to offer. They discussed the importance of getting to know their students and developing strong relationships with them, as well as the importance of not assuming that a child with behavioral issues cannot or will not change.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational structure and opportunity, testing, and the impact of the dominant narrative</td>
<td>The respondents appreciated the connections made in the workshop in how various gaps in equity contributed to gaps in achievement. Respondents also affirmed that all individuals learn at different rates and levels, regardless of IQ tests, and that standardized tests in general should not define students’ ability, potential, or intelligence. The respondents framed the relationship between the achievement gap and the equity gap in terms of the factors that affect students outside of school that often also continue to affect them inside the school, and the importance of not making assumptions about students and their ability to achieve based on the dominant narrative. The respondents discussed the importance of instilling a growth mindset in students through their personal stories of overcoming the odds and their personal challenges in becoming successful professionals, for they know that, if they can do it, so can their students. They also discussed the challenge in overcoming a story that has been told about them over and over because it comes to feel like a story that cannot be rewritten. The respondents expressed their understanding that negative assumptions about students are not who they are, but are rather characteristics that can be changed. They also discussed the importance of instilling a growth mindset because single story mindsets kill dreams and limit students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive classroom engagement and student-centered instruction</td>
<td>The respondents indicated they felt motivated to get to know their students more and were reminded of the importance of seeing students for all that they are. They affirmed that individual students learn at different rates and levels, regardless of test scores and single stories. They also affirmed that it was important to understand and empathize with the students' values and frame of reference in considering their behavior while not seeking to save them from their responsibilities. The respondents indicated their intent to start building contracts around their classroom’s culture and expectations together with their students to create positive learning environments that are safe for students to be vulnerable and express their individuality. They also indicated their intent to be more supportive to students who appeared disengaged. The respondents named the key elements in a reflective classroom as mutual respect, questioning, thoughtful silence and reflection, and student collaboration and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Themes</td>
<td>Evidence of prioritizing and centering the voices and interests of students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence of prioritizing and centering the voices and interests of students engagement and indicated their intent to incorporate these into their lesson plans. They indicated they would encourage open, respectful discussion of opposing viewpoints in the classroom and incorporate more opportunities for students to move around and engage in projects. They affirmed education as a continuing conversation and the classroom as a place of discussion and acknowledged that there were many ways to engage students, to connect to their daily lives, and to expose them to different viewpoints. The respondents expressed commitment to ensuring the success of their students not just as students, but also as people with their own thoughts for the future. The respondents also discussed how equity is different from equality in that equality does not guarantee that everyone has what they need. They also stated they would like to see more culturally responsive texts and indicated openness to giving students the opportunity to have buy-in for classroom management and safe-space building. The respondents expressed interest in allowing students to facilitate discussions, in letting students struggle and learn from their mistakes, and in giving students new and different ways to present their work. The respondents also indicated interest in starting a mentor program, as well as in creating more social clubs that are geared to different cultures represented at the school, creating a student government association so that student voices will be heard, hosting student-led morning meetings, announcements, and conferences.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Social–emotional learning (SEL) and positive engagement within student community</th>
<th>The respondents affirmed that learning about SEL was important because emotions are precursors to attention and learning has generational impacts. They indicated learning that SEL is a better predictor of school performance than IQ because students cannot learn or absorb their learning when they do not feel safe. The respondents also affirmed the power of words and actions to hurt or heal at any moment. The respondents also expressed the importance, now more than ever, to become more empathetic and open to learning from different people, ideas, and stories. The respondents also learned that a situation could end up differently, depending on which role each player chooses to embrace, that of bystander, upstander, perpetrator, or victim. They learned that showing students they have this choice can promote positive school culture as they apply the terms to real-life situations. They also affirmed that sometimes students learn better from one another and might engage in perpetrator roles for acceptance. They acknowledged that knowing this helps educators to spot trends in student behavior, which in turn helps them to be more proactive in addressing the needs students are trying to meet through these behaviors. The respondents also</th>
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indicated interest in restorative circles and restorative conversations and suggested that allowing students the opportunity to bond through common interests, goals, and activities might help them feel more connected to the school and wanting to learn. The respondents also expressed support for implementing a restorative justice discipline program (stop siloing children in in school suspension/out of school suspension, expulsion).

### Table 3A

*Equity Principle: Evidence of Redistributing or Distributing Access and Opportunity to Marginalized Students*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Evidence of redistributing or distributing access and opportunity to marginalized students</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Culturally responsive teaching</td>
<td>The respondents discussed setting learning within the context of culture, including expanding the reading list to incorporate texts from a variety of cultures and in a variety of formats to assist with comprehension. The respondents also discussed how they could avoid perpetuating the trauma of cultural assimilation and elimination by applying the Four Conditions Necessary for Culturally Responsive Teaching to Phredd, a hypothetical student who appears disengaged with learning. A similar example given was promoting science subjects with students of color. The respondents also related the difference between equality and equity as a responsiveness to individual needs rather than giving everyone the same treatment. They discussed the concept of Whiteness and how understanding it can help them best help their students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator reflections on the dominant narrative and their role as educators</td>
<td>The respondents expressed that they were leaving the workshop feeling more informed about the power of teaching and their job as educators to disrupt the dominant narrative, to provide their students with consistency and encouragement, and to move them towards justice. The respondents discussed the importance of getting to know students and build relationships with them. They also discussed the importance of maintaining and cultivating a growth mindset with students and of not letting single narratives based on socioeconomic status, race, or other aspects of their background or situation define them or limit</td>
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<td>Themes</td>
<td>Evidence of redistributing or distributing access and opportunity to marginalized students</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education structure/opportunity, testing, and the impact of the dominant narrative</td>
<td>The respondents appreciated the connections made in the workshop in how various gaps in equity contributed to gaps in achievement. The respondents also appreciated the discussion of equity versus equality and the fluidity and self-defining nature of Whiteness. They indicated that they would constantly check the language they used with their students and would consider the students’ backgrounds in all their interactions with them as well as in the decisions they make as educators.</td>
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<td>The respondents discussed disparities in access and prioritization of minorities in education as a cycle that feeds and is fed by test data, but that is also rooted in single stories. They recognized contemporary parallels to special education and diploma tracks and the tracking of students as evidenced in Common Core Curriculum. The respondents also indicated surprise that a person’s intelligence and potential were once determined at the age of 10 and were troubled that students with low IQ test scores were not encouraged to try again to increase their score, but were tracked for industrial and other low-paying jobs. The respondents also discussed the concept of equity as giving what is needed so that the recipients could achieve equality with their peers, even if it meant giving more to some than to others. They also indicated the importance of educating students on history and steps to take to overcome the challenges that minorities face.</td>
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<td>The respondents also affirmed that all individuals learn at different rates and levels regardless of IQ tests and that standardized tests in general should not define students' ability, potential, or intelligence, but they expressed troubled feelings that standardized tests are still used today and still favor certain classes or neighborhoods because of their cultural biases, just as they did in the 1920s. They named the crucial role of testing in the opportunities given to students, both historically and today, and they discussed the importance of educating students, families, school faculty, and school administrators around the purpose of testing and of encouraging students to keep trying for better scores. The respondents also expressed their surprise at their own unconsciousness of Whiteness and how an entire society can support an idea or narrative without thoroughly understanding and investigating it.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Themes</td>
<td>Evidence of redistributing or distributing access and opportunity to marginalized students</td>
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<tr>
<td>Positive classroom engagement and student-centered instruction</td>
<td>The respondents discussed their deepened understanding of how to approach the dominant narrative with their students, including in classrooms such as math, specifically by understanding that stereotypes do not define one’s story. They also discussed the importance of knowing their history to connect better with people who are different and to understand how their story has shaped them as people and as educators/students. The respondents affirmed the importance of being aware that the factors that affect students outside of school also affect them inside the school. They indicated being reminded of the importance of seeing students for all that they are. The respondents also discussed the supports and opportunities, a greater amount of which they wanted to provide to students with special needs and to students and families that experience systemic obstacles. They indicated a desire to learn how to build more community in their classroom to reach all students and they acknowledged the importance of learning about their students and providing more student-centered and culturally relevant projects and tasks. The respondents also expressed interest in sharing ownership of knowing with all students and in allowing more equity of voice. They discussed how taking ownership for their own learning can help disengaged students reengage in the lesson and be more committed to their learning. The respondents discussed how to reengage students who appear disengaged and how to change internalized narratives of themselves, teachers, admin, and the school system. They suggested showing students more worldviews and encouraging them to set their own goals and to hold themselves accountable. They also suggested exposing students to different businesses to inspire the drive within them. The respondents also indicated that they would work on developing a positive, engaged community with their students and on being supportive to students who appeared disengaged. They suggested that exposing students to different cultures could expand their understanding of people, show them that people of different races can go through similar hardships, and inspire in them ways to overcome their own challenges. They affirmed the importance of engaging all students and that the eight components of reflective learning environments helped to create spaces where everyone felt safe to engage.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social–emotional learning (SEL) and positive</td>
<td>The respondents indicated learning that educating students about the roles of bystander, upstander, perpetrator, and victim and their impacts can help them self-reflect on their behavior as</td>
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Themes | Evidence of redistributing or distributing access and opportunity to marginalized students
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Engagement within student community | It relates to their needs and triggers. They also acknowledged that preconceived notions about students make it difficult to make the best choices and also make it difficult for society to see and understand the whole person in conflict. For example, some students with disabilities might encounter situations regarding behavior issues, but might not be aware of what they are doing. The respondents also affirmed that learning about SEL was important because it helps build community and break down barriers and helps students become the best versions of themselves.

Systemic challenges and positive engagement within educator community | The respondents discussed the importance of teaching to students an awareness of historical underpinnings of oppression and other social constructs and their impacts on students so that they will be informed. The respondents asked how to change or fight the single narrative when power and resources were lacking.

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<th>Themes</th>
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<tr>
<td>Culturally responsive teaching</td>
<td>The respondents emphasized the importance of culturally responsive teaching and its effectiveness for promoting learning and expressed their commitment to practicing more cultural awareness and culturally responsive or mediated instruction with their students. The respondents also stated that they would continue to reflect on their practices and biases concerning education and would revise any practices that were not culturally responsive.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Educator reflections on the dominant narrative and their role as educators</td>
<td>The respondents expressed a greater sense of pride in and commitment to their job as educators to disrupt the dominant narrative, and they reflected on the way that the workshop showed them how much their students need them as their teacher and furthered the intentionality of their teaching. They affirmed that they are the decisive element in the classroom and viewed this as a charge to action. The respondents indicated some success in shifting the narrative in one-on-one interactions when talking with people outside the school community about where they work. The respondents expressed how the discussion around the single story helped everyone get personally connected to the idea that people are consistently placing certain groups of people into boxes, especially in the absence...</td>
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<td>Evidence of a renewed commitment to equity</td>
<td>of personal relationships. They affirmed the importance of being cognizant of their own biases and how their biases shape their actions. They also affirmed the importance of maintaining and cultivating a growth mindset and giving students the opportunity to show them what they know and what they are capable of doing. The respondents expressed how they focus so much on tests, data, and deadlines that it is easy to forget that the students are human beings who deserve our love and care. They also expressed interest in continuing the conversation around race, stereotypes, and biases and they indicated that they were engaging in self-reflection around examining their own biases and their impacts.</td>
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<td>Educational structure and opportunity, testing, and the impact of the dominant narrative</td>
<td>The respondents indicated that they had learned more about equity, recognized its importance in their teaching practice in serving students, and indicated the intention to incorporate it into their teaching plans. They indicated intentions to use materials, media, and strategies shared during the workshop to expose students to new ideas and to break down barriers surrounding education. They asked critical questions around providing equity for everyone and preparing students for society, and expressed a sense of urgency regarding the need for structural change in education. They discussed the relationship of equality, equity, and justice as being along a spectrum that educators should be moving toward. They indicated intent to begin immediately to work towards greater equity and justice and towards shifting the achievement gap. The respondents also expressed the importance of discussing the difference between the equity and equality and how each can impact student outcomes. The respondents also affirmed that there should be a change in the testing policy and biased content and expressed troubled feelings that biased tests still exist. The respondents expressed the way that the workshop had reminded them that students should not be defined by their narrative and the importance of encouraging them to maintain a growth mindset and a fair personal assessment of their abilities and achievements.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Positive classroom engagement and student-centered instruction</td>
<td>The respondents indicated they would work on creating safe and equitable environments for learning that incorporate the eight components of reflective classrooms so that they can reach all of their students. They acknowledged the importance of being a culturally competent teacher for their students. They affirmed that educators should respect their students' values and culture and help students commit to their responsibilities and take ownership of their education. The respondents also indicated they had learned that every aspect of how they interact with their students can have impacts on their students, and they committed to being more aware of their actions and</td>
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<td>being more intentional in creating positive change and building equity in education. The respondents indicated they felt motivated to get to know their students more and they were reminded of the importance of seeing students for all that they are. They indicated that they were leaving the workshop thinking about ways to improve the mental and emotional well-being of their students and creating more student-centered and culturally relevant projects and tasks for students. They discussed the importance of being empathetic and more open to learning from different people, ideas, and stories. They also indicated their intention to build more equity of voice by remembering that everyone has a voice and by practicing “Teacher as a Facilitator.” The respondents also discussed how they can inspire students to change their single story and how they can tell their own stories of doing so, to show students that it is possible.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social–emotional learning (SEL) and positive engagement within student community</td>
<td>The respondents affirmed the importance of empathizing with students and their agency as the driving force and decisive element in the classroom. They indicated that they learned how quickly they could be the change in students’ experience of school, and they expressed their intention to start being more proactive with disruptive students and to use a strict but nurturing approach to addressing their behaviors. The respondents also affirmed the importance of educating everyone on the terms perpetrator, victim, bystander, and upstander in managing bullying behaviors and expressed the hope that their school would embrace this language in building a more positive culture that would be welcoming to all students. The respondents also committed to making SEL a priority this year. They indicated they had learned about the importance of showing and encouraging vulnerability, as well as examining their own triggers and reflecting on their students' needs and triggers. They committed to helping students process traumas with SEL next time those situations arose, and they indicated feeling more comfortable addressing inappropriate comments made by students.</td>
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</table>
| Systemic challenges and positive engagement within educator community | The respondents indicated they had learned that the educator community at their school might think differently, but that they have one common goal, and indicated that this gave meaning to what was being done in the school. The respondents expressed that the workshop made difficult conversations easier and opened the door for more open conversations about serious issues at their school. They expressed the need to keep the conversation going and to help and encourage each other. They also expressed interest in incorporating the topics and strategies from the workshop into their classroom and into specific content areas across the curriculum. They asked for help in identifying tangible actions and conversations that they could have
Themes | Evidence of a renewed commitment to equity and do in their classroom on a daily basis to help give their students an equitable education.
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Table 5A

*Equity Principle: Evidence of a Focus on Fixing Injustice (or Systems of Oppression) and Not Fixing Students*

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<th>Themes</th>
<th>Evidence of a focus on fixing injustice (or systems of oppression) and not fixing students</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Culturally responsive teaching</td>
<td>The respondents emphasized the importance of culturally responsive teaching, including the selection of reading list texts, and their effectiveness for promoting interest in the subject as well as comprehension. The respondents also discussed how schools are sites of trauma when educators seek to erase culture, and discussed the importance of respecting students’ cultural values and not marginalizing or changing them.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Educator reflections on the dominant narrative and their role as educators</td>
<td>The respondents shared that the workshop had shown them how much their students need them as a teacher, and how they leave feeling more informed about the power of teaching to disrupt the dominant narrative and to move students along the continuum of equality, equity, and justice. They indicated they were reminded that teaching is more than content, and that they would be committed to breaking the barriers of classism. They also indicated that they understood the importance of educating students about history and about the steps to take to overcome the difficulties faced by minorities. The respondents discussed the relationship between single stories, biases, and the misperceptions of people of the various races in the community and in America, as well as the fluidity of the way in which Whiteness is perceived. They discussed the importance of being cognizant of biases and deficit mindsets, and of being careful not to project them onto the students and their families, acknowledging their role as a reinforcer in the classroom. The respondents also discussed how to change the narrative, particularly internalized narratives, amidst dealing daily with challenging circumstances.</td>
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</table>
| Educational structure and opportunity, testing, and the impact of the dominant narrative | The respondents indicated that they had learned more about equity, recognized its importance in their teaching practice in serving students, and indicated intention to incorporate it into their teaching plans. They indicated they had learned the importance of equity and justice in the Nation’s schools and expressed commitment to the work of eliminating barriers altogether. The respondents expressed
Evidence of a focus on fixing injustice (or systems of oppression) and not fixing students

appreciation for the connections made in the workshop regarding the way in which the various gaps in equity contributed to gaps in achievement. They also expressed appreciation for learning about equality versus equity, indicating the importance of discussing the difference between the two and the way in which the lack of equality or equity could affect student outcomes.

