

UC San Diego

UC San Diego Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title

The Ways of Whiteness: Exploring White Teachers' Perspectives on Whiteness in their High Schools

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/98b4j0m7>

Author

Schwartz, Anne

Publication Date

2022

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SAN MARCOS

The Ways of Whiteness:
Exploring White Teachers' Perspectives on Whiteness in their High Schools

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education

in

Educational Leadership

by

Anne Deborah Schwartz

Committee in charge:

University of California San Diego

Professor Mica Pollock

California State University, San Marcos

Professor Joni Kolman, Chair
Professor Brooke Soles

2022

Copyright

Anne Deborah Schwartz, 2022

All rights reserved.

The dissertation of Anne Deborah Schwartz is approved,
and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on
microfilm and electronically.

University of California San Diego
California State University, San Marcos

2022

DEDICATION

For all of us that went to public schools,
For the teachers working to do better,
For the students pushing for justice and truth,
And for the tiny human growing inside me,
I hope you love school enough to fight for it.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DISSERTATION APPROVAL PAGE	iii
DEDICATION.....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v
LIST OF TABLES.....	viii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	ix
VITA.....	xi
ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION.....	xii
Chapter One: Introduction	1
Statement of the Problem.....	4
Positionality	5
Research Questions.....	6
Significance	6
Chapter Two: Literature Review	8
Critical Whiteness Theory	8
Historical Context of Whiteness and Schooling.....	11
Whiteness in Education Currently	13
<i>Teachers as Assimilators</i>	13
<i>Avoiding Race and Whiteness</i>	16
<i>Addressing Race and Whiteness</i>	21
<i>Whiteness Permeates Everything</i>	22
Chapter Three: Methodology	26
Settings	26
<i>Big Comprehensive High</i>	27
<i>Small Charter High</i>	28
Data Collection	29
<i>Interviews</i>	29
<i>Document Collection</i>	32
Data Analysis.....	32
<i>Article One</i>	33
<i>Article Two</i>	34
Limitations.....	34
Summary.....	35

Chapter Four: Illuminating Whiteness: White Teachers’ Perspectives on How Whiteness Permeates Two High Schools	36
Research Questions.....	39
Conceptual Framework.....	39
<i>Findings from Second Wave CWS</i>	40
Methods	41
<i>Participants</i>	43
<i>Data Collection</i>	44
<i>Data Analysis</i>	45
Findings	46
Whiteness at Big Comprehensive High.....	47
Whiteness at Small Charter High	53
Discussion.....	60
Conclusion.....	62
Chapter Five: Enacting White Domination: How Whiteness Persists in Two High Schools	63
Whiteness in Schools.....	64
Research on Whiteness in Schools	65
White Domination and Teachers’ Thinking	66
Methods	67
<i>Big Comprehensive High (BCH)</i>	68
<i>Small Charter High (SCH)</i>	68
<i>Participants</i>	69
<i>Data</i>	70
<i>Data Analysis</i>	71
Findings	72
<i>Setting up the System</i>	72
<i>Mystify the System</i>	75
<i>Remove the Agents of Actions from the Discourse</i>	79
<i>Stifle the Discussion</i>	81
Discussion.....	83
Implications	85
Chapter Six: Discussion and Conclusions	87
Recommendations for Further Research	87

Recommendations for Practice	88
REFERENCES	92
Appendix A: Interview Protocols	101
Interview 1	101
Interview 2	103

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Student Body Make Up	27
Table 2 Participants	30

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, thank you to Dr. Kolman who held me to high expectations and supported me while I met them. I am a better writer and researcher for having the opportunity to work with you. Dr. Pollock and Dr. Soles, thank you for your feedback and kindness throughout this process.

Thank you to the teachers who agreed to speak to me. This post-pandemic year has been the hardest teaching year of many of our careers and you took two hours out of your lives to talk to someone you had never met. I am lucky to have learned from such generous humans.

To my students, thank you for always pushing me to do better and more. For calling me Dr. Ms. Schwartz long before I was done, and for being the best part of my day every day. And my colleagues, thank you for showing me what schools can look like when they are student-centered, for being willing to talk about race and whiteness, and for continually demonstrating the Be the Best pillar.

To the amazing networks of people who have supported me through the last 3 years, I finished because of you. The JDP 15 Cohort group chat and messages kept me going through the roughest two years. The community of educators and researchers on Twitter, particularly my #didyouwritetoday friends, kept my motivation high who wrote with me, near me, or just on the same day as me, even on days where writing felt impossible.

My friends, thank you for allowing me to disappear, to cry, to complain, and to celebrate. Thank you for being critical thinking partners and making this work better. Thank you for not holding it against me when I did nothing but write for the last 4 months, and for reminding me to come up for air. Thank you for always creating space for me.

Lastly, thank you to my family. To my brother, the best educator I know, thank you for believing in me and reminding me that it is supposed to be hard. And to my parents, you have always modeled caring deeply about what you do and making a difference. I am who I am because of you.

VITA

- 2009 Bachelor of Science, Mathematics, California State University, San Marcos
- 2010 Single Subject Teaching Credential, Mathematics, California State University,
San Marcos
- 2014 Master of Science, Education Psychology, University at Albany, New York
- 2022 Doctor of Education, Educational Leadership, University of California San
Diego, California State University, San Marcos

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

The Ways of Whiteness:
Exploring White Teachers' Perspectives on Whiteness in their High Schools

by

Anne Deborah Schwartz

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

University of California San Diego, 2022
California State University, San Marcos, 2022

Professor Joni Kolman, Chair

Many scholars have argued that whiteness permeates all parts of the American public system. In schools, whiteness has been said to be challenging to study as it operates differently in different contexts, so while it might show up one way in some schools, in other schools, the ways of whiteness take up a different shape. Given that white teachers represent the vast majority of teachers in these schools, there is a need to understand how school context

influences their perspectives on race and whiteness. This dissertation reports on findings from a qualitative interview study of nine teachers in two high schools. The stories these teachers tell show many of the ways whiteness is maintained in the two schools including by: being rendered invisible, promoting a culture of individualism, and obscuring the pathways to eliminating its dominance. While teachers told stories of pushing back against whiteness, a major finding was the ways in which the school systems that were built on whiteness held on to power even with opposition. Implications focus on the need for further research in to the ways systems of whiteness maintain themselves and the need for a clarity of purpose when working to dismantle white supremacy.

Chapter One: Introduction

Scholars have argued for decades that harm is caused by the ways in which whiteness permeates American public schools (e.g. Baldwin, 1963; Gillborn, 2006; hooks, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Leonardo, 2009; Paris & Alim, 2017). Whiteness is both a set of structures that upholds white¹ supremacy - the political, economic, and cultural ways in which white people hold on to power (Gillborn, 2006) - and the individual privileges that people racially coded as white enjoy because of those structures (Leonardo, 2009). White supremacy can be seen in the racial disparities in suspensions and expulsion data in American public schools, where Black and Brown males are substantially more likely to receive harsher punishments for less serious infractions than their white peers (McCray & Beachum, 2006). When Black and Brown students are punished more harshly, they miss more instructional time and thereby perform less well academically because of a lack of opportunity. The ways schools uphold whiteness looks different depending on context, so while some schools may not have racial disparities in discipline data, white supremacy might be found in the ways they track their students in to leveled courses based on “ability,” ending up with majority white students in honors and Advanced Placement classes and majority Black and Brown students remedial courses (Howard, 2019; Oakes, 2005). Again, white students here are being granted more opportunities than their Black and Brown peers. If white supremacy did not exist in these two situations, then consequences for behaviors would be the same for all students regardless of race and the racial

¹ I am following the convention set by Harris (1993) and used by McIntyre (1997) by choosing to capitalize Black and not white because as Harris (1993) argues, “Thus, the use of the upper case and lower case in reference to racial identity has a particular political history. Although “white” and “Black” have been defined oppositionally, they are not functional opposites. “White” has incorporated Black subordination; “Black” is not based on domination... “Black” is naming that is part of counterhegemonic practice” (pg 1710).”

breakdown of students in both remedial and advanced coursework would match the racial demographics of the schools. While these quantitative measures of white domination in schools are clear in the numbers, there is a variety of research into the subtle qualitative ways it operates in classrooms and schools.

More qualitative measures of whiteness can be found in the ways that schools systematically erase the identities, cultures, and languages of their Students of Color (Emdin, 2016; Paris & Alim, 2017). Erasing a student's identities can be as simple as declining to use their correct names. Kohli and Solórzano (2012), in their study of teachers white-washing students' names, for example calling a student named Gilberto "Gil," demonstrated the harmful impacts of this practice, including students seeing their own culture as burden and, therefore, putting the comfort of white people at the center of their concern. By changing students' names to ones they can pronounce, teachers give more value to names that seem more white. Shalaby (2017) in an ethnographic study of students deemed "troublemakers," illuminated some of the ways teachers pushed students towards whiteness. For one young Black student in particular, Shalaby highlighted the stark difference between the whiteness of school and the explosion of color and noise at home, at school this child was pushed to fit in, sit quietly, and raise her hand, at home she was reminded to be outstanding. This created a challenge for this small child, where the teacher pushed her to erase her culture at school. Language erasure has been the subject of more than one study, revealing how forcing students to use and value academic English above their home languages reinforces the power of English while simultaneously placing other languages into the subordinate position (Daniels, 2018; Valenzuela, 1999).

Another focus of the qualitative research into the ways whiteness is maintained looks at silencing race talk in schools be it: teaching children to be polite and not talk about race

(Castagno, 2008; Yoon, 2012); teachers avoiding racialized topics because of a perceived fear of consequences including, but not limited to, job loss (Dunn, 2021); or schools talking around race, for example, using “all students” when they are actually referring to specific racial group of students (Pollock, 2004). This explicit avoidance of race, both seeing and speaking on it, perpetuates patterns of racialized harm onto all students (Howard, 2019; Matias, 2013b; Pollock, 2004). These studies demonstrate that by adopting colorblind and colormute mindsets, teachers distance themselves from the responsibility of teaching each child as a whole person, including their racial identity (Case & Hemmings, 2005; Pollock, 2004).

One of ways whiteness maintains itself is through domination. Research into white domination in schools tends to focus less on individuals and more on policies and practices like tracking and the school-to-prison pipeline. Tracking, the practice of placing students in leveled classes based on perceived ability, has been shown to separate students most readily by race and class, limiting expectations and opportunities for Students of Color (Oakes, 2005). This separation by race reinforces white domination by implying white children are “naturally” better students and normalizes the racist belief that Students of Color lack academic abilities (Chubbuck, 2004). Research into the school-to-prison pipeline has shown it to be a similar type of tracking, but instead of academic tracking the school-to-prison pipeline is a type of perceived behavioral tracking that sorts students out of schools using suspensions and expulsions and into jails by imposing harsher punishments to Students of Color, poor students, and students with disabilities (Heitzeg, 2009; Kim et al., 2010; Owens, 2017; Tulman & Weck, 2009). All of these studies recognize the harmful of patterns of whiteness and the need to expose them.

Statement of the Problem

In order for whiteness to be a dominating force in education, there must be policies and people that uphold and maintain it (Leonardo, 2004). In schools, whiteness has been said to be challenging to study as it has “no essence and it shape shifts” (Leonardo, 2013, p. 85). It has also been explained as an “elastic wall” (Bonilla-Silva, 2006, p.47) that stretches and moves depending on context and its own needs, so while it might operate one way in some schools, in other schools, whiteness has a different shape. The literature highlights this (Ahmed, 2004; Bonilla-Silva, 2002; Leonardo, 2013) and calls for educators to make the many forms visible (Leonardo, 2013). There is a need to explore the many forms of whiteness in different contexts. In particular, since the vast majority of teachers in the public school system are white (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020), the field calls for research illuminating how these teachers and the school systems they work in, uphold and work to dismantle white supremacy.

Much of the original research into race, whiteness, and white supremacy in education began with an examination of how to “fix” Students of Color who were not achieving in the current system. Researchers like Leonardo (2009), Sleeter (2001), Matias (2013), Picower (2009), and many others opted to instead explore instead why the overwhelmingly white school system does not serve Students of Color. Even with this shift, the majority of these studies focus on teachers who have yet to enter the classroom or are just beginning their journey. Indeed, research into whiteness pedagogy and preparing white preservice teachers for diverse classrooms has been around for decades (e.g. Bennett et al., 2019; Case & Hemmings, 2005; Fasching-Varner, 2013; Lawrence & Bunche, 1996; Matias & Mackey, 2016; Sleeter, 2001). While a focus on preservice teachers can influence the next generation of teachers, it does not address the question of how whiteness is permeating current classrooms and schools and how

in-service teachers' beliefs and practices are shaped. The research under-documents how this is happening (and not happening) at the high school level by experienced teachers. This gap in research calls for a focus on understanding what is happening in classrooms with attention paid to how current teachers' contexts, be that state, district, or school, influences their perspectives on of whiteness and race.

Conceptual Framework

In this study, I draw on Critical White Studies (CWS) to describe the ways whiteness permeates these white teachers' stories about race. Barnes (2017) documents two waves of CWS. The first wave examines whiteness as an individual problem. In schools, this means studying white teachers and how they contribute to racialized outcomes (Delgado & Stefancic, 1997; Fine et al., 1997). The second wave recognizes whiteness' ability to change based on context and examines how whiteness is manifested, maintained, and exerted (Matias & Mackey, 2016). Second wave research has examined school systems as whole entities, including written laws, unwritten rules, language used, what is taught, and what is not taught. My study draws on both first and second wave conceptualizations of CWS by exploring how these individual teachers describe their experiences with race and whiteness in the classroom, and by situating their descriptions within the contexts of their schools and districts. In so doing, I build on many education scholars' (e.g., Castagno, 2013; Flintoff & Dowling, 2019; Gillborn, 2006; Leonardo, 2013; Matias, 2013a; Picower, 2009; Yoon, 2012) work that brings visibility to whiteness in order to help schools identify and dismantle it in their own contexts.

Positionality

My interest in this work is multifaceted, as an experienced white teacher myself, I have spent years learning about the ways whiteness often remains invisible to those who benefit

(Ahmed, 2004) and I am committed to illuminating, disrupting, and dismantling its domination in schools. I have, also, for the past decade worked at a high school where the majority of my students are Students of Color and the majority of teachers I work with are white. I am hopeful the insight provided by this study can illuminate practices that maintain white domination not only in the schools where I researched but other schools, including my own.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to deepen understandings of the ways whiteness shapes itself in two high schools. Using semi-structured interviews and accompanying document collection, I worked to explore the following overarching questions:

- In what ways does whiteness permeate the perspectives of white experienced high school teachers on race and racial justice in schooling?
- How, if at all, does the school context influence how experienced white teachers interact with whiteness?
- What are the similarities and differences in the ways whiteness is enacted in two different high schools?

Significance

Whiteness and white dominance in schools is not only a historical issue to be studied as though it is over, whiteness continues to enforce its dominance today. While my research uses Critical Whiteness Studies as a framework, currently, the conversation in elementary and secondary schools is around Critical Race Theory (CRT). CRT is a graduate level law theory, in the fight to enforce whiteness in schools white parents, legislators, and news networks are framing CRT as teaching white children to feel guilty about historical racist events (Sawchuk, 2021). Since 2021, 41 states have passed or attempted to pass laws that ban the teaching of

CRT in k-12 schools (Schwartz, 2021). In 2022, that fight has shifted to banning any book that makes white people uncomfortable (Beauchamp, 2022). While these are some of the more overt and newsworthy ways white dominance shapes schools, more covert whiteness and its influence needs to be explored, too.

The American public school system is tasked with the responsibility of educating all children, not just regardless of race but, including their race. The teachers interviewed in this study expressed a common desire to do better for their Students of Color. As the student population becomes more diverse and the teacher population remains majority white there is need for research that helps teachers and schools un-normalize (Leonardo, 2013) the white dominance in their contexts and create schools that serve all their students.

Summary

In line with CWS, this study seeks to explore the ways whiteness is upheld by teachers and systems in two shapes itself in different schools. Given that white people represent the vast majority of teachers in public schools (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016), I use semi-structured interviews to focus on the perspectives of these teachers in two diverse high schools. Following this chapter is a review of the literature, which demonstrates the need for this research and situates in its historical and current context. Next, the methodology for this study is explained and then chapters four and five are two stand-alone articles addressing whiteness' forms in the schools studied. Lastly, the sixth chapter shares some of the possible implications from this research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

In recognizing that whiteness is dominating force in education (Leonardo, 2004) and that whiteness itself takes many forms (Ahmed, 2004; Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Leonardo, 2013), this study looks to answer the need to explore the many forms of whiteness in high schools. Using semi-structured interviews and accompanying document collection, I explored the following overarching questions:

- In what ways does whiteness permeate the perspectives of white experienced high school teachers on race and racial justice in schooling?
- How, if at all, does the school context influence how experienced white teachers interact with whiteness?
- What are the similarities and differences in the ways whiteness is enacted in two different high schools?

In order to frame this research, I start with a review Critical Whiteness Studies and some of the ways that framework has been applied to research on schools and teachers. This chapter then provides a historical framework of whiteness and the American school system. Lastly, it explores the research on whiteness in contemporary schooling.

Critical Whiteness Theory

In order to understand Critical Whiteness Studies as a framework, Critical Race Theory must first be outlined. CRT was started in the 1980s by legal scholars Mari Matsuda, Angela Harris, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Richard Delgado, and Derrick Bell. They saw a need to express racism as a systematic force, as opposed to the feelings of an individual, and to examine how that force affected the everyday lives of people of Color (Delgado & Stefancic, 1997; Parker & Lynn, 2002). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) presented the idea of combining the work of

CRT and education at the 1994 American Education Research Association Conference. They argued race was an understudied area in education and was a significant contributor to inequality in education. Their arguments were: (1) race is a factor in inequality, (2) U.S. society is based on property rights, and (3) the intersection of race and property should be used as a tool to analyze school inequity.

Critical Whiteness Studies is one of many offshoots of CRT other offshoots include: LatCrit, FemCrit, AsianCrit, TribalCrit, and more (Bohonos, 2019). All of these extensions of CRT complement each other in their work to fulfill the tenets of CRT (Yosso, 2005). CWS is unique in that it seeks to make whiteness visible in order to deconstruct its physical, emotional, and political power (Leonardo, 2013; Matias & Mackey, 2016). This aligns with two of CRT's themes: pushing back against the assumption of the United States as a meritocracy and challenging the norming of whiteness.

