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## Navigating Conversations about Race through an Introduction to Anti-Racist Pedagogy for Practicing Teachers

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FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

NAVIGATING CONVERSATIONS ABOUT RACE THROUGH  
AN INTRODUCTION TO ANTI-RACIST PEDAGOGY  
FOR PRACTICING TEACHERS

By  
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This dissertation is dedicated to my family, friends, and colleagues who have supported me throughout this process. I extend the most special note of thanks to my children, Desmond and Penelope, as well as my husband, Andy for absorbing the real cost of having their mom/wife journey through a doctoral program. And to my mom Terri and my dad Mike, who have always supported my endeavors, even the crazy ones.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	v
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 2: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	11
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY.....	27
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS.....	40
APPENDICES.....	64
A. INTERVIEW PROTOCOL.....	64
B. FACILITATION PLAN.....	66
C. INFORMED CONSENT RECRUITMENT EMAIL.....	72
D. CONSENT FORM.....	74
E. IRB APPROVAL FORM.....	75
References.....	77
Biographical Sketch.....	85

## ABSTRACT

It is well documented that with a growing demographic mismatch between a largely white teaching force and an increasingly diverse student body, teacher-student relationships are often impacted by a lack of educator understanding around the effects of racism on students' lives and educational systems. The utilization of anti-racist pedagogy, which emphasizes the examination of historical and political contexts and the cultivation of critical analysis of individual and systemic structures, presents a suitable approach of introducing and delving into the issue of racial equity in education. This study explores the ways in which practicing teachers in a Title I school navigate conversations about race and react to strategies and activities in an introductory professional learning in-service using the *Courageous Conversations* framework developed by Glen Singleton. This paper indicates a need for continued, ongoing professional development to move teachers toward an anti-racist mindset and create the context necessary for educators to understand systemic racism and its effects within the educational system.

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 2020, images of tear-gassed protesters, military tanks, and masks filled the screens of America as protesters took to the streets over issues of racial justice and inequity. Headlines quickly shifted from the singular, inescapably alarming focus of Coronavirus statistics. Headlines around racial tensions replaced them, many centered around the profession of education (Beninate, 2020; Hall & Gousman, 2020; Magee, 2020;). Headlines read: “Suburban teacher’s social media post sparks outrage, internal investigation” (Hall & Gousman, 2020); “California teacher apologizes after video shows her yelling, cursing at BLM protesters” (Magee, 2020); “Teacher Calls for Anti-Racism Curriculum After She Was Put on Leave Over Remarks on Police Violence” (Young & Raphelson, 2020). Closer to home in Northwest Florida, the headlines continued: “Five Pace High School teachers placed on leave amid racist Facebook post investigation” (Blanks, 2020), “Pensacola elementary teacher under investigation after Facebook post about ‘privilege’ (Beninate, 2020). In a speech after the 2016 election, Darling-Hammond (2017) reminded those of us in the education community that progress follows decline and that it is the tragedy suffered that so often awakens acts of bravery and allyship to create change in our communities. Addressing the cultural mismatch of educators and the students they teach through in-service learning and educational research can provide a path forward, creating a proverbial bridge to fill gaps in understanding and experience.

### **Problem of Practice Statement**

White teachers often struggle to understand the lived experiences of and form positive relationships with students of color (Gay, 2009; Kailin, 2002). A lack of relationship and connection between White teachers and Black students due to implicit and often unconscious

biases can often become a roadblock in creating an equitable educational experience for Black students (Darling-Hammond, 2017; Gay, 2009; Kailin, 2002). According to the National Center for Education Statistics, in the 2017-2018 school year roughly 80% of teachers across the U.S. were White and only 7% of teachers identified as Black (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). The Pew Research Center finds that in the same year, 39% of Americans and 51% of students in public education settings were non-White (Geiger, 2018).

The experiences of the mostly White teachers and those of their increasingly diverse student bodies often do not overlap. They often do not share a common history, narrative, or experience that can be leaned upon to form authentic, caring relationships and to provide meaning and context in learning (Gay, 2009). Few are involved in the communities of the children they serve and fewer understand the effects of systemic racism within those communities that lead to “higher concentrations of poverty, dense housing, food deserts, high rates of violence and a lack of green space” (Utt & Tochluk, 2016, p. 126). Prior to entering the profession, many White teachers’ experiences or contact with people of color is limited, potentially causing bias beginning as early as preschool (Young, 2016).

Each year, 90% of Black children as young as eight will experience discrimination based on the color of their skin (Pachter & Coll, 2009). In a narrative piece detailing racial stress afflicting Black students, Anderson, Saleem, and Huguley (2019) reference the profound effects of this cultural gap and implicit bias on students and their families. In schools, Black students are often restricted from accelerated coursework and are underrepresented within the curriculum (Anderson et al., 2019). Teachers often hold stereotypes about Black students, believing that their attitudes impede instructional efforts rather than enhance them and view programs related to social justice or cultural competency as discriminatory against Whites (Sleeter, 2008). The



effects of racism and racist practices within schools have led to disproportionate disciplinary practices targeting Black students, the overrepresentation of Black students in special education programs and alternative programs, disengagement of Black students with school, an ever-increasing achievement gap, lower graduation rates as compared to their White peers, and student apathy towards an educational system that often doesn't seem to value their lived experiences (Anderson, Saleem & Huguley, 2019, Kailin, 2002; Sleeter, 2008).