The respondents discussed historical race-based labeling as a major factor in the resultant social status and educational and professional opportunities offered to people of color, and they expressed their surprised and troubled feelings regarding that knowledge. They made parallels to continued classism and hindered education of minorities, as well as special education and diploma tracks. The respondents made the distinction that equality means getting the same thing, while equity means getting what is fair and just, even if it means giving some students more than other students receive. They also named the challenge for students of overcoming a negative single narrative and the erasure of culture in schools because of the structural embracing of the dominant narrative.

The respondents also discussed the discriminatory nature of high-stakes testing, both in the way in which the tests are developed and how they are used. They indicated shifts in their own understanding of the historical underpinnings of testing in eugenics, and the historical and continued use of testing to label and marginalize students and to mete out opportunities. The respondents suggested creating more adequate assessments for career paths and creating adjusted grading scales to reflect clearer scores. They also discussed the importance of educating students, families, school faculty, and school administrators about the purpose and context of testing. They also discussed the importance of emphasizing with their students the value of effort and growth more than achievement.

The respondents discussed how single stories affect teaching and learning process and the way that believing in single stories can have negative impacts on student achievement. They discussed the importance of not defining students by their narrative or labels, and instead embedding more text that is centered on public and influential figures who came from little to nothing yet contributed greatly to our society. The respondents affirmed the need of all students for high expectations, structure, and consistency and the importance of believing in students and developing with them a positive community that would support students who appear disengaged. The respondents discussed the importance of connecting to students and the qualitative
### Themes

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<th>Evidence of a focus on fixing injustice (or systems of oppression) and not fixing students</th>
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<td>factors in their lives (e.g., family or personal issues) that they might bring to the space of learning and to how they behave in society. They affirmed the importance of humanizing students and not creating single stories about them, as well as the importance of reaching all students and recognizing their need for different things. They also named the need for more wraparound services as well as assistance and guidance with helping students with special needs and students who come from broken homes or other spaces that provide a lack of consistency or structure. The respondents also discussed the challenge of overcoming the single narrative of poverty and society’s expectations and the importance of inspiring students to rise above them.</td>
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### Social–emotional learning (SEL) and positive engagement within student community

| The respondents named the connection between creating safe spaces for learning, vulnerability, and growth in analytical skills and achievement and the role of SEL in building safe communities for learning. They shared how learning about the dominant narrative has made them tender towards their students and that it is important to allow students to see themselves and their importance. The respondents also affirmed the importance of adopting a common language to talk about behaviors that include the terms perpetrator, victim, bystander, and upstander in fostering a safe atmosphere for learning and growing. |

### Systemic challenges and positive engagement within educator community

| The respondents expressed the impactfulness of eugenics as a belief that has had long-lasting consequences that are still present today. They discussed the importance of understanding the past to keep it from becoming a cycle and to influence and change the future for the better. The respondents indicated they had attained a more complex viewpoint of the education system. They named systemic and structural complexities (e.g., the power of government to hurt as well as to help, the hierarchical framework that education was designed to support and under which it operates, and the school to prison pipeline). The respondents also questioned the continued oppression of minorities, despite 60 years of new learning and information, and the need to hold those who are in positions of greater power accountable for funding and creating a system that meets student needs. The respondents indicated the need for more resources and support as well as for transparency and effective communication from all members from the team. They expressed an interest in strategies or examples of how to address the issues discussed in the workshop in |

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Evidence of a focus on fixing injustice (or systems of oppression) and not fixing students' classrooms. The respondents also indicated a desire to feel appreciated and valued, to have a platform from which to collaborate and share ideas, and to have more opportunities for teacher leadership.

The respondents also identified a disparity in privileges that are afforded consistently to some teachers, but that are not even considered for other teachers (e.g., additional planning periods, smaller class sizes, responding to Code Ones, and acknowledging teacher referrals). They named the difficulty of performing their jobs with excellence and setting a positive tone and culture in their school and classroom, when they are overwhelmed with high stress levels, deadlines, and additional duties, as well as changing expectations.

The respondents identified the need for clean, well sanitized and stocked restrooms for teachers and students (i.e., walls, doors, toilets, sinks, and floors).

The raw data from exit tickets, open ended responses to surveys, and interviews were thematically analyzed to search for key findings that answered the research question:

- How does teachers’ understanding of antiracist teaching change when they engage in the Teaching for Equity and Justice Professional Development Model?

The researcher’s conclusions were drawn using deductive reasoning from similar responses that the participants provided to the same question. The findings are presented in narrative form and organized around five key findings that provided evidence that the teachers’ understanding of racism changed while engaged in the TEJ Professional Development Model modules. The five key findings or changes follow:

1. The teachers in the study were found to have changed such that they afterward valued culturally responsive teaching practices, showing increased value and usage.
2. The teachers in the study were found to change the way in which they viewed their roles in mitigating White supremacy in schools by showing an increased commitment to do so.

3. The teachers in the study were found to have changed their understanding of the way in which historical racism affects education today, for they showed an increased in understanding its impact on students’ experiences.

4. The teachers in the study were found to have changed their instructional practices by adopting more student-centered and antiracist instructional practices.

5. The teachers in the study were found to have changed their understanding of socially and emotionally safe learning by showing a commitment to taking more of an antiracist approach to SEL.

Each of these findings is an important indicator that the teachers’ understanding and commitment to more antiracist thinking and practices had changed throughout the professional development experience, which was the basis of the research question. The collective impact of the findings provides significant evidence that is strongly linked to the research question:

- How does teachers’ understanding of antiracist teaching change when they engage in the Teaching for Equity and Justice Professional Development Model?

Presentation of Findings

Key Finding Antiracist Finding 1: Teachers Placed an Increased Value on Culturally Responsive Teaching

Key Indicator of Antiracism: Shifts in Educator Mindsets Regarding Culturally Responsive Teaching. Several of the sessions in the TEJ Professional Development Model training introduced common beliefs and tenets of culturally responsive teaching and explored
culturally responsive teaching practices. In their response to these sessions, there is significant evidence that teachers’ understanding of, commitment to, and application of cultural responsiveness increased because of the TEJ Professional Development Model training. Teachers who take a more antiracist approach to their teaching of Black and Brown children are more likely to embrace culturally responsive mindsets and practices.

After a session that was designed to introduce teachers to the principal mindsets and practices of culturally responsive teachers, one respondent noted, “I am now thinking about how impactful understanding cultural responsiveness is for relationship building with my students. Being more culturally competent puts me in the right mindset for how to treat and educate our children.” This response shows a strong indication that the teacher will more likely now build deeper and more authentic relationships with the Black and Brown children because the teachers’ understanding of cultural competencies has increased. The educator showed increased awareness of the impact that their own mindsets could have on the treatment of students. In response to same session, another teacher wrote, “Cultural differences between me and my students impact classroom culture as relationships are being built. These culture differences cannot be ignored as the dominant culture would prevail rather than the children’s culture.” This response further indicates an increased understanding of the role that culture plays in the way that, in this case, an assumed to be White teacher builds relationships with Black and Brown children whose cultures are too often either ignored or devalued in the learning process as the dominant culture of Whiteness is privileged. Another educator expressed a response this way:

Learning my students’ culture is very important in order for me to engage and teach them; culture understanding is a key tool for teachers and can be leveraged for deep learning and I will be careful not to eliminate or take away the cultural values of our students and instead attach learning to those values.
This response indicates an increased awareness of the connection between developing their own cultural competencies and teacher effectiveness with reaching Black and Brown children whose lives and stories are not usually centered in these Eurocentric learning environments. One respondent indicated, “This increased cultural competence could lead to higher levels of engagement between students and teachers and, therefore, [to] more desirable academic outcomes.” The growing willingness to privilege Black and Brown children’s cultures in the learning process indicates an increased understanding of antiracist teaching, as was sought in the research question.

There were other findings related how these teachers would embrace cultural responsiveness and, therefore, move toward being more antiracist in their approaches. This educator wrote, “In order to be more culturally responsive I now willing to deviate from the prescribed text which too often fails to speak to the context of Black and Brown children, which I think leads to them not paying attention.” Building on this response, another teacher wrote, “Today I learned how to relate to the everyday life of students. This is important to my practice because I can help my students stay on a positive track. I think/hope that at least half of the lives of the youth change for the better.” This response is further evidence that these teachers are moving away from their own Eurocentric norming to centering the cultural experiences of their children, a feature of culture responsiveness. The respondent also underscores a critical connection between centering students’ experiences and students “staying on track” which is generally interpreted as students experiencing both social and academic success in school. The teacher connects this increased student’s success to the educators’ increased cultural competencies, which in essence shifts responsibility to educators and away from Black and Brown children. Another respondent made a compelling observation,
Instead of all of the behavioral intervention training that we get, what we really need is to understand the culture of our students better. The behavioral training only serves to further label our children as bad actors in need of further training or punishment.

The behavioral intervention training to which the teacher referred (as its name suggests) is focused on student behavior, rather than on educator mindsets and practices. This educator denotes a shift toward a more antiracist framing by suggesting that behavior related encounters, or deemed misbehaviors, might be more of a failure of educators to understand culture and context. As this educator indicated, overly “policing” and referring Black and Brown children to the office for misbehaving could be substantially mitigated by more cultural understanding. They need to be more cultural responsive across disciplines as well. A self-identified STEM (science-technology-engineering-math) teacher had this to say:

Today I learned that even a math teacher should focus on cultural responsiveness as it helps me to understand what students are experiencing in the real world, to value their experiences, and to realize that I need to find a way to connect those experiences even to teaching math. I never thought of culture in the context of teaching math. This may be the key to why so many of my students say that they do not like math. I need to make it more real to their lives.

This comment was critical to the findings in that this STEM teacher was showing an increased commitment to culture as tool to help Black and Brown children embrace math, a subject area that is highly tested. “Making it [math] more real,” as this teacher suggests, could lead to better outcomes. Another STEM teacher wrote,

I teach science and I never really thought about being culturally responsive until this session. There is so much that I can probably bring in. Science, especially medicine, is a place where people are treated differently because of race or culture.

**Key Indicator of Antiracism: A Greater Commitment to Culturally Responsive Practices.** The discussion of the findings of an increased need for cultural responsiveness so far has been largely centered on showing shifts in educator’s awareness of the importance of cultural responsiveness as a commitment to antiracism. What about educator practices? There is strong
evidence in the findings that suggest that educators had not only shifted in their thinking but had planned to change practices according to the TEJ Professional Development Model experience. After a session entitled, “Exploring Five Key Features of Culturally Responsiveness,” the teachers were specifically asked how the session might affect classroom instructional practices. Several respondents specifically spoke about changes in the text. A respondent wrote, “I will work to expand the reading list to incorporate texts from a variety of cultures and in a variety of formats to assist with comprehension.” This response indicates that the teachers saw the connection between culturally diverse text and student comprehension as a key instructional impact. This response denotes a strong indication that the teacher was placing greater value on children as interested learners who need opportunities beyond the common text. Another respondent wrote, “In order to help with their comprehension of literature, I will need to make stronger connections between the literature and my students’ realities. Use of journal questions facilitates this.” By adopting the practice of using journal prompts to give students the agency to make their own personal connections to the literature, this teacher indicates high expectations of Black and Brown children, and that this type of agency would aid their comprehension of potentially complex texts. A different respondent made a similar point: “Expand our reading list to incorporate texts from a variety of cultures so that students are exposed to and making personal connections to cultures other than the dominant and their own.” What one sees in this response is evidence that this educator now understands being culturally responsive as a way of mitigating the propensity to center the dominant narrative (i.e., Whiteness) in curricula as opposed to creating student-centered and cross-cultural experiences that reflect nondominant people’s experiences. That response is a strong indicator of a more antiracist understanding.
What consistently shows up in these reflections is evidence that these educators connect culturally responsive text to students’ engagement and academic performance:

This training left me thinking that, if we want our students to perform better academically, we have to resist reliance on traditional forms of teaching that are colorblind. We teach children with rich cultures that we have to bring into our lessons, or we will continue to lose them. They will not just adapt to us.

Another respondent wrote, “Culturally responsive texts help students see themselves in history, and that allowing students to write their thoughts or think in silence shows students that their teachers trust them as thoughtful learners.” These are both powerful indicators that teachers in the study were shifting to more antiracist approaches to choosing and using texts that center Black and Brown students’ cultures. Another respondent expressed the response this way, “I would continue to reflect on my practices and biases concerning education and would revise any lessons that are not culturally responsive.” This renewed commitment to taking a more culturally responsive approach was evident across the data. Another respondent wrote: “This professional development experience has shown me that I have to own my bias and how it impacts the way I see my students from the text I choose to how I teach.” Another respondent stated, “I never considered culturally responsive teaching as important. Always thought of it as optional until now.” These respondents’ renewed commitment to cultural responsiveness shows a commitment to equity and changes toward a more antiracist understanding of teachers, for teachers who once resisted culturally responsive teaching now see that it is important in the context of this TEJ Professional Development Model.

Key Indicator of Antiracism: Contextualizing Education in Students Realities and Experiences. The increased awareness of students’ cultural experiences also leads to a deeper understanding of the troubling emotional impact that school culture can have on students. A teacher wrote, “Schools can be sites of trauma when seeking to erase or ignore culture, and it’s
important to respect students’ cultural values and not marginalize or change them.” Another teacher noted, “I now see that students cannot be themselves in school because the adults in the building want to change them.” The desire to change students rather than connect to their cultures’ values and norms is an example of what it means to fix students rather than fix the injustices that produces the inequities. This teacher realized through the professional development that changing students can be traumatizing, which denotes an increased antiracist understanding: “I now see why so many students have poor attendance. It must be hard for a child to come to a place every day that does not truly embrace them.”

Those responses indicate this connection between culture responsive, relationship building, and student engagement, but there were also responses that denoted a deeper understanding of the realities that students Black and Brown children face in the context of systemic racism outside of school. One teacher wrote,

Many of the Latinx children are the only person in their household that is proficient in English, so they often have to take on the role of translating for important matters such as court dates. This cultural challenge causes some students to miss school which puts them further behind.

Another respondent shared,

A more culturally responsive approach could be to connect the adults with community resources that could provide some English as a Second Language training for them and wrap around services that will fill the gap rather than having children fill those gaps.

Another respondent talked about a need to “spend more dollars on resources that are written in Spanish so that students can access the material in their original language first, and parents can help with homework.” Yet another respondent spoke of the need to “have translators on staff and equip to use in assemblies so that all students can equitably experience assemblies.” These responses showed clear evidence that teachers in the TEJ Professional Development Model training showed increased understanding of the cultural challenges that Black and Brown
students face outside of school and how schools could take a more antiracist approach to helping meet those challenges. Whereas the previous responses surfaced the connections on cultural responsiveness and relationship building with children, these responses denote a deeper understanding of who the children are and the challenges they face. “Today I learned that everyone comes from different worlds/families/situations, and as educators, we must be aware of this and incorporate this into our lessons and classroom management; the student’s outside world and family context matters.”

**Key Antiracist Finding 2: Teachers Showed Increased Dedication to Mitigating White Supremacy**

**Key Antiracist Indicator: Increased Knowledge of History of Educational Inequity.**

The TEJ Professional Development Model series has an entire module focused on the historical impact of eugenics on education. For context, the 19th century Eugenics Movement had a lasting impact on helping both to create and justify a pseudo-science, racist idea of White supremacy. At the end of a TEJ Professional Development Model survey in Spring 2019, teacher respondents were asked an opened-ended question about the value of learning about eugenics and its impact on education policy and practices. One teacher wrote:

> One troubling legacy of the eugenics impact on education is the belief in IQ being fixed which apparently led to standardized testing to sort kids, and we [are] still doing it today, with our children being put on the bottom rung.