The norms of whiteness, and their implications, are frequently invisible to white people (Ahmed, 2004). In her seminal piece *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack*, McIntosh (1988), attempts to list some of these implications for white people. She includes items like Band-Aids coming in white skin tone, the easy accessibility of books with white characters, and white-passing people being able to walk into a store and not be surveilled. Even when listed out, researchers found it was difficult for the white preservice teachers to see and acknowledge the system of advantages whiteness granted them (Solomon et al., 2005). In their study of 200 teacher candidates, researchers found that preservice teachers looked past or around their own whiteness and privilege even when given McIntosh's list. Other studies of white teachers and preservice teachers had similar finding around an unwillingness to accept

that the participants were recipients of privilege (e.g. Aveling, 2004; Case & Hemmings, 2005; Levine-Rasky, 2000; McIntyre, 1997).

This unwillingness to accept or see the privileges whiteness grants is so deeply woven into our society, community, and norms, whiteness itself is often described as invisible (Ahmed, 2004; Leonardo, 2009). One study by DiAngelo (2006) highlighted the invisible norms of whiteness in the classroom by observing a graduate level course populated by half white students and half Asian international students. Through her observations, DiAngelo found that the classroom norms of whiteness, be it talking over each other, not having enough think time, or disagreeing with the professor, lead to the white students dominating the conversation. The Asian international spoke very little and the white students monopolized the resources of time and teacher-attention without consequence. While this study was done at the university level, the politics of whiteness at play in this room have been found in all levels of the educational systems for decades.

In 1963, James Baldwin wrote about the challenges for Black children in a white school system. He spoke of the ways schools purport to sell the “American Dream” to all children but really only make it available to white children. Research has shown Black people and Black teachers, in particular, have a unique insight into the reality of the school system. A study of exemplary Black teachers found that these teachers were explicit in their teaching of racism and white supremacy. Instead of hiding from or speaking around the systemic racism their students did and would face they spoke to it and taught their students to see and speak to it (Duncan, 2020).

Though whiteness is deeply and historically embedded in our education system, academic research and educational research, in particular, had for a long time pointed the focus

away from white people and toward an examinable “other” (Leonardo, 2009). This led to research on “fixing” Black and Brown children. Pushing against this idea, CWS in education looks to make teachers’ whiteness and white discourse visible by deconstructing their impact and origins in schools. Scholars such as Ahmed (2004) argue that this deconstruction must be carefully done because studying whiteness comes with the risk of recentering it. Whiteness already exists as a “mythical norm” (p.116) in America (Lorde, 2012). For example, in the education system the norm of the teacher is a white woman (Leonardo & Boas, 2013); in urban education, a white woman savior (Matias, 2013a). Rather than perpetuate that myth, CWS in education seeks to break it down by drawing critique to the harm whiteness enacts in schools and drawing attention to ways to transform it (Leonardo, 2009).

Historical Context of Whiteness and Schooling

Whiteness as a dominating force in schools is not a recent phenomenon. In order to understand the situational context of white teachers, it is important to be able to place them in their historical context. When examining race in American schools, people often begin with a review of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). White colonizers, though, through laws and actions, have been mandating whiteness long since before the mid-1950’s. For example, since arriving in the Americas, Catholics and Protestants have formed schools in attempts to force Native people to conform to more “civilized” ways, framed as European and then as “white” (Lomawaima & McCarty, 2006). For nearly 300 years, white religious people attempted to convince Indigenous tribes to send their children to missionary schools. Often when they could not convince families to send their children, they would kidnap them. These schools were designed and taught by white people to erase the Native identities and cultures of the children,

striving to make them “white” by cutting their hair, erasing their languages, and not allowing for contact with their elders (Lomawaima, 1995).

Assimilation to whiteness became a keystone of the American school system. In 1896, the Plessy v. Ferguson doctrine of “separate but equal” made it legal to continue to segregate Native schools, schools for Black students, Mexican students, Chinese students, and Students of Color from the schools for their white student peers. The schools for Students of Color were woefully underfunded, understaffed, and often miles from the homes of the children expected to attend (Anderson, 2016). In California and other border states as immigration increased, the population of Mexican and Mexican American children attending public schools grew. Just like the Native schools that white people built, the schools for Mexican children focused on “Americanizing” them. White teachers enforced a ban on speaking Spanish and taught the students “American values” (Wollenberg, 1974). In San Francisco, this same treatment was applied to Chinese students. Chinese and Chinese American families fought hard for their children to attend local white public schools (Kuo, 1998). In segregated schools taught by white educators, Students of Color were allowed to attend and the goal of state funded schooling was to school them in whiteness; to “civilize” them.

In 1954, the *Brown* decision stated that separate was not equal under the 14th Amendment and required states to integrate their public schools. White parents, unwilling to have the Black and Brown teachers work with their children, demanded Teachers of Color, particularly Black teachers, be fired. These teachers were almost entirely replaced by white women (Anderson, 2016). bell hooks (1994), who was a Black student in the years immediately following *Brown v. Board*, describes the shift during desegregation from almost entirely Black

teachers to almost entirely white teachers as a shift from teachers who wanted you to learn to teachers who wanted you to obey.

Whiteness in Education Currently

Understanding the ways in which whiteness operates in schools is a step toward dismantling it (Leonardo, 2009). While not an exhaustive list, this section explores some of the ways whiteness has been shown to operate in schools, first looking at teacher actions that assimilate students to white norms in the contemporary school system. I then examine the research on the ways in which districts, schools, and teachers chose silence and their perception of neutrality by avoiding race talk. Next, I explore studies where teachers and schools have attempted to dismantle whiteness and by addressing it head-on. Lastly, I share the small number of studies that demonstrate the ways whiteness permeates education no matter the goals of the teacher or system.

Teachers as Assimilators

The assimilation of children by teachers into white culture, and the erasure of the cultural ways of being for Students of Color, continues from those original missionary schools to this day. Emdin (2016), describes American's urban youth of Color as *neoindigenous*, using this term to connect the experiences of urban youth of Color to Indigenous children's experiences. He describes how both urban youth and indigenous youth enter schools with the languages, literacies, cultures, and histories of their families and communities. Many studies document the ways schools and teachers erase or devalue that knowledge (e.g. Emdin, 2016; Kohli & Solórzano, 2012; Shalaby, 2017; Valenzuela, 1999).

One example of cultural erasure is the microaggression of asking Students of Color to change their names for the ease of the teacher or the white students. Kohli and Solórzano

(2012), in their qualitative interview study, cited examples similar to the teacher being uncomfortable saying Spanish names like, “Gilberto,” and instead calling him “Gil.” They argued that by changing the child’s name, white educators were taking away a piece of the student’s very identity. Students interviewed in this study reported they felt like outsiders at school and in order to fit in they began to go by the “whitened” version of their names, some replied that “it was just easier” (Kohli & Solórzano, 2012). This ease the student spoke of prioritized the comfort of white people over the culture of the student. While offering the child, a whitened name may be seen by the teacher as an act of caring in order to help the student fit in (Noddings, 2012), in actuality the teacher is enforcing to the student that their culture is less important than white norms and comfort (Kohli & Solórzano, 2012).

Culture erasure can be behavioral as well. In an ethnographic study looking at students deemed challenging, white teachers were found trying to “help” their challenging Students of Color to be more “white bread” (Shalaby, 2017, p. 7). This idea of “white bread” included sitting more quietly, not sharing out too often, and not touching/hugging the teacher. When their students did not conform to these white norms, the teachers responded by issuing time outs for talking out of turn and harsh public criticism for having too much energy (Shalaby, 2017).

A different group of white teachers in an ethnographic study of a majority Mexican-American high school in Houston, Texas, demonstrated cultural, behavioral, and linguistic erasure. Valenzuela (1999) found that teachers at this high school pushed Mexican and Mexican-American students to act more like their white peers and to only speak English. The systematic erasure across the school and daily devaluing of the culture of their communities and families left these Mexican-American students feeling disconnected from school and home

and lead to failing classes, getting suspended and expelled, and dropping out at much higher rates than their white peers.

When students are discouraged from using languages other than English, the research shows they internalize the other language as less valuable than standard English (Valenzuela, 1999). This limiting or restricting of students' native language in schools is not only happening in isolated school districts. In 1998, the state of California passed Proposition 227 which imposed English-only rules in schools, making it illegal for teachers to instruct in a student's native tongue (Nieto et al., 2008). While the California law has been overturned by Proposition 58, which allows non-English instruction in public education, there are generations of students who were taught their language was not the language of academia, their language was less than English. This type of law has not been erased completely, Arizona and Massachusetts currently have similar laws in place.

Even while only teaching in English, teachers can push students towards a style of English they have been enculturated into thinking of as proper or correct. Most English teachers ask their students to speak and write in "standard" or "academic" English. One study followed a group of white female English teachers who were trying to be culturally proficient and examined how and why they taught code-switching, the act of switching between the standard English of school and the more casual English of their homes (Daniels, 2018). The teachers found themselves struggling. They wanted to allow their students to speak the same way in class as they did at home. Upon hearing the student speaking "improperly," though, they quickly corrected the students to standard academic English. Despite attempts at interrogating the language they taught their students, they still found themselves feeling they were not doing

their duty to the students if they did not prepare the students by requiring academic English (Daniels, 2018; Delpit, 1988).

There are also teachers and schools intentionally pushing back against assimilationist practices. For example, University of California, Santa Barbara has been partnering with their local school districts to create a program that fosters the students' culture and language, teaches them the language of institutions, and guides students to analyze and fight against inequity and injustice (Nieto et al., 2008). A study of two students in this program found that the recognition of the language the students used in their everyday lives as important and valid helped sustain their culture and give validity to their experiences and identity. Native people are also actively working to sustain their cultures and identity in schools. In Paris and Alim's (2017) *Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies* two different Native Schools are profiled. Both schools focus on values and knowledge of the local tribes and place high worth on the identities of the individual students. Schools, programs, and classrooms like these exist but the research on them is scarce and not widely available.

What is evident in the body of research around whiteness studies in education is that the majority of students in the United States are taught by teachers who are in some ways reinforcing the norms of whiteness. However, the research under-documents how this is happening (and not happening) at the high school level by experienced teachers. In particular, there is room in the literature for how context influences the ways inservice high school teachers reinforce whiteness in their schools and classrooms.

Avoiding Race and Whiteness

Whiteness is so ingrained in our education system that even when teachers actively avoid it, it still persists. Another pattern of whiteness in schools is teachers claiming

colorblindness or colormuteness (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Pollock, 2004). Colorblindness is the assertion race does not have a significant effect on the lives of individuals in society today. Throughout history, it has been upheld as the standard of acceptance and tolerance even with ample evidence to the contrary (Bonilla-Silva, 2002; Lee & Dallman, 2008). Where colorblindness is the act of pretending not to see race, colormuteness is the act of not talking about or mentioning race (Pollock, 2004). Colormuteness was coined by Pollock (2004) in a study of a California high school which found a trend of teachers and students talking around race instead of to it. This careful avoidance of race was designed to not offend, to protect white feelings, and, often, to avoid harming kids. Colorblindness and colormuteness can be tools of white supremacy used to avoid and ignore the real differences in access, achievement, and treatment of people based on their race. This explicit avoidance of race, both seeing and speaking on it, perpetuates patterns of racialized harm onto all students (Howard, 2019; Matias, 2013b; Pollock, 2004). When adopting colorblind and colormute mindsets, teachers distance themselves from the responsibility of teaching each child as a whole person, including their racial identity (Case & Hemmings, 2005).

In Bonilla-Silva's *Racism without Racists* (2006) he pulls together interview and survey data from multiple large scale studies and finds that colorblind racism can be categorized into four types: abstract liberalism, naturalization, cultural racism, and minimization of racism. All of these categorizations can be found in the research about schools. Bonilla-Silva (2006) defined colorblind racism in the form of *abstract liberalism* as the use of liberal or progressive ideals to explain away concrete differences. Abstract liberalism shows up in Castagno's (2008) study of an urban school district in Utah, which found an abundance of examples of language used to avoid talking about race. One finding was the ways in which teachers obscured the

terms difference and deficit. Teachers in her study used the word “difference” to talk around the things they really saw as deficits. When speaking about students who lived in poverty the teachers would talk about the “differences” in the lives of their students when really, they were addressing what they considered deficits in comparison to the middle-class white norms of their own lives. In the same conversation teachers in this study avoided mentioning or talking about the role of race in poverty, an example of colormuteness (Castagno, 2008). Other studies have also explored the avoidance of race. In a year-long study of two “white-dominated” spaces (an 8th grade classroom and university preservice teacher seminar) Haviland (2008) found that the preservice teachers used a variety of discourse strategies to avoid offense and maintain their own sense of being a good white person. These strategies included: avoiding words that might be racial, rephrasing sentences until they felt unoffensive, and changing the topic to safer more direct forms of racism.

Another example of abstract liberalism is teachers claiming that “things” are equal now so race is unimportant. In Picower’s (2009) study of eight preservice teachers, she called the ways in which these teachers protected their long-held beliefs the “tools of whiteness.” One tool the teachers in her study used to avoid race was expressing a belief that racism was “better” now. This belief removed the belief-holder from the responsibility of teaching to or understanding the role of race and whiteness in the classroom and led to the teachers teaching racism as a history and “in the past” as opposed to addressing the reality of its impact right now.

In a large-scale survey study of 336 white teachers in the United States, researchers found that teachers believed race was an important topic but did not know how and had not had training on how to bring it into their classrooms (Alvarez & Milner, 2018). Since they claimed

they did not know how to teach race, they avoided the topic all together using a form of abstract liberalism. In order to keep a “safe” classroom and not offend or hurt any of their white students they avoided talking about race and whiteness altogether. This study, in part, looked at how white teachers talked about police violence against Black people. When this topic was raised there was some cognitive dissonance between the teachers’ abstract understanding that racism is wrong, their own personal feelings on the police as a means of protection, and the idea of racism in policing. In fact, one teacher stated it was important to discuss the protests following police violence in order to make sure his students understood that protests must be peaceful. In doing this he reinforced the power of the police and protected white comfort (Alvarez & Milner, 2018).

The idea of avoiding race is often tied to Bonilla Silva’s (2006) *minimization of racism*. Case and Hemmings (2005) found, in their study of white preservice teachers, that their participants consistently minimized race by using silence, social dissociation, and separating themselves from responsibility. Social dissociation includes: avoiding the label of “racist,” claiming to be a “good white,” using ethnic identities to deflect the label of white or privilege, and leaning into colorblindness (Case & Hemmings, 2005; Picower, 2009). Other white preservice teachers, in attempts to explain away racial factors, looked for exceptions to racial trends, like white people who did not have money and therefore did not have the financial privilege, or they leaned into the myth of meritocracy claiming hard work could overcome all obstacles (Picower, 2009; Zamudio et al., 2010). When white teachers refuse to see how privilege affects them and deflect the impact of race, it limits their ability to see how lack of privilege might affect their students (Picower, 2009; Solomon et al., 2005).

Colorblind racism in the form of minimization happens at the district and school level, as well as in the classroom. At the school level, teachers and administrators might avoid race categories by looking for other ways to tie groups of students together. In the same Castagno (2013) study she found that the district level language, socioeconomic status, and immigration status were all used as placeholders for race. In that study they even used their local neighborhoods as code for race: east side, west side, rich area, poor area. None of these explicitly name race, and in avoiding it, minimize its importance and can serve to make white liberals more comfortable.

Teachers minimize race in their classrooms, too. Though research showing the benefits of addressing race in the classroom has existed for years, there are teachers and teacher educators who still avoid talking about race (Haviland, 2008; Peters et al., 2016). In one study, instead of addressing a group of kids calling a Native American girl Pocahontas, the teacher had everyone learn each other's names and telling the students "we are all the same" (Deckman, 2017, p. 12). In a racialized moment, the teacher decentered race and chose instead to focus on white kindness. While this is a clear example of the minimization of race, whiteness is a system whose parts work together and this example also demonstrates how the teacher erases the Native child's identity in order for her to be more comfortable. A different tool of race minimization is pretending racism is a joke. In a separate study, Castagno (2013) documents a teacher giggling and rushing past a moment where a group of students were mocking an Asian student by pulling their eyes out to the sides. In that same study, a teacher ignored students who were squealing and pounding their mouths in a mock Native American. In avoiding addressing these behaviors the teachers, in both cases, prioritized their own comfort and the comfort of their white students over the safety of the Students of Color.

The research clearly demonstrates many of the ways in which white teachers avoid, minimize, and talk around race and racism in order to protect their own comfort. Building around Picower's (2009) "tools of whiteness" there is room in the research for what tools are used in different contexts and how experienced white teachers use them.

Addressing Race and Whiteness

Teachers who engage in intentional conversations about race can begin to understand the experiences of their Students of Color and their families. These understandings can shift the way white teachers think about students from a stereotypical "other" to a whole person (Singleton, 2014). There are many inservice and preservice teachers and schools attempting these complex conversations about race and whiteness.

A study of a small diverse urban high school in Michigan, doing school-lead racial equity work found, even though teachers were having large scale structured professional development around race, these conversations did not ease the racial tensions in the school (Buehler, 2013). One white teacher in this study was afraid to participate because she thought her belief that all white people are inherently racist would turn other staff members against her. Other white teachers in the study spoke about white defensiveness and norming whiteness among the staff (Buehler, 2013). Even though this study did not show large scale change in racial tensions by having intentional conversations about race within a community of practice, the researchers found that ongoing cross racial conversations began to slowly shift individual teachers' perspectives. Some teachers began to change their curriculum, others had more conversations that centered race.

Another study focusing on professional development for inservice teachers brought together eight white teachers to form a group that worked on becoming antiracist educators

(McManimon & Casey, 2018). McManimon and Casey held this group for two years focusing on the importance of relationships within the group to hold each other accountable to antiracist work. This study found that teachers began to recognize racism and manifestations of whiteness in their schools and worked in material ways to push back against them.

These small pockets of changing perspective or deepening understanding can be found in many of the studies on race and whiteness in education. While there is a lack of evidence that preservice course work leads to long-term changes in beliefs (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2009), many preservice-teacher educators have documented at least a short-term shift in teacher candidate perspectives during their time together. For example, in her work with 16 teacher candidates, Aveling (2004) assigned readings and written reflection on whiteness and race. While some of the students became defensive or chose not to fully engage in the material, many of them wrote about coming to understand the norming of whiteness in ways they had not before. Several of the preservice teachers from McIntyre's (1997) yearlong action research project that focused on participants understanding their own whiteness, changed their future plans to more social justice-oriented work after beginning to understand their own whiteness. Similar to McManimon and Casey (2018), McIntyre commented on the importance of the relationships built within her group to pushing her participants towards change. As Bennett (2019) argues, in his two-year study documenting his work with a new white teacher, changes in perspectives or understanding of whiteness most often come from conversations that are grounded in a strong relationship.