In *Preparing White Teachers for Diverse Students*, Sleeter (2008) posits that this gap in cultural experience can lead to a lack of relationship building both with students and their families as well as difficulty creating curricula that students see as relevant, leading to a lack of engagement that White teachers often attribute to apathy on the part of the student. Pre-service certification programs often do not provide the necessary embedded multicultural education to become culturally competent (Delk, 2019) and, in the absence of such preparation, comprehensive professional development programs are necessary. In order to create a common conceptual framework for professional development programs, the measurement should be focused on core features of effectiveness including content focus, active learning, coherence, duration, and collective participation (Desimone, 2009).

Sleeter (2008) identified four problems that affect the daily practices of White teachers in the classroom. First, these teachers generally define racism as “interpersonal” relationships and attitudes about people of color as opposed to recognizing racism within systems and institutions that are so deeply rooted in the history of America. Second, they generally maintain lower expectations for students of color than their White counterparts and do not see this as related to racism. The third identified problem posits that these teachers are generally not comfortable interacting with Black communities and are afraid of discussing race and racism with those

within the Black community. Finally, White teachers often do not view themselves as “cultural beings” but rather view their whiteness as normative and the central standard to which every other ethnicity is compared (Gillborn, 2005; Sleeter, 2008). These identified problems do not lead to an equitable education system but instead highlight the inequities embedded in the relationships that can often be formed by White teachers and their Black students.

Researchers have stressed the need for an explicit focus on bridging the cultural gap between teachers and their students (Delk, 2019; Spanierman et al., 2010). A recurrent theme in this research is the power of self-reflection and awareness of the differing life experiences of White educators and their students in majority-minority school settings. Understanding racial identity and the role that it plays in education has the potential to correct the misconceptions of White teachers whose focus is often on the role of the racial identity of students of color as opposed to the impact of their own racial identities (Utt & Tochluk, 2016).

Teachers, specifically White teachers, at JH Workman Middle School, a majority-minority Title I school in Pensacola, Florida, struggle to create positive classroom cultures and develop and maintain positive relationships with their students. Black students continue to be disproportionately disciplined on the campus and the gap in academic performance between White and Black students has continued to widen. According to Civil Rights data published in 2015, though Black students only accounted for 52.5% of the school population, they accounted for 84% and 86.6% of In-School and Out-of-School Suspensions respectively (Summary of Selected Facts, 2015). Data also show that the only students retained and required to repeat a grade level during the 2015-2016 school year were Black.

During the 2018-19 school year, JH Workman replaced eleven teachers; during the 19-20 school year, seven teachers were replaced, ending the school year with two vacancies. Though

no formal exit interview structure has been established, the complaints of those who leave the school have been consistent and clear. The exiting teachers state that they do not understand the behavior of the children; they assert that there is a lack of “respect for authority” in the classroom, and do not feel that they can “teach these kids” especially in “this” environment. Teachers who come into the profession without traditional preparation often have even less knowledge of the history and foundations of educational systems than those who are prepared traditionally. This occurs on a regular basis as more than 52 percent of teachers at JH Workman Middle School are alternatively certified and lack any formal educational training. The lack of educational knowledge and self-awareness compounds the difficulties they face. This situation highlights the need for explicit, anti-racist professional development to change behaviors and discipline practices, specifically of White, inexperienced classroom teachers, to keep them in the profession and to ensure that majority-minority schools are staffed with effective teachers who have the training to create authentic relationships and create equitable learning environments for their students.

### **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this Dissertation in Practice (DiP) is to understand motivating factors and explore participant interactions and experiences as teachers are introduced to the idea of anti-racist pedagogy. Specifically, this study explored a variety of approaches of introducing anti-racist pedagogy to understand how the structure of professional learning and language used may be connected to the receptivity of participants while addressing deficit thinking.

The research questions address the discourse and reflection that occur during and after professional learning. A goal of this study was that both the expressed and written, reflective

thoughts of the teachers would provide adequate information to determine the level of participant receptivity.

This study seeks to better understand participants' engagement with and reactions to the in-service including determining activities that create entry points and activities that create or exacerbate barriers to attitudes about anti-racist pedagogy. The data gathered through this study will be used in program evaluation to refine the in-service and create the next iteration with the eventual goal of creating an introductory anti-racist pedagogy PD that can be used across contexts where participants have little to no knowledge about systemic racism and its effects in the educational system.

### **Research Questions**

In an effort to understand the motivating factors of this new, untested in-service, the research questions addressed in this study are as follows:

1. How do teachers at JH Workman Middle School who self-enrolled in anti-racist pedagogical in-service navigate conversations about racism and react to the strategies presented?
2. What activities presented during the in-service create entry points that increase participant engagement and comfort with the discussion/reflection and what activities halt conversations or exacerbate barriers for teachers during the in-service?