> This educator is raising an important finding, which is that this training has led the participants to think more critically about high-stakes testing and its contribution to perpetuating White supremacy narratives of Black and Brown students’ intellectual inferiority. Another respondent said, “I always thought all this testing was bad for students, but in this context of eugenics I see how much more problematic and racist the testing movement has been and continues to be.” These teachers indicated an increased understanding of the racist foundations of
testing and that the consequences are most damaging for their Black and Brown children.

“Eugenics has been simply repackaged today to fit present-day racist ideas that say our students are dumb or lazy. The legacies of eugenics are frightening. All educators need to learn this.” The responses show not just an awareness, but also a clear sense of urgency around mitigating the impact of racist testing policies on students. As these teachers’ awareness of the historical context of testing became clearer, their commitment to standing up for mitigating its impact seems to have increased as well. Another respondent noted: “Eugenics was such an impactful belief that has long-lasting consequences that are still present today.” Again, they are tying the historical eugenics movement to present day White supremacy systems that continue to oppress Black and Brown children today.

Whereas those responses denoted an increased understanding of the history of White supremacy other responses to the eugenics session led teachers to a greater sense of responsibility to their students regarding mitigating the impact of eugenics and White supremacy thinking on their children. A respondent noted, “Learning this [eugenics] frustrates me and makes me more determinant towards my students, which creates an environment in which I want to push, encourage, and motivate them continuously.” This sense of urgency and determination reflected an increased awareness on the teacher’s part of the present-day impact of racist thinking and a call to action and empowerment of their Black and Brown children to overcome the impact of these long held White supremacy narratives. “Exposure to this information made me more informed about why history is important to understand and how I need to help my students overcome these stereotypes.” There is further evidence related to the theme of mitigating dominant narratives of White supremacy, such that teachers can take responsibility. One respondent said, “Gaining historical relevance about race and its origin in eugenics is eye-
opening in that it helped me to see my own blind spots in working with children in this neighborhood. I first must change my outlook.” Here the teacher is expressing that this historical understanding of White supremacy led to an encounter with their own implicit biases towards the Black and Brown children with whom they are committed to working. Another respondent also indicated the impact on their thinking: “It really opened my mind to history's ways of thinking and how I need to think in the future.” These self-described encounters with their own racist thinking, while studying the legacies of eugenics, were compelling in that this awareness could very well lead to antiracist practices. For example, one respondent explicitly mentioned eugenics in the context of antiracist teaching, saying, “Learning about the Eugenics Movement is essential to becoming an antiracist teacher.” This note showed strong evidence of the connection between the training and the research question exploring changes in participants’ understanding of antiracist teaching. Keeping with the “eye-opening” need to take responsibility for mitigating White supremacy, another respondent said, “The information on the formation of race in America really opened my eyes and will serve to reshape how I think about my teaching moving forward. These dominant narratives of Whiteness [have] to be challenged in all our thinking.” Again, the teacher denoted a real encounter with their own biases toward Black and Brown children and more importantly a stated intent that there would be at least a reassessment of one’s practice moving forward.

Evidence also shows that studying the educational strand of the eugenics movement led to a more enlightened and antiracist understanding of educational inequity. This enlightenment sparks antiracist approaches. One teacher expressed the response this way: “This workshop really enlightened me on the disparities and deprivations of not only to African Americans, but also to others. It is obvious that the injustice was calculating and intentional. The impact is
severe and lasting.” Another respondent said similarly: “Understanding the creation of race and how it evolved in the U.S. and how it led to eugenics using science to justify so many injustices is compelling and troubling.” The educators’ responses to the history indicate that they became troubled about the state of education in ways that they had not been before, indicating that the educators might have experienced mindset shifts towards more antiracist understandings. Each of these responses is critical to the research question in that a more enlightened teacher is more likely to orientate toward antiracist understandings and practices.

**Key Antiracist Indicator: An Increased Commitment to Dismantling White Supremacy.**

There is also evidence this renewed enlightenment of White supremacy also affects commitment to Black and Brown children. A respondent indicated, “The TEJ session on eugenics and White supremacy was troubling, but it was necessary because it increased my commitment to students and showed them how much my students need me as their teacher.” Another teacher said, “It’s disturbing, but important to learn how these negative stereotypes of our children developed over time. It’s not just history; people still believe this stuff, and we have to fight these stereotypes.” Teachers in the study expressed feelings of frustration with the way that the dominant narrative of White supremacy has been intentionally constructed over time, but they also gained a renewed commitment to resistance and countering White supremacy. As teachers had this encounter with how dominant narratives of White supremacy have shaped negative perceptions of their students, teachers indicated a greater awareness that their students needed them to be advocates for equity. One educator expressed the response this way: “I now have a greater focus on the desire to provide consistency and encouragement to my students.” In the presence of this troubling historical narrative, it is evident that some of these educators were moved to a more antiracist disposition. The stated desire to provide consistency and encouragement to students is a clear
indicator that educators saw the importance of making policy and practice decisions in the interest of their students. Another teacher indicated, “[I recognize] the importance of maintaining cognizance around how I view my students and being careful not to see them through racist serotypes at the expense of the totality of who they are and what they have to offer.” This is a powerful indicator that the session led to more critical thinking on the educators’ part and more self-awareness of the roles that they play in mitigating White supremacy culture in school. One teacher wrote,

> Getting to know my students and developing strong relationships with them, as well as not assuming that a child with behavioral issues cannot or will not change, is critical. The idea that our children cannot grow, and change is rooted in this troubling history.

This educator is again indicating the importance of resisting racist narratives of Black and Brown children by believing in them and maintaining growth mindsets in the face of these pessimistic narratives.

There is further evidence that the professional development led to greater insight into the impact of this dominant narrative of White supremacy on Black and Brown children’s educational experiences and on teacher’s commitment to mitigating said impact. For example, one respondent said,

> The lack of AP courses that would be offered in more affluent schools with a significant population of White students is proof that our students are not valued. Or maybe it is an assumption that they cannot do the work. Either way they need equal access.

This educator is surfacing the practice of denying their Black and Brown children access to rigorous learning experiences as a way of maintaining White supremacy in schools. As the respondent indicated, this denial of access is often rooted in lies and misconceptions about children’s abilities to handle the rigor. To add more on this point, another respondent wrote, “The lack of an advanced curriculum is not just about limited resources but also stereotypical and racist beliefs that students in this neighborhood cannot handle AP courses.” Pointing to this
injustice in the context of discussing the construction of a dominant narrative of White supremacy indicates that teachers in the professional development series were seeing the distribution of resources and opportunities through a race equity lens and saw their role as change agents. One respondent also discussed “the importance of maintaining and cultivating a growth mindset with students and not letting racist narratives based on socioeconomic status, race, or other aspects of their background or situation define them or limit their opportunities” as a key takeaway from the session. This response indicated a commitment not only to mitigating White supremacy in the mind and practices of educators, but also to being intentional about equipping and empowering students to resist this oppressive view of their potential and possibilities. Another participant strongly indicated that empowering students as a deterrent to the impact of White supremacy when they wrote about “the importance of pointing out each student’s strengths instead of focusing on the students’ weakness. Our kids need to see how awesome they are, and they need to hear it from us all the time.”

**Key Antiracist Indicator: Challenging Internalized Racism and Stereotypes.** There was strong evidence that the sessions grew teachers’ sense that they needed to become more advocates for antiracism and disruption of White supremacy everywhere, even outside schools. For example, one respondent said, “I can shift the narrative in one-on-one interactions when talking with people outside the school community about my students. People have negative stereotypes about our students and have never met them.” This teacher was acknowledging that the dominant narrative of White supremacy and the stories of failure associated with their children were not only in the building, but also in the outside community, and the teacher felt a renewed commitment to disrupting this narrative as a way towards education equity. This was affirmed by another respondent who said,
I bet if you asked people outside of this community about our students, they would consider them to be violent, disruptive, and disinterested in school. Nothing could be furthest from the truth. These kids are no worse than other kids. But these lies have been told for so long that they are taken as truth.

One respondent shared that the professional development had shown them how much their students need them as a teacher and how they are leaving feeling more informed on the power of teaching to disrupt the dominant narrative and how they had moved along the continuum of equality, equity, and justice.

These quotes powerfully indicate participants’ increased ownership for disrupting the impact of White supremacy on their students both through their own activism and student agency. Another respondent said, “The training reminded me that teaching is more than content. I am committed to breaking barriers of classism and also to educating students on history to empower them to take steps to overcome difficulties that they face.” Again, this response showed that some participants not only took greater responsibility for challenging White supremacy, but also that they felt the need to empower their students to do so as well. This respondent indicated a desire and need for help in this area: “I want more professional development on how to change the narrative, particularly internalized narratives, amidst dealing daily with challenging circumstances of educating for equity.” This comment showed that the teacher understood the complexity of the issue in that they recognized that these troubling narratives are internalized by Black and Brown children and their caregivers over time, and it is the responsibility of teachers to mitigate these myths through all their interactions with students, to dismantle the systems that has continued to uphold these narratives, and not to find fault in the children.

In further exploring the data that was related to mitigating White supremacy culture narratives, several responses were related to the importance of directly confronting serotypes that support White supremacy ideas. One respondent said:

Stereotyping and how it can affect a person's outlook, especially educationally, was a big takeaway for me in this training. The history made me take a look at myself and my
potential biases and will help me be better informed as an educator. For example, learning this motivated me to keep fighting to change the stereotypical narrative about my students.

This response indicates a deeper awareness of the impact that unexamined bias and stereotypes could have on educators’ interactions with Black and Brown children leading to the further perpetuation of White supremacy in schools.

Another educator expressed the response this way: “This session gives the tools and insight into achieving equity and justice during the educational process and combatting racist stereotypes rooted in White supremacy. I can dispel stereotypes because of this knowledge.” It was compelling that respondents, unsolicited, mentioned increased agency and commitment to fighting stereotypes about their children, especially stereotypes that are grounded in biased White supremacy narratives. This respondent specifically connected stereotyping of Black and Brown teachers to White supremacy denoting that “educational possibilities could be shaped by stereotypes of our children. The training shows that these stereotypical narratives are grounded in racism and White supremacy.” There is strong indication that the professional development experience not only raised their commitment to disrupting racist stereotypes, but also gave to them tools and a sense of agency that they can now dispel stereotypes. All of the findings related to a commitment to fighting stereotypes are collectively critical to the research question in that dismantling racist stereotypes of impoverished Black and Brown children is necessary to an understanding of antiracist teaching.

**Key Indicator: Countering Negative Single-Story Narratives.** Another key session in the TEJ Professional Development Model was exploring the idea of a single narrative or a single story about who Black and Brown children are and of what they are capable. The single narratives are mostly based on stereotypes and myths that have been rooted in historical racism and the continuation of the theme of White supremacy. The participants were introduced to the
concept of single narratives through the voice of the African poet and activist, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, who defined single narratives as “the overly simplistic and sometimes false perceptions we form about individuals, groups, or countries, and they are often untrue.” These single narratives, when associated with Black and Brown children, are often rooted in White supremacy racist stereotypes.

This workshop is a reminder that my students should not be defined by their narrative just as I am not defined by mine. Although I came from a single parent home and faced unfavorable circumstances, I became successful. My students are capable of the same.

Although the teacher cautions that students should not be defined by these single-story narratives, they are showing the importance of combatting these narratives, using their own experiences as inspiration. Another respondent said,

My students think that, because they are from this neighborhood, they have to be ‘hard.’ Poverty, however, sometimes becomes their story, and they do not see how they can change it. Even when people ‘leave’ the hood, they tend to look down on the ones that are still there. This is one of the reasons why I use myself as an example in the classroom. I am from the hood. I show them that you can make it out to be a productive part of society.

It is compelling that the teachers see their own journeys and connections to the student experiences as useful tools for combatting single narratives and raising the students’ hopes for themselves. This is clear evidence of educators being more willing to combat White supremacy narratives.

Along with using themselves as an example in navigating the impact of the single-story narratives, respondents tend to indicate that empowering students is a part of the resistance. “[I see] the importance of continually pushing students to understand that they have a growth mindset and the ability to change their single story. We can inspire students to achieve above society’s expectations of them.” This response shows that the respondents have developed high expectations of Black and Brown children even in the face of single stories that depict them as
likely failures. However, it could be implied that the teachers are putting the unfair burdens of Black and Brown boys and girls to overcome systemic racism through their own will and grit rather than having the oppressive systems abolished. Nevertheless, there were some indicators that the teachers put the responsibility on themselves to dismantle the systems of oppression rather than just expecting students to rise above these systems. Consider this response:

As a teacher how can you change the single-story White supremacy narrative? Exposure. People only know what they have been told and are willing to believe it. While it is a small scale, I’ve had some success in one-on-one interactions with people who have never met our children.

One might also consider this response:

We’ve got kids who are profoundly behind academically because the education system has failed them. No longer should the finger be pointed to children. The historical nature of single narratives is more than any kid can overcome. I am leaving more informed on the power of teaching and my job to disrupt troubling single-story narratives.

These responses point to the teachers taking more responsibility for disrupting dominant narratives, rather than placing the burden more on students with teachers serving as motivators, as was expressed in some of the previous responses. This example is more evidence of teachers taking responsibility: “Today I learned I am beginning to appreciate that I am here for a purpose; to ensure equity and dismantle stereotypes and personal bias. This is the work. Not just teaching content.” This response indicates an increased level of both personal and professional responsibility on the educator’s part. A full realization that the work is essentially about dismantling racism, while teaching Black and Brown children, is a paramount testament to the study. Another educator expressed the response this way: “This training evoked a greater sense of pride in what I do every day and has caused me to self-reflect more on my role in disruptive these narratives.” In essence, whether it be on an individual, systemic, personal, or professional level, these respondents collectively identified a heightened awareness that disrupting these single-story narratives is essential to teaching effectively the Black and Brown children that they
serve. These stereotypical single-story narratives are largely rooted in White supremacy, thus a commitment to disrupting these narratives might be viewed as an increased understanding of antiracist teaching. This respondent leaves a broad impression on the impact of single narratives:

Single narratives create stereotypes that can affect our students’ worldview of themselves. Single narratives are what help students ‘other’ their peers. There is only one type of person who is smart, or only one way they should speak. They put themselves into their own boxes to protect themselves from their own single narrative. Single narratives constantly go unseen by students until it is too late for them to know the real story. Single narratives can also prevent a student from experiencing new opportunities that can open a new door. This crippling mindset can prevent our students from reaching their full potential.

This response was critical in that it surfaced another troubling impact of single narratives: they impact the way in which students not only see themselves, but also how they view their peers. Peer to peer respect is lost in these narratives. This was a crucial finding to lift as one feature of Whiteness is to place marginalized people in competition with each other.

Collectively, the quotes above show evidence that teachers had a serious encounter with the way that racist single-story White narratives can shape the way that educators see students and the way that students see themselves. The comments also showed teachers’ commitments to be challenging and disrupting to these narratives. Disrupting White supremacy and single-story narratives could denote an understanding of antiracism.

**Key Antiracist Finding 3: Teachers Showed an Increased Understanding of How Historical Racism Impacts Education Today**

**Key Antiracist Indicators: Understanding Systems of Oppression.** An emerging finding from the data is that the teachers recognized the legacies of historical racism and their impact today. Confronting the legacies of historical racism is a key indicator of an understanding of antiracist teaching. The teacher responses were analyzed to find potential evidence that there was a confrontation with current or historic racism in the TEJ Professional Development Model
in which educators get a very direct encounter with systemic racism through a session that looks at the historical construct of race in America and, more particularly, how that construct got connected to Black and Brown students’ intellectual abilities. One respondent wrote: “Learning about how schools became part of the larger ecosystem of racial oppression in the U.S. goes a long way [in] helping me to understand how poor kids of color have gotten on the wrong side of educational disparity.” Another teacher expressed the response thus: “Through the training, I have become more aware of how scientific myths of Black racial inferiority have been developed over time and contributed to systemic racism. This systemic oppression is more deeply enriched than I had previously known.” This is evidence that teachers gained an increased recognition of the legacies of historical racism and its lasting impact today. This awareness is evidence of a greater understanding of antiracist teaching in that it shows an understanding of how events have gotten to where they are today. One educator put it this way:

Placing educational inequities in the context of systemic racism helps to move from blaming children and their caregivers for students’ academic failures to looking at the systemic injustice. Resisting blaming children for their academic failures is an important step towards interrupting systemic racism in schools.