Whiteness Permeates Everything

The small amount research on inservice teachers often exposes the ways in which whiteness has permeated all parts of the education system. One example of this is Marx's

(2008) interview study of popular white high school teachers of Latino/a/x students at a continuation school. The study found multiple teachers had deficit beliefs of their students rooted in the teacher's own ideas about race and culture. One teacher reported believing that there were two types of Hispanic people: "gangbangers" and low-wage hard workers (Marx, 2008, p. 44). Another teacher in the same study claimed that her Mexican students were just there to pass, that they did not care about their grades. When asked to reflect on their own whiteness the first teacher expressed a colorblind mindset claiming her whiteness did not impact her teaching because the students "forgot she was white" (p. 44). The teachers in this study were chosen based on their strong relationships with Students of Color and still whiteness was there in the teachers holding racist beliefs, lowering expectations, and enculturating students towards whiteness.

Kendi (2019) defines that teacher's belief-- that her Mexican students can only be one of two things-- as biological racism. He defines a biological racist as, "one who is expressing the idea that the races are meaningfully different in their biology and that their differences create a hierarchy of value (p. 44)." Biological racism is another way that whiteness creates difference in order to maintain dominance. Bonilla-Silva (2006) refers to this same phenomenon as a type of colorblind racism called *naturalization*, it can be seen in the many places in the schools system including but not limited to: expectations around sports, academics, and behaviors that are rooted in whiteness. In sports, biological racism can be seen in a study of white Physical Education teachers that found they picked their Black students first for teams and games and held them to different expectations than their white peers (Flintoff & Dowling, 2019). In academics, these types of beliefs introduce artificial limitations around students' capacity and motivation to excel. When teachers do not trust in the abundance of

future opportunities for their students, they lower their expectations, and their students do not perform to their fullest potential (Howard, 2019). This can lead to academic tracking which has been found to sort white and Asian students in to higher-performing tracks and Black and Brown students into more remedial tracks (Oakes, 2005). Biological racism can also be seen in behavioral expectations. A study focusing on dismantling the school-to-prison pipeline found teachers of students as young as kindergarten held racialized beliefs of their students (Allen & White-Smith, 2014) and these beliefs lead to more Black and Brown students getting harsher punishments. Howard (2019) calls for more research on teacher beliefs and how they are impacting students.

Chubbuck's (2004) study of two white teachers who were identified by their community as good teachers of African American students aligns closely with Howard's (2019) call. Over the course of a school year, Chubbuck interviewed and observed these two teachers many times. She also interviewed a few of their African American students for their perspectives. Both teachers spoke of disrupting the racism in their schools by supporting their Black students. They also both had a strong understanding of their own whiteness and were actively fighting against norming or centering whiteness in their classroom. Even with all this, Chubbuck found the teachers held their Black students to lower standards both behaviorally and academically and that both teachers saw themselves through a white savior lens. Chubbuck's (2004) study provides one example of this lesser explored area of inservice high school teachers' current classroom practices. This study is also almost 20 years old and one part of the context is the time. So, there is space in the literature to explore how current inservice teachers view race and whiteness.

Summary

Critical Whiteness Studies calls for making whiteness visible in schools. While many studies were found on making it visible for preservice teachers, there is substantially less research on inservice teachers and their perspectives. In particular, there is a need for research showing the ways in which whiteness shapes itself in different contexts. My research fits in the second wave of CWS focusing on the systemic ways whiteness is maintained and replicated in two diverse high schools.

Chapter Three: Methodology

The purpose of this qualitative study was to deepen understandings of the ways whiteness shapes itself in two high schools. Using semi-structured interviews and accompanying document collection, I worked to explore the following overarching questions:

- In what ways does whiteness permeate the perspectives of white experienced high school teachers on race and racial justice in schooling?
- How, if at all, does the school context influence how experienced white teachers interact with whiteness?
- What are the similarities and differences in the ways whiteness is enacted in two different high schools?

These questions look to answer CWS's call to investigate whiteness and understand how it is replicated and maintained (Matias & Mackey, 2016).

Settings

This study focuses on teachers within two high schools (Table 1) which I refer to as Big Comprehensive High (BCH) and Small Charter High (SCH). They are both public high schools in a diverse suburban area. These two schools were selected for this study because of the contrast they provide in mission, vision, and structure. While they have similar student populations in race and economics, and similar academic ratings on state metrics, the ways in which they position their schools are very different.

Table 1
Student Body Makeup

	Big Comprehensive High (BCH)	Small Charter High (SCH)
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged	28%	49%
English Learners	5.3%	6.9%
African American		1.7%
American Indian	2.3%	0.9%
Asian	5.8%	1.9%
Filipino	2.2%	1.4%
Hispanic	38.1%	50.5%
Pacific Islander	0.5%	0.9%
Two or more races	3.9%	6.4%
White	47.2%	36.3%
Total	3582	411

Big Comprehensive High

BCH is a 60-year-old comprehensive high school in a high-performing district. BCH’s mission focuses on academic rigor and personal growth for their over 3,500 students. The school is positioned as a classic high school with a variety of sports and extracurricular activities and a range of course offerings allowing students to build their own experience. The school includes everything from moderate/severe special education self-contained classrooms, to classes aimed at helping minority and first-generation students get into college, to over 30 honors and Advanced Placement classes. While there are some small differences between racial and economic subgroups in achievement on state tests, overall, their outcomes have earned them a statewide outstanding school award.

BCH has more than 130 teachers separated in the school by department. The school holds weekly professional development (PD) late start days for all teachers. These days rotate between all-school PD, department time, and specialty groups.

Small Charter High

SCH is a 13-year-old charter school chartered through the state. Like BCH, it is high-performing across all of the state metrics with small (if any) achievement gaps between racial and economic subgroups. Where BCH has a wide variety of course offerings at many levels, all of SCH's classes are heterogeneously grouped. SCH prides itself on the opportunities it offers students outside the classroom and in the community. All of the students at SCH complete internships and the school offers a variety of clubs and activities. SCH also has a strong advisory program with a focus on relationship and community building. Where BCH serves 3,500 students, SCH only serves 411 students, and employs approximately 25 teachers. As part of the school's equity mission, the school works to maintain a racially, ethnically, and socio-economically diverse student body.

The approximately 25 teachers at SCH work in grade level teams. Those teams have a shared planning time every day to discuss students and to plan full curricular projects and because of this they have the ability to change the schedule to accommodate longer lessons or to co-teach. They are also afforded multiple non-student contact days before and during the year for planning.

Participants

Within these two schools, I aimed to study experienced white high school teachers' perspectives. I defined "experienced" as teachers who have been in the classroom for at least five years. In selecting teachers this way, I aimed to find teachers who were more likely to have

had personal and professional learning experiences in the context of their particular school and district.

Given this study focused on teacher beliefs, I sent an initial email to teachers asking specifically for white experienced teachers who believed that they have caring relationships with their Students of Color. I included a brief summary of the study and allowed for the self-selection of white teachers who, I hoped, were willing to have more in-depth conversations about their own beliefs and actions around whiteness and white supremacy.

Of the 10 teachers who responded to the invitation, nine ultimately participated in the study, four teachers from SCH and five from BCH. The participants (Table 2) were white teachers with 5 to 31 years of experience as a classroom teacher. The teachers who replied taught a variety of grade levels and subjects but at neither school did a math or arts teacher volunteer to participate. The wide range of subjects and grade levels, the teachers I spoke to taught, provided insight into the ways in which these teachers experienced culture in their different small contexts within the school as a whole.

Data Collection

This data from this study consisted of semi-structured interviews, and some accompanying document collection. Interviews were used to explore these teachers' beliefs and perceptions about their schools, race, and their relationships. Document collection was used to provide a deeper understanding of the schools themselves and their missions and vision. Given the realities of COVID-19, interviews for this study were conducted over Zoom.

Interviews

To explore these experienced white teachers' beliefs, I interviewed each participant twice for 45-60 minutes each time. Though this was not an extensive amount of time, our

Table 2
Participants

Name	Years Taught	Subject
Big Comprehensive High		
James	7	Associated Student Body and History
Ollie	20	Spanish
Rose	31	English
Tanya	13	English and Psychology
Ursula	9	Moderate/Severe Special Education
Small Charter High		
Alex	26	Humanities
Dana	9	Science
Joanna	5	Science
Peter	30	Spanish

similarities (white experienced high school teachers) made forming relationships happen more quickly. They were semi-structured and recorded. In the first the interview (Appendix A), I asked teachers to reflect on their experiences and to tell stories of their lives and their teaching in order to get a sense of their beliefs and assumptions about whiteness, race, and racial justice in schools (Bell, 2003). In the second interview (Appendix A), I more explicitly addressed race and whiteness in their schools, classrooms, and relationships with Students of Color.

The first interview was designed to elicit understandings about the teacher themselves and their context. First, asked the participants to talk about their schooling experiences and how they decided to become a teacher. I also asked about the goals and culture of the department/team they belonged to, then we discussed their perspective on the mission and

vision of the school as a whole. This held dual purposes. It built a relationship between the participant and I which was essential to building trust and rapport (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009). Relationship building was more challenging on the digital platform but was still crucial. I noticed that participants shared more openly in the second interview than the first because of the easier rapport we had. Second, when talking about race and whiteness, white teachers tend to avoid or talk-around the subject (Haviland, 2008). Without that trust and rapport built in the first interview, personal racialized experiences might have been seen as a scary or dangerous topic (Bennett, 2019; R. DiAngelo, 2018; McIntyre, 1997). Starting with basic questions about the participant's life gave them time to ease into talking to me. At the end of the first interview I asked, if they had a specific memory of a racialized incident in the news and how it impacted their classroom and school. I asked if their school or district addressed formally and also what they did in their classroom. I worked to find out if they way they addressed it in their classroom fit into the larger school community.

After the initial trust was built, the second interview introduced whiteness and race into the questions. This interview was less structured and more conversational than the first. I asked them to touch back on the events they shared in the first interview. We talked about whether addressing or not addressing racialized incidents influenced their relationships with their Students of Color. Next, I asked them to tell me about a specific student of Color they had a relationship with. They described both the student and what made that relationship strong. Within these answers, I will be probed for how the teacher made sure that student knew they cared about them. Specifically, I aimed to understand if their perspectives were rooted in virtue caring, authentic caring (Noddings, 1984; Valenzuela, 1999) or pity (Matias & Zembylas, 2014)on'. In this part of the interview, I began to mention whiteness and white supremacy.

First, I asked the teacher to explain how they think the fact they are white played into the relationship with the student. Then I asked them to explore what they thought the impact being white was on their relationships with Students of Color in general. Specifically, I asked how they thought being white impacted their teaching. These interviews were designed to create the opportunity to draw thick descriptions of racialized situations and whiteness in the teacher's own words (Parker & Lynn, 2002).

I wrote reflective memos following each interview that recorded emergent themes and questions from that interview, as well as themes that emerged across all interviews conducted to that point. The memos allowed me to explore my subjectivity and helped me make sure I was consistently putting forth the participant's ideas and not my own (Peshkin, 1988).

Document Collection

Document collection was used primarily to provide additional context about the two school sites. For each of the sites, I explored their public-facing school and district website. I looked for policies or outward-facing documents that address equity, access, whiteness, or race. In specific, I found mission and vision documents for each school and looked at how those aligned with the interviews with the teachers. I also collected state information about both schools including population data, test scores, and teacher data. I used this information in conjunction with the interviews will help me to understand how teachers' perspectives were influenced by their context (Maxwell, 2012; Stake, 2006).

Data Analysis

Because this is a two-article dissertation, data analysis looked slightly different for each article but both started the same way. Analysis for both articles was an ongoing and iterative process (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Following each interview, I wrote reflective memos which

captured themes emerging from the data. For example, within many of the first interviews the teachers described power struggles. These were showing up not just with students but with colleagues and administration, too. Once all the interviews were finished and transcribed, I listened to the audio recordings and cleaned the transcripts. I also removed all identifying information from the transcripts using the pseudonym chosen by the participant.

Next, I engaged in a process of rereading all of the transcripts, sorting, and coding (Maxwell, 2012; Saldaña, 2009). This process involved reading through each transcript several times based on category (e.g., school setting, interactions with students), keeping notes about themes arising that were responsive to my research questions, and writing analytical memos after each round. At this point my data analysis for the two articles diverged.

Article One

For the first article, analytical questions (queries posed to the data that allowed me to focus on themes that could respond to my research questions) were developed, and focused my attention on the ways teachers positioned whiteness, how they grew and learned, and finally, how they handled racialized situations.

The coding process occurred over several rounds. My first round of coding focused on any mention of race. I applied process and values codes (Saldaña, 2009) to the data to note the participants' beliefs and feelings about race and whiteness. The second round of coding separated the race codes into subthemes. For example, when looking at the positioning of whiteness I identified moments where the participant talked about racial differences between them and their students and/or colleagues. Then for each question, I took that smaller set of data and developed further codes and subcodes. Codes, subcodes, and their definitions were written in a code book to track the process and ensure consistent application of the codes.

Analytical memos were written following each round of coding. Some of the themes that emerged included minimization and deflection of whiteness and race, white saviorism, the need for back up in racialized situations, and neutrality.

Article Two

While working through my memos from the interviews and the transcripts themselves I began to see patterns of white domination. This is not just white privilege but the ways in which the structures of these two schools created a place for the daily use of white privilege (Leonardo, 2004). I used Leonardo's (2004) framework for the enactment of white domination as themes for coding for data. I focused on his four steps of enactment: setting up the system, mystifying the system, removing agents of change, and stifling the discussion. For example, under the theme of setting up the system, more than one teacher at SCH talked about how the school was much whiter when it started, and the population change over the past 5-7 years. After sorting the data by these new themes, I wrote new memos for each theme and reread the transcripts again making sure I did not miss any moments of white domination that tied into my themes. Finally, I went to each school's website and read through all the public-facing documents adding quotes and pieces of those to my memos for each of the four steps. For example, I added the missions of both schools to the section about setting up the system for white domination.

Limitations

There is a need for research on how whiteness operates in difference school contexts (Leonardo, 2009; Sleeter, 2001). However, this study is limited in its context and participants. It looks at a small sample of teachers situated in two high schools. The findings generated here will only reflect their experiences and lives. Generalizability to all school systems is not the

intended outcome; instead, I aim to add concrete examples to the research on the ways whiteness exists in different school systems. This data is, also, only the perspectives of a few white teachers in these schools it does not include teachers of Color, students, staff, administration or parents but I hope there will be a call for those voices, too. The articles written from this study have the potential to offer insights how to disrupt whiteness in other high schools.

Summary

This study focused on the ways whiteness permeates the schools and teaching of these nine experienced white teachers. Using semi-structured interviews and document collection, coding brought to the surface themes of white domination and white supremacy which led to the two articles. Through the lens of CWS the articles in the next two chapters seek to illuminate the ways whiteness inserts itself in to all parts of teaching even when schools seek to disrupt it.

Chapter Four: Illuminating Whiteness: White Teachers' Perspectives on How Whiteness Permeates Two High Schools

Whiteness is both a set of structures that upholds white supremacy and the individual privileges that people racially coded as white enjoy because of those structures (Leonardo, 2009). In an effort to explain the construct of *white privilege*, McIntosh (1988) wrote *White Privilege: Unpacking The Invisible Knapsack* and identified some of the privileges that are accessible to people who are racially coded as white but denied to those who are denied the mantle of whiteness. These include simple things like Band-Aids coming in the color of your skin to more covert ones like being able to walk around a store without being watched. Where McIntosh's list made visible to white people some of their own privilege, Leonardo's (2004) *The Color of Supremacy: Beyond the Discourse of 'White Privilege'* puts forth an explanation of white supremacy and white racial domination, pulling into focus that the ease and privileges white people enjoy are built on a foundation of white racial domination. This domination also built the foundations for America's schools.

The pervasiveness of whiteness is evident in the racial divides seen in the demographics of American public schools. While whiteness is a set of structures, it is maintained by the actions of people, most often, white people (Leonardo, 2004). In public schools more than 80% of the teachers are white, the student body they teach is increasingly diverse; currently over half of whom are Students of Color (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). This racial and often cultural mismatch has led to worse academic and life outcomes for Students of Color (Ladson-Billings, 2006). This "overwhelming presence of whiteness" (Sleeter, 2001) in the form of white adults in education extends beyond the classroom. In the United States, 67% of school administrators and almost 80% of school board members are white (National School

Boards Association, 2018; Zippia, 2021). A group of majority white adults are deciding, based on their own experiences, what is best for Students of Color every day.

One challenging part of studying whiteness in schooling is that it has “no essence and its shape shifts” based on its needs (Leonardo, 2013, p. 85). It has also been explained as an “elastic wall” (Bonilla-Silva, 2006, p. 47) that stretches and moves depending on context, so while it might operate one way in some schools, in other schools, whiteness has a different shape. Although the nature of whiteness in schools shifts and changes, it can be observed in a variety of ways. One place whiteness is often named in is the practice of comparing the test scores of Black and Brown students to the scores of white students; this difference, sometimes referred to as the, “achievement gap,” is a prime example of how whiteness operates in schools and has been named as such by education scholars (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Many reasons have been proposed for this “gap” from subpar instruction, to a lack of culturally relevant pedagogy, to a lack of access to opportunities for Students of Color. While the “achievement gap” can give schools a closer look at student achievement, most schools are not using this as an opportunity to investigate how whiteness and racist expectations are influencing the “gap” and are instead, focusing on improving Students of Color test scores (Yoon, 2012).

Another concrete example of whiteness in schools that has been studied is teachers holding lower expectations for their Students of Color. Van Galen (1993) describes the unintended consequences of these teachers caring about their Students of Color without addressing race. She found that expressions of that care included, in an effort to see their students succeed, tracking African American students into easier courses. By introducing artificial limitations around students’ capacity and motivation to excel academically and limit

students' performance and "gatekeep" honors and advanced placement classes, maintaining white students' majorities in those rooms (Howard, 2019). Along with disparate academic expectations for students from different demographics, whiteness also carries behavioral norms, and the research shows that not all students in schools are socialized with the same expectations (McKown et al., 2010; Tenenbaum & Ruck, 2007). For example, in a study looking at how teachers treat students who had been deemed challenging, two white teachers were found to be trying to help their Students of Color to act more "white bread" (Shalaby, 2017, p. 7). This idea of "white bread" included sitting more quietly, not sharing out too often, and not touching/hugging the teacher. When their students did not conform to these white norms, the teachers responded by issuing time outs for talking out of turn and harsh public criticism for having too much energy (Shalaby, 2017).

I come to work as white teacher myself. I am a product of schools that normalized whiteness and a product of all the privileges that whiteness carries. I came into teaching thinking that schools were a place for everyone if they just fit into the system. I have, in the past, pushed students to act and dress "whiter," I enforced dress codes thinking that students who looked more "modest" would, somehow, do better. I have lowered expectations Students of Color, truly believing that I was helping students by passing them without allowing them the opportunity to meet expectations. Worst, I have used my privilege to benefit myself, not understanding that I was buying into a system build for me. In my 12 years of teaching, I have just begun to see the ways in which white supremacy impacts mine and my students' lives. I have studied the work of the scholars who came before me and hope to continue to learn about and make evident to other white teachers the ways whiteness is limiting us and harming our students.