This study aims to determine if the language and structure of the professional development can change the reflection of participants and identify areas of improvement to remove barriers and increase participant motivation to experiment with anti-racist pedagogy in the classroom.

## **Study Design Overview**

The anti-racist in-service that is the basis of this dissertation had not previously been implemented in the local context. In Escambia County School District, professional development that addresses the disconnect between teachers and students has focused solely on strategies for teaching students living in poverty and training in student resilience. There had been no formal professional development opportunity for teachers to delve into racist structures and White dominance. This two-day in-service was open to all teachers but was limited, due to the nature of the in-service, to five to ten self-selected participants to allow for meaningful discourse. The in-service took place over two full seven-hour days. The objective of this in-service was to create an experience that introduced teachers to the individual and systemic forms of racism, and how to implement anti-racist pedagogy in the classroom. The research in this dissertation was completed using an exploratory model through a qualitative case study analysis and seeks to better understand the experiences and perceptions of participating teachers and explore the barriers that exist in learning about racism and anti-racist pedagogy. Studying the experiences of the participants and observing their interactions with one another during the in-service made it possible to identify the barriers to implementation and provided information as to how to overcome those challenges in future sessions.

## **Study Site Overview and Feasibility**

Of the 40,000 students in Escambia County, Florida 34.6% are African American, and 72.1% are labeled as disadvantaged (2018-19 School Report Card, 2019). There is much diversity in this beachside city, which has continued to struggle with race relations both as a local education entity and community long after *Brown vs. Board of Education*. In 1973 a lawsuit developed over Escambia High School's mascot name of "Rebels" and its symbol of the

Confederate Battle Flag, stating that it violated the rights of Black students on campus as defined by the 14th Amendment (*Augustus v. School Board of Escambia County*, 361 F. Supp. 383 (N.D. Fla. 1973)). This was met with race riots organized by the Ku Klux Klan in February of 1976 when it was decided that the team would henceforth be known as the “Raiders” (Special, 1976). In a 2020 Quality of Life survey through Pensacola Young Professionals in partnership with Mason-Dixon Polling and Strategy, 58% of those interviewed stated that race relations within Escambia County were negative, including 71% of Black survey participants and 55% of White participants. Additionally, 61% of participants stated that systemic racism continues to be an issue in Escambia County (Mason-Dixon Polling & Strategy, 2021). In light of this information and the data collected through school district and community surveys, the newly appointed superintendent of schools has stated that it is the top priority for our school district over the next three years to close the achievement gap, specifically between Black and White students and has encouraged unity throughout the district.

Escambia County School District’s racial imbalance in its teacher force mirrors that of the nation. An example can be found at JH Workman Middle IB World School, a majority-minority public city school in Pensacola. At this site, 51.7% of students identify as Black and 71.1% of the employees working to serve those students identify as White (Escambia County School District, 2020). Additionally, more than half of the teachers at JH Workman are categorized as inexperienced by the Florida Department of Education and 52% are alternatively certified. There are several pathways to teaching in the county, but these pathways often overlap with time in the classroom and are entered into only after being hired at a school site. Therefore, in the 2020-2021 school year, 52% of new teachers began their careers in the classroom with little to no preparation or training (Escambia County School District, 2020).

This study was realistic and feasible as both the in-service development of teachers and informal observations fall under the purview of site-based administrators in Escambia County School District. The current principal, level director, and superintendent were wholly supportive of this work.

### **Study Significance**

Providing professional development to teachers in anti-racist practices is a step toward improving the inequitable structures entrenched in our educational system, and a tiny step toward repaying the debt we owe to students of color. Ladson-Billings (2006), in an address to the American Research Education Association, used apt and thought-provoking comparisons to describe the ingrained roots of the achievement gaps created through racist practices. Ladson-Billings asserts,

I am arguing that our focus on the achievement gap is akin to a focus on the budget deficit, but what is actually happening to African American and Latina/o students is really more like the national debt. We do not have an achievement gap; we have an education debt (p.6).

The analogy of national deficit and national debt speaks to the continued accumulation of disparity and the educational community's lack of action to adequately address it.

As I watched students, teachers, and families around the country don masks and take to the streets in a global demonstration of civil action and disobedience in defense of Black lives, as I took my own children to stand in solidarity and listen to the stories of experiences with racism, I heard stories that began in the classroom. Stories that began with having a teacher who didn't understand a student, stories of suspensions and retention, stories of children who so desperately needed adults to hear and see them yet were being shown repeatedly that they were not welcomed within our educational system. There is nothing more significant that we can do for

our educators than to teach them to see their students for their worth and for who they are capable of becoming. Understanding how educators experience and process through anti-racist practices has the potential to impact future practice and policy and, with diligence and steadfast dedication, rid the profession, which makes all other professions possible, of the need for this type of continuous development.