In one of the sessions, educators took a critical look at the “achievement gap” and were introduced to reframing it as an “equity gap” with the former being more racist in its application and the latter pointing more to the way that systems of oppression have created gaps. One respondent said, “Understanding the relationship between the achievement gap and the equity gap flat out changed my perspective. The achievement gap narrative is deficit thinking and a racist construct.” This shift in perspective is a critical indicator of a more antiracist understanding of student achievement and the systemic barriers that lead to inequitable outcomes. Another respondent said it this way:

The historical session points out the importance of not making assumptions about students and their ability based on this historically racist achievement gap framing.
assume that policy leaders know some of this, so who benefits from continuing with this outdated idea of a racial achievement gap?

This profound questioning of why the achievement gap framing persists is a strong indicator of moving towards a more antiracist understanding, as did the question of critically confronting racist norms.

Another respondent said,

This session reminds me of how important it is to instill a growth mindset in students so that they can overcome the odds and the personal challenges to become successful professionals, even in the face of historical racism in schools.

One determined teacher stated, “The challenge is helping students overcome a story that has been told about them over and over because it feels like a story that cannot be rewritten, but we have to persist.” These responses indicate that these educators have a renewed commitment to conspiring to empower their students to overcome systemic racism in spite of deeply entrenched frameworks such as the achievement gap. Another respondent expressed hope that “negative assumptions about students are not who they are but rather characteristics that can be changed . . . instilling a growth mindset because single story mindsets kill dreams and limit students.” This response indicates a critical understanding of historical racism: negative stereotypes have been attached to students’ identities and not just merely their behaviors. Black and Brown children do not get to make adolescent mistakes without having their characters destroyed and access to opportunity shut off. One respondent put it this way: “I now realize that historical inequities are really the root causes for the limited access to resources and opportunities for impoverished Black and Brown children.” The respondent went on to say that “the poverty of children or culture depravation is not to blame, but rather long held practices of denying access like tracking Black and Brown students into lower or remediated courses compared to White middle class peers.” Limited access to resources, denial of opportunities, and
tracking are all manifestations of historic racism, yet as the respondents suggest, the blame is too often placed on cultural depravation or some other racist framing of the inequity. This training led to a determinant of root causes, rooted in systemic racism. For example, one educator noted,

The importance of the discussion of equity versus equality helped me to see the self-defining nature of Whiteness. I always engaged in colorblind practices of giving each of my students the same. This professional development led me to shift my thinking to making sure that all of my students get what they needed to be successful. For example, if one student needed a little more time to complete an assignment because of language barriers or some other factors out of the student’s control, they will get that time.

These are important indicators of shifts in educator mindsets to more antiracist understanding in that one can see a commitment to resisting cultural depravation narratives to engaging in more antiracist practices with the intent of mitigating the impact of historical racism.

Another respondent expressed the response this way:

From now on I will constantly check the language I use with my students to assure it is not negative and consider the students' backgrounds in all of my interactions with them as well as in the decisions that I make as a teacher. This historical framing has given me a different lens.

This is strong evidence that exploring historical racism has given this teacher not just new insights, but also the development of a critically conscious mindset to filter their interactions and decision-making processes. This could only lead to a more antiracist approach to teaching and equitable allocation of resources and opportunities.

**Key Antiracist Indicator: Removing Barriers to Equitable Opportunities.** As previously noted, educators were able to make connections to the construct of race and its impact on education policy and practices. Several respondents pointed to tracking as a persistent manifestation of historical inequities. One respondent wrote,

I now see that disparities in access and opportunities are driven by test scores, which then shapes students’ access to more rigorous curricula and pathways to college. Of course, test scores paint incomplete narratives about what students know, but we still treat them as reliable.
These educators now realize that the singular measure of a test score has for too long determined access to opportunities.

Another respondent said it this way:

I am surprised that a person's intelligence and potential were once determined at the age of 10, and I am troubled that students with low IQ test scores were not encouraged to try again to increase their score, but were tracked for industrial and other low-paying jobs. Of course, I now know that they were not encouraged to try again because intelligence was deemed to be fixed.

According to this educator, not much has changed: “I now recognize contemporary parallels to special education and diploma tracks and the tracking of students as early as the 19th century residential schools.” This evidence of a historical understanding of the racist origins of tracking denotes a shift towards a more antiracist understanding of teaching today in that these educators are now more likely to reframe so called gaps in achievement as gaps and opportunity access driven by tracking.

Interestingly, one educator embraced the reality of the seemingly permanence of testing and tracking by saying,

The crucial role of testing in determining the opportunities given to students is obvious historically, but continues today, and the importance of educating students, families, school faculty, and school administrators around the purpose of testing and of encouraging students to keep trying for better scores is important as testing seems likely to stay.

This educator seems resigned to the current reliance on testing and does not speak of dismantling the testing system but rather equipping students to do better.

In looking for more evidence that educators were inclined both to think and to do something different as a response to the legacies of historical racism, relevant responses were found in the data. Much of these responses were aimed at school policies and practices. One respondent said that they “now recognize that if resources and opportunities are to be distributed more in the interests of marginalized students, then we have to consider how systemic racism has
continued to create inequitable access.” For example, the respondent wrote that they would “now push the school administration to reconsider the criteria for allowing students to participate in certain extracurricular activities.” The teacher went on to note that “the school places a heavy emphasis on conduct grades on report cards or referrals to the office with a certain period to determine which students are eligible for certain activities.” After now better understanding how systemic racism operates, it meant that “Black boys in the school were more likely to be referred to the office than other students, and that means that they are systemically being denied access to activities.” This denotes a profound understanding of how the legacy of historical racism operates to shape possibilities for Black and Brown children and that antiracist understanding would, as this educator did, challenge racist policies. Another respondent expressed “the need for the school to reconsider its office referral policy and consider the role that teacher bias and systemic racism is playing in over-referring Black boys to the office.” This is yet another example of the way that the historical understanding surfaced a challenge to policies that are rooted in unexamined bias which leads to the racist outcomes particularly for Black boys.

Throughout the findings, as previously stated, there are a number of responses that point to the need to extend this understanding of historical racism to students as means of resistance. A participant wrote,

If we teach marginalized students about historical racism, they will better understand what the system is doing to them and will be better equipped to protect themselves from the pitfalls designed to fail them. Unfortunately, we (teachers) do not have the power to make systemic change, but we can empower our students through education and awareness.

The most salient responses continued to point to needed changes and policies for addressing historical racism. A survey respondent rhetorically asked, “Are school board members and policy makers ever having these conversations about historical racism? If they knew this information, maybe they would do better.” This question is strong evidence that this
respondent has increased understanding of antiracist teaching, for teachers who take an antiracist approach realize that they teach in the larger context of systemic oppression supported by centralized policy decisions. “This professional development series showed me how, historically, certain ethnic groups were placed in specialized groups academically well before they [were] given a chance to prove themselves otherwise. It’s almost like they were set up to fail.” Although disheartening, this statement shows that the teacher now sees the historical roots of educational inequity which could note a deeper understanding of antiracist teaching. Another respondent said, “What I take away from the historical lesson is that education will never be equal unless it fundamentally changes.” This response too is rather disheartening, but the respondent does imagine that the system could fundamentally change. Signaling the need for change could denote a greater understanding of antiracist teaching. Another respondent said, “What I see in the history is that schools have often been sites of trauma especially when they seek to erase culture, but we can do better if we have the will to change.” A constant pattern in the responses is an increased awareness of the serious and sad nature of historical inequities and varying levels of hope that things could change. Yet another respondent spoke to the clear nature of historical inequities when they said, “Historically, [the] school system was designed to improve quality of life for superior people and maintain hierarchy, and it’s still being done today.” One could deduce that each of these respondents’ heightened understanding of the historical legacies of racism could signal a greater understanding of at least the need for antiracist teaching. One respondent noted, “I would like to share this information with Board members who set testing and other policy that further harm our children. What would they do?” These related responses showed evidence that one of the potential impacts of TEJ Professional Development Model series is that it could activate teachers to advocate for more policy changes at the systems level.
This recognition that policy changes need to help to mitigate the impact of racism on schools is evidence of an understanding of antiracist teaching.

**Key Antiracist Indicator: Resisting Forced Cultural Assimilation.** One of the sessions that teachers explored in the series featured looking at the Native American boarding school experience through a documentary called *In the White Man’s Image* (Lesiak & Jones, 1991). This session served as a miniature case study to explore the impact of historical racism on a different racialized group of students to help make meaning of what has and is happening to Black and Brown children today. The documentary was used as a historical case study to examine how Native Americans in particular and Black Ingenious People of Color in general have been historically forced to assimilate into the Whiteness to experience success in school. For context, the Native American children were taken from their lands, brought to boarding schools, literally stripped of any resemblance of their cultures, and re-made in the image of Whiteness. After viewing the film and a discussion, the teachers were asked to respond to the following question in an exit ticket: “Using the Native American boarding schools as a historical reflection, what are the warnings and connections to today?” These responses denote an increased understanding of historical racism and application to today. One teacher wrote,

> Our students today can relate to the Native American children. They probably feel this way. Being African American, a lot of times our kids do not make it to the table, or they fight twice as hard to get there. Classrooms should be places where children do not have to fight to be seen or heard.

This is a powerful connection to this history and the realities facing Black and Brown children rooted in historical racism and racist practices.

> The assimilation of Native children should serve as a wakeup call for us today. We do the same thing. We expect these children to leave their home cultures behind and show up like we want them to. I never thought of it as racism before this session.
This respondent saw the connection to this history in direct parallel to what African American children are experiencing today. Confronting this in schools is a way of facing historical racism.

Another respondent said,

Watching the video about the Native American boarding schools showed the danger of demeaning students’ home culture in favor of the school culture. Classrooms need to be spaces where students can be themselves or they will not engage. We need to be careful that we are not doing the same thing to children today. Even when we mean well, we can unintentionally dismiss their families.

This respondent made a phenomenon connection that pointing out that much of the problematic policies that are intended to help Black, Brown, and Ingenious children today has been done with good intentions.

One educator name an important antiracist alternative to forced assimilation: code switching, which places value on home culture as well. The respondent said: “I never thought code switching to be that important, but studying this history shows me the danger of telling students that how we speak or act in school are the desired norms everywhere.” This teacher shows a shift in their thinking from being an assimilationist, which is oppressive to valuing students by code switching. This is a great practice for teachers who understand and commit to antiracist teaching.

This analysis of the Native American boarding school experience brought a critical question to the analysis from a participant:

This story leaves me with a question of how [do] I get my students to not value very negative cultural things like pants sagging, while also honoring who they are? Pants sagging is not a good representation of who they are and leads to perpetuation of very negative stereotypes.

The fact that this respondent viewed pants sagging as culture says something about the misappropriation of culture. Pants sagging is not a cultural norm for Black and Brown people. However, this respondent grappling with the complexity of the question indicates how ingrained
are the historical racism and negative stereotypes that must be eradicated. This respondent seems to contend that “pants sagging” is cultural rather than a fad practiced across races and age groups. Further evidence of this tension was found in another response to the session:

So, how do we prepare them for a future in society without putting them in an educational box that’s inequitable as we have seen done in this history? Do we not do students an injustice by not preparing them for a world that does not accept their culture norms?

Another respondent said of the Native American boarding schools: “The impact was tragic as many of those students lost themselves or committed suicide. Yet the intent was not bad. The Indian children would not experience success in the new world holding on to their traditions.” Each of these questions and responses denote that the session led to a critical grappling with what happens when the home culture is in conflict with the dominant school culture. The racist approach assumed assimilation or, in the case of Boarding schools, forced assimilation. Other educators saw this more clearly as racism. “This is cultural genocide. Native Americans mostly wanted to be left alone and not assimilated. But what if the emerging public school system had adapted to and welcomed Native American culture?” This response denotes a more antiracist understanding, placing the burden on institutions and policy makers and not the marginalized people. Another said,

[The] system continues to subjugate and oppress Black children despite the past years of new learning and new information that was covered in this training. Our students are outraged, and their resistance is labeled as disrespect and misbehavior and is met with punishment. It’s a troubling pattern.

Again, this denotes a more antiracist understanding of forced assimilation.

**Key Antiracist Indicator: Advocating for Structural Change.** In moving from the analysis of responses to the Native American boarding schools, there is further evidence that indicates exploring the legacies of historical racism leads to a greater understanding of antiracist teaching. A respondent said that the whole series raised “critical questions about providing
equitable experiences for all students and preparing them for society and created a sense of urgency for structural change in education.” Another respondent said that “exploring historical racism helped me to understand the relationship between equality, equity, and justice, and this understanding renewed my commitment to creating more equitable learning experiences.” Another teacher said, “I intend to begin immediately to work towards greater equity and justice and towards shifting the achievement gap conversation to an equity conversation.” Each of these responses indicates that this encounter with the legacies of historical racism led to a deeper commitment to equity. Another respondent recognizes the need for change but questions the agency or power teachers have to create change when they asked: “Something needs to change, but what can I, as a teacher, do about historical racism even now that I understand it better?” Again, the preponderance of the question itself could suggest an increased understanding of antiracist teaching even if the participant is not quite clear of the way forward.

In essence, the collective responses that fit under this theme of recognizing the legacies of historical racism show that some teachers in the TEJ Professional Development Model series had a deeper understanding of how historical inequities impact education today yet had varying levels of understanding what they could do at the systems level. However, the statements and the questions raised showed an increased awareness for the need for more antiracist approaches to teaching and policy making.

**Key Antiracist Indicator: Developing Self-Critical Conciseness.** One of the key components of Gorski and Swalwell’s (2000) Five Equity Literacy Principles is a focus on fixing injustice and not fixing students (Gorski, 2019). In the context of education inequities, that could mean addressing systemic racism and doing something to end it in schools. The following discussion is from responses from survey results that had the open-ended question: What impact
has talking about race and racism in schools had on you and your practice? One respondent said, “These sessions should open the door for more honest conversations about serious issues at our school involving some of our discipline practices that could be racist.” This response indicates that the professional development experience has led this teacher to make connections between teacher-focused professional development and systemic issues in the school that might be operating in a racist manner (e.g., school discipline practices). Another respondent thoughtfully said,

We must keep the conversation going and continue to encourage each other. This work can be challenging. We do have to find ways to collaborate and continue working for the greater good of our students and not let racism prevail.

This particular response revealed that this respondent emphasizes the need to work collaboratively to defeat systemic racism in schools. The respondent acknowledges that race equity work is difficult and systemic, showing evidence of a greater understanding of antiracist teaching.

A critical finding was the surfacing of some responses that denoted a cross-department approach to dismantling systemic racism in the school. This is a relevant response: “As a math teacher, I was thinking, ‘What does this course/workshop have to do with me being an effective teacher?’ I now realize helping our students overcome racism is for everyone.” In this postsurvey, many responses indicated not only greater competence, but also a greater need for addressing systemic racism. These findings are so critical in that there is clear evidence that some aspects of the TEJ Professional Development Model moved teachers towards a greater understanding of antiracist teaching.

Other indicators are evident, for this respondent said, “I am now more open to difficult conversations about race,” indicating growth in their willingness to discuss race. Another respondent said, “I never realized just how much racism impact schools; even when most of the
teachers are Black, this is not just for White teachers.” This is a powerful reflection in that it is appropriate to deem antiracist professional development as essential to White teachers in that the majority of the public-school teachers in the United States are White even in the presence of an increasingly Black and Brown public school majority (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Smedly, 2007). However, the respondents noted the importance of bringing these conversations to Black teachers as well realizing the all-encompassing nature of the impact of White supremacy.

Teachers named both the need for and the impact of addressing historical racism. One respondent said, “These sessions on culture and race can change our school if we apply what we learned.” Another respondent wrote, “The importance of the issues we discussed could not be more important. Racism in this community is real.” These commitments provide evidence that there is an increased understanding of antiracist teaching among some participants in that a key component of addressing systemic racism in schools is teachers showing a willingness to change and move toward more antiracist practices.

The following discussion of findings is from exit tickets that followed a session entitled, “Developing Critical Consciousness for Antiracist Teaching.” Being critically conscious in this context means not merely being aware of, but also being willing to address racism where it shows. One respondent said, “Today I learned what it means to be more critically conscious of racism. This will reshape how I do everything in my class.” This respondent expressed a real commitment to rethinking their teaching through an antiracist lens. Another respondent wrote that “this increase in knowledge and conscience is helping me to own my role in giving students an equitable education; I know I have to do my part.” The response again shows renewed commitment that demonstrates some degree of increased understanding antiracist teaching.
Other respondents indicated various understanding of how to now do their parts to dismantle system racism. One respondent spoke of the importance of being sincere: “Change is only good when it is sincere. We have to be sincere about this work.” Antiracism work is difficult in that it challenges power, so sincerity is important.