Research Questions

The purpose of my study is to build on current research on whiteness and white supremacy in schools and to how whiteness is operationalized in different contexts by investigating the perspectives of experienced white teachers on the following questions:

- (1) How are experienced white teachers positioning their whiteness when talking about race in schools?
- (2) How, if at all, does the school context influence how experienced white teachers interact with whiteness?
- (3) What, if anything, are white teachers doing when faced with racialized situations in schools?

Conceptual Framework

In this study, I used Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS) to look for evidence of the ways whiteness permeates nine white high school teachers' stories about race. Critical Whiteness Studies, in its examination of the ways in which people uphold and maintain whiteness in different contexts, allows me to make whiteness visible and take down what Bonilla-Silva (2006) calls the "elastic wall" (a barrier that protects white people from the reality of ways white privilege and white supremacy impacts American society). I attend through this study to whiteness as an individual problem (Barnes, 2017)--how these teachers contributed to institutional racism and institutionalized racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 1997; Fine et al., 1997), as well as how whiteness is rooted in their schools contexts (Matias & Mackey, 2016)—how it is manifested, maintained, and exerted. This meant examining the two school systems through the perspectives of several of their experienced white teachers. Scholars of education (e.g., Castagno, 2013; Flintoff & Dowling, 2019; Gillborn, 2006; Matias, 2013a; Picower, 2009;

Yoon, 2012) have used CWS as a means of making visible the ways that whiteness and white supremacy actively harm Students of Color in schools. My study uses that piece of the framework of second wave of CWS to look at the ways these teachers impact and are impacted by the systems of whiteness that permeates two different high schools.

Findings from Second Wave CWS

My research builds on the work of scholars who situate their work within CWS. Picower (2009) and Yoon (2012), for example, researched the ways whiteness was maintained by teachers. Picower (2009) studied pre-service white teachers in an urban setting and how they used what she called the “tools of whiteness” (pg. 204). These tools include removing personal responsibility for racism, denying racism exists, remaining silent when witnessing racism, and wanting to help “save” the children of Color. Meanwhile, Yoon (2012) studied the discourse strategies of classroom teachers intent on doing equity work and conceptualized the concept of “whiteness-at-work” which is the way some teachers talk about wanting to address race and racism in the classroom but, when given the opportunity, do not actually address it. Similar to Picower (2009), she found that teachers avoided responsibility and remained silent in challenging moments.

Another branch of second wave CWS-constructed studies to illustrate positive examples of white people working toward recognizing and unlearning the behaviors of white supremacy (Aveling, 2004; J. Bennett, 2019; McManimon & Casey, 2018; Yeung et al., 2013). Yeung et al. (2013) and Aveling (2004) both used education classes in universities to investigate how presenting preservice teachers with information on whiteness and a chance to engage with other students might move them towards becoming better allies to people of Color. Bennett (2019) worked to build a strong relationship with a single inservice teacher in order to help her move

away from a colorblind belief system. There are fewer examples of studies of inservice teachers working against white supremacy but one, McManimon and Casey, (2018), formed a support and professional development group for white educators looking to push back against whiteness.

Teachers do not develop in a vacuum. They are products of their upbringing, training, previous experiences and current context. Informed by the second wave of CWS, this study looks at not just the teachers themselves but also the public-school systems they are a part of. The CWS lens in context allows me to focus my attention on the ways that whiteness and white discourse is taken up and pushed against by these high school teachers, and the ways the contexts in which they are situated shape their perspectives and practices.

Methods

This article describes findings from a qualitative interview study of 9 teachers who identify as white and have been in the classroom for at least five years. I chose to do interviews in order to focus this study on the perspectives of white teachers themselves, as they represent the vast majority of teachers currently in the classrooms in the United States. Moreover, I am interested in how contexts shape the culture of whiteness within schools.

Settings

This study focuses on teachers within two high schools (Table 1) which I refer to as Big Comprehensive High (BCH) and Small Charter High (SCH). They are both public high schools in a diverse suburban area. These two schools were selected for this study because of their contrasting size, culture, and mission. While they have similar student populations in race and economics and similar academic ratings on state metrics, the ways in which they position their schools are very different.

Table 1
Student Body Makeup

	Big Comprehensive High (BCH)	Small Charter High (SCH)
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged	28%	49%
English Learners	5.3%	6.9%
African American		1.7%
American Indian	2.3%	0.9%
Asian	5.8%	1.9%
Filipino	2.2%	1.4%
Hispanic	38.1%	50.5%
Pacific Islander	0.5%	0.9%
Two or more races	3.9%	6.4%
White	47.2%	36.3%
Total	3582	411

Big Comprehensive High. BCH is a well-established comprehensive high school in a high-performing district with around 3500 students. BCH’s mission focuses on academic rigor and personal growth. The school is positioned as a traditional high school with a variety of sports and extracurricular activities and a range of course offerings allowing students to build their own experience. The school includes moderate/severe special education self-contained classrooms, classes aimed at helping first-generation students get into college, and more than 30 honors and Advanced Placement classes. While there are some minor differences between racial and economic subgroups in achievement on state tests, overall, their outcomes have earned them a statewide outstanding school award.

BCH has more than 130 teachers separated in the school by department. The school holds weekly professional development (PD) late start days for all teachers. These days, which are planned and directed by the administration, rotate between all-school PD, department time, and specialty groups.

Small Charter High. SCH is a relatively new charter school chartered through the state accrediting board. Like BCH, it is high-performing according to state metrics with negligible achievement gaps between racial and economic subgroups. Where BCH has a wide variety of homogeneously grouped course offerings, all SCH's classes are heterogeneously grouped. SCH prides itself on the opportunities it offers students outside the classroom and in the community. All of the students at SCH complete internships and the school offers a variety of clubs and activities. SCH also has a strong advisory program focusing on relationship and community building. SCH has 400 students, as part of the school's equity mission, the school leadership works to maintain a racially, ethnically, and socio-economically diverse student body.

The 25 teachers at SCH work in grade level, rather than department, teams. Those teams have a shared planning time every day to discuss students and plan curricular projects. As a result, they have the ability to change the schedule to accommodate longer lessons or to co-teach. They are also afforded multiple non-student contact days before and during the year for planning.

Participants

The participants in this study (Table 2) were teachers with 5 to 31 years of experience as a classroom teacher who identified as white. They were invited to participate through an all-school email that included the criteria for participation. Of the 10 teachers who responded to

the invitation, nine ultimately participated in the study, four teachers from SCH and five from BCH. They teach a variety of grade levels and subjects.

Table 2
Participants

Name	Years Taught	Subject
Big Comprehensive High		
James	7	Associated Student Body and History
Ollie	20	Spanish
Rose	31	English
Tanya	13	English and Psychology
Ursula	9	Moderate/Severe Special Education
Small Charter High		
Alex	26	Humanities
Dana	9	Science
Joanna	5	Science
Peter	30	Spanish

Data Collection

The data for this study were generated from two semi-structured interviews conducted over Zoom with each teacher between October and December 2021. Each interview lasted 45-60 minutes and was audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis. The two interviews with Ursula were combined into a single 75-minute interview due to both her answers and the subject matter she teaches.

The purpose of the first interview was to elicit understandings about the teachers’ context. by discussing the goals and culture of their department/grade level team, then we

discussed their perspective on the mission and vision of the school as a whole. The second interview narrowed in on questions of race and how the teachers deal with race in their own classroom. That final question in each second interview asked teachers to identify how they believed their whiteness played into their teaching.

Conducting two interviews with most participants, separated by at least a week, allowed me to build a relationship with the participant. White teachers have been found to avoid or talk-around race and whiteness (Haviland, 2008). Without that trust and rapport, personal racialized experiences might have been seen as a scary or dangerous topic (J. Bennett, 2019; DiAngelo, 2018; McIntyre, 1997). The relationship built in the first interview, in conjunction with white racial bonding and our shared experiences being experienced teachers (Bennett, 2019; Fasching-Varner, 2013), changed the tenor of the second interview and participants spoke more freely about race in their classrooms and schools.

Data Analysis

Analysis for this study was an ongoing and iterative process (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Following each interview, I wrote reflective memos which captured themes emerging from the data. For example, within many of the first interviews the teachers described power struggles. These were showing up not just with students but with colleagues and administration, too. Once all the interviews were finished and transcribed, I listened to the audio recordings and cleaned the transcripts. I also removed all identifying information from the transcripts using the pseudonym chosen by the participant.

Next, I engaged in a process of rereading all of the transcripts, sorting, and coding informed by the work of Maxwell (2012) and Saldaña (2009). This process involved reading through each transcript several times based on category (e.g., school setting, interactions with

students), keeping notes about themes arising that were responsive to my research questions, and writing analytical memos after each round. Analytical questions (queries posed to the data that allowed me to focus on themes that could respond to my research questions) were developed and focused my attention on the ways teachers positioned whiteness, how they grew and learned, and finally, how they handled racialized situations.

After the rereading and thematic analysis, I began a more formal coding process. This coding process occurred over three rounds. My first round of coding focused on any mention of race. I applied process and values codes to the data to note the participants' beliefs and feelings about race and whiteness. The second round of coding separated the race codes into subthemes. Subthemes like working alone or needing back up when dealing with Students of Color came up along with white saviorism and neutrality. After I had those codes for each question, I took that smaller set of data and developed further codes and subcodes. Codes, subcodes, and their definitions were written in a codebook to track the process and ensure consistent application of the codes. Analytical memos were written following each round of coding. Some of the themes that emerged included minimization and deflection of whiteness and race, white saviorism, the need for back up in racialized situations, and neutrality.

Findings

Drawing on second wave Critical Whiteness Studies, I describe the findings from the interviews of the nine teachers in two high schools. For each school, I describe my findings on how whiteness manifests itself depending on context. I conclude this article with a discussion of the different forms whiteness takes from these perspectives to maintain itself when addressing similar problems in both schools. Finally, I conclude with the limitations of this research and the space it creates for more studies going forward.

Whiteness at Big Comprehensive High

The stories from the teachers at BCH suggest that constructs of whiteness, such as prioritizing white feelings and avoiding race in conversations, permeates most, if not all, aspects of these teachers' experiences at BCH. In the interviews with all the teachers from BCH—Rose, Ollie, Tanya, Ursula, and James—whiteness was evident in their classroom-decision making, student interactions, curricular choices, and their willingness to take risks. This section describes two major findings around whiteness at BCH.

Rendering Whiteness Invisible

One way whiteness manifested itself in my conversations with teachers from BCH was by being rendered invisible. This happened when the teachers at BCH deflected talking about whiteness by first citing other differences like socioeconomic status, gender, or first language. When asked if being white impacted their teaching, four of the teachers from BCH deflected the impact of their race by focusing on other pieces of their identity. For example, Rose, a 30-year veteran English teacher, spoke more than once about her gender being the biggest factor in her interactions with students. When asked if being white played into her teaching Rose responded, “Being white? No. I think being a female does. Oh, sometimes maybe Latino boys, boys in general, feel like they could be disrespectful. Maybe a white woman? I don't know. More so a woman than white.” Though Rose stated that specifically the student subset she struggled with the most was Latino boys, identifying race, she quickly corrected to gender making sure to point out that it was all boys not just Latino boys. While Rose spoke of the races and genders of her students at several points throughout our conversations, she only spoke of her own whiteness when asked directly. She describes herself as a, “feminist teacher” and centered her being female anytime race or difference was mentioned.

While Rose's avoidance of whiteness centered around gender, Ollie leaned on socio-economic privilege. She grew up in one of the wealthier local areas and was concerned about how her socio-economic privilege would impact her relationships with her students: "So, I've always struggled with telling my kids where I grew up, especially because I've always worked in a lower middle class to high-poverty school." While she says she talks more openly about that privilege this year than in previous years of teaching, she tries not to "focus too much" or "make a big deal" of her differences when talking to her students. While she is beginning to speak more about her privilege the difference in race between her and her students was still mostly avoided. Ollie did speak to her students about their cultures and race, particularly her Spanish for Spanish speakers class which was almost entirely Latino/a/x students. In doing this she highlighted non-white cultures while rendering white culture as the norm.

All of the teachers at Big Comprehensive High spoke in some way about the non-white cultures of their students. Four out of five of them acknowledged that being white plays a role in their interactions with students, but they could not articulate what it was. James said he knew his being white played a role, but he did not speak to students about it. While James spoke often about Latino boys in particular, he did not name himself as white almost at all. He was just the "goofy teacher" they liked. By naming other races and avoiding of whiteness, he inadvertently made whiteness the invisible default.

The fifth teacher at BCH was Ursula, a moderate-severe special education teacher. She was the only example in the study of overt colorblindness. While other teacher talked around race Ursula flatly denied its importance, arguing that whiteness does not play a part in her teaching at all: "I think my skin color and who I am as a person are two totally different things." In fact, she stated, "I don't think that [being white] should ever impact how you teach."

Making Whiteness Neutral

Another way whiteness was could be seen in the stories teachers told at BCH was in the ways that teachers stayed “neutral” on challenging topics. In BCH, “neutral” was often standing on the side of white students and parents. The two sides at BCH can be seen when James described BCH as a powder keg,

And I think that what's so interesting about [Big Comprehensive High], is it's like a powder keg on every issue. And so, when an outside issue comes up, like the Black Lives Matter movement, like COVID, like vaccines, like masks, I mean, we always have...it's like a powder keg. And it's two sides. It's, you know, and so, it's, yeah, it's very interesting to try to navigate both sides in a classroom.

Many of the teachers at BCH stated a need to stay “unbiased” or “neutral” in front of students. Tanya was concerned of “losing credibility with half of our population.” She spoke about how awful it was to teach at BCH after Trump was elected. She spoke of students wearing MAGA hats, shirts that said “Go Back to Mexico” and carrying American flags. Here she articulated that if she were to speak poorly about Trump, which was her option, half her students would no longer respect her, particularly her white students. She presented this lack of sharing her opinion as remaining neutral. She didn’t speak of the other half of the student population, in remaining “neutral” she chose to privilege “not losing” the white conservative students in her class over the other students. Her neutrality here upheld the view of the white students.

Tanya and several other English teachers worked together to come up with lesson plans that addressed the election without being “political,”

[We had] conversations about teaching stereotypes. I was like put psychology into it. So, like, we talked about stereotypes and like, why they happen, and why they have worked for us evolutionarily. But how it translates into modern day and then the chain from like, okay, so stereotype turn into to, discrimination, which turns into racism, which can turn into, you know, violence and, and eventually, possibly genocide.

She made it clear that they spoke about stereotypes not racism, they spoke in general terms not addressing the reason for these lessons. This allowed the teachers to again remain “neutral.”

Being neutral meant that some teachers avoided topics that might be connected to race altogether. This was the case of Ollie, who was a long-term substitute teacher at BCH during the insurrection of January 6, 2022. She chose to avoid the topic altogether, saying, “I didn't address [the insurrection] in the classroom very much. I wouldn't have said anything...Ever want to sub again?” Ollie, who does not have tenure at BCH yet, does not address “powder keg” issues in her Spanish classes, either choosing to “stick to the curriculum.”

Ollie, Tanya, and James also described an incident that made national news when a teacher on campus, who was recorded yelling at a white student for wanting a “white student union.” When I asked Ollie if she spoke to her students about it, she said, “That didn't come into the class at all, and I tried not to watch the video.” As to whether the school or district addressed it, “So the district sent the email and school sent the email, but like, there wasn't a school addressing of the incident. No, absolutely not.” Neither James nor Tanya addressed it with their students. Rose does not address any of the “powder keg” issues either, instead focusing on content,

Well, I'll say stuff, like, we talked about the themes, like being an outsider, marginalized people, we were doing, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, and I said, you know, this still happens, you know, people are marginalized all the time, refugees, blah, blah, blah. And so, I think that the kids can kind of tell what side I'm on.

Between this teacher being moved and the election of Trump, it was clear that racism and whiteness were not addressed in these classrooms at BCH. The findings here show the ways invisibility and neutrality were used to maintain the status quo of whiteness. Specifically,

by avoiding or talking around challenging topics like racism and whiteness teachers could not be accused of being too political or radical. They were instead allowed to be seen as neutral.

Pushing Back Against Whiteness

While there are examples of the teachers at BCH maintaining the status quo of whiteness, there are also times where they attempted to push back against it. James, who is involved in running the in-school suspension program at BCH told the story of finding out that a white student and a Hispanic student who had been in a fight had been assigned different punishments by two different Assistant Principals. Upon learning about the inequity, he went and spoke to the APs and they modified the consequences to be equal. When I asked if he thought this incident changed the procedures of the APs long term James said,

I don't know what changed. That's a really tough question. Because obviously, that case hasn't come up again. So maybe that's the change, right? But a lot of times in our in-school suspension programs, we're dealing with isolated incidents that aren't with two different students and if it is with two different students, then it's usually the same color students for we hardly ever see our white kids fighting our Hispanic kids. And it's usually Hispanic we'll find a Hispanic kid or white you'll find a white kid so I haven't really seen that since. So maybe that's a good thing, right? I gotta assume, but yeah, I don't, I don't know how to answer that question.

James here describes pushing back against racist discipline practices but he cannot say whether his input changed the way these administrators thought or if it caused any long-term change.

This fits into Bonilla-Silva's (DATE) idea of whiteness as an elastic wall, James pushed against the unjust punishment for Students of Color and the wall moved but when he stopped pushing the wall rebounded back.

Along with helping the in-school suspension program, teaching the Associated Student Body class, coaching basketball, and teaching World History, James also describes pushing back against whiteness by trying to increase access for Latino males in Honors and Advanced

Placement classes. James pushed to desegregate these classes by starting a program that provided access and support to these students:

And then one of the things I am probably most proud of is we started a program at [BCH] to ... make it feel a little smaller. We call it an academy of sorts. And basically, we took Latino, specifically Latinos, Latino males, and we said you're smart, you've never been held ever held accountable, and we're gonna hold you accountable and then we're going to give you the skills and supports to make you feel successful, and to make you see how successful you can be when you apply yourself. And then we push those kids into honors and AP classes and we call it the Academy.

Providing students with access was James' main avenue for pushing back against whiteness. He positioned himself many times as the one teacher called in by the administration to help with diversity. He was assigned World History this year to make it more "relevant to all students" and he was assigned to ASB to help include "different types of leaders."

Another way CWS suggests individuals can push back against whiteness is by decentering it and white emotions (Applebaum, 2007). When Ollie was having trouble with her almost entirely Hispanic Spanish for Spanish Speakers class, she asked a colleague of Color to assist in running a restorative circle in order to help "build a bridge" between herself and her students,

When we did the circle, I got our other teacher, who is she's Mexican background, I got her to come in and help out with it. So that it wasn't just like a bunch of white teachers trying to get the kids of color to try and to open up soon, because she has a similar background and similar struggles.