### **Conclusion**

The school district of Escambia County, Florida has long struggled with achievement gaps, discipline disparities, and graduation rates between White and non-White students. Though this struggle is in no way unique to this county, the need for anti-racist in-service development of our teaching force is obvious and urgent. Ultimately, I would like to use this research to create an anti-racism in-service program that can be utilized as a piece of our district's onboarding process to promote anti-racist practices for new teachers and eliminate the reproduction of racist classroom practices.

Collectively, it is crucial that we define the purpose and intended outcomes for our educational systems. Neil Postman, author of *Teaching as a Subversive Activity* (1972), stated "Once you have learned to ask questions - relevant and appropriate and substantial questions - you have learned how to learn and no one can keep you from learning whatever you want or need to know" (p. 38). If the purpose of education is to teach students to think critically and ask questions about the world around them, including the systems, structures, and institutions that affect their everyday lives, we first have to know, understand, and appreciate our students. Only then will we be able to achieve the ultimate goal of education, to help develop a citizenry with the ability to internalize curiosity, to question, analyze, and assess problems, and to think and question critically. This is how we achieve the more perfect union that we seek.



## **CHAPTER 2**

### **A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

#### **Introduction**

The cultural mismatch between the teaching population and the student population in the United States creates a need for race-based professional development so that teachers can better understand the individual and institutional effects of race and racism in their classrooms and schools. Research on a predominately white teaching force has shown how implicit teacher bias can create additional barriers for Black students in U.S. schools (Singleton, 2022; Sleeter, 2001; View et. al., 2020). It is necessary to explicitly focus on race and equity for school reform efforts to move toward desegregation and equitable opportunities for all (Bonilla-Silva, 2017; Goode et al., 2020). Educators make hundreds of momentary decisions each day and must be aware of how unconscious or implicit biases may influence both their actions and their decision-making processes (Benson & Fiarman, 2019). Without intervention, these unconscious biases can severely limit the educational opportunities of Black students and cause disengagement with the educational system (Benson & Fiarman, 2019).

Teacher preparation programs often do not adequately provide teachers, specifically White teachers, with the tools necessary to effectively teach in racially diverse classrooms. Research indicates that prospective teachers tend to avoid recognizing that race and ethnicity are important aspects of diversity and instead use socially safer terms such as culture (Ed et al., 2011). Teachers in the U.S. have been underprepared to critically reflect on issues of race and ethnicity as it relates to educational opportunities and student outcomes (Hernandez & Endo, 2017). Criticisms have been levied that these foundational courses focus too heavily on theory

and fail to provide adequate experiences for preservice teachers to practice application in real-world contexts. Because of these criticisms, necessary foundational knowledge that provides teachers with the threads that connect education to society, anthropology, and other social sciences is being pulled from syllabi and replaced with real-world, practical applications that can lose meaning without a foundation to be built upon (McManimon & Casey, 2018; Darling-Hammond & Adamson, 2010).

Professional development is necessary to provide in-service teachers with the skills necessary to effectively teach their students. In a review of the literature on antiracist preservice and in-service teacher development from 2002-2018, less than 30% of the articles focused on in-service teacher professional development efforts (Hambacher & Ginn, 2020). When White practicing teachers are unconscious of the systematic oppression and racism in the United States, their unintentional actions can be detrimental to Black students (Matias, 2013).

The central argument of this Dissertation in Practice is to address the cultural mismatch of teachers and their students by developing an understanding of the role identity and racism play in the educational landscape. It is a necessary first step to introduce teachers via in-service professional development to the foundations of antiracism and antiracist pedagogy.

### **Orientation Within the Larger Educational Landscape**

Since the inception of the educational systems in America, there has been a history of inequitable opportunity in K-12 classrooms. The topic of race, though sensitive in nature, is necessary for educational equity (Hambacher & Ginn, 2020). The systems and structures around zoning, urban planning, and federal, state and local laws, have created segregated communities and segregated schools contributing to generational poverty (Benson & Fiarman, 2019). Discriminatory mortgage policies and the depreciation of property in Black neighborhoods are

directly related to underfunded schools in these areas (Benson & Fiarman, 2019). The 1896 U.S. Supreme Court decision of *Plessy vs. Ferguson* upheld the constitutionality of this segregation within public schools (*Plessy v Ferguson*, 1896).

In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, though there have been concerted efforts toward system reforms, the foundational inequities between White and Black students remain. The U.S. Census projections show that between 2010 and 2050 the Black population will have a 46% growth rate; Latino(a)s will have an 87% growth rate; Asian Americans will have a 213% growth rate; and Whites will have a 1% growth rate (Hernandez & Endo, 2017). There is a significant overrepresentation of White Americans in PK-12 teaching (Hernandez & Endo, 2017). Some disparities between racialized groups of students in the PK-12 system have been attributed to this homogeneity of the workforce (Hernandez & Endo, 2017). Additionally, the aforementioned segregation provides fewer opportunities for a predominately White teaching force to have natural interactions with Black communities including the communities of their students (Benson & Fiarman, 2019). Because of racial isolation, many White teachers' information about Black students comes from secondary sources including media such as movies, news, and social media (Benson & Fiarman, 2019). Concerns exist in educational research regarding professional learning focused on diversity oversimplifying issues and avoiding the more charged topics of race and racism (Hambacher & Ginn, 2020).