The shifts in teacher mindsets toward antiracism were apparent in some responses. “These sessions have challenged me to see my so-called failing students differently. It is not their fault. Systems are designed for them to fail.” This is a powerful revelation and indicator of an understanding of antiracism in terms of shifting blame from students to the systems that produce the inequities. Another respondent wrote, “Equitable education needs to be a priority!!! It will be even more for me.” This respondent denoted an urgency and a move away from gradualism to a prioritizing of educational equity.

The critical consciousness session was an important experience for raising awareness and personal commitments to racial justice and dismantling systemic racism. “I now have attained a more complex viewpoint. I appreciate being critically conscience. It made me more aware and responsible,” says one respondent, again showing movement toward more understanding of antiracist teaching. Another respondent put the need for commitment succinctly: “I am leaving thinking the system is broken but we have to fix it. Taking on systemic oppression is hard, but we can’t let the children down.” These reflections are powerful indicators in that some respondents felt a sense of urgency after the training noted the language: “We have to fix it,” and “We can’t let children down,” denoting an urgency towards and an understanding of antiracist teaching.

Teachers in the session indicated an increased understanding of the impact of systemic racism on children. One respondent said, “Suspension feeds the school to prison pipeline! That
has to change!” This respondent named the strong and historical connection between racist practices in schools and its manifestation in troubling impacts on the lives and futures of Black and Brown children. One respondent connected the need to address systemic racism in schools to the White supremacy session saying, “The education system was design to improve quality of life for superior people and maintain hierarchy. Educators have to fight that system.” This is another example of how being more critically conscious increased not only the teacher’s understanding of antiracist teaching, but also their commitment to it. One respondent made the point clear that teachers can and do play a role in addressing systemic racism by saying, “Teachers have the power to hurt as well as help. It’s our choice.” The respondent’s emphasis on teacher’s choice was significant in that it suggests an awareness that teachers can do something about systemic racism, indicating an understanding of antiracist teaching. There was a noted outlier among the respondents as this particular respondent said,

> We go through the motions of discussing this material and have a great sense of what needs to be done, but teachers are the lowest rung on the educational hierarchy. Fragile administrative egos and out-of-touch politicians who set policy really need to be held to account on funding and creating the system to meet these needs!

In spite of the critical consciousness session, this teacher seems to hold on to the conviction that teachers are too far below on the hierarchy to have impact on systems.

In essence, this section of the findings relates to the theme of addressing historical racism, and many respondents discussed how putting educational inequities in the context of systemic racism helps to move from blaming children and their caregivers for students’ academic failures to looking at the systemic injustice. Resisting blaming children for their academic failures is evidence that teachers have more of an antiracist understanding of educational inequities.
**Key Antiracist Finding Number 4: Teachers Showed a Greater Commitment to Student-Centered/Antiracist Practices**

**Key Indicator: Centering Students Identity in Learning.** An analysis of educators’ overall responses to the TEJ Professional Development Model series led to another key finding: teachers committed to the importance of student-centered classrooms as an antiracist approach to teaching. For context, one of the key features of the professional development experience was the constant modeling, naming, and analysis of pedagogical strategies to facilitate student-centered learning which the teachers recognized as an antiracist approach to teaching. One respondent said,

> Learning strategies on how to engage a kid who appear to be uninvested in the classroom was the greatest takeaway from the workshop. Rather than falling back on the old practice of blaming students, I am now more willing to reflect on my own educational practices to determine if they center my students and adopt some new ones.

This kind of willful analysis led to some explicit naming of student-centered practices that educators vowed to integrate. For example, a respondent wrote, “It’s important to be cognizant of how I view my students and to give them a chance to show what they know and tell their stories rather than making predetermined groupings based on my own assumptions.” This is a powerful indicator that the teacher is not only being more reflective but is also approaching the common practice of ability grouping from a more student-informed and less biased lens. This direct confrontation with historical racism places the students’ identities at the center of the learning experience in a thoughtful and empowering way. Centering students’ voices and stories in the classroom is essential to an antiracist understanding of teaching.

Another respondent wrote,

> I now place greater importance on learning about the home/family/culture that students are coming from, and I encourage them to embrace both their home culture and the school culture. I can attach learning to both and make the lessons more relevant.
This is a great practice for not only cultural responsiveness, which we explored in another section of the findings, but also for creating student-centered learning environments. A teacher indicated,

I am now more likely to consider ways in which I might get students to share about themselves so that I can know where to meet them. You provided examples for how to do this like creating simple identity charts which will tell me a lot about my students.

The participants named one of the strategies for centering students and, just as important, expressed a willingness to do so. Essentially, this intentionality around getting to know students as people in a shared learning community is an indicator of an understanding of antiracist teaching. One respondent put it this way: “I feel motivated to get to know my students more, and I am reminded of the importance of seeing students for all that they are.” Another respondent said that the training was a reminder “that individual students learn at different rates and levels regardless of test scores and single stories; they are all unique individuals.” Another respondent indicated that “it was important to understand and empathize with the students' values and frame of reference in considering their behavior while not seeking to save them from their responsibilities.” Each of those responses indicates that the professional development experience led these teachers to reflect on the importance of centering students in the learning process as an important way of prioritizing their needs.

One key pedagogical strategy centered in the training was an activity called contracting which is essentially a best practice for coconstructing the learning environment with students rather than simply posting classroom rules from the teacher. A participant wrote:

I really enjoyed the experience of contracting and learned that contracting around my classroom’s culture and expectations together with my students to create positive learning environments that are safe for students to be vulnerable and express their individuality is critical to centering them in learning. I will do this in every class.
Because this educator experienced contracting in the professional development model, they became committed to adopting the practice as a more antiracist approach to establishing classroom rules in that it centers and values students rather than using the old banking model.

Experiencing contracting in the training proved to lead to practices that were more student-centered: “Contracting around my classroom’s culture and expectations together with my students to create positive learning environments that are safe for students to be vulnerable and express their individuality is critical to centering them in learning.” This educator continued on to indicate their intent to be more supportive to students who appeared disengaged:

I would now encourage open, respectful discussion of opposing viewpoints in the classroom and incorporate more opportunities for students to move around and engage in co-operative learning, which I would not do before from fear of losing control of the learning environment which I now come to understand is rooted in White supremacy.

This reflection indicates a number of antiracist approaches. Encouraging the sharing of multiple points of views rather than imposing on students is a critical antiracist practice especially when paired with freedom to move in the space without fear of punishment.

One respondent recalled a session on the key elements of a reflective classroom, which are mutual respect, questioning, thoughtful silence and reflection, and student collaboration and engagement. The respondent indicated their intent to incorporate these into their lesson plans. The respondent wrote, “These elements of a reflect classroom affirm that these teachers began to see classrooms as a place of discussion, and that there were many ways to engage students, connect to their daily lives, and expose them to different viewpoints.” Another teacher said, “I have a renewed commitment to ensuring the success of my students not just as students but as people with their own thoughts about the future.” These responses all indicate that the teachers were centering the needs of their students in the learning process. When asked what they would do differently after doing a session on student-centered learning, one respondent mentioned, “I
would like to see more culturally responsive texts, and I am now open to giving students the opportunity to have buy-in for classroom management and safe-space building.” Yet another respondent expressed, “I will allow students to facilitate discussions, struggle and learn from their mistakes, and give students new and different ways to present their work.”

One respondent said, “Even in my math classrooms, I must specifically help students to understanding that stereotypes do not define them so they will not believe anyone is superior to them.” One teacher in the study also discussed “the importance of students knowing their own history so as to understand how their story has shaped them as people and as students.” Another responded said to that “to counter White supremacy narratives, educators must also be aware that factors that affect students outside of school also affect them inside the school.” Another respondent indicated being reminded of the importance of seeing students for all that they are was also critical to mitigating the dominant narrative of White supremacy. Each of these responses indicate the way that teachers in the TEJ Professional Development Model experience saw the connection between centering students in the learning community and access to a quality education and opportunities that come with that education.

When responding to a session on how to get greater engagement from otherwise disengaged students, teachers in the study went away with remedies that could be deemed antiracist as they center the needs of marginalized students. One teacher specifically indicated a “desire to learn how to build more community in my classroom to reach all students” and “acknowledge the importance of learning about my students and providing more student-centered and culturally relevant projects and tasks for them.” This response denotes that this teacher wants to give their students more access to meaningful educational opportunities that are relevant to the student and how they show up to learn. This will improve student engagement.
Another respondent expressed interest in “sharing ownership of knowing with all students and in allowing more equity of voice.” This educator realized that, when students have the opportunity to take ownership for their own learning, teachers can help students who are disengaged to reengage in the lesson and to be more committed to their learning. Another responded suggested “showing students more worldviews and encouraging students to set their own goals and hold themselves accountable.” Another suggested “exposing students to different businesses to inspire the drive within them.” Another respondent indicated that they would “work on developing a positive, engaged community with their students and on being supportive to students who appeared disengaged.” The responses from this session indicated that the teachers understood the connection between student-centered classrooms and access to opportunities.

**Key Antiracist Indicator: Centering Students Voices in Learning Process.** These responses come from an open-ended question asking teachers to indicate their most important takeaways from one of the trainings. A discussion of these findings is also centered on the finding related to student-centered classrooms. A common thread was that teachers saw the need to honor students’ voices in the classroom as one respondent said, “My students have powerful voices; they need space to use [them] in a positive way. I need to create that space for students.” This respondent not only recognized the power of student voice, but also that teachers need to be intentional about creating the space for student voices to come forth. Another respondent said, “This training just led me to realize that I do not always have to be in control. I should be more of a facilitator of learning between students.” Both of these responses show an increased sense of responsibility by these teachers that they have to create student-centered classrooms. A bit differently, a third respondent said,
The ability to relate the lessons to their community is key. I am leaving this training realizing that their stories count and that I cannot just pour information in my students but need to take the time to know them.

This respondent connected student-centered classrooms to an engagement with the community, not just the classroom itself. The respondent also raised very critical student-centered classrooms disposition when they said, “I cannot just pour information in my students.” Perhaps unaware as they did not name it specifically, but this statement shows that the teacher is resisting the banking model of treating students as empty containers in the classroom. Nevertheless, the fact that the teacher mentioned the importance of not practicing the banking model may signal an understanding of antiracist teaching.

Teacher pedagogy and practices are important places to look for a commitment to centered-student learning that serves the interests of Black and Brown children. One responded said,

I have to get used to the idea that the classroom does not always need to be silent and orderly. Letting the classroom be a little messy sends a message to students that we trust them. This is important to my practice, to show students that I trust them as thoughtful learners.

That response shows a shift in the respondent thinking that the Black and Brown children need to be trusted in the learning environment and not always be expected to learn in White supremacy or teacher-centered classroom norms. A respondent that identified as a math teacher said,

I know it would greatly change my practices as a teacher; however, I would need to think more about student-centered practices if it’s going to make my students more engaged in math, which they mostly do not like as a subject.

In this response, the teacher noted two important potential findings: (a) that the need to engage in student-centered practices could have wide cross-discipline appeal, and (b) that teachers need to be willing to change. One should also note that the respondents connected this commitment to student-centered learning to better academic outcomes for Black and Brown children.
After a session where teachers explored the key elements of a reflective and student-centered classroom, teachers were asked to respond to the session. One respondent indicated they would “work on creating safe and equitable environments for learning that incorporate the eight components of reflective classrooms so that they can reach all of their students.” Another respondent wrote that “educators should respect their students' values and culture and help students commit to their responsibilities and take ownership of their education.” Another respondent also indicated they had learned that “every aspect of how I interact with my students can have impacts on them, and I am more committed to being aware of my actions and being more intentional in creating positive change and building equity in education.” One can see that this educator sees the need to center the identities of their students as an indicator of an ideological commitment to equity. Another respondent indicated, “I feel motivated to get to know my students more and am reminded of the importance of seeing students for all that they are.” Another respondent indicated that they were “leaving the workshop thinking about ways to improve the mental and emotional well-being of my students and creating more student-centered and culturally relevant projects and tasks for students.” Another teacher indicated their “intention to build more equity of voice by remembering that everyone has a voice and by practicing teacher as facilitator.” These collective responses show a commitment to centering the voices and experiences of students and that this centering is another indicator of a commitment to equity and antiracism. Several respondents indicated in various ways that the training heightened the need to center students in a way that lifts them up as whole beings. For example, one respondent said, “Classrooms should be places of high expectations, structure, and rigor, and teachers should demonstrate the importance of believing in students and developing a positive community with them that supports students who appear disengaged.” There are many relevant points in that
direct quote. The teacher described the importance of student-centered classrooms being highly structured, rigorous, and positive with high levels of expectations that would lead to higher student engagement. This a great example of a classroom that centers students and focuses on their strengths, rather than preconceived, prejudiced notions about features that need fixing in students.

Another respondent discussed the importance of “connecting to students and the critical factors in their lives, such as family or personal issues, that they may bring to the space of learning and influence how they behave.” However, rather than seeing these factors as inherent barriers to learning, the teacher went on to say that “students need trauma-informed support systems to help them navigate the issues of life. Nothing is wrong with the children; they just need the same support that more wealthy children get.” This comment was indicative of how some teachers’ mindsets shifted from focusing on negative behaviors to creating student-centered learning centers that humanize rather than stigmatize students’ experiences away from school. A greater focus on centering students’ voices and experiences in the classroom is a way of avoiding fixing students and instead engaging in more antiracist teaching practices.

**Key Antiracist Indicator: Use of Student-Centered Antiracist Pedagogy.** One feature of the TEJ Professional Development Model is that the facilitators of the training would intentionally model student-centered practices. Some respondents mentioned specific student-centered strategies that they hoped to practice. One respondent said, “I liked learning new strategies the most, like how you posted visual aids on the wall and had us walk around and share our opinions on them. My students will like that because they love to talk.” This respondent noted both the importance of incorporating movement in a student-centered classroom and creating instructive ways for children to talk. Respondent 2 said, “Using identity
charts at the beginning of the school year to establish a safe classroom culture in which everyone feels valued so that we can approach challenging topics with grace and understanding is a great strategy.” By contrast, another respondent put a greater emphasis on the emotional safety of a student-centered classroom. A third respondent said, “The practice that I may do differently in the classroom is Think/Pair/Share; getting the students to talk to each other is important practice.” Each of these respondents indicated some conviction that getting students to talk to each other is an important aim of student-centered classrooms. What is important to this study is that the participants in the TEJ Professional Development Model training seemed to have grown in their understanding of and commitment to creating more student-centered classroom in the interest of taking a more antiracist approach to teaching.

In the training, teachers experienced a very specific exercised designed to facilitate creating of student-centered classrooms. The session in Module 1 is entitled, “Creating Brave and Safe Classroom Space.” In the session, teachers experience a strategy where they coconstruct classroom norms with students. This is an important antiracist approach in that Black and Brown children are not often trusted to have voice in the classroom norms. The following is a discussion of responses from Exit Tickets collected from teachers after they experienced the Module 1 session entitled, “Creating Brave and Safe Classroom Space.” The teachers were asked to respond to the following prompt: “I came into the session thinking ______. I am leaving thinking ______.”

One respondent said, “I came in thinking my classroom is already safe. I am leaving thinking I have new tools to inspire my classroom culture. Every student wants to feel safe. I will intentionally promote social emotional wellness.” This statement showed that the session moved the teacher from what they thought was a good place to better place with an emphasis on
promoting the social well-being of their students. Another respondent said, “I came in thinking about my own self and my own triggers. This strategy reminded me of my students' needs and their triggers.” This response indicates how being intentional about creating safe classroom spaces can actually make teachers more aware of centering children’s emotional needs over their own. This is so important in that Black and Brown children are often treated as adults and expected to carry the emotional load of adults in the face of trauma. Another respondent expressed a prior commitment to creating student-centered space, but did not know how to create this space: “I came in thinking that I want to include and focus on allowing my students to bring whole identities to my room. I’m leaving thinking I have some resources and activities to start that process with.” The session gave teachers a concrete strategy along with the rationale for the session. Other respondents noted that they gained a strategy for creating safe space for children.

It was striking in that this was an obvious gap in teachers’ prior professional development experiences. Says another respondent: “I came in thinking this will be nothing new to me. I am leaving with some classroom strategies that I desperately need around community building.”