Almost every teacher interviewed mentioned using restorative circles, which can be used to center the voices of students as a way of decentering whiteness. On top of Ollie using one to address classroom culture and build stronger relationships with her Students of Color, James mentioned employing restorative circles in the in-school suspension program he runs. All of the stories of circles being used were reactive to serious situations. When asked if the

school as a whole ever pushed back against racist events on campus, Tanya told the story of BCH's administration running a large circle after some white students brought "Build a Wall" signs to a soccer game,

There was this huge controversy of, you know, should the students be allowed to express their beliefs, would we? And just like, what is? How does one discipline that? Does the discipline even happen? And what does it look like? If it does? It was this whole conversation and nobody ever really fully agreed on it? And I don't think much really happened to the students. But it definitely made a large group of our students feel very uncomfortable. And it turned into the administration putting together a panel of students and talking to each other, it was like... a restorative circle with a group of these students and then they had the panel of students come and talk to the staff and talk about like, how they were feeling and you know, things like that.

None of the teachers at BCH who brought up this incident spoke of it in their classroom. James at the time was teaching Government, he told me he believed that the kids wearing Make America Great Again hats and carrying flags were just trying to be "patriotic" and that they "didn't realize." He did not though ask them if that's what they thought, he just assumed. In not talking about the teachers protected themselves in allowing the students to assume their views. Even when the school pushed back against the violent whiteness of the signs, the teachers, out of fear or a desire to remain "neutral" allowed for whiteness to maintain itself.

Whiteness at Small Charter High

The findings for Small Charter High looked very different from BCH. Teachers at SCH spoke much more about the overt ways they pushed back against whiteness. Peter, Alex, Dana, and Joanna all spoke of how working at SCH had changed them as people and teachers.

Relationships and Professional Development

Where BCH had monthly PD, SCH had multiple teacher-organized structured planning and professional development days. The PD at SCH was built around fostering relationships between staff members. Relationships and working on teams to coplan and learn were

emphasized in all the interviews with SCH teachers. Each teacher had both a grade level team and a content team they worked with. Where departments were the main grouping mechanism for the teachers at BCH, Dana, a 10th grade science teacher, shared the emphasis at SCH was to plan and execute “projects that integrate with other 10th grade teachers.” Alex, a 30-year veteran teacher who taught 9th grade humanities, talked about working with the 9th grade team and the flexibility afforded to her by having only 4 other teachers. This flexibility and trust between adults allowed them to do things like changing the entire day’s schedule to accommodate student culture building. Alex credited the small school and the “amazing other teachers” for being able to work together like that.

Relationships that pushed the teachers to think about race and whiteness were a theme across the interviews with SCH teachers. Alex, Peter, and Dana all spoke of a Black female teacher who used to teach at SCH who now leads professional development for their charter. Alex and this teacher had been friends for ten years and this teacher would bring by ideas and lessons she was trying. She pushed Alex to realize her curriculum was that of “old white men”. Alex tried “little things here and there” but didn’t commit to a large overhaul of her curriculum until the last few years. For Peter, a Spanish teacher, this same former colleague, made him aware that he brought his whiteness into every room he entered,

[She says] and I'm paraphrasing, but, you know, when you walk in the door, as a teacher, you've walked the curriculum in the door with you. You're the curriculum. Like, you bring it. Yes, you can teach history and all that stuff. And whatever your subject is, but really, when you walk in the door, like you've, you've brought the curriculum with you, right?

The relationships each teacher formed with this teacher changed their thinking and teaching.

Outside of the SCH system, Alex talked about the influence of her husband on pushing her to learn more, “I grew up in a really conservative Catholic family from Orange County.

And I married an Englishman who was definitely way more liberal ... I think like his influence, and working at SCH, as well, I changed.” All of the teachers at SCH reported at least one relationship that changed how they addressed race and racism in their classrooms.

The ways in which these relationships illuminated whiteness was different for each of the teachers. For Joanna, it pushed her to change her science curriculum and to research “decolonizing” science. Alex also shifted her curriculum, moving away from the cannon to more authors of Color and began to examine her own privilege. Peter and Dana both became more aware of their whiteness in the classroom.

Because of the strong relationships at SCH, one Professional Development (PD) that stood out to all the teachers was the one run by the school-formed antiracist committee of which Dana was a member,

Like, we're gonna put together as antiracist committee, and we're gonna have teachers, you know, from sort of different backgrounds, like put together PD for the rest of the school, and we're gonna pay you to do this, and we're gonna make sure that you have some time set aside to do this.

The group included teachers and staff from all 3 schools on the k-12 campus. Joanna mentioned in both her interviews how their presentation on the ways logic is used as a defense of racism changed her views on science and caused her to completely rethink what she was teaching. Particularly, Joanna dug into the colonization of science and at the start of this school year she said to her department, “Guys, I just had this revelation, but I don't know what to do with it. I just know that I can't teach what I was going to teach... I have to do something with this.” Alex and Peter both commented how invested the teachers at SCH were to do antiracist learning together. Building on the strong foundation of the relationships among teachers and staff, this PD was cited as a major reason for change by all the staff I spoke to. That change for Alex, Dana, and Joanna was to push back against whiteness in both their classrooms and their lives.

Unlearning

Leonardo and Manning (2017) talk of an *unlearning* (p.25) that needs to happen for white people to address whiteness. Alex and Joanna talked about their increasing awareness of race and whiteness in their lives and students' lives. Following prominent murders of Black men by the police, they both spoke of a need to learn more and address racial bias in their classrooms and curriculums. For Alex, the murder of George Floyd in the summer of 2020 that triggered the beginning of her *unlearning*,

During COVID, you know, the George Floyd incident ... I got into the 1619 project. That's another friend and I, ... just started doing like our own little zoom meetings, we would get together on like Saturday, and just talk about what we had read. We became sort of accountability partners. And I had another friend, ... she and I did it via text ... there was a lot of really cool resources during that time. And so, there was one that was like, each day, you read something, you watch something, and then you did something. And I just, I just was like, oh, my, I felt like I was just re-educating myself.

This *unlearning* for Alex led to her teaching a more antiracist curriculum,

[The] couple of last years, like lessons is, this idea of finally using my like whiteness to my advantage. And teaching these things, teaching this antiracist, anti-bias work ... using my whiteness and my privilege to say, we can change, we can be a better society. We can be a better America or whatever it is, you want to put it in that, you know, a better school, a better community, a better country. And so yeah, I feel I feel like my whiteness has had its advantages, for sure.

Alex used her journey from a conservative white upbringing to a more liberal belief system to her advantage in talking to families and students who were angry at her attempts to teach a more antiracist curriculum. Joanna, a 12th grade science, was also working to update her curriculum to “decolonize science.” She taught lessons around how science is conceptualized in other countries and the inherent whiteness of the scientific method. She told a story about a student who, while learning about science in other cultures, wrote a racist answer to a question on the

poster of another group. She did not see it until after class and was unsure who wrote it. When she found it,

I was like, oh, we have to talk about this. So, I took those comments, and I put them in a slide. ... I took off the handwriting too. I just, I typed them out. And I addressed that. And as part of my entry to every class the next day, or the next cycle of rotations, like hey, you know, I don't know who said this, I don't you know, I'm not calling that person, one person, particularly out ... this is not this is not how we have these conversations... you do not shut down someone's questioning like that. That's not how you have these conversations. It's also when you're making a statement like that. If you're going to make a statement and say, No, that's not true. You better be backing it up with evidence.

Joanna said thinking about it now there are things she could have done differently but she “felt brave” for not just letting it go.

The teachers at SCH also told stories about how their *unlearning* pushed them to address systems at SCH that they felt were unjust. As a part of her *unlearning* Joanna addressed more things head on. She spoke of wanting to make sure she modeled leveraging her whiteness to address systemic racism for her white students. She told the story of the school setting up parent-teacher conferences and instead of checking to see the home language of each student, the school sent home an email to just the Hispanic families asking if they needed translation, “[The school] emailed everybody who was labeled as Hispanic and said, Do you need translation? They did not contact the Russian person who needed translation... to assume, because you're Hispanic you need translation ... But it is no, it's not okay.”

Dana’s *unlearning* happened within the antiracist PD planning group she was a part of. She was the only white person on the committee and said she felt like she needed to model to other white people what learning looked like, “Like, if there's no one white there, who's safely stepping into that space, and ... going, yeah, I need to learn. And I need to be like, open to that ... like to model openness to learning.” As a group they looked at the ways school system

perpetuate harm on to students she said it opened her eyes to the impact of her charter in particular:

[SCH sees] differences in grades, we see differences in, you know, performance assessments of like, like [standardized test] scores, and that kind of thing, we see those differences. So, we know that we're not solving that, as a school, our system is perpetuating that the same as the wider system. So, it's not like we're some miracle cure for these bigger systems, like, we like to pretend that we are.

Dana spoke of loving SCH, but she saw the system for what it was. SCH was presented to the public as a school focused on equity and access for all students, but the data did not paint a picture that SCH was serving Students of Color well.

Dana also saw the hiring practices at SCH were “unusual.” She pushed to be on the hiring committee and fought for a teacher of Color to be hired over another white female teacher. When that teacher was let go after helping to organize the unionization of the teachers at SCH, Dana pushed back and spoke to the head of the school. Similar to James at BCH, she was not sure that talking to the administration made any difference in the long term. Dana said before joining the antiracist PD group she might not have seen the ways they treated this teacher through a lens that included race but working with that group allowed her to see. This is an example of how *unlearning* a system allowed Dana to see the unjust pieces, in this case how whiteness maintained itself.

Centering Whiteness

While there were several examples of learning and *unlearning* about whiteness, there were also examples of teachers centering themselves and their whiteness when talking about race. In particular, Peter, a Spanish teacher who had been teaching for 30 years, used his whiteness to position himself as a victim. He spoke about being an instructional coach and going into a school the day after Trump was elected:

And coming into that school there was an on-site coach, who was who is Latina? And she kind of tried to help me understand a little bit. But again, it was so racially charged, like just me, just the color of my skin, I felt you could tell there were some kids resentful of me being there that day.

When describing how the teachers at the school addressed the election of Trump, he said some took that opportunity to “get on their soapbox” and “curry up even more hatred toward Trump and toward white people in general, and the system.” The teachers who did not address Trump’s election in this mostly Latino/a/x school were described by Peter as being “even keeled” and “neutral.” While I asked about the students and the teachers in the room with them, Peter centered his white experience in feeling like a resented outsider.

Peter also positioned himself as the victim when interacting with a student of Color in his class. Peter described pitching project ideas to his class when a student tried to “play the race card”:

...it was like, just out of way over the top and way inappropriate. But it was racialized for sure. And so I had to take it to my dean and go through all the little chains of command and, and let him know that, you know, if he has a problem, let's take care of it as people human beings, but you can't, you can't cast out racial dispersions on people just to get a reaction or to sabotage their careers or to bring them into trouble or just to, you know, raise a raise a ruckus.

Alex and Peter both reported making sure they back up when faced with a racialized situation. When a student accused Peter of being racist, his first response was to go to a dean, “So I had backup and I had a witness there.” Alex described looking for administrative back up, not while dealing with students but with parents, “I finally said, I can't field nasty emails from parents all night long. I needed like any support.” Alex struggled with a lack of support from her head of school. When asked if she thought parents were emailing her instead of the head of school because she was a white woman and he was Black man she admitted that yes, they were less likely to complain about antiracist teaching to him.

Discussion

The stories these teachers tell highlight the ways whiteness is allowed to persist in these two high schools. They suggest that because of whiteness' ability to take many forms, even when the teachers pushed back against whiteness, whiteness was maintained in both spaces.

One substantial difference in the two schools was the use of tracking. BCH tracked students based on perceived ability which has been shown repeatedly to place white students in higher level courses and Black and Brown students into remedial courses (Tyson, 2011). Though James worked to diversify the higher level courses through his academy program, the research shows that tracking systems that include things like Honors and AP classes maintain “a set of conditions in which academic success is linked with whiteness” (Tyson, 2011, p. 6). While SCH did not have tracking, according to Alex the untracked courses did not solve the program differentials between racial groups, “Oh, look at our summer school list. It's every person of Color on that summer school list... We're not doing something right here. Something definitely is not right. If this is the only group of kids that are in summer school.” It brings to the forefront the idea of access versus equity, at BCH James was working to provide access to the Latino students who had been typically left out. At SCH access was already there but just providing that access did not create the equity that SCH was trying for. This finding speaks to the ways detracking, and just putting all the students in the same room, is not going to create equitable learning experiences for all students in the same way that desegregation did not.

Another finding around the ways whiteness operated differently in the two schools was the culture of individualism versus collectivism. Where white culture tends to value individualism, communities of Color tend towards collectivism (Hammond, 2014). At BCH, teachers were very much “siloed” by department and within those siloed they were not given

explicit time or structures to work together whereas at SCH teachers there was intentional time and space put aside for working together. Teachers at SCH reported talking to other teachers and staff when they struggled with a student looking for insight, advice, and help. They built strong relationships and felt comfortable learning, growing, and sharing within these relationships. Teachers at BCH in contrast reported not reaching out, in fact Tanya, who reported the strongest relationships with other teachers at BCH, spoke of not knowing anyone in other departments well enough to reach out. Still, even with these strong relationships at SCH, individualism was still evident, both Joanna and Alex talked a lot about changing their curriculum and after attending professional development but when I asked who they were working with and if anyone else was involved or also implementing it, the answer was no. The small school system made them the only one teaching their content and in that, everything they did was on their own. They were pushing back against whiteness but alone and not in a way that would influence the whole system of their school or charter.

This study raises the issue of how white comfort is valued at school. One outlier comment from BCH was this sentence from Tanya, who had been teaching here for 13 years, “But it definitely made a large group of our students feel very uncomfortable.” In this quote Tanya was talking about Students of Color being uncomfortable with the white students’ actions. This is the only time in any of the interviews where the teachers at BCH centered the comfort of their Students of Color. At both schools it was interesting the ways some teachers avoided racialized topics for fear of parent or student pushback directed at them but that fear was never of the parents or Students of Color it was always fear of the white students and parents. The teachers I spoke to wanted to serve their Students of Color well and many felt they

did but in order for the students' comfort to come first the whole system from the district level would have to evaluate its values.

Conclusion

This study found that whiteness existed in many, if not all, facets of these schools even when schools and teachers were actively working to push against its various manifestations. When tasked with pushing against whiteness, the teachers struggled against the largeness of a system shaped by white supremacy. My study focused on the perspectives of experienced white teachers, as they are the vast majority of teachers currently in classrooms, but it did not look at other vital perspectives. First, many of the teachers talked about support or lack of support from their administration and district. This raises the questions of how and if the administration in schools and districts believe they are pushing back on whiteness. While districts are still part of the larger system, they have more control on setting agenda and spending. Administrators also have more power to set schoolwide missions and visions and to follow through.

Another potential focus for research going forward would be to talk to students. How are Students of Color impacted by the decisions of whiteness that their schools and teachers are making each day? Two teachers at BCH spoke of losing half their population if they abandoned what they considered neutrality, which led me to wonder if it's really half? Are all white students on one side of this? Are all white parents? Again, because of whiteness' ability to shape shift it would be necessary to do this in multiple types of schools and look for patterns. This research has the potential to illuminate whiteness for those looking to dismantle it.

Chapter Five: Enacting White Domination: How Whiteness Persists in Two High Schools

I am sitting outside for lunch at the high school where I teach as four students rush up to bombard me with questions. “Have you seen this stuff about books?” “Do you know about the banning?” “What about our school? Will it happen here?” I knew two of the students had read Art Spiegelman’s *Maus* the previous year in English class and one had just bought *All Boys Aren’t Blue* by George M. Johnson. Both books have been featured in the news stories about book banning. When I ask what they know about what’s going on, their responses are passionate. Hands waving, voices raised with and over each other, they’re eager to tell me what they’ve heard. They tell me how *Maus* supposedly makes kids feel bad. “It should,” one says, “the Holocaust was bad.” The stories my students are referring to are all over news right now. Books are being banned in both schools and libraries under the guise of parents having input into their child’s learning. In actuality, the books being banned are the ones that introduce topics that some white people find challenging, like race and gender expression (Pollock & Rogers, 2022). In whiteness studies, Leonardo (2013) talks about making the normal strange in order to illuminate whiteness and this moment feels to me like the first time these students are coming up against such overt whiteness. The normal had been made strange for my students.

These students, their questions, and the adults whose actions lead to their concerns are why I research white domination in schools. As a white woman teacher who studies whiteness, I have spent years becoming aware of the ways whiteness remains invisible to those of us who benefit (Ahmed, 2004) and I am committed to the disruption and dismantling of its domination in schools. I understand that my position is not without bias, I bring to this research over a decade of teaching experience in diverse public and private school classrooms and a lifetime of attendance in public schools where my perspective has been centered. I do this research and

learning because I want my students to have access to the full spectrum of humanity. I do not want their experiences and learning overshadowed by the power of whiteness. I want them to know adults will expand their horizons, not limit them.

Whiteness in Schools

Whiteness as a dominating force in schools is not a recent phenomenon. In order to understand the situational context of schools and teachers now, it is important to situate whiteness in the long history of school, where there are multiple examples of how whiteness has shaped the American system. For nearly 300 years, missionary schools in America, founded by white people, worked to erase the Native identities and cultures of the children, striving to make them “white” (Lomawaima, 1995). The *Plessy v. Ferguson* doctrine of “separate but equal” established in 1896 justified a system that segregated Native schools, schools for Black students, Mexican students, Chinese students, and other Students of Color from their white peers. Schools built for Students of Color were underfunded and while typically understaffed, the curriculum teachers were expected to follow pushed these students towards white norms by eliminating their language, culture, and community (Anderson, 2016; Givens, 2021; Lomawaima, 1995; Paris & Alim, 2017; Wollenberg, 1974). The 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court ruling used the 14th Amendment to refute and required states to integrate their public schools. While this law may have appeared to be a victory for Students of Color, many states took advantage of the “all deliberate speed” clause to purposefully slow integration by closing or defunding schools that might serve Students of Color alongside white students (Driver, 2018). bell hooks (1994), who was a student at the time of integration, describes the shift from Black schools with almost entirely Black teachers to

these desegregated spaces with almost entirely white teachers as a shift from teachers who wanted you to learn to teachers who wanted you to obey.