Threats to racial equity in education at the systemic level continue to plague the same systems and structures working to provide equitable opportunities for all students. Recently, the integrity and value of public education is questioned by those who would profit from its dismantling. In 2012 only 29% of Americans polled stated they had “a great deal” or “quite a lot” of confidence in public education. Many White families continue to choose to separate

themselves from public schools where there are likely to be a majority of Black families. School choice and charter expansion also continue to add to the segregation of American schools with additional voucher funding provided in the last decade creating more inequities between Black and White students (View et al., 2020).

## **Previous Studies**

### **Theoretical Frameworks**

Previous empirical studies on antiracist staff development that addresses individual conscious and unconscious biases and institutional racism as well as many opinion pieces on the matter rely heavily on two theoretical frameworks to provide an overarching lens: Critical Race Theory and Critical Whiteness Study (Goode et al., 2020; Hambacher & Ginn, 2020; McDermott & Sampson, 2005; Soloranzo & Yosso, 2001). These frameworks, as opposed to the colorblind and cultural assimilation ideologies often employed in diversity training and cultural awareness seminars, directly address the societal and individual structures that reproduce White dominance and systemic racism (Goode et al., 2020; Hambacher & Ginn, 2020).

It is necessary to examine how Critical Race Theory can be used to disrupt these colorblind ideologies when used as a framework for teachers to hone their skills, attitudes, perceptions, and abilities around race and equity (Goode et al., 2020). Critical Race Theory posits that racism is not an anomaly but rather an entrenched part of our American society and therefore since it is hidden in plain sight; it is often considered appalling when addressed in polite discussion (Hambacher & Ginn, 2020). Because of the advantages afforded to White people through White dominance, these groups may see efforts to deconstruct these entrenched structures as a loss of or threat to persons within the group (Hambacher & Ginn, 2020). Critical Race Theory also highlights the deficit model of thinking which can often dismiss structural

inequities with a focus on the deficits of an individual or community (Goode et al, 2020). Additionally, inequities through educational disciplinary practices, homogenous school course assignments, school choice, as well as how educational systems reproduce ideas of White supremacy through pedagogical practices, school curricula, and educational expectations are focuses of Critical Race Theory (Hambacher & Ginn, 2020).

Critical Whiteness Study calls attention to the lack of visibility of racial power and all of the associated privileges afforded to Whites (McDermott & Sampson, 2005). White privilege is an embedded concept of Critical Whiteness study that posits that White people benefit socially, economically, and in a myriad of ways simply by being White (Hambacher & Ginn, 2020). The study of Whiteness has been criticized for being co-opted by the dominant White research community which could potentially misinterpret Critical Race Theory ideas by focusing on the individual aspect of Whiteness without addressing the systemic and institutional policies at play that have been combated by Black individuals and collectives for centuries (Hambacher & Ginn, 2020). Critics of White privilege theory argue that White people are painted as passive inheritors of power and position and downplay the active role that White people play in perpetuating systems of inequity (Hambacher & Ginn, 2020).

### **Effective Professional Development Practices**

A description of the foundational professional development practices that have been found to be effective for in-service educators provides a framework to determine how these practices could be used to support anti-racist PD. These components coupled with an investigation of empirical studies on race visible professional development serve as the basis for creating a PD intervention that is focused on introducing anti-racist pedagogy to practicing teachers.

Current literature provides a great deal of flexibility when defining professional development and includes a variety of formats and structures under the PD umbrella including but not limited to coaching cycles, workshops, professional learning communities, reflection activities, and natural learning and leadership opportunities. There is a consensus in recent research that critical features of professional development exist and can be used to increase the knowledge and skills of educators with the possibility of improving student outcomes. The critical features agreed upon in research are active learning, coherence, duration, and collective participation (Desimone, 2009; Singleton, 2022; View et. al, 2020). Using these characteristics, Desimone (2009) created a conceptual framework to study teachers' professional development that links critical features, teacher knowledge and beliefs, classroom practice, and student outcomes. This study will focus on the first two phases of Desimone's model: core features of PD and teacher attitudes and skill development.

Hague (2019) and Romjin et. al. (2021) engaged in literature reviews centered on reflection, enactment, and collaboration in professional development. Hague (2019) used activity theory as a framework to complete a search of pedagogical terms using ERIC using exclusion and selection criteria to analyze articles from 2015-2017 to find out how professional development occurs in schools and identify changes in teacher practice. Findings suggested that trust between teachers and trust between teachers and leadership played a critical role in changing teacher attitudes and creating buy-in when new interventions around teaching and learning were presented This coupled with external support and teacher agency led to changes in practice. Another finding that emerged suggested that "when the approach to development and learning focused on students as learners, and how teachers can change their discursive patters of

students as learners from being passive participants to active participants in their own learning processes” teacher practice was more likely to change (p. 17).