Another respondent connected the safe space creation to student empowerment: “I would try contracting for brave space norms with my students. This will empower them more in the classroom.” One of the most salient of responses said, “I came in thinking that the classroom was my domain. I am leaving thinking I have to share the space and honor my student’s voices.” This response captures the essence of the exercise, “Creating Brave and Safe Classroom Space.” Brave space is about centering the needs of Black and Brown. It is about privileging their voices and allowing them to construct norms in ways they have never been engaged.
Key Antiracist Finding Number 5: Teachers Showed a Greater Commitment to an Antiracist Approach to Socially and Emotionally Safe Learning

Key Antiracist Indicator: Less Punitive Responses to Student Conflict. An antiracist approach to SEL recognizes that Black and Brown children’s social, emotional, and educational challenges must be considered in the context of racial injustice in schools and society. In this section, the researcher discusses findings related to SEL and how the TEJ Professional Development Model led teachers to a more antiracist approach to SEL in their teaching and interactions with children.

A respondent said, “In the SEL session I learned strategies for identifying my students’ emotions and de-escalating conflict and I feel more comfortable addressing inappropriate comments made by students without immediately seeking to punish.” Too often teachers typically respond to conflict with Black and Brown children through verbal abuse or removing them from the learning experience. The respondent has moved to a less punitive and antiracist approach. This teacher said,

This greater understanding of SEL practices make me less likely to send students to the office, but to help to navigate the choices before them and move to a more productive and restorative and humanizing approach to resolving conflict in the classroom.

Again, the teacher is expressing the need to engage in less punitive and more restorative practices to resolving inevitable conflict with adolescents. This self-awareness of the importance of SEL safety for students points towards teachers understanding the impact of historical racism and the need to embrace antiracist SEL practices.

A respondent also said, “I want to make checking (a form of verbal bullying popular among school aged children) less popular, but I realize the practice will not stop by punishing students, but by helping them to grow their empathy for each other.” This form of bullying threatens the SEL safety of the learning space for targeted children. Verbal “put downs” can be
the source of many students feeling emotionally unsafe in the learning environment. One teacher said, “Rather than referring students to the office, I will now try discussing with students the impact of this name calling game on their classmates as a way of developing empathy.” Another teacher said, “I am eager to adopt the shared language from the professional development model that asks students to be ‘upstanders’ in the face of bullying, i.e., stand up for the victim of the verbal onslaughts.” Both of these responses denote a shift to SEL that benefits students and that is less punitive by way of reflecting on choices rather than removing the student altogether. This is a more antiracist approach to addressing name calling. It is evident that, in the context of the TEJ Professional Development Model training, teachers gained a greater insight into creating more socially and emotionally safe learning environments free from insults and bullying. One teacher wrote, “Trusting students to be empathetic towards their fellow classmates goes a long way to creating socially and emotionally safe learning environments.” In the context of the research question, the teachers saw the need to resist the more racist approach of sending the perpetuating students out of the classroom. They saw the value of taking the more humanizing and antiracist approach of trusting students to develop empathy for each other. One teacher noted, “I now realize that when properly applied, SEL can better serve the needs of marginalized children by trusting them to reflect and adjust rather than being punished.”

After a session on the connection between SEL and academic achievement, participants were asked for their takeaways on the session. One respondent said, “Learning about SEL was important because emotions are critical components of the learning process, and it should be about the whole child.” Another indicated learning that “SEL is a better predictor of school performance than IQ because students cannot learn or absorb their learning when they don't feel safe.” Another respondent said that they now know the power of their words and actions “to hurt
or heal at any moment and that hurting kids cannot learn as they, like we, shut down when hurting.” These are powerful indicators that teachers grew in their understanding of the connections between SEL and academic outcomes. More racist approaches to SEL simply connect it to students’ behaviors.

There was a session in the SEL training that gave language to roles that people play in conflict: bystander, upstander, perpetrator, or victim. One respondent stated,

This shared SEL language helped to show students they have a choice in the roles that they take on and have the power to promote positive school culture. The notion that students have agency and that they can determine the outcome of events by their actions is a great way of helping my students feel seen, heard, and valued.

Another respondent also affirmed the importance of “educating everyone on the terms perpetrator, victim, bystander, and upstander in managing bullying behaviors” and expressed the hope that their school would “embrace this language in building a more positive culture that is welcoming to all.” Developing shared language for more equitable responses is an indicator of a commitment to a more equitable approach to school culture and responses to conflict. Again, reflecting on the roles that people play in conflict, a respondent said,

Sometimes students may engage in perpetrator roles for acceptance. I now will try and see what is driving a kid to act out and get to the root causes rather than just focusing on the behavior as long as no one is being physically harmed.

This indicates a deeper and less racist approach to understanding the choices students make. Rather than the racist practice of criminalize student’s behavior the educator is humanizing. A respondent indicated, “This shared language allowed for self-reflection by both the teachers and students. When I can self-reflect and allow my students the privilege of self-reflection, perhaps we can resolve conflict without office referrals.” The awareness by the teacher that they too need to be self-reflective is a strong indicator that the teacher sees students as worthy of mutual respect, an antiracist SEL idea. Another respondent said, “Learning about
the roles of bystander, upstander, perpetrator, and victim and their impacts can help students self-reflect on their behavior as it relates to their needs and triggers.” These respondents seem to realize that, if students are allowed to be reflective about their choices and why they make them, they have tools for communicating and managing their emotions that lead to misbehaviors. Another teacher stated, “Looking at students’ behavior through an antiracist lens helps me to spot trends in student behavior and I can then be more proactive in addressing the needs students are trying to meet through these behaviors.” This reflection again shows a teacher being reflective about students’ needs rather than merely addressing the behavior. This shows an increased antiracist understanding of social emotional interactions with students. Another respondent indicated,

I now have an interest in restorative circles and restorative conversations that allow students the opportunity to work through their differences. Before this session I would have considered restorative practices as waste of time and children just need consequences. I would not have the language to help students name their roles in conflict.

This embracing of restorative practice indicates an antiracist approach to working students through conflict by engaging in the affirming practice of restoration. One participant mentioned specifically that “having shared language to discuss choices and human behavior is useful in helping students to take ownership for their own choices and the consequences.” This shared SEL language could build mutual understanding between the teacher and student and foster a safe atmosphere for learning and growing. Having this shared language gives to students social capital in the classroom, reduces the focus on their shortcomings, and treats them as thoughtful and able to reflect on their own choices as children and not adults.

Key Antiracist Indicator: Showing Empathy for Marginalized Children’s Experiences. In responses to an opened survey on SEL teachers were asked what their biggest
takeaways from the training were, many of the responses showed an increased understanding of
SEL and a more antiracist application of SEL. One respondent acknowledged,

My takeaway is that societies preconceived notions about Black students make it difficult
for society to see and understand the whole person when there is conflict. For example,
some students with diagnosed or undiagnosed mental health issues may encounter
situations regarding behavior issues but may not be aware of what they are doing.

This response is evidence that the teacher is taking a more antiracist approach to SEL, for
they are advocating taking a whole child approach, including considering the mental state of a
child in the context of conflict. Another respondent also affirmed this antiracist approach to SEL
that sees the whole child:

Learning about SEL was important because it helps to build community and break down
barriers and helps students become the best versions of themselves. I now try to look pass
some of the negative things my students and try to focus more on their positive attributes,
all children have them.

As teachers consider the complete SEL needs of students in the learning environment, they can
best help students overcome the barriers that keep them from reaching their fullest potential.

One of the sessions in the SEL training emphasized the SEL skill of practicing empathy
with students in the context of conflict or misbehaviors. The respondents were given an
opportunity to reflect on what they had gained from the session. One respondent affirmed the
importance of

empathizing with students and their agency as the driving force and decisive element in
the classroom and my relationship with students. I now see that empathy is one of the key
elements of SEL that I must develop to become more antiracist in that empathy requires
seeing Black children beyond stereotypical descriptions.

That is a powerful reflection showing movement towards a more antiracist approach to SEL:
using empathy as skill to build relationships and seeing the agency that children should have.

Another respondent said, “Learning the great impact that my own empathy or lack of
empathy could have on how students emotionally experience school was eye opening and
humbling. That’s my biggest takeaway.” Another respondent said, “I intent to be more empathetic. Not to claim to know what the kids are experiencing but at least to try and imagine what it’s like to walk in their shoes.” Being willing to walk in the shoes of poor Black and Brown children as a way of increased understanding would lead to more antiracist mindsets as one takes the time to try and see choices from student’s vantage point. This respondent said,

Being empathetic to me means being more proactive with disruptive students and to use a strict but nurturing approach to addressing their behaviors. I know now that empathy is a skill that I can build and useful tool for preventing conflict students.

Again, this response shows a greater orientation towards more socially and emotionally affirming responses to student behavior. Though the educator values being strict (which can punitive) the increased value placed on empathy could lead to fairer and antiracist interactions with Black and Brown children.

A respondent also committed to “making SEL a priority this year and that they had learned about the importance of showing and encouraging vulnerability, as well as examining their own triggers and reflecting on their students' needs and triggers.” This showed a deep reflection on exploring the interpersonal dimensions of SEL within the context of equity. Of note, another teacher expressed a “I now have a commitment to helping students process traumas by applying SEL principles next time those situations arose.” This also shows a deep commit to an antiracist ideological approach in that Black and Brown children behavior is too often criminalized rather than explored through SEL principles. These responses indicate some of the teachers had a renewed commitment to antiracism as evident by their commitment to SEL.

**Key Antiracist Indicator: Connecting Social–Emotional Learning to Academics.** TEJ Professional Development Model training integrates an approach to SEL that is connected to academic outcomes and not just behavioral management. When asked to reflect on SEL in the
context of educating for equity and justice, respondents made some connections to SEL and academic outcomes. For example, one of the respondents said that a key takeaway was the connection between the role of SEL in building safe communities for learning and better academic outcomes has never been more important. I now know that if SEL is not attached to academic outcomes, it’s really a form of behavioral control.

Thus, focusing on safe learning communities as opposed to the perceived inabilities of children could lead to greater academic outcomes. Another teacher, commenting on academics in the context of SEL, shared,

This work moved me to a greater understanding and commitment to seeing the connections to what my students learn and how they navigate their emotions in the learning process. For example, a loud student might just be passionate and need skills to channel that passion to learning rather than being seen as acting up.

This response was an amazing reflection on the power humanizing students’ emotional responses and attaching those responses to learning. This a clear shift from the more racist approach of punishing students or belittling them for making noise. This is an important admittance in that Black and Brown children are often held highly responsible for the mistakes they make and frankly are not always treated as boys and girls, but rather as adults. Children make noise! This teacher’s comment is an indicator of a self-reflection that will lead to a more antiracist approach to SEL.

Finally, relative to this SEL conversation, a teacher also named “the need for more wraparound services as well as assistance and guidance with helping students with special needs and students who come from broken homes or other spaces that provide a lack of consistency or structure.” This does show that, even after the TEJ Professional Development Model experience, teachers will have to continue the work of resisting the tendency to want to fix students. This respondent’s “broken homes” comment is an indicator of the need for continued reflection. However, the respondent did mention the need for wraparound services, at least noting that
resources must be allocated to assist the children that she deemed had come from broken homes. In spite of this response, overall the responses showed the importance of grounding student behavior in the context of SEL in a way that’s empowering and antiracist. However, as noted in the review of literature, SEL is tricky in that it can be used both as a tool to humanize and empower students, but also as a tool for behavioral modification and reinforcing stereotypes. Teachers in this training were encouraged to do the former in the interest of a more antiracist approach to SEL.

**Key Antiracist Indicator: A Deeper Commitment to and Capacity for Social–Emotional Learning.** So how committed to SEL where teachers after the training? In the following responses, teachers specifically named their learnings and commitments to SEL. “I learned that SEL can be effective if there is school-wide buy-in so that students can experience consistency from adult to adult. I am committed, but this seems to need a shared enterpriser to really produce results.” This respondent notes a commitment to SEL but also raises a critical warning that adults must be all in for antiracist SEL practices to benefit students. Another respondent said,

> Today I learned that SEL is more important in schools than I had previously thought, as I actually did not fully understand how vulnerable the children must feel in learning environments that do not privilege who they are and believe in what they can achieve.

This respondent denoted the connection between SEL and academic outcomes for “vulnerable,” in this case Black and Brown children. Connecting SEL to learning and not only to behavior is a critical antiracist approach to SEL.

Another respondent wrote,

> Today what I learned about SEL is that it is important to my practice because it helps the students to understand what emotions they are experiencing at any moment and to learn how to channel that emotion in a way that leads to a more positive outcome for them.
All of that is so important from an antiracist SEL prospective in that Black and Brown children are more likely to receive more severe consequences for losing control of their emotional responses. Interrelated understanding of SEL comes from an antiracism approach in which teachers share power with their children.

Further showing evidence of these teachers’ commitment to SEL, one teacher wrote, “Today I learned the importance of SEL and incorporating this in my classroom beginning [on] Day One. Our students need both the content and SEL. No one is going to want to learn if they [don't] feel known.” This respondent makes the important point of starting with incorporating SEL, rather than being reactive. As other respondents had, this respondent also linked SEL to the desire to learn. Again, it’s an important finding in the context of antiracist teaching as Black and Brown children’s motivation to learn is often blamed for disengagement. Another respondent wrote,

Today I learned the significance of emotional support in the classroom. This is important because implementing this is proven to enhance the classroom environment. Tomorrow I will ensure my practices include honoring emotional support to create a trusting and productive space for learning.

This response is yet more evidence that suggests that the TEJ Professional Development Model approached SEL in a way that benefited and did not yoke Black and Brown children.

One should note that the respondent named the connection between emotional support, classroom environment, trust, and learning. Along with the commitment, this nuanced understanding of SEL is a critical indicator that this teacher would resist the Eurocentric approach to SEL and embrace a more antiracist approach. Further evidence that the TEJ Professional Development Model approach led to a commitment to SEL can be found in these two other responses: “I will plan SEL-focused workshops/activities with students at least monthly throughout the year,” and “I left the training thinking about ways to integrate SEL in
everything that I do with my students.” The first respondent shows a commitment to SEL, yet not in an integrated way, but more in focused sessions, whereas the second respondent plans an integrated approach. What is common here is a shared commitment to SEL whether integrated or not, but one could look for further evidence to support the claim that a more integrated approach is antiracist in its impact.

Beyond a mere commitment to SEL, there are findings that support that the TEJ Professional Development Model training developed teachers’ capacity to implement SEL strategies through a race equity lens. The following is a discussion of findings from exit tickets following a session on the “Six Components of a Reflective Classroom.” The session was designed to give teachers a framework for embedding SEL practices. The exit ticket prompt was: “What new learnings, strategies, or thoughts you are now leaving with?” Respondent 1 wrote, “I have learned a lot about humanizing students and my role in de-escalating tense interactions. Children have bad days as well.” This response shows that the teacher learned to take an approach to SEL that “humanizes” students, but also recognizes that the teacher has agency and a role when students seem to not be managing their emotions well. The respondent’s willingness to take responsibility for “de-escalating” indicates that the teacher is not placing the burden on the child. Another respondent wrote, “I now have some real strategies to use to help students identify emotions and de-escalate. I also feel more comfortable to address inappropriate comments made by students.” Similarly, the teacher took responsibility for handling an emotionally tense moment with the child, but they also claimed an increased ability to address inappropriate comments.

These findings are critical to the study in that they provide evidence that the teachers are taking less punitive and racist approaches to tense moments such as office referrals that could lead to suspensions. The training seems to have provided some skill building in this area.
Another respondent said it this way: “It is important that we get to know about our students’ social and emotional health. My words and actions can hurt or heal at any moment. [I am] think[ing] of more ways [to] empower my students.” Again, the response indicates that the teacher is taking responsibility by realizing the power of their responses in any given moment. These respondents seem to gain an understanding that SEL must be approached in ways that promote understanding of students’ context.

Another respondent stated, “I now know the importance of positive affirmation of students. SEL cannot work without positive affirmations.” This respondent sees positive SEL as affirming students and denotes this as new learning from the professional development experience. Another respondent wrote, “I will try to develop a positive community with my students and be supportive of those with behavior issues.” One should note that this respondent is also taking a more humanizing and supportive approach. This was a common thread among the responses. It is a critical finding in that a more humanizing and supportive approach to Black and Brown children’s perceived behavior issues is a more antiracist approach, and this training seemed to have impacted teachers’ understanding. One respondent made a direct link to SEL and antiracism by writing, “A positive and social emotional[ly] safe classroom is an engaging and antiracist classroom.” This is further evidence that the training linked SEL to antiracism in a way that pushed teachers to a more antiracist understanding of SEL.