Research on Whiteness in Schools

Whiteness in schools can be challenging to study due to its ability to “shape shift” based on its context (Leonardo, 2013, p. 85). However, even with that constraint, there is considerable research into how whiteness operates in schools (e.g. Blaisdell, 2016; Lewis, 2001; Picower, 2009; Pollock, 2004; Valenzuela, 1999; Yoon, 2012). A subset of that research focuses on teacher actions that erase or eliminate students’ non-white identities. This includes white-washing students’ names, harsher punishment for nonwhite students, and an insistence that children conform to a particular image of how a student should be. Kohli & Solórzano (2012) documented how white teachers gave students whitened versions of their names to help them “fit in” and make it easier on their teachers and white peers. An ethnographic study of students deemed “troublemakers” showed how a teacher punished Students of Color harshly when they did not conform to whiteness (Shalaby, 2017) claiming that she was preparing them for future white-dominated jobs. More than one study has found the harmful impacts of whiteness enforcing academic English on students, devaluing their home languages and cultures (Daniels, 2018; Valenzuela, 1999). These actions separate the culture of home and community from the school community forcing assimilation at the expense of the student’s identity. Castagno (2008) and Yoon (2012) found evidence on the ways whiteness is maintained through silence in schools by teaching children to be polite and not talk about race. Teachers were also found to avoid talking about race in Pollock’s (2004) *Colormute*, where in order to avoid the perception of racism, teachers focused on “all students” instead of referring to students’ racial or ethnic identity. Dunn (2021) also contributed to research on the role of silence by documenting

teachers' fear that talking about racialized topics would result in negative consequences, including job loss. This explicit avoidance of race, both seeing and speaking on it, perpetuates patterns of racialized harm onto all students (Howard, 2019; Matias, 2013b; Pollock, 2004). By adopting colorblind and "colormute" (Pollock, 2004) mindsets, teachers distance themselves from the responsibility of teaching each child as a whole person, including their racial identity, and thereby maintain the norms of whiteness (Case & Hemmings, 2005).

Other researchers have explored the impact of white domination in schools and identified the impact of tracking and the school-to-prison pipeline. Tracking, the practice of placing students in leveled classes based on perceived ability, has been shown to separate students by race and class, limiting expectations, and opportunities for Students of Color (Oakes, 2005). This separation reinforces white domination by implying white children are "naturally" better students and normalizes the racist belief that Students of Color lack academic abilities (Chubbuck, 2004). Research into the school-to-prison pipeline has shown it to be a similar type of tracking, but instead of academic tracking the school-to-prison pipeline is a type of perceived behavioral tracking that moves students out of schools using suspensions and expulsions and into jails by imposing harsher punishments to Students of Color, poor students, and students with disabilities (Heitzeg, 2009; Kim et al., 2010; Owens, 2017; Tulman & Weck, 2009).

White Domination and Teachers' Thinking

My study expands on the existing research by focusing on teachers' thinking around race and whiteness. I frame this article around Leonardo's conception of how white dominance is enacted to "set up a system that benefits the group, mystify the system, remove the agents of actions from discourse, and when interrogated about it, stifle the discussion with inane

comments about the ‘reality’ of the charges being made” (Leonardo, 2004, p.148). In schools that might look like: schools set up to value white students and white feelings over Students of Color, an inability to create change in the school due to an unclear path, teachers or adults who are removed from the systems who might have been able to enact change, and all mentions of change being shut down either by individuals or preexisting systems. My qualitative interview study documents the perspectives of experienced white teachers on race and whiteness in two high schools within the same community. The teachers in this study have all been teaching for five or more years and report strong relationships with their Students of Color. Their answers to my primary research questions: What are the perspectives of white experienced high school teachers on race and racial justice in schooling? and In what ways do these teachers unintentionally center whiteness and white supremacy in their descriptions of their relationships with their Students of Color? led me to examine white domination following Leonardo’s (2004) framework. In showing the enactment of white domination by educators in these two schools, I aim to illuminate how “Whiteness upholds institutional White supremacy” (Matias & Newlove, 2017, p. 926) in ways that might allow teachers and schools to illuminate white domination in their own context.

Methods

This interview study focuses on the perspectives of nine experienced white teachers at two high schools in a suburban area. The two high schools in this study BCH and SCH were chosen because they are in the same suburban community and have similar student populations insofar as racial and socio-economics breakdown (Table 1) but their number of students and teachers, their social contexts, and their academics offerings are distinct.

Big Comprehensive High (BCH)

BCH is a comprehensive public high school in a high-performing district. BCH's mission focuses on academic rigor and personal growth for its over 3,500 students. The school is a traditional high school with various sports and extracurricular activities and a range of course offerings allowing students to build their own experience. The school programs range from special education self-contained classrooms for students who require extensive support to classes aimed at helping first-generation students get into college as well as over 30 honors and Advanced Placement classes. While there are some differences between racial and economic subgroups in academic achievement on state tests, overall, the school's achievement data has earned them a state outstanding school award.

Small Charter High (SCH)

SCH is a relatively new charter school. As part of the school's mission, they work to maintain a racially, ethnically, and socioeconomically diverse student body. It is high-performing across all of the state metrics with small academic achievement differences between racial and economic subgroups. All of SCH's classes are heterogeneously grouped with differentiation for student ability happening within the classrooms. SCH prides itself on the opportunities it offers students outside the classroom and in the community. SCH also has a strong advisory program focusing on relationship and community building. SCH serves approximately 400 students.

Table 1
Student Body Makeup

	Big Comprehensive High (BCH)	Small Charter High (SCH)
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged	28%	49%
English Learners	5.3%	6.9%
African American		1.7%
American Indian	2.3%	0.9%
Asian	5.8%	1.9%
Filipino	2.2%	1.4%
Hispanic	38.1%	50.5%
Pacific Islander	0.5%	0.9%
Two or more races	3.9%	6.4%
White	47.2%	36.3%
Total	3582	411

Participants

All nine participants in the study were white teachers from within BCH and SCH who have taught at least five years. They (Table 2) have between five and 31 years of experience as classroom teachers and teach a variety of grade levels and subjects. There was one male teacher from each school and the rest identified as female. The final nine teachers represented a variety of subjects, extracurriculars, and grade levels.

Table 2
Participants

Name	Years Taught	Subject
Big Comprehensive High		
James	7	Associated Student Body and History
Ollie	20	Spanish
Rose	31	Spanish
Tanya	13	English and Psychology
Ursula	9	Moderate/Severe Special Education
Small Charter High		
Alex	26	Humanities
Dana	9	Science
Joanna	5	Science
Peter	30	Spanish

Data

The data for this study come from two semi-structured interviews conducted individually with each teacher between October and December 2021. Each interview lasted 45-60 minutes and was audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis. The two interviews with Ursula were the only exception; she was interviewed in a single 75-minute session.

The goal of the first interview was eliciting more information about the teachers' context. First, I asked about the goals and culture of their department or team. We then discussed their perspective on their school's mission and vision. The second interview narrowed in on questions of race and how the teachers deal with issues of race in their

classroom and in the school. For each participant, I ended with a question about the role of whiteness in their teaching.

Conducting two interviews, separated by at least a week, allowed me to build relationships with the participants. I believe that the relationship, in conjunction with white racial bonding (Bennett, 2019; Fasching-Varner, 2013), made the participants feel more comfortable sharing stories about race. As an example, Rose briefly mentioned a story about a difficult interaction with a Black male student while in the second interview, she provided greater detail, mentioning several times that she was “called a racist” even though she “obviously” is not one.

Data Analysis

My analysis for this study was an ongoing and iterative process (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). I wrote reflective memos following each interview to record emergent themes and capture questions that emerged from each interview. Once the interviews were completed, I began the work of data analysis by rereading the transcripts, sorting, and coding (Maxwell, 2012; Saldaña, 2009). This process involved reading through each transcript several times, taking notes about white domination themes and re-visiting my memos. While working through these memos and transcripts, I used Leonardo’s (2004) definition of the enactment of white domination as a framework to define themes for coding for data. I focused on his four steps of enactment: setting up the system, mystifying the system, removing agents of change, and stifling the discussion. For example, under the theme of setting up the system, more than one teacher at SCH talked about how the school was much whiter when it started, and how the population has changed over the past 5-7 years.

Findings

These findings describe how white dominance is enacted in two schools. I present the findings in terms of Leonardo's (2004) system of the enactment of white dominance, "set up a system that benefits the group, mystify the system, remove the agents of actions from discourse, and when interrogated about it, stifle the discussion with inane comments about the 'reality' of the charges being made." I conclude with a discussion of the ways these teachers' attempts at dismantling whiteness were undermined and the implications of this study on other schools.

Setting up the System

Both BCH and SCH have been, from their conception, set up to serve whiter, more affluent populations of students, and while the populations have become more diverse, both racially and socioeconomically, over the years the systems themselves have not changed. BCH, for example, serves students from two main areas. In fact, four of the five teachers interviews from BCH made reference to the differences between the students who came from the wealthier whiter neighborhood and the students from the Browner, less affluent area. Tanya, who has been at BCH for over a decade, described the two groups as "students that are affluent" and "students are metaphorically and almost literally, on the other side of the tracks." Rose, who has been there for 30 years, described the neighborhoods as "two different worlds."

According to James, Rose, and Tanya, these two different neighborhoods, or as James put it, "two different communities," translate directly to class enrollment. Though desegregation put students of all races in the same schools, tracking allows schools to separate students under the claim of academic achievement while benefiting. Tanya teaches three different English tracks: the honors track, the traditional track, and the track with a high

percentage of special education classes. When I asked her about the populations of these classes, she said the special education and grade-level courses were about “50/50” Students of Color and white students, which is representative of the school population. Meanwhile, the population of higher-level courses was closer to 70% white. Rose, who also teaches ninth-grade honors English, reported her honors classes are becoming more diverse, “I haven't taught ninth grade in a while. It's honors, which is a really nice mix of all kinds of kids and a pretty big mix of Latinas/Latinos, mostly Latinas.”

Rose credits the increase of Latino/a/x students in honors and AP classes to an “academy program” that James was a part of starting. James and three other staff members, looking to increase diversity in their AP and honors classes, started this program six years ago. Rose explained:

We call it an academy of sorts. And basically, we took Latinos, Latino males, and we said you're smart, you're not ever held accountable, and we're gonna hold you accountable and then we're going to give you the skills and supports to make you feel successful, and to make you see how successful you can be when you apply yourself. And then we push those kids into honors and AP classes and we call it the Academy.

When I asked Rose about the program:

The problem I have with that is that you can't just put these kids into these classes in ninth or 10th or 11th grade without having them been in it, since, I don't know, elementary school or middle school. If you haven't been exposed to that level of rigor throughout it's really hard to start doing it right away in ninth or 10th or 11th grade. And so they need to up the rigor starting in kindergarten, or first grade or sixth, fifth grade, they need to be exposed all the time. All the kids, and I think it should be all the kids from the beginning of schooling, you know, like all of a sudden, oh, we were gonna fix the numbers and put these kids in an honors and AP. It's too late, I think.

According to James, the program has not been able to recruit due to the pandemic and he hopes that budget cuts won't eliminate the program entirely. While other programs that had been around longer, were available to more students, or were just deemed “more important”

continued, this program, which only served Latinos, was not prioritized. Looking at BCH as a system, tracking sets up white dominance by filtering the whiter, wealthier students into higher level courses which provides them with opportunities, including post high school graduation, that their less affluent, Brown and Black peers will not have access to.

The setup of the system looked different at SCH. Alex and Peter were there at the opening of the school. Peter, who has been teaching for over 30 years, talked about how the population of the school started, “As a new high school, our percentage of special needs and special education students was much higher than average.” Along with having more special education students, those students were majority white. Alex, a 9th-grade humanities teacher, agreed with Peter saying the first few years her students were much whiter and wealthier, and for many of them, it was their first experience “outside of homeschooling.” Like Peter, she spoke of the high special education population citing “more than 25%” of her students had Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) or 504 plans. Those years, she told me, were about community building and school culture.

Over the past five to six years, the participants from SCH say that the charter system the school is a part of has made an effort to make their school population more fully match the local community. Joanna, a senior science teacher at SCH says of the current population:

We have a larger population of Hispanic or non-Caucasian students and a lot of students from lower economic areas. Then we still have some students who are coming in from areas where there's a lot of resources, but I think we have more and more students coming from areas where there's not as much resource.

Peter and Alex also shared the school’s shift to a more diverse, less white, less wealthy population since the beginning of their time there.

SCH’s charter system has recently declared a focus on equity in their schools. Their website defines that as having intentionally diverse schools, teachers who address inequities,

and students in non-tracked classes. When Dana, who has been teaching science at SCH for 9 years, described school systems in general and then more specifically SCH's system, she said,

at [SCH], our Students of Color do not perform as well. We see differences in grades, we see differences in performance assessments like [state test] scores, and that kind of thing, we see those differences. So we know that we're not solving that, as a school, our system is perpetuating that the same as the wider system. So it's not like we're some miracle cure for these bigger systems like we pretend that we are.

SCH does not have academic tracking maintaining white dominance in the same way that BCH does, but their detracked system was still built with white students at the center.

Mystify the System

Me: Do you feel like your school has a collective mission or vision?

Ursula: Yeah, it's on the website.

Ursula is correct, the mission and vision are on the website, though surprisingly difficult to find, but the fact she cannot name them, nor can any other teachers interviewed, speaks to their potential lack of value at BCH. Once the system has been set up to benefit whiteness, it must be mystified just enough that there is no clear path for change. In this context, I use *mystify* to refer to the ways the schools and teachers within them set goals and expectations that are either unknown or have no tangible way of being met. At both sites that mystifying happened through a mission and vision that were unknown, vague, and unclear. BCH's stated mission, from their website, references *personal growth* and *academic rigor* whereas SCH's focuses on *meaningful relationships* and *community engagement*. When asked about the schools' mission, none of the answers from any of the teachers interviewed at either school matched with the mission from the websites. This shows a lack of value placed on the mission and vision by the teachers and schools and without that value, a lack of clear path for change.

When I questioned teachers at BCH about their mission, they all used the words *equity*,

inclusion, and/or *access*. Tanya specifically said, “So equity and access is always thrown out. So they're clearly trying to, you know, that is definitely something they're striving for. I think that they also are looking for inclusivity.” James, Ollie, Ursula, and Tanya mentioned the administration's goal of teachers building strong relationships with students. When James talked about the mission, he admitted it was “a little blurry.” Instead of clear goals and plans, he spoke about things the school did well, like co-teaching classes and the inclusion of students with special needs and emerging multilingual students into the general education classes. This lack of clarity for the school’s mission was in contrast to when he spoke about the academy program he had helped found whose goal of “increasing access to AP and honors classes for Latino students” he could articulate quickly.

Ollie linked the goals of equity, access, and inclusion to the professional development (PD) the school hosted for the whole staff monthly. She told me about the series of lectures on student mental health, restorative practices and circles, and LGBTQ student inclusion. When I asked if they were effective, the answer was “not really.” She felt they shared good information but none of the professional development mentioned was “actionable.” In addition, it was delivered in lecture format to the over 130 teachers on staff at BCH. Tanya used “thrown out” to describe the goals while James used “a little blurry,” Rose, who has been at BCH for over 30 years, referred to the mission as little more than “lip service.” She talked about being at the school for many administrations, and well, “not much has changed. They don’t know about teaching.” Tanya similarly said, “I feel like I know that our administration works very hard on equity and access. But I don't think that they know exactly how to address it.” The goals of the school are so vague the PD does not have concrete objectives to hit. This mitigates the possibility of meaningful change by not communicating a path forward for teachers to follow.

At SCH I got a variety of answers on the school having a mission or set of values. Two of the four teachers mentioned the school being an “equity project.” Dana explained briefly about equity becoming a bit of a buzzword at SCH:

As I was teaching here, the word equity rolled out a lot more. And there's a lot of focus on like, equitable experiences and making sure that we were, you know, equitable? For a while they're like, Oh, we're like an equity project. And I was like, okay, but like, what does that mean? And like, what are we actually doing to be an equity project? Like, we could say, we're an equity project, but we haven't changed anything, are we?

The other two teachers mentioned student-led work and connections to the community as the mission of SCH. All of the teachers at SCH talked, at least briefly, about project-based learning. When asked if he felt like the mission and vision were clear and guiding their school the teachers, Peter put it this way:

When I came back in a few years ago, there had been a real lack of leadership, and there had been a principal that just wasn't effective...So I feel like still our need, our school still needs clear mission work and mission statement that needs to be defined...I think we're in need of some clear cultural work to define that mission, you know, as as it informs our daily work.

Alex and Dana similarly stated that they felt as though the values of the school were less clear and central than they had been in the past. While teachers at both schools talked about equity Dana’s questions of “What does that mean?” and “What are we actually doing?” seemed to echo throughout the transcripts. Words used at both schools, commonly used in education such as “equity,” “access,” and “relationships” felt like buzzwords; they were important to say but without meaning. By mystifying the words or using them without a clear understanding, the system does not change, remaining set up to benefit whiteness.

Beyond the mystified mission and vision, there was evidence at both BCH and SCH of students experiencing mystified classroom systems. Rose, from BCH, and Alex, from SCH, both spoke of students not being “respectful” or not meeting “expectations.” Knowing that

behavior expectations and definitions of respect vary from culture to culture and classroom to classroom, I asked Rose how she communicated her classroom expectations, “So I don't tell them like, well, this is what I expect. They should, I'm hoping that they figure it out from how I conduct my class...I hope that they infer my expectations.” For Rose those expectations are both behavioral and academic; she explained that she only graded large assignments and that often that was confusing or frustrating for kids because other teachers in her department had varying grading procedures. It was up to the students to figure out each teacher’s expectations.

Alex recently discovered that her expectations were unclear in a restorative conference with some students that she felt were being “disrespectful.” She explained:

During the restorative circle, one of the kids asked me, How are we being disrespectful? And I said, God, that's a great question. Could you give us examples? I said, Yep, I sure can. And so one of my examples is like when I asked the kids to get off their phones, and they'll say to me, wait, hold on just a minute, I'm almost done. Or, you know, no. So I said that, to me, seems really disrespectful, like, everybody else is off their phones. Why aren't you off your phone? Because you're playing a game and don't want to lose your man or whatever, you know?

This interaction clarified for Alex that she had not been communicating her behavioral expectations to her students. She spoke of the students that struggled the most to just “know” what she wanted were her Students of Color. When she took the opportunity to clarify her expectations with all her students that week, she was surprised by the questions they asked. She talked about three Latina girls who did not know that being tardy was “a big deal” to her at all. While the lack of mission and values mystified the system for the adults, the lack of clear expectations mystified the system for the students. Particularly the implied (but not explicitly expressed) expectations were mystified for students who did not share the same cultural background as the teacher.