Romjin et. al. (2021) focused their literature review on how professional learning efforts improve intercultural competence, specifically in the K-2 realm. Similarly, the literature review was conducted through online databases using exclusion and inclusion criteria. Patterns that emerged throughout the review included interventions that “target knowledge, skills and belief systems simultaneously” (p.10) were more likely to be entrenched in organizational practice however there were no differences found for interventions that focused on a single group versus more general, inclusive diversity approaches. Reflection was also highlighted throughout the findings as 96% of papers reviewed reported its use within interventions with a heavy reliance on written assignments of participants.

Effective professional development practices must be implemented for successful antiracist in-service development. *The Handbook of Professional Development in Education* posits that there are five characteristics of effective professional development. It must be instructive, reflective, active, collaborative, and substantive (2014). Critics argue that professional development in isolation has been found to be ineffective; it must be contextualized to support teachers’ professional learning (Romjin et al., 2020; Hauge, 2019). Professional learning exists in both formal and informal structures, both of which have been found to be effective when there is a balance between the context and structure of the professional learning opportunity, as well as embedded flexibility that allows for teachers to be part of the process and have ownership of their learning (Hauge, 2019). Though individual differences between teachers mean they may benefit from different approaches to professional development including content and pedagogy or strategies (Romjin et al., 2020), when teachers are actively engaged in

meaningful and relevant professional development experiences, they are better able to create those experiences for their students (Hauge, 2019). Effective professional development requires active participation, connection with current ideology/beliefs, and a duration fitting to the content (Romjin et al., 2020). Research indicates that collaboration in professional development can contribute to developed teaching practices, but schools often struggle to create meaningful interactions when working to teach content. Additionally, the culture of a school or system has a profound impact on the success of professional development efforts (Hauge, 2019).

### **Effective Instructional Strategies: Avoiding Barriers**

Teaching antiracist pedagogy and facilitating professional learning around the concepts of individual and systemic racism evokes strong emotions in participants and challenges worldviews and life views of many involved. Because of this, those facilitating antiracist staff development must use intentional and explicit strategies in order to avoid participant shut-downs and to pierce through the hegemonic narratives that often dominate societal and educational discourse (Wagner, 2005). Matias & Mackey's development of an urban education course for preservice teachers focused heavily on this idea of emotional literacy during the first phase of their coursework (Matias & Mackey, 2015). To prepare pre-service or in-service teachers to delve into the sensitive topics of antiracist praxis, this focal point has been successfully implemented and prepared participants with a structured process of what they will be learning, how to discuss and reflect on the emotions raised during the sessions, and how to unpack these feelings both individually and collectively as a participant group (Matias & Mackey, 2015; McManion & Casey, 2018; Wagner, 2005). This includes providing participants with a safe place where honest discourse can occur (Haltinner, 2016) and building relational accountability between both the facilitator and participants (McManimon & Casey, 2018). In order to do this,



Wagner, in constructing a university course centered on antiracist practice, found increased effectiveness when participants were provided with explicit goals for the session or program, and orienting students to and normalizing tension within group discussions and providing norms that give students frames in order to disagree appropriately while still valuing the lived experiences of other participants and highlighting the intersectionality of those experiences (Wagner, 2005).

### **Instructional Content**

Several studies relied heavily on literature to convey the lived experiences of people of color to the relatively homogeneous teaching force. These studies relied on non-canonical texts to shed light on the dominant discourse of American Literature and the English classroom (Glenn, 2015; Katsarou, 2009). Other studies used various forms of media to guide participants toward an understanding of social complexities and explore societal views on race through social media challenges, and the analysis of commercials, viral videos, and documentaries (Bryant et al., 2015; Matias & Mackey, 2016). The instructional and pedagogical strategies used to analyze the content, though still varied, collectively relied on critical reflection through “race-reflective writing” and structured participant discourse to delve deeper into antiracist practices and the study of a dominant White culture (Hambacher & Ginn, 2020, p. 5). These overarching pedagogical practices were embedded in a multitude of ways within studies. For example, Goode et al. (2020), in an initial 5-day summer institute springboard of a two-year program, employed journal writing and small group discussions to allow participants to engage both in discourse and critical reflection in a book study around race, equity, and computer sciences. The focus of the study was to expose participants to race-based dialogue around computer sciences in an effort to provide teachers with additional tools to teach diverse groups of students. Though talk around equity was productive, they found that teachers, specifically White teachers, were

hesitant to engage in race talk, citing concerns about using the “wrong” language or offending other participants and often defaulted to colorblind ideology.

In Sleeter’s review of multicultural literature (2001), she found that participants who analyzed their role in institutional and systemic practices related to race and White dominant culture by analyzing family histories were more likely to draw connections between their own identity development and that of others. Matias & Mackey (2016), in the development of a teacher education diversity course, depended instead on a more public forum of digital storytelling where participants publish their reflections on their own lived experiences and the development of their normative values online. Through the use of pre and post qualitative questionnaires, they collected stories from their participants about their growth throughout the course, specifically how their whiteness was decentered through the use of texts and they were better able to connect with those that were different from them through self-reflection and engagement with their peers around others’ stories.