Several responses emerged in the data that also suggest that teachers made the connection between positive SEL and community building. A respondent wrote: “I will try to create a greater sense of community with my students by opening up more as a person. That’s what I took from the SEL session.” The need for a greater sense of community is apparent, but interestingly, this teacher spoke of “opening up more as a person,” indicating that their own SEL awareness
contributes to that community building. Another respondent wrote, “We need to break the isolation and trust children to socialize by more community outings and a chance to collaborate across grade/subject areas.” Again, this shows this relationship between developing SEL skills through community building. These responses show willingness to take a proactive approach to SEL rather than being reactive and punitive. A third respondent wrote, “Creating a community that allow students to develop the curiosity to question things and allowing them to make mistakes without fear of retribution is critical to SEL.” This shows another connection to positive approaches to SEL for these teachers is grounded in community building and not fear of punishment. This was a critical finding in that it points to an understanding of antiracist teaching in the context of SEL.

SEL is a key component to the TEJ Professional Development Model approach; therefore, there was much related data. On an exit ticket after a session entitled “Developing Mindsets for Equity Focused Teaching,” the respondents were asked to self-report how their thinking had shifted during the session. Many of the responses were grounded in SEL. One respondent stated, “I came in thinking about how to make my students better. I am leaving thinking about making them more active and engaged. [I am] honoring them as people!” The respondent expresses a connection between honoring students and higher levels of engagement, essentially connecting the students’ SEL well-being to their engagement in the learning process. Another respondent seemed challenged in change their mindset, writing:

I always focused on my content and learning objectives and not paying much attention to SEL probably until something bad happens. I learned here that being aware of my students’ social and emotional needs is going to increase my ability to reach them.

This and other responses are evidence that, in this professional development model, the connection between SEL and student engagement was centered as a key learning.
There was also a preponderance of evidence that suggests that teachers gained not only a greater understanding of an antiracist approach to SEL, but also antiracist SEL practices. A respondent wrote, “I left thinking that I have great techniques to engage my students and the ability to appeal to my students. SEL is critical!” Notice that the respondent mentioned increased ability to appeal to students. This is keeping with an important thread in the data that indicates teachers are being reflective and taking on the ownership for building safe relationships with the children. A second respondent wrote, “I now will try initiating cooperative learning groups as it helps students develop their SEL skills.” This respondent expressed a link between developing students’ SEL skills and teacher practices. This finding is important in this context because lip service to antiracist SEL is common (Simmons, 2010), but actually practicing it takes strategies and skill building. A third respondent wrote, “Creating reflective classrooms will allow the class to become a place of discussion. This is what I believe education should be: a continuing conversation.” Again, these three responses indicate that teachers gained some critical SEL-centered strategies from an antiracist approach.

Conclusion

The core purpose of this study was to examine the impact of the TEJ Professional Development Model. More particularly, the study examined how teachers would better understand antiracist teaching after engaging in this professional development model. The context of these teachers’ experience with the professional development model was particularly important as the boys and girls that they teach were overwhelmingly Black and Brown children from low socioeconomic homes according to the schools’ free and reduced-price lunch qualification data. The middle and high school teachers in this study are attempting to take a serious and more equitable approach to closing disturbing gaps. It seemed beneficial to these
teachers to explore the way that the idea of race has historically shaped the way in which first Black and later Brown children experienced education in the Western context. There is evidence that this exploration seemed to have affected their understanding of what it means to be antiracist teachers.

The professional development experience also exposed the racist idea of White supremacy that teaches that Black and Brown children are intellectually inferior, which notions are founded on disproven racial stereotypes. The findings suggest that, when teachers engage in the TEJ Professional Development Model, they become intentional about implementing more equitable educational practices in their classrooms. Teachers become more equity-based and engage in more culturally mediated practices in the classroom. Teachers become more effective in developing a vision for their classrooms as socially and emotionally safe spaces that mitigate the impact of racism and historical inequities on students. Teachers develop more trusting, personalized, and respectful relationships with students and created more open, inclusive, and student-centered classrooms. The collective data addressed the research question:

- How does teachers’ understanding of antiracist teaching change when they engage in the Teaching for Equity and Justice Professional Development Model?

The data shows evidence that teachers’ understanding of antiracist teaching changes when they engage in the TEJ Professional Development Model. It also opens doors for more study.
Chapter 5

Discussion

Research Question

- How does teachers’ understanding of antiracist teaching change when they engage in the Teaching for Equity and Justice Professional Development Model?

Summary of the Study

In this study, the researcher analyzed how a group of teachers made meaning of a professional development experience, Teaching for Equity and Justice (TEJ) Professional Development Model, using an constructivists–interpretivists approach to the data analysis. The TEJ training was designed for teachers who primarily teach historically marginalized students of color, in this case overwhelmingly Black and Brown children. The researcher analyzed a variety of archival data of different teacher responses over 4 years of experiencing the professional development. All of the teachers taught in schools in which more than 95% of the children were Black and Brown. The TEJ Professional Development Model took teachers through four modules that were essentially aimed at (a) exploring the historical context of racial inequities in schools, (b) examining the roots of negative stereotypes of Black and Brown children in education, and (c) challenging teachers to reexamine their practices through a racial equity lens. The examination of the data was conducted through a constructivist–interpretivist perspective. As a constructivist–interpretivist, Stake (1995) acknowledged that the researcher not only makes meaning of how participants construct knowledge, but also how the researcher plays an important interpretive role. In this Chapter 5 discussion, the researcher explores (a) the major conclusions of the study, (b) its implications for teacher mindsets and practices, and (c)
recommendations for potential further research. In this case study, the researcher explored the research question,

- How does teachers’ understanding of antiracist teaching change when they engage in the Teaching for Equity and Justice Professional Development Model?

There is reasonable evidence that the TEJ Professional Development Model affected teachers in a way that shifted their mindsets and practices toward being more antiracist. The study surfaced a couple of critical conclusions: when racist foundations are addressed in professional development that attention can mitigate the impact of racism on secondary teachers’ mindsets and practices. The opposite could also be true, meaning that students of color will continue to suffer inequities if racist foundations in schools are not addressed in professional development. Also, teachers who receive this professional development are more likely to engage in CRE practices.

**Conclusions**

*Increased Antiracist Approaches to Educating Black and Brown Children*

Teachers in the study proved to move towards embracing a more antiracist approach to educating Black and Brown children. Several of the key tenets of antiracism were evident in the outcomes. The first major tenant of antiracism is that racism is pervasive; it will persist when it is unchallenged, and would continue to privilege Whiteness (Akintunde, 1999, DiAngelo, 2006, Kendi (as quoted in Schwartz, 2019; Lipsitz, 1995). The pervasiveness of racism in schools that primarily teach poor, Black and Brown children makes it critical that professional development leads to a disruption of racist, dominant narrative ideology. It can be concluded from the findings that the TEJ Professional Development Model increased participating teachers’ understanding of the impact of historical racism on schooling and also increased their commitment to disrupting
single-story White supremacy narratives about their students. It is not clear from the findings that teachers would take the steps to challenge how racist systems operate in their schools, yet they are more likely to adopt pedagogical approaches to mitigate the impact of racism.

The second major tenet of antiracism is the importance of having a very direct confrontation with racism. “Antiracists claim that race is much more important than social class and other types of disparity” (Delgado, 2010, p. 38; Niemonen, 2007, p. 12). Therefore, antiracist teaching centers the impact of racism as a major factor in the educating of Black and Brown children. The findings from the study showed that the TEJ Professional Development Model led to teachers having a more radical and direct confrontation with racism and white supremacy by explicitly centering race and racism rather than using a generalization of educational inequality. By centering race and historical racism as key indicators of Black and Brown children’s experiences, teachers in the study had a direct confrontation with racist ideas and policies (e.g., over testing and tracking). The findings did not indicate that teachers would take an active stand against testing, which would be an antiracist act, yet they did increase their awareness that testing and tracking are racist approaches. One of critical tenants of being an antiracist is intentionality. Kendi (as quoted in Koenig, 2020) suggested that the most important aspect of being an antiracist educator is to make sure to be intentional about being antiracist. As noted, the findings do indicate that the teachers will take a more antiracist approach to their own work, but it is uncertain that they would challenge the systemic racism in the larger school context.

Another compelling conclusion related to antiracism is that the professional development changed the way that teachers think about intelligence. Evidence showed that teachers in the study viewed intelligence through a more antiracist approach. According to Kendi (as cited in Koenig (as quoted in Koenig, 2020) antiracists “don’t consider intelligence or how we assess
one’s intelligence based on how much a person know but assess one’s intelligence based on how much one has a desire to know.”

Teachers in the study demonstrated more willingness to reimagine how they measure or assess student success. This could lead to a massive, needed change for real education reform to happen: the dismantling of standardized tests as the key determinant of what students know and can do. When Black and Brown children are able to demonstrate their intelligence and aptitude beyond the standardized tests, they can activate culture references that are critical sources to show what they have learned. They can also then fully activate their genius and creativity.

A third key tenet of antiracism theory is to reject neutrality. No one is neutral; if you do not act against racism, you are perpetuating it (DiAngelo, 2006, 2012). This tenet is also critical in the context of schooling, for if teachers do not actively resist oppressive pedagogy and stand up against institutional inequity, they are a part of the problem. For example, teachers who resist “teaching to the test” are acting as antiracist teachers. By contrast, teachers who contend that they are just doing as instructed yet claim to have the students’ best interest at heart, are still perpetuating racism if they participate in pedagogy that they know is irrelevant and disengaging to students. It’s difficult to indicate whether these teachers would surely resist their orders and rebel against oppressive pedagogy, but with increased understanding of the impact on their students, the study findings show that they are more critically conscience and would likely take actions in the best interest of Black and Brown children.

**Embracement of Culture Responsive Education to Combat Racism**

As noted in the previous section, the findings showed that teachers developed a more antiracist understanding and approach to what it means to educate impoverished Black and Brown children. As a way of practicing antiracism, teachers in the study showed renewed
commitments to and an embracement of cultural responsiveness in various and interesting ways that also speak to the literature on cultural responsiveness. According to Ladson-Billings (1994), culturally relevant pedagogy “empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically using cultural references to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes.” The study showed that teachers embraced culturally relevant pedagogy as a way of assuring that their practices were connected to experiences of Black and Brown children therefore reducing the chance of engaging in oppressive pedagogy. The intellectual empowerment that Ladson-Billings speaks of comes from drawing on students’ personal cultural knowledge to help them not only to comprehend what is being taught, but also to care more about the learning. The findings did not prove that students would care more about learning, for the study was centered on teacher outcomes, but there was clear evidence that teachers embraced culturally relevant education as an antiracist approach to pedagogy. This could be attributed to the fact that the TEJ Professional Development Model contextualized the need for culturally responsive practices in the context of combatting historical racism and White supremacy narratives about Black and Brown children’s readiness and motivations for learning.

Gay (2010) defined culturally responsive teaching as “using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of references, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them” (p. __). Learning experiences that are more relevant to students’ lives lead to higher levels of student engagement and motivation to learn. This has critical implications for Black and Brown children, for because of historical racism and deficit thinking of some teachers, students are often accused of being disinterested in learning. The fact that respondents in the study showed an increased commitment to culturally relevant education could mean that they are willing to take a critical look at their practices rather
than taking the deficit approach of blaming the students for disengagement. Gay (2013) denoted that replacing deficit perspectives of students and their communities with more empowering references is essential to culture responsive practices. These deficit perspectives are rooted in White supremacy ideology; therefore, the TEJ Professional Development Model led teachers to resist them. The evidence from the study indicates a greater commitment to culturally relevant education and that teachers have had a serious encounter with deficit thinking that leads to oppressive pedagogy (Friere, 1993).

Some other key research on CRE also indicates that when education is centered on students’ cultural experiences, it builds students’ awareness and empowers them to address social issues that affect their communities (Gay 2013; Ladson-Billings, 1994). The research did not measure whether students would go on to address social issues in their community, but what the evidence does indicate is that the teachers are more likely to empower their students to do so as the content pedagogy becomes more culturally centered. In essence, the evidence indicated that when educators center students’ cultures and communities in the learning experience, students are more likely to be aware of the issues that their community face and more likely to see themselves as agents of change. Additionally, one could conclude that empowering Black and Brown children socially and politically will help them build the skills and the desire to remain civically active into adulthood. The Teaching for Equity and Justice Professional Development Model unlocks teachers’ critical consciousness so that they are much more likely to engage in culturally responsive educational practices that they otherwise might not have deemed important or lacked the skills to implement.

Gay (2010) described appropriately pushing teachers to think about being culturally responsive as not merely a strategy for teaching, but also as part of humanizing the lives and
experiences of students. As stated, teachers in the study are now more likely to engage in culturally responsive practices and, therefore, to create this humanizing learning environment. This is important, for in too many contexts, Black and Brown children are in fact dehumanized. The very present and consistent brutality at the hands of police is just one way in which these particular children are dehumanized. If being more culturally responsive as Gay suggested is humanizing, then this TEJ Professional Development Model could go a long way to mitigate the impact of structural and systemic racism in that educators would be more inclined to actively counter these

**Implications**

The stated conclusion that there is evidence to support the fact that teachers in the study have taken more antiracist approaches to educating Black and Brown children and have displayed a greater embracement of CRE has critically important implications for both teacher mindsets and practices in the context of educating Black and Brown children. The implications include that reframing SEL through an antiracism lens which will lead to some shifts in teacher practices and approaches to SEL that are more in the interest of engaging students than punishing them. In addition, the idea that Black and Brown children’s school success relies heavily on their personal grit, is mediated by evidence that teachers see their roles in removing barriers to learning and engaging in culturally responsive educational practices. The study also has huge implications for how teachers approach poverty frameworks. Viewing Black and Brown student’s financial poverty through a deficit lens leads to reinscribing White supremacy and oppressive pedagogy. Lastly, the implications for teachers embracing unconscious bias training as an honest encounter with their own blind spots can have real implications for being more critically conscience of bias and could lead to more antiracist and culturally responsive teaching.

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Reframing Social–Emotional Learning Teacher Practices

One key feature of the TEJ Professional Development Model training was SEL framed in the context of antiracism. Educational researchers and policymakers agree that SEL is essential for student success in school and beyond (Durlak et al., 2011, as cited in Dromitrovich et al., 2019; Young & Webb, 2019).

The TEJ Professional Development Model proved essential to increasing educator commitment to SEL, but equally important is their understanding of how to take a more antiracist approach to SEL that serves the interest of Black and Brown children’s education. Researchers have shown that SEL is most effective when it is thoughtfully and explicitly integrated into academic learning (Kahn et al., 2019; Jones & Kahn, 2017), but achieving an integrated approach to SEL is one of the main challenges that schools face when trying to implement SEL programs (CASEL, 2019). However, an approach to SEL that is more integrated is critically to leveraging SEL as a tool for learning and not for behavioral modification. For example, developing students’ interpersonal skills (a feature of SEL) should be done in the context of learning and not for the sake of getting students to behave. What this looks like is that teachers will engage in student centered practices that indicate that students’ identities and stories matter by integrating culturally responsive strategies and by making sure the curricula is reflective of communities with which students can identify. The TEJ Professional Development Model also facilitated self-reflection that allowed teachers to actually think about integrating SEL objectives into standards-based academic content, making it more interesting and relevant. This evidence-based approach promotes effective teaching and fosters equitable classrooms, thereby improving students’ social–emotional competencies, their civic skills and dispositions, and their academic engagement, motivation, and achievement (CASEL 2019)
One of the key challenges to an integrated approach to SEL is that SEL has too often been used in the context of behavioral modification which could lead to racist and oppressive practices. As teachers approach SEL from a more integrated approach, they will adopt more effective and antiracist ways of addressing conflict with children. The approach to SEL that teachers experienced in the TEJ Professional Development Model was focused on teacher competencies and learning environments that affect student outcomes rather than on student behavior. The implications are that teachers are more likely to think about more antiracist responses to student behavioral issues (e.g., engaging in important restorative justice practices in place of more punitive tools like office referrals). Of course, the office referrals discriminately target Black and Brown children; therefore, restorative justice is essential to antiracist teaching.