Remove the Agents of Actions from the Discourse

In schools, white domination maintains itself by remaining hidden. In order to do that, it perpetuates the idea of whiteness as neutral and removes agents of action who try to implement change through fear or removal. Across the BCH interviews, there was a consistent theme of remaining “neutral” in order to avoid complaints and “keep credibility.” Tanya, James, and Ollie all told the story of a teacher at BCH who was reassigned to a different school because of an interaction with a student over zoom. Tanya explained:

Just last year, we had a student, who asked a teacher why we couldn't have a white student union. And she went off on the student, and we were on Zoom, because we're remote at the time, got recorded ... and it was just this whole thing. And when the kid was investigated, he had made a lot of money, racist, sexist, very inappropriate remarks on social media. And, again, the kid never, I don't know, we're still I think, recovering from that as a staff on campus, just because it was very much like this. The teacher got punished... There was a lot of hullabaloo around it.

I asked if any of them addressed it with their students or their administration but, according to the participants, none of them had. James described BCH as a “powder keg” on every issue from Black Lives Matter to masking and that he had to be careful navigating “both sides.” He and Tanya were concerned about credibility with students, whereas Ollie expressed concern for keeping her job. She had been a long-term sub last year and avoided the powder keg issues with her students saying about the insurrection at the capitol, “So I'm gonna be honest with you I didn't address it in the classroom very much. Yeah. Um, I wouldn't have said anything. Ever want to sub again?” Even if any of these teachers had thought about becoming agents of change, what happened to this teacher made them even more careful to remain “neutral.” Here, where these teachers might have engaged in actions of change, the fear of upsetting students and possibly losing their jobs stopped them.

The teachers at SCH spoke less about staying neutral. Joanna and Alex were both actively working to address issues of race and inequity in their classrooms. At SCH, themes of removing the agents of action occurred in two stories. The first started with a group of teachers looking to learn more about anti-racist work in schools and help the staff develop a more anti-racist lens to bring to teaching. Dana was a member of the committee and explained its formation:

We're going to have teachers from sort of different backgrounds, like put together PD for the rest of the school, and we're going to pay you to do this, and we're going to make sure that you have some time set aside to do this.

This committee met and began to explore issues of systemic racism both in the school system in general and in SCH's systems. According to Peter, Alex, and Joanna, the committee was well received by staff but when the administration at SCH pushed to be more involved it began to fall apart. According to Dana,

Then one of our community members ended up getting fired. Yeah, scary immediately. Yeah, there was no warning. And then the whole group just stopped meeting and like we had no more PD ... we were afraid. And so it really caused a bunch of staff to leave last year, and a lot of people felt really uncomfortable with how everything was handled... And so it was like this whole cascade of turnover. Um, and, and it left a lot of us in this like, weird position of feeling like nothing was finished.

Another example of an agent of action being removed from the discourse was the firing of the community member that Dana mentioned. He was a Black teacher who had been involved in the anti-racist work the school was doing and was a leader in the effort to unionize the teachers at SCH. The night after he was interviewed on the news about the unionization, he was fired, three weeks before summer break. When I asked how his firing was addressed with the students Dana said, "No one else was hired to fill that spot...The senior students were super left in the dark, like nobody said anything. It's kind of like, we're just gonna not talk about it as

if it didn't happen.” While the unionization still happened, teachers felt less safe to speak out, the lack of job security made being an agent of change of a high-risk choice.

Stifle the Discussion

During our conversation, Rose shared her thoughts on change:

I think it takes a long time; I think it takes much longer than my career to change the institutional stuff that's been going on for many years before I even got there. So it's gonna be, it's gonna take longer than the 31 years I've been there, it'll take maybe 31 more years after I leave. But I think eventually, I mean, I think you're making progress. But it's really incremental, you know, small increments. And that's, you know, that's just how to think about how it works in life, basically, you know, change will come, but it's slow.

According to Leonardo (2004) the last step in enacting white domination is to, “stifle the discussion with inane comments about the ‘reality’ of the charges being made (p.148).” I saw stifling the discussion at BCH in two ways. One was evident in the way, Rose made it clear that the ‘reality’ of the situation is that institutional change is slow. The discussion of ideas that might lead to immediate change is likewise slowed by pushing on the idea that change is slow. Many BCH teachers spoke of the reality of slow change; any new thing was bound to fail before it got started. Tanya, as a member of both the History and English department, compared the willingness to change in the two departments:

The history department is mostly over 40. And predominantly male, and not to say that that's anything like gender, but like, I don't know why it is that way. But they are veteran teachers as well. And so anytime there's like something that changes, in the English department, it's more of like this mindset of, okay, so what do we have to do to make this work? In history, it's more of a mindset of here we go again, another, you know, it's more like a negative approach to how to deal with change, which becomes really taxing.

Also, in the History department James talked about very slowly moving the other

teachers towards a more inclusive vision for the department:

[Another teacher and I] have to figure it out first. And then present slow, easy changes... Teachers are very fickle and protective over what they do in their classrooms. And it's, they don't take change, well, they don't adapt very well, as

we saw in COVID, obviously, and so those things are kind of gradual, and you have to really have your eyes dotted and your T's crossed, to make sure, you know, you're gonna put something in.

This slow resistant-to-change attitude was shared in Ollie's experience in the World Languages Department. When she brought up changing the Día de los Muertos lesson across the Spanish team, teachers were "dismissive" and "unwilling to do anything." All four of the teachers noted the need for change but their reality of working with people who were unwilling to change stifled any real chance at progress. The last step of Leonardo's (2004) enactment was clear here with the dismal of any chance of serious change within the teachers at BCH.

Another way discussions of race and racism were stifled was in conversation with students. James recalled teaching in the days after Trump was elected. He told a story about Latino/a/x students crying in his government class and how scared they were about a physical wall being built,

I remember even joking, like, oh, I don't think he means like a physical wall. I remember very vividly saying that to students that year, I think it's more of a metaphor, you know? We were very wrong.

Thinking back, he felt like he was "trying to lower concern" for those students. In doing that, he was dismissing and diminishing what were very real concerns for his Students of Color. He stifled what was the opportunity to have a maybe more challenging conversation about racism in America.

Building the wall quickly became a powder keg issue at BCH, and many white students went to the next football game in "Make America Great Again" hats with American flags and chanted "build a wall." Tanya brought up this incident, too, talking about how "it was a nightmare" to teach after Trump's election. When she talked about addressing it with students, she explained how "it was never a conversation about Trump specifically, because that clearly

wasn't gonna win anyone over.” The English department collectively worked to design lessons on “respect” and “treating each other well,” but there was never a direct conversation with students about the impact of the election on them.

At SCH teachers were often changing their curriculum, pausing to talk about world events, and debriefing with students but the big changes that really pushed against whiteness were undermined by a lack of consistent leadership and a constant shifting of priorities. The anti-racist committee stopped meeting after a new principal, equity was identified as a priority but never followed through. As much as teachers tried on their own while being short staff, they were not given time to get together and talk about race and whiteness.

This theme of change not being maintained showed up at both schools. At BCH schoolwide programs designed to challenge whiteness fell by the wayside during the pandemic. James’ academy was unable to recruit and so was absorbed by another program. At SCH, the anti-racist committee stopped meeting due to high turnover and a non-sustaining vision. When the administration changed and many group members left the school, the group itself dissolved. Peter spoke of “competing priorities” stopping the deep anti-racist work that needed to be done. As an example, their administration was focused on hiring, are short with teachers and staff, and, according to James, unable to think about other things. A lack of institutional support from their individual schools, the pandemic, teacher resistance, and no clear focus or direction from consistent administration, their attempts were either unsustainable or did not replicate to the rest of the system.

Discussion

What I present here are two portraits of Leonardo’s (2004) framework for the enactment of white dominance in schools. This is not to say these are the only ways whiteness was exerted

at these schools or that the examples presented here include all the ways that teachers at either school attempted to dismantle its enactment. The literature highlights that whiteness itself can take many forms (Ahmed, 2004; Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Leonardo, 2013) and calls for educators to locate it and become familiar with it in order to un-normalize it and make it strange again (Leonardo, 2013). There were teachers in this study who tried to do this.

James, for example, started to locate whiteness and un-normalize it with his academy program at BCH. He identified that it was wrong that the AP and Honors classes were majority white because “skin color doesn’t define smart.” While he worked to improve access to these courses for Latino students, he was doing it in a system of tracking that for some students has been around since elementary school. The academy he and others at his school created pushed students into classrooms that have been, since their conception, majority white spaces. The system wasn’t designed for Students of Color. He wasn’t the only teacher to locate whiteness and attempt to dismantle it: Tanya worked with the English department after the election of Trump to write lesson plans to address empathy and respect, Alex and Joanna both reworked their curriculum, and Dana joined an anti-racist committee. However, a variety of factors prevented these efforts from moving forward or becoming sustainable.

As illuminated by my study, the ways whiteness operates looks different in different contexts but both schools clearly existed in a mystified system designed to benefit white people that removed agents of change and stifled discussions of charges against whiteness. While my findings emphasize the four parts of Leonardo’s conception, it’s important to recognize that these parts are inextricably linked. The way the teachers at BCH felt the need to be neutral is deeply tied to the system being set up to define whiteness as the norm which is a mechanism of the set up of the system, a way to remove agents of actions, and a type of stifling. The lack of

clear mission or values from either school maintains the current system and mystifies any pathways for real and sustainable change. The question, then, is not how do schools disrupt white dominance in any of the four parts of the enactment but instead, how do schools create change that disrupts the enactment in all the four parts at once?

Implications

My goal here is not to provide one set of tools or recommendations that will work for all schools to dismantle white dominance and create equitable and affirming spaces for all students. Whiteness is too slippery for that. Rather, using the data from these interviews, I offer a jumping off point for schools to examine what practices they are engaging in in order to build a personalized toolbox to begin the work. As someone who has been in public schools for my whole life, I am not pretending that individual schools can eradicate white supremacy entirely. But if the goal of education is to serve all students, then working towards eradication is the only path forward.

The interviews in this study suggest a few things. First, schools need a consistent mission and articulated set of values that the school lives into. The teachers I spoke with were not opposed to learning, changing, or growing, but they were all pulled in different directions. The SCH teachers all talked about the impact of Dana's anti-racist committee and the school-wide professional development they ran, despite it being short-lived. Despite its success, because of the lack of a strong mission, when the administration left and a new head of school started, the work was deprioritized. This leads to a second finding around consistency and the need for consistent administration or at least consistent administration focus. Rose, who had been at BCH for 31 years, admitted she had given up on following the administration's plans because they would just change again. Peter, who had been at SCH for three different heads of

school, said the same, the tone and school's goals shifted dramatically with different administrations.

Another suggestion from the findings is the need for shared understandings regarding the relationship between neutrality and whiteness. Rose and Tanya at BCH believed they remained neutral by not directly addressing Trump or his beliefs. This only holds true if whiteness is considered neutral. If schools are looking to dismantle white dominance, they need to locate and name it. One place to look is at beliefs within the school that are considered neutral.

This leads to what I consider the most important suggestion: schools need to un-stifle the discussion. None of the changes above can occur until discussion is not only allowed but encouraged. James wanted to be an agent of change at BCH and Tanya had strong relationships with other teachers that she leveraged to create lesson plans on respect and kindness but they were stifled by fear. Dana was for a short time intentionally pushing anti-racist work at SCH but because of fear, that discussion dissolved. Again, all four parts of Leonardo's (2004) conception are linked and need to be unwound together and one way to do that might be to let the agents of change, illuminate the set-up of the system, demystifying it, and starting the discussion. When I think back on the conversation with my students, I can see that they are ready to start discussion and waiting for the adults to break that patterns that are enacting whiteness.

Chapter Six: Discussion and Conclusions

This study started as an exploration of experienced white teachers' perspectives on their relationships with their Students of Color. After 17 hours of interviews with nine teachers, it became evident that the data was not about race and whiteness within those relationships but instead about the ways in which whiteness infiltrated these teachers' interviews. While the teachers in this study work at only two schools in a suburban neighborhood, the recommendations from the findings may be adapted to other high schools in order to illuminate the ways that whiteness is a foundational part of their systems, too. Within these recommendations it is important to remember that whiteness is set of structures, and while that system is maintained by people and policies, dismantling white supremacy is not about blaming individual white people but instead about a lot of people, including but not limited to white teachers, working together to tear down systems that are upholding domination.

Recommendations for Further Research

The first recommendations from the findings are for further research. This study was limited due to the pandemic but there is room in the research for more studies like Yoon's (2012) that include classroom observation and interviews with teachers to both gather their perspectives on race and whiteness and to observe how those beliefs are playing out in their classrooms. This study showed the value of looking at those teachers as part of a system and so I would also argue the need for ethnographic studies similar to Pollock's (2004) *Colormute* to examine how whiteness is maintained within the school and district as a whole. My study focused on the perspectives of experienced white teachers, because they are most represented teacher group in America, but schools are not just teachers. It was clear that the teachers in this study wanted to do what was best for their students but there was not a lot of evidence that the

students themselves had been asked what they wanted. Leonardo and Manning (2017), argue that the experts on whiteness are People of Color as they have been forced to navigate the system from the outside for their whole lives. Knowing that, a focus on Students of Color and their perspectives has the potential to illuminate whiteness in ways speaking to white people will not. Lastly, there are many other groups that contribute to the school system, parents and guardians, administrators, superintendents but one group that is often left out of research is school staff. Our school staff (e.g., custodians, receptionists, registrars) are involved in all parts of the school and are more likely to be People of Color than our teachers and administrators. When looking in the system for white dominance, their perspectives are important and missing. Understanding how all these pieces work together to maintain whiteness is critical to dismantling it. When considering this research through the lens of CWS, Matias and Boucher (2021) call for a move away from studies like mine that focus on the white perspectives and instead center People of Color. While there is still value in understanding the largest teaching force in American school, a recentering of research to explore the ways whiteness is harming students of Color, and how to dismantle it, is a framework worth following moving forward.

Recommendations for Practice

The second set of recommendations from this study are for clarity in practice. Every school I have worked at talks of their mission and vision. Rozycki (2004) describes missions and visions as “dull utensils of publicity and persuasion” (p.97). Both schools in this study had clearly articulated missions and visions that they presented to the public, but neither seemed to be using them to guide practice in any way that teachers understood. In order for schools to improve outcomes for Students of Color by dismantling, or even working to dismantle, whiteness there needs to be a clear and consistent purpose coming from the administration.

Findings from this study suggest that must include: how the principals plan professional development opportunities, how student behavioral and academic issues are handled, and larger school policies like tracking. One struggle with implementation of these goals is principal turnover. Just under one in five principals last only a year, and only 11% of principals last 10 or more years (Levin & Bradley, 2019). If, as many of the teachers at BCH said, change takes time, how can that change happen without consistent leadership?

Recommendations for clarity in practice are not just about school mission and vision; a lack of clarity in this study was found around teacher expectations. This was seen in behavioral expectations, grading systems, and definitions of words like respect or rudeness. More than one study has cited the ways in which Students of Color code switch, or in this case, culture switch, when they go from home to school (Emdin, 2016). The findings from this study demonstrated two issues around clarity in classrooms (1) the expectations in individual classes were unclear and (2) the expectations across classes were unclear. Since we know expectations at home and school are different, particularly for Students of Color with white teachers, white teachers need to spend time developing expectations and definitions with their students. Alex from SCH spoke of a change in classroom culture after explaining the things that she found disrespectful, she was shocked her students did not just intuit how she wanted them to act. This recommendation ties to the need to for strong consistent administrative leadership as teachers may not have systems or structures for these conversations and having a principal or school leader who can guide them is crucial. The other recommendation is more challenging in a school like BCH that has 130 teachers. A school-wide interrogation of policies across classrooms and departments is necessary. Clarifying classroom expectations and grading policies for students will allow more students to understand what it takes to be successful. It

will also allow the school to examine what policies and practices are grounded in whiteness and to push back against them. The findings at BCH suggest, though, that this requires teacher buy in. The professional development discussed in this study was mostly in the form of lectures to the whole staff without a lot of teacher voice, if any of these recommendations are going to succeed teachers need to feel invested in the work.

A smaller but no less important recommendation centers around neutrality and teacher fear. The findings in this study suggest that the teachers at BCH considered not speaking to a challenging subject or speaking around it to be neutral. When talking about Trump's racist comments in 2016, Tanya and the English department focused their lessons on kindness and acceptance. James dismissed the fears of his Students of Color instead of engaging with them. These examples are not neutrality but instead examples of choosing white comfort over the pain of People of Color. The teachers who spoke about this expressed fear of losing credibility with their students, their parents, and possibly losing their jobs. Tied to both other recommendations, there is a need in these schools for strong leaders that center student harm over student comforts, and expresses that clearly as part of the values of the school community so that teachers can follow suit.

There are lots of findings and implications in this data but the last one that stands out to me is that dismantling whiteness is not only individual work. James and a small group of teachers started the Academy, which clearly pushed back against the whiteness of tracking, but without strong institutional support it has not lasted. Dana joined the antiracist committee at SCH but because of a lack of long-term vision and consistent administration it also dissolved. It brings to mind Bonilla-Silva's elastic wall, the wall of whiteness around these schools stretched to allow these teachers to push against it yet snapped back when there was not enough force.

Instead of a single person or small group of people pushing against whiteness, in order to break the wall, it requires stress from many points simultaneously.