Similarly, written reflections such as journaling, autobiographical writing, family history exploration, and content-based reflective exercises were used to prompt participants to reflect critically about the development of their own world view as it relates to race and dominant culture as well as the experiences of other racialized groups (Goode et al., 2020; Hambacher & Ginn, 2020; Matias & Mackey, 2016; Sleeter, 2001). Though these efforts created a more rich and thorough dialogue, there remained in each study a hesitancy of teachers, specifically White teachers, to actively engage in race specific dialogue.

These studies each included intentional content to construct professional development experiences that guided participants through a study of personal lived experiences as they relate to race as well as introduce systemic and institutional biases about race and ethnicity. The

studies collectively used lenses of critical race theory and critical whiteness study to frame instructional practices during teacher education for both pre-service and in-service teachers (Hambacher & Ginn, 2020; Good et al. 2020). The common thread linking the studies was the use of texts, used here in the broadest sense of the word, to disrupt the dominant discourses around race and identity and open an empathy-driven dialogue to deepen understandings about race as it relates to both current and historical systems and structures within our society (Matias & Mackey, 2016). Though hesitancy existed throughout the studies, in each of the findings the authors discussed the need for future research focused specifically and explicitly on race.

### **Roadblocks and Shutdowns**

Many scholars argue that teachers often resist seeing racism and accepting Whiteness despite long-term professional development efforts (Hyland, 2005; Pennington et al., 2012). Many empirical studies found that there was hesitancy to engage in group dialogue around race during professional development, especially for White teachers (Goode et al., 2018; Haltinner, 2016; Wagner, 2005). Goode et al. found that in a week-long workshop for computer science teachers focused on explicit race talk, White teachers struggled and were often disengaged during explicit conversations about race, while Black teachers and other teachers of color engaged in dialogue around personal experiences as well as structural and system-based inequities. While this was seen across many studies, Black teachers can often be burdened in this role by becoming a “spokesperson from race” in PD sessions (Goode et. al, 2020).

The hesitancy of White participants can stem from internalized guilt when engaging in discussions about White privilege and, if not checked and normed both during the initial meeting and throughout the experience can cause bouts of silence, specifically of White participants fearing judgment or criticism (Haltinner, 2016). This silence is often exacerbated or prolonged,

diminishing important conversations when emotions become heightened and reverting to “polite” discussion rather than delving into important talk (Boyd, 2017). These tensions are a source of opportunity for change and growth (Hauge, 2019). Pollock et. al (2009) found, in a study of a semester course titled Everyday Racism for Educators (EAR) for pre-service teachers, the same struggle of participants to engage in real-time conversations about race and when prompted, many defaulted to colorblind ideology. Additionally, though, they found the same group wrote at length about their experiences in reflective journals and were far more likely to address systems and structures, as well as their own personal experiences about racism.

### **Critical Reflection and Collaboration**

Previous studies show a consensus that critical reflection and collaboration are crucial race-based professional development because they are effective tools in combating the entrenched hesitancy of teachers to discuss the topic of race (Christian & Zippay, 2012; Hague, 2019; Hernandez & Endo, 2017). Collaboration led by skilled facilitators can lead to trust between teacher participants which is necessary for honest and reflective conversations to occur. This trust is developed through the shared responsibility of dialogue, mutual kindness, and tolerance (Hague, 2019). Critical reflection is a cognitive process that considers the broad social and historical contexts when processing events and/or making decisions (Hernandez & Endo, 2017). Though studies have found that reflection does not necessarily lead to classroom actions, it is considered an effective and necessary strategy when planning professional development opportunities (Christian & Zippay, 2012; Hague, 2019). Teachers state that they were better able to enter into exploratory reflections and conversations in an environment where trust was built between participants rated the experience as valuable to their learning (Hauge, 2019). In a case study of forty preservice teachers enrolled in a fully online multicultural course, the authors

studied the student groups and found students who reflected on their own personal experiences were more likely to reach the “Transforming” category in their rubric which showed a shift in core thinking and pedagogical practice. Mandated professional learning that was deliberately crafted with embedded collaboration and self-reflection opportunities showed a shift in teachers' attitudes and beliefs about race and diversity (Christian & Zippay, 2012). Specifically, in moments of existential crisis and heightened tension, which are likely to occur during race-centered professional development due to the sensitive nature of topics covered, reflection has been found to be helpful in processing through and adjusting worldviews of participants (Hernandez & Endo, 2017).

### **Shortcomings of Existing Studies and Methods to Improve upon the Existing Literature**

Though there is a breadth of literature on race-based professional development experiences, little literature focuses on the particular verbiage or activity that ignited resistance in participants. Additionally, many studies use small groups of participants and much of the participation is voluntary, meaning the participants are open to the idea that inequities exist in the first place. Though there are a variety of studies on short-term and ongoing professional development efforts, most studies focus on a single effort and few are iterative in nature. The findings of many studies in the literature are not used to create more effective versions of the professional development offerings.