The TEJ Professional Development Model also facilitated moments for teachers to reflect on their own SEL competencies and not merely on those of their students. Therefore, teachers are more likely to deescalate conflict in an effort to keep students in class and engaged rather than removed from the learning environment. It is well documented that the longer and the more often children are out of the learning environment, the further behind they fall which begins a vicious cycle of failure that could be avoided by increased SEL awareness of the teacher.

**Reframing Grit**

Another implication for teachers in the study and future teachers who experience the TEJ Professional Development Model is they are more likely to reframe grit in the context of historical and systemic racism thereby reshaping their practices. While conducting studies across many industries, Duckworth and Quinn (2009) concluded that the characteristic that mostly determined success was that of grit. Duckworth and Quinn defined grit as a characteristic of someone who displays a great deal of passion and persists to achieve what seem like
unachievable goals. On the surface, it makes sense that professional development aimed at helping teachers to develop grit in their students would be great for students. However, when this approach reinscribes White supremacy ideas about students of color, the impact may not mirror the intent. Asking adolescents who are, in fact, suffering from historical and institutional racism to merely have a growth mindset and be more persistent is paramount to blaming the victim. The findings from this study indicate that the teachers who experiencing the TEJ Professional Development Model training will engage in teacher practices that will actually remove racist barriers to student outcomes, rather than expecting children to just rely on their own resiliency. As evidence in the Chapter 4 findings teachers in the study are more likely to take engage in student centered pedagogical practices. In one of the studies, Duckworth (as cited in Perkins-Gough, 2013) stated, “Grit is not just having resilience in the face of failure, but having deep commitment that you remain loyal to over many years” (p. __). The TEJ Professional Development Model would lead to teachers contextualizing grit in the context of historical racism. By contextualizing grit in historical racism and historical inequities, teachers will continue to resist stereotypical explanations for students’ failure, including placing fault in the students’ culture. The TEJ Professional Development Model approach moves the responsibility from students to teachers to create more student-centered, culturally mediated, and engaging learning environments. This is more antiracist than asking students to persist in spite of learning environments that are not conducive for their intellectual or social emotional growth. It is not that students do not need professional grit and persistence, but Black and Brown children should not be expected to have more grit than their peers. The TEJ Professional Development Model led teachers to a grappling with the conditions and systemic barriers that Black and Brown children have unfairly to overcome.
Reframing Poverty

Payne’s Framework for Understanding Poverty. Payne’s (2002) framework surfaces similar problematic themes as does the grit work: it reinforces negative stereotypes, it claims cultural deficiencies in the student community, and it is associated with saviorism. Payne detailed the differences among students according to their social economic class. The goal of Payne’s professional development was to help teachers to be more effective in working with children from poverty. One could reasonably imply that, if teachers who attend the TEJ Professional Development Model training were to engage in Payne’s framework, they would be cognizant of the potential racist implications of the model and work to mitigate the impact.

Payne’s (2002) framework heavily generalizes the experiences of students in poverty, and those generalizations, perhaps unintended, reinscribe historical stereotypes and single narratives about Black and Brown children and their families. The TEJ Professional Development Model will mitigate this effect, for the findings in this present study indicate that the teachers who participate in it are not as likely to see poverty through a deficit lens. Therefore, these teachers will be less likely to lower expectations of Black and Brown children using poverty deficit narratives as the excuse. Furthermore, teachers in the TEJ Professional Development Model training are more likely to be critically conscious and believe that they have agency to mitigate the impact of poverty on their students’ learning opportunities. Without the historical context and intentional reflections on educator mindsets in the TEJ Professional Development Model training, implanting Payne’s framework approach runs the risk of thinking of impoverished children of color through a deficit lens. Payne’s framework minimizes the systemic issues of poverty to focus more on class behavior, which in effect leaves the educator to see the barriers to achieving as being attached to the student’s community, rather than to their own pedagogy and
practices, which is a result similar to the grit approach. Further implications are that teachers in this study are not likely to practice saviorism or assimilationism which can reinscribe White supremacy. The evidence from the study implies that the TEJ Professional Development Model approach is about removing barriers to Black and Brown students’ social, emotional, and academic success and empowering them in the learning environment. In the context of the TEJ Professional Development Model, poverty is a symptom of historical racism and not a factor in students’ abilities or motivations to learn.

**Reframing Unconscious Bias Training**

According to Kerwin (2018), unconscious biases are the stereotypes that affect people’s beliefs and actions without them realizing it. The idea behind the unconscious bias training for teachers is that, if they are made more aware of their biases, it might mitigate some of the factors that contribute to the failure of students of Black and Brown children. However, consistent with the discussions on grit and poverty frameworks, unconscious bias training can also reinscribe White supremacy if educators resist owning their bias as a fundamental problem in favor of believing stereotypical narratives about their students.

Evidence from the study indicated that the TEJ Professional Development Model experience led teachers to contextualize antibias training in the context of historical racism. The training exposes teachers to how stereotypical negative narratives about Black and Brown children’s intelligence have persisted over time to set up this deplorable bias; therefore, teachers are more likely to believe that they have bias. The implication of teachers admitting their own bias could lead to them thinking critically about their pedagogy and practices, which would likely lead to more student centered, culturally responsive, and antiracist teaching practices.
To be clear, teachers who have had this professional development will still have encounters with their biases, but they will be more knowledgeable about how those biases actually manifest in unequal treatment of students based on races. For example, it has become known that unconscious attitudes towards particular racial groups can affect, for example, discipline decisions. Extensive research has documented implicit associations that link Black boys to criminality (Eberhardt et al., 2004). Teachers in the study are presumed to be more likely to consider the role that their bias might be playing in their discipline decisions; therefore, they might choose to slow down and be more reflective. This moment of reflection can lead to a less punitive approach to discipline. Staats (2015) conducted a school related study of unconscious bias in school discipline and found that ambiguous infractions such as disruptive behavior or making noise were very subjective; therefore, educators’ unexamined bias often led them to dipropionate punishing of children of color. The study indicates that the TEJ Professional Development Model experience leads to educators becoming more aware of their blind spots, such that many have had a renewed commitment to seeing their students through a culturally mediated, antiracist lens.

In summary, the aforementioned models and frameworks collectively are rooted in White supremacy ways of thinking about professional development. Likely unintentional, they still have the potential of reinforcing stereotypical narratives about Black and Brown students, treating students as if they need saving, asking students to overcome barriers rather than removing them, and finding cultural deficits in students and their communities. The teachers in this study now have not only developed their critical consciousness for seeing this injustice, but also have recognized the importance of historical context for resisting the tendency to reinscribe notions of White supremacy through these well-meaning models and frameworks.
Recommendation for Future Research

The core purpose of this study was to examine the impact of the TEJ Professional Development Model on teachers in a small public charter school district in an impoverished community in Memphis, Tennessee. This case study proved to provide some remarkable findings that could have wider implications if the study were to be taken to scale. Future research could be conducted on the three key areas, exemplified by these questions:

- What would be the impact of the TEJ Professional Development Model on policy makers?
- What would be the impact on students whose teachers had the TEJ Professional Development Model training?
- What would be the impact on preservice teachers who might participate in the TEJ Professional Development Model?

Teaching for Equity and Justice and Policy Makers

Policy makers such as district leaders and school board members have an incredible impact on schools that educate Black and Brown children. Though many policy decisions are now decentralized, the economic resources to carry out real reforms are often controlled by the district. Therefore, the researcher asks:

- What could happen if district leaders and school board members contextualized their decisions from a historically informed and antiracist perspective?
- How might that change the educational experiences for Black and Brown children?

Well, known policy historian Darling-Hammond (as quoted in Christianakis, 2019) said, Bureaucratic solutions to problems of practice will always fail because effective teaching is not routine, students are not passive, and questions of practice are not simple, predictable, or standardized. Consequently, instructional decisions cannot be formulated on high then packaged and handed down to teachers. (Article preview)
It would be of interest to explore whether, if policy makers had this training, they would resist making top-down policy decisions that do not at all center the voices and experiences of the children and communities most affected by the decisions that they make.

**Teaching for Equity and Justice and Student Outcomes**

Another important study that could be conducted would be to do a comparison of student data for teachers who might receive the TEJ Professional Development Model training and students of teachers who did not receive the training. The researcher then asks these questions:

- Would the students’ academic outcomes be statistically, significantly different?
- Will office referrals and suspension rates be significantly different?
- Will student’s attendance and engagement be significantly different?

According to Foorman and Torgesen (2001), “Students who do not keep pace with their peers in learning to read need the same instructional components; however, they need instruction that is more explicit, more comprehensive, more intensive, and more supportive” (p. __). Historically, poor Black and Brown children fall behind their peers in literacy because, as Foorman and Torgesen suggested, the instruction is not explicitly tied to their experiences and is often not rigorous enough, and the students lack the support to reach their fullest potential. It would be of value to study whether teachers who are exposed to the TEJ Professional Development Model obtain better student outcomes because they are more likely to engage in these more antiracist and transformative practices.

**Teaching for Equity and Justice and Preservice Teachers**

Cross (1992) stated,

As part of our effort to prepare teachers to teach in urban schools, we require our students to take a course entitled Introduction to Teaching. The course is intended to help the students learn to teach children who are racially different from themselves. As an African American woman, I take teaching about racism and improving race relations very
seriously. I know from my own research (Cross 1992) how teachers' values, beliefs, attitudes, and prejudices affect their teaching. (p. 2)

I know by first-hand experience that Cross and her colleagues at the University of Memphis have an explicit commitment to mitigating the impact of systemic racism on the educational experiences of Black and Brown children. It would be a great addition to the research to expose preservice teachers to the TEJ Professional Development Model and conduct a qualitative study of their experiences in the first year of teaching. The researcher would then ask:

- Would they have a greater sense of efficacy than other preservice teachers?
- Will they be more likely to resist oppressive pedagogy?
- Will their students’ engagement and motivations to learn be significantly higher than other first-year teachers?

These could be some incredible research questions and could make a great impact on preservice teacher preparedness for teaching impoverished Black and Brown children.

Therefore, the discussion of implications of the study would be not only about the impact in various fields and context, but also about the implications for students whose teachers might participate in this particular professional development approach. The implications can also be especially important for the vast number of teachers who likely did not have a preservice teacher educator experience that explicitly prepared them to educate Black and Brown children from a historically informed and antiracist approach. Sleeter (2016) stated,

The dominance of White perspectives has huge ramifications for what happens in teacher education programs: how curriculum is designed and what is taught; how students are recruited and selected; how new faculty members—and who those new faculty members are—are recruited, hired, and supported; how urgently a program works to address race and ethnicity; and the extent to which faculty members who work with race are supported. (p. __).
The professional development model TEJ Professional Development Model could be an effective tool for countering the Eurocentric experiences that many educators hold.

**Closing Reflection**

In the study, the researcher applied a CRT lens to explore the impact that the TEJ Professional Development Model eventually had on teachers attitudes and practices. Racism is an integral, permanent, and indestructible component of this society (Banks, 1993; Bell, 1992). Critical race theorists challenge educators to face this reality in all spheres. Education is a sphere in which educators must face the persistence of racism to mitigate its impact Black and Brown children. One can reasonably conclude that the TEJ Professional Development Model is beneficial to teachers because they have an encounter with the way that race has shaped the way in which Black and Brown children are viewed in the learning process. Many teachers unconsciously believe that some children are intellectually inferior because of their race, which is a racial and cultural stereotype (Kozol, 1997).

However, the TEJ Professional Development Model helped to expose the roots of that deplorable thinking. The study showed that present-day professional development models whose designers aspire to develop antiracist teachers will be enhanced by mitigating the daily injustices perpetuated on our most vulnerable boys and girls through historical racist narratives and oppressive pedagogy. Antiracist professional development is enhanced by exploring the impact of historical racism on schooling in the curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, and approaches to behavioral management. Such a historical contextualization could make professional development more effective in preparing teachers to educate Black and Brown children. As evidenced in the study, when professional developed is centered in understanding the legacies of historical racism teachers practice more student-centered and culturally responsive approaches.
They also understand SEL in the context of academic development and not as a means to controlling students’ behavior.

In addition, the belief that boys and girls with racialized identities fail in school because of deficits in their race or culture is largely based on historical lies and myths about Black racial inferiority that has over time been applied to other people of color with racialized identities (Anderson, 1990). The professional development approach that teachers in the study experienced equipped them to have a direct confrontation with the myths of racial inferiority of Black and Brown children. Teachers’ failure to confront these vicious and false myths has a profoundly negative impact on our most marginalized children. When professional development does not focus on historical racism, it follows the status quo, which is to focus on equipping teachers to manage students’ behavior rather than challenging them as young learners and critical thinkers. Effective antiracist professional development should be situated in dismantling the historical impact of White supremacy, which could lead to more equity centered decisions and practices in schools.

In a public address, Ladson-Billings (2006) offered a comprehensive analysis on the state of education. Ladson-Billings (2006) suggested the term education debt. Repositioning the achievement gap as a national debt supports the notion that historical context matters. The racial achievement gap is yet another false indicator that Black and Brown children are in some way defective and lack the innate intellectual capabilities of their White peers. This professional development approach dispelled these notions and challenged teachers to have a direct confrontation with their own racist’s mindsets and practices. The educational debt cannot be paid by blaming the children to whom the debt is owed (Ladson-Billings, 2006). The can debt only be repaid by challenging the racist epistemologies on which the untruths were built. In this study,
the researcher provided substantial evidence that the TEJ Professional Development Model could be a critical addition to more antiracist approaches to professional by exploring the research question:

- How does teachers’ understanding of antiracist teaching change when they engage in the Teaching for Equity and Justice Professional Development Model?


doi:10.1177/1609406918817954 journals.sagepub.com/home/ijq


https://doi.org/10.1037/1524-9220.5.1.40


Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate IV, W. F. (1995, Fall). *Teachers College Record, 97*(1), 47-68.


https://www.jstor.org/stable/3876731


Tatum, B. (____). Why are all the Black kids sitting together in the cafeteria?


https://doi.org/10.1177/00124502034004006


doi:10.1080/1361332052000341006

Appendix A

Request for Research Assistance

Thank you for contacting Facing History and Ourselves with your research request. To provide you with assistance, we require as much information as you can provide in response to the following questions. The Committee on Research Requests will respond to you based on the information you provide. (please answer as completely as you can)

1. Name of requestor_____________________________________________________

2. Address_____________________________________________________________

3. Phone: Daytime ( ) Home ( )
4. E-mail:

5. Institutional affiliation (school), program and department.
   Curriculum and Instruction, Lynch School of Education, Boston College

6. Current Academic Level
   □ Masters □ Doctoral □ Other

7. Faculty advisor or course instructor

8. How did you hear about Facing History and Ourselves?
   □ Yes □ No If Yes list:

9. Have you attended any Facing History and Ourselves activities or events?
   □ Yes □ No

10. What is the specific purpose of the proposed research?
    □ Class paper (potential pilot study for dissertation) □ Dissertation research □ Other
12. If dissertation, has your proposal been approved?
   ☐ Yes ☐ No

13. What specific assistance are you requesting from FHAO?

14. If assistance is provided, indicate which of the following you are willing to do:
   ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A  Attend a Facing History workshop or institute as a participant
   ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A  Provide a copy of the final report to FHAO
   ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A  Conduct a presentation of the results of your research to FHAO staff prior to submitting a final version of the research or publishing your research

15. On a separate sheet, describe the proposed research design, including:
   - Research question/ Theoretical framework
   - Sample
   - Measures
   - Methods for data collection and analysis
   - If research involves students, describe your plan for handling permissions

(If the request is for doctoral or qualifying paper research, you may substitute a copy of your research proposal and/or review of literature, if available, but remember to indicate your plan for handling permission from subjects.)
All teacher surveys collected were done so with this agreement. If teacher said no to this question that did not proceed with survey.

Facing History and Ourselves has been working with your school this year in a variety of ways. Your perspectives on your school, your teaching, and your students are an important part of understanding the value of the work that Facing History has done. While we are eager to learn from you, your participation in this survey is voluntary. Should you participate, your individual responses would not be shared with anyone except the evaluation team at Facing History. We will share anonymous, aggregated results with Facing History and school staff, however. The more complete your survey the better, but you are, of course, free to skip questions.

Thank you in advance for your time!

If you are willing to participate in this research, please indicate your consent by clicking on Yes.