REFERENCES

- Ahmed, S. (2004). Declarations of whiteness: The non-performativity of anti-racism. *Borderlands E-Journal*, 3(2).
http://www.borderlands.net.au/vol3no2_2004/ahmed_declarations.htm
- Allen, Q., & White-Smith, K. (2014). “Just as bad as prisons”: The challenge of dismantling the school-to-prison pipeline through teacher and community education. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 47(4), 445–460.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2014.958961>
- Alvarez, A., & Milner IV, H. R. (2018). Exploring teachers’ beliefs and feelings about race and police violence. *Teaching Education*, 29(4), 383–394.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10476210.2018.1512091>
- Anderson, C. (2016). *White rage: The unspoken truth of our racial divide*. Bloomsbury Publishing USA.
- Applebaum, B. (2007). White complicity and social justice education: Can one be culpable without being liable? *Educational Theory*, 57(4), 453–467.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-5446.2007.00268.x>
- Aveling, N. (2004). Critical whiteness studies and the challenges of learning to be a “White Ally.” *Borderlands: E-Journal*, 3(2), Article 2.
<https://researchrepository.murdoch.edu.au/id/eprint/8494/>
- Baldwin, J. (1963). A talk to teachers. *The Saturday Review*.
<http://richgibson.com/talktoteachers.htm>
- Beauchamp, Z. (2022, February 10). *Why book banning is back*. Vox.
<https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/22914767/book-banning-crt-school-boards-republicans>
- Bell, L. A. (2003). Telling tales: What stories can teach us about racism. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 6(1), 3–28. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1361332032000044567>
- Bennett, J. (2019). Fostering relational trust to engage white teachers and researchers on reflections of race, power, and oppression. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 86.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2019.102896>
- Bennett, J. S., Driver, M. K., & Trent, S. C. (2019). Real or ideal? A narrative literature review addressing white privilege in teacher education. *Urban Education*, 54(7), 891–918.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085917690205>

- Blaisdell, B. (2016). Schools as racial spaces: Understanding and resisting structural racism. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 29(2), 248–272. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2015.1023228>
- Bogdan, R., & Biklen, S. K. (2007). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theories and methods*. Pearson A & B.
- Bohonos, J. W. (2019). Including critical whiteness studies in the critical human resource development family: A proposed theoretical framework. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 69(4), 315–337. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0741713619858131>
- Bonilla-Silva, E. (2002). The linguistics of color blind racism: How to talk nasty about Blacks without sounding “racist.” *Critical Sociology*, 28(1–2), 41–64. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08969205020280010501>
- Bonilla-Silva, E. (2006). *Racism without racists: Color-blind racism and the persistence of racial inequality in the United States*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Brinkmann, S., & Kvale, S. (2009). Conducting an interview. In *InterViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing* (pp. 149–166). SAGE.
- Brown v. Board of Education, Topeka, 347 U.S. 483 (1954).
- Buehler, J. (2013). ‘There’s a problem, and we’ve got to face it’: How staff members wrestled with race in an urban high school. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 16(5), 629–652. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2011.646256>
- Case, K. A., & Hemmings, A. (2005). Distancing strategies: White women preservice teachers and antiracist curriculum. *Urban Education*, 40(6), 606–626. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085905281396>
- Castagno, A. E. (2008). “I don’t want to hear that!”: Legitimizing whiteness through silence in schools. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 39(3), 314–333. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1492.2008.00024.x>
- Castagno, A. E. (2013). Multicultural education and the protection of whiteness. *American Journal of Education*, 120(1), 101–128. <https://doi.org/10.1086/673121>
- Chubbuck, S. M. (2004). Whiteness enacted, whiteness disrupted: The complexity of personal congruence. *American Educational Research Journal*, 41(2), 301–333. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312041002301>
- Cochran-Smith, M., & Zeichner, K. M. (2009). *Studying teacher education: The report of the AERA panel on research and teacher education*. Routledge.

- Daniels, J. R. (2018). “There’s no way this isn’t racist”: White women teachers and the raciolinguistic ideologies of teaching code-switching. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, 28(2), 156–174. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jola.12186>
- Deckman, S. (2017). Managing race and race-ing management: Teachers’ stories of race and classroom conflict. *Publications and Research*. https://academicworks.cuny.edu/le_pubs/193
- Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (1997). *Critical white studies: Looking behind the mirror*. Temple University Press.
- Delpit, L. (1988). The silenced dialogue: Power and pedagogy in educating other people’s children. *Harvard Educational Review*, 58(3), 280–299. <https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.58.3.c43481778r528qw4>
- DiAngelo, R. (2018). *White fragility: Why it’s so hard for white people to talk about racism*. Beacon Press.
- DiAngelo, R. J. (2006). The production of whiteness in education: Asian international students in a college classroom. *Teachers College Record*, 108(10), 1983–2000. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9620.2006.00771.x>
- Driver, J. (2018). *The schoolhouse gate: Public education, the supreme court, and the battle for the american mind*. Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group.
- Duncan, K. E. (2020). ‘That’s my job’: Black teachers’ perspectives on helping Black students navigate white supremacy. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 0(0), 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2020.1798377>
- Dunn, A. H. (2021). *Teaching on days after: Educating for equity in the wake of injustice*. Teachers College Press.
- Emdin, C. (2016). *For white folks who teach in the hood-- and the rest of y’all too: Reality pedagogy and urban education*. Beacon Press.
- Fasching-Varner, K. J. (2013). “Uhh, you know,” don’t you?: White racial bonding in the narrative of white pre-service teachers. *Educational Foundations*, 27, 21–41.
- Fine, M., Wong, L. M., Powell, L. C., & Weis, L. (1997). *Off white: Readings on race, power, and society*. Routledge.
- Flintoff, A., & Dowling, F. (2019). ‘I just treat them all the same, really’: Teachers, whiteness and (anti) racism in physical education. *Sport, Education and Society*, 24(2), 121–133. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2017.1332583>

- Gillborn, D. (2006). Critical race theory and education: Racism and anti-racism in educational theory and praxis. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 27(1), 11–32. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01596300500510229>
- Givens, J. R. (2021). *Fugitive pedagogy: Carter G. Woodson and the art of Black teaching*. Harvard University Press.
- Hammond, Z. L. (2014). *Culturally responsive teaching and the brain: Promoting authentic engagement and rigor among culturally and linguistically diverse students*. SAGE Publications.
- Harris, C. I. (1993). Whiteness as property. *Harvard Law Review*, 106(8), 1707–1791. JSTOR. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1341787>
- Haviland, V. S. (2008). “Things get glossed over”: Rearticulating the silencing power of whiteness in education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 59(1), 40–54. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487107310751>
- Heitzeg, N. A. (2009). Education or incarceration: Zero tolerance policies and the school to prison pipeline. *Forum on Public Policy Online*, 2009(2). <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ870076>
- hooks, bell. (1994). *Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom*. Routledge.
- Howard, T. C. (2019). *Why race and culture matter in schools: Closing the achievement gap in America’s classrooms*. Teachers College Press.
- Kendi, I. X. (2019). *How to be an antiracist*. Random House Publishing Group.
- Kim, C. Y., Losen, D. J., & Hewitt, D. T. (2010). The school-to-prison pipeline: Structuring legal reform. In *School-to-Prison Pipeline, The*. New York University Press. <https://doi.org/10.18574/9780814749197>
- Kohli, R., & Solórzano, D. G. (2012). Teachers, please learn our names!: Racial microaggressions and the K-12 classroom. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 15(4), 441–462. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2012.674026>
- Kuo, J. (1998). Excluded, segregated and forgotten: A historical view of the discrimination of Chinese Americans in public schools notes and comments. *Asian Law Journal*, 5, 181–212.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. *American Educational Research Journal*, 32(3), 465–491. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312032003465>

- Ladson-Billings, G. (2006). From the Achievement Gap to the Education Debt: Understanding Achievement in U.S. Schools. *Educational Researcher*, 35(7), 3–12. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X035007003>
- Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate, W. F. (1995). Toward a critical race theory of education. *Teachers College Record*, 97(1), 22.
- Lawrence, S. M., & Bunche, T. (1996). Feeling and dealing: Teaching white students about racial privilege. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 12(5), 531–542. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0742-051X\(95\)00054-N](https://doi.org/10.1016/0742-051X(95)00054-N)
- Lee, S., & Dallman, M. E. (2008). Engaging in a Reflective Examination about Diversity: Interviews with Three Preservice Teachers. *Multicultural Education*, 15(4), 36–44.
- Leonardo & Boas. (2013). Other kids’ teachers: What children of color learn from white women and what this says about race, whiteness, and gender. In *Handbook of critical race theory in education* (pp. 333–344). Routledge.
- Leonardo, Z. (2004). The color of supremacy: Beyond the discourse of ‘white privilege.’ *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 36(2), 137–152. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-5812.2004.00057.x>
- Leonardo, Z. (2009). *Race, whiteness, and education*. Routledge.
- Leonardo, Z. (2013). *Race frameworks: A multidimensional theory of racism and education*. Teachers College Press.
- Leonardo, Z., & Manning, L. (2017). White historical activity theory: Toward a critical understanding of white zones of proximal development. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 20(1), 15–29. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2015.1100988>
- Levin, S., & Bradley, K. (2019). *Understanding and addressing principal turnover: A review of the research* (p. 28). National Association of Secondary School Principals.
- Levine-Rasky, C. (2000). The practice of whiteness among teacher candidates. *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 10(3), 263–284. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09620210000200060>
- Lewis, A. E. (2001). There is no “race” in the schoolyard: Color-blind ideology in an (almost) all-white school. *American Educational Research Journal*, 38(4), 781–811. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312038004781>
- Lomawaima, K. T. (1995). *Educating Native Americans*.
- Lomawaima, K. T., & McCarty, T. L. (2006). *“To remain an Indian”: Lessons in democracy from a century of Native American education*. Teachers College Press.

- Lorde, A. (2012). *Sister outsider: Essays and speeches*. Potter/Ten Speed/Harmony/Rodale.
- Marx, S. (2008). Popular white teachers of latina/o kids: The strengths of personal experiences and the limitations of whiteness. *Urban Education*, 43(1), 29–67.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085907306959>
- Matias, C. E. (2013a). Check yo’self before you wreck yo’self and our kids: Counterstories from culturally responsive white teachers? . . . to culturally responsive white teachers! *Interdisciplinary Journal of Teaching and Learning*, 3(2), 68–81.
- Matias, C. E. (2013b). On the “flip” side: A teacher educator of color unveiling the dangerous minds of white teacher candidates. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 40(2), 53–73. JSTOR.
- Matias, C. E., & Boucher, C. (2021). From critical whiteness studies to a critical study of whiteness: Restoring criticality in critical whiteness studies. *Whiteness and Education*, 0(0), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23793406.2021.1993751>
- Matias, C. E., & Mackey, J. (2016). Breakin’ down whiteness in antiracist teaching: Introducing critical whiteness pedagogy. *The Urban Review*, 48(1), 32–50.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-015-0344-7>
- Matias, C. E., & Newlove, P. M. (2017). Better the devil you see, than the one you don’t: Bearing witness to emboldened en-whitening epistemology in the Trump era. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 30(10), 920–928.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2017.1312590>
- Matias, C. E., & Zembylas, M. (2014). ‘When saying you care is not really caring’: Emotions of disgust, whiteness ideology, and teacher education. *Critical Studies in Education*, 55(3), 319–337. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17508487.2014.922489>
- Maxwell, J. A. (2012). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach*. SAGE Publications.
- McCray, C., & Beachum, F. D. (2006). A Critique of Zero Tolerance Policies: An Issue of Justice and Caring. *Values and Ethics in Educational Administration*, 5(1).
<https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1186502>
- McIntosh, P. (1988). *White privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack*.
- McIntyre, A. (1997). *Making meaning of whiteness: Exploring racial identity with white teachers*. SUNY Press.
- McKown, C., Gregory, A., & Weinstein, R. S. (2010). Expectations, Stereotypes, and Self-Fulfilling Prophecies in Classroom and School Life. In *Handbook of Research on Schools, Schooling and Human Development*. Routledge.

- McManimon, S. K., & Casey, Z. A. (2018). (Re)beginning and becoming: Antiracism and professional development with white practicing teachers. *Teaching Education, 29*(4), 395–406. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10476210.2018.1506429>
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2016). The state of racial diversity in the educator workforce. *The United States Department of Education, 42*.
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2020). *Digest of Education Statistics, 2019*. National Center for Education Statistics. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19_209.10.asp
- National School Boards Association. (2018). *Today's school boards & their priorities for tomorrow*.
- Nieto, S., Bode, P., Kang, E., Raible, J., Banks, C. A. M., & Villenas, S. (2008). *Identity, community, and diversity: Retheorizing multicultural curriculum for the postmodern era* (pp. 176–197). <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412976572.n9>
- Noddings, N. (1984). *Caring, a feminine approach to ethics & moral education*. University of California Press.
- Noddings, N. (2012). The caring relation in teaching. *Oxford Review of Education, 38*(6), 771–781. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2012.745047>
- Oakes, J. (2005). *Keeping track: How schools structure inequality*. Yale University Press.
- Owens, E. G. (2017). Testing the school-to-prison pipeline. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management, 36*(1), 11–37. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pam.21954>
- Paris, D., & Alim, H. S. (2017). *Culturally sustaining pedagogies: Teaching and learning for justice in a changing world*. Teachers College Press. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/csusm/detail.action?docID=4902156>
- Parker, L., & Lynn, M. (2002). What's race got to do with it? Critical race theory's conflicts with and connections to qualitative research methodology and epistemology. *Qualitative Inquiry, 8*(1), 7–22. <https://doi.org/10.1177/107780040200800102>
- Peshkin, A. (1988). In search of subjectivity- One's own. *Educational Researcher, 17*(7), 17–21. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X017007017>
- Peters, T., Margolin, M., Fragnoli, K., & Bloom, D. (2016). What's race got to do with It? Preservice teachers and white racial identity. *Current Issues in Education, 19*(1), 24.

- Picower, B. (2009). The unexamined whiteness of teaching: How white teachers maintain and enact dominant racial ideologies. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 12(2), 197–215. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13613320902995475>
- Plessy v. Ferguson, 163 U.S. 537 (U.S. Supreme Court 1896).
- Pollock, M. (2004). *Colormute: Race talk dilemmas in an American school*. Princeton University Press.
- Pollock, M., & Rogers, J. (2022). *The Conflict Campaign: Exploring Local Experiences of the Campaign to Ban “Critical Race Theory” in Public K–12 Education in the U.S., 2020–2021—IDEA*. <https://idea.gseis.ucla.edu/publications/the-conflict-campaign/>
- Rozycki, E. G. (2004). Mission and vision in education. *Educational Horizons*, 82(2), 94–98.
- Saldaña, J. M. (2009). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Sawchuk, S. (2021, May 18). What Is Critical Race Theory, and Why Is It Under Attack? *Education Week*. <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/what-is-critical-race-theory-and-why-is-it-under-attack/2021/05>
- Schwartz, S. (2021, June 11). Map: Where Critical Race Theory Is Under Attack. *Education Week*. <https://www.edweek.org/policy-politics/map-where-critical-race-theory-is-under-attack/2021/06>
- Shalaby, C. (2017). *Troublemakers: Lessons in freedom from young children at school*. The New Press.
- Singleton, G. E. (2014). *Courageous conversations about race: A field guide for achieving equity in schools*. Corwin Press.
- Sleeter, C. E. (2001). Preparing teachers for culturally diverse schools: Research and the overwhelming presence of whiteness. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 52(2), 94–106. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487101052002002>
- Solomon, R. P., Portelli, J. P., Daniel, B.-J., & Campbell, A. (2005). The discourse of denial: How white teacher candidates construct race, racism and ‘white privilege.’ *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 8(2), 147–169. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13613320500110519>
- Stake, R. E. (2006). *Multiple case study analysis*. The Guilford Press.
- Tenenbaum, H. R., & Ruck, M. D. (2007). Are teachers’ expectations different for racial minority than for European American students? A meta-analysis. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 99(2), 253–273. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.99.2.253>

- Tulman, J. B., & Weck, D. M. (2009). Shutting off the school-to-prison pipeline for status offenders with education-related disabilities school-to-prison pipeline symposium. *New York Law School Law Review*, 54(4), 875–908.
- Tyson, K. (2011). *Integration interrupted: Tracking, Black students, and acting white after Brown*. Oxford University Press.
- Valenzuela, A. (1999). Subtractive schooling: U.S.-Mexican youth and the politics of caring. In *Undefined* (p. 346).
<https://search.proquest.com/eric/docview/62311274/9199D4561BD54E4FPQ/1>
- Van Galen, J. A. (1993). Caring in community: The limitations of compassion in facilitating diversity. *The Urban Review*, 25(1), 5–24. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01108043>
- Wollenberg, C. (1974). Mendez v. Westminster: Race, nationality and segregation in California schools. *California Historical Quarterly*, 53(4), 317–332.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/25157525>
- Yeung, J. G., Spanierman, L. B., & Landrum-Brown, J. (2013). “Being white in a multicultural society”: Critical whiteness pedagogy in a dialogue course. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 6(1), 17–32. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0031632>
- Yoon, I. H. (2012). The paradoxical nature of whiteness-at-work in the daily life of schools and teacher communities. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 15(5), 587–613.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2011.624506>
- Yosso, T. J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 8(1), 69–91.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1361332052000341006>
- Zamudio, M., Russell, C., Rios, F., & Bridgeman, J. L. (2010). *Critical Race Theory Matters: Education and Ideology*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203842713>
- Zippia. (2021, January 29). *School administrator demographics and statistics [2022]: Number of school administrators in the us*. <https://www.zippia.com/school-administrator-jobs/demographics/>

Appendix A: Interview Protocols

Interview 1

Introduction: Thank you so much for agreeing to be part of this study. I really appreciate your time and energy. I know this year has been overwhelming so thank you for this. The purpose of this study is to examine race and whiteness in schools and in particular in teacher student relationships. Your interview data will be kept confidential and you can withdraw your consent or stop this interview at any time. You can also skip any question at any time. Do you have any questions for me?

1. Tell me a little about yourself:
 - a. Why did you decide to become a teacher?
 - i. How old were you when you decided? Was there an impetus to the decisions?
 - ii. Has why you become a teacher changed in the years since?
 - b. How long have you been teaching?
 - c. How long have you been here at this site?
 - i. Why did you decide to teach here?
 - d. Where did you go to high school?
 - i. Can you tell me about a relationship that you had with a teacher?
 - ii. How did your high school experience compare to where you teach now?
2. Tell me about your students:
 - a. What do you teach?
 - b. Describe your students and the students at your school in general.

- c. Do you intentionally work to build relationships with your students? How? How did you learn?
 - i. Do other people in your department/school do these things?
 - d. Do you remember your school or district supporting you in your learning?
3. Can you remember a specific racial incident in the news that impacted you and your students?
- a. How did you address it in your classroom? Did you get any push back?
 - b. Did other teachers at your school address? Did you work together to come up with a plan?
 - c. Did your school address it? Your district?
 - i. Was there any written acknowledgment of the incident?
4. What role do you believe schools have in disrupting racism and racial injustice?
- a. How do teachers play into this?
 - b. Can you describe the ways you feel like your school/district does or does not do this?
 - c. How do you do this or not?

Interview 2

Thank you for coming back for round two! I really appreciate your time and energy. Again, just so you your interview data will be kept confidential and you can withdraw your consent or stop this interview at any time. You can also skip any question at any time. Do you have any questions for me?

1. In the last interview you talked about this incident {recap what was talked about}. Has anything new come up for you about that since we talked?
 - i. We have been through a lot of racial unrest in the last 4 years. How, if at all, have these incidents changed the way you teach?
 - b. Have they changed the way you talk to/relate to students? How?
 - c. Have you noticed a change in the why your school or district talks about relationships or students in the last four years?
2. Describe a student of Color you had a strong relationship with.
 - a. How did you know the relationship was strong?
 - b. What intentional things did you do to form that relationship? Why did you do them? Did they all work?
 - c. Did the district/school have policies about relationships?
 - d. How do you think the student would describe the relationship if they were here?
 - e. How, if at all, do you think you being white played into that relationship?
 - i. How does it play into your teaching?
3. How do you acknowledge your whiteness? Do you at all?
 - a. Does your school/district talk about whiteness? Or teacher race at all?

4. Okay, one last question, how do you think you, in your own classroom or at school uphold or disrupt white supremacy?
5. Did I miss anything? Do you feel like there's anything you want to add?