It would be beneficial to conduct a qualitative study that uses the actions and interactions of participants to gauge the effectiveness of activities on reducing deficit model thinking. Additionally, efforts to improve upon the existing literature could focus on pinpointing the specific causes of participant resistance and conduct iterative versions to compare results in order

to create a palatable and effective antiracist professional development session that reaches all participants.

### Description of the Local Context

J.H. Workman Middle School is a comprehensive Title I school located in Escambia County School District (ECSD) in Pensacola, Florida. The makeup of this school district is diverse. 46% of students identify as White, 34.6% identify as Black 8.3% identify as Hispanic, and another 11% identify as mixed race. The cultural mismatch of teachers is evident here in our school district of 40,000 students (See Figure 1). While the student body is a diverse representation of our community, the teaching force is less so. Of the 2746 teachers in Escambia County School District, 79% of them identify as white and only 13% identify as Black. 4% of teachers identify as Hispanic and another 4% identify as mixed race. At Workman, where I served as assistant principal from 2018-2021, the cultural mismatch is mirrored with 70% of our teachers identifying as white but only 25.5% of our student body doing so (Florida Department of Education, 2021).

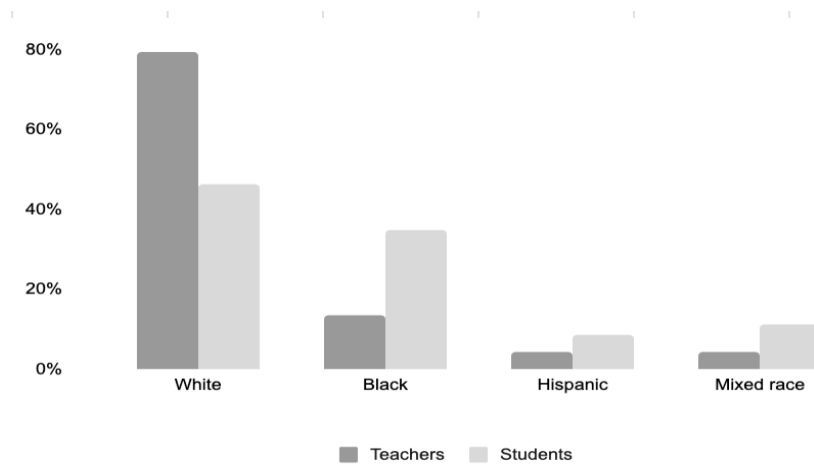


Figure 1

Racial Demographics of Teachers and Students in Escambia County

Efforts on our campus as well as across the district to address the differences in lived experiences between teachers and their students are sparse and have been solely addressed in terms of class. In the Professional Learning Department Catalog for the strategic plan from 2018-2023, ECSD stated that their goal was “To make a positive difference in students’ lives and prepare them for lifelong learning” (Escambia County School District, 2020). The district aims to share this goal through its strategic plan and focuses on high student achievement, a safe learning and working environment, a high-performing workforce, and efficient and effective systems. In a search of the catalog of over 750 professional learning modules and sessions available for the school district, for the words “race” and “equity” each produced only one result, which happened to be within the same training that JH Workman Middle School held on campus through the Title I program. During the 2020-2021 school year, the teachers, administrators, and staff engaged in a year-long book study on *Disrupting Poverty* by Budge and Harrett (2017). Again, though this has been beneficial in opening conversations about the difference in lived experiences of staff and students, it is focused on class, and even in the structured discussions held over the course of the last year, anecdotal observation shows that the topic of race is skirted around and unspoken within discussion groups (Escambia County School District, 2020).

This yearlong book study in coordination with other efforts to reform our school’s campus culture by providing restorative practices, restructuring our disciplinary system, and focusing on high expectations for all students has decreased JH Workman’s referral rate by 11% (Florida Department of Education, 2021). There has been no noticeable change in academic performance, and without a pre and post measure for student-teacher relationships, there is no dependable data source to measure this. Anecdotal evidence of teacher complaints and a referral analysis on student behaviors coupled with the continued disproportionate referral levels for

Black students still shows an urgent need to address race and the vastly different lived experiences of our teachers and our students.

### **Summary and Contributions of this DiP**

This review of literature supports the idea that there is an urgent need for antiracist professional development for in-service practicing teachers. The mostly homogenous educational workforce teaches an increasingly diverse student body with whom they will need to build relationships in order to ensure academic and social success. Structural inequities have been present from the inception of the American public education system and are furthered, both consciously and unconsciously, in silence. Race-conscious teaching using antiracist pedagogy is an effective strategy to begin to dismantle the systems in place and bring awareness to the teaching workforce about how their identities and these systems can affect the academic performance and opportunities for their students.

There is a need for further research into the experiences of participants in antiracist professional development for in-service teachers to better understand the content and strategies that create entry points for collaborative conversation and reflection to change teacher attitudes and dispositions, how resistance builds and develops, and how it can be avoided during professional development. Investigating the content, writing, and reflections of participants and using semi-structured interviews provides valuable information that can increase the effectiveness of antiracist professional development.



## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Introduction and Study Type**

This study seeks to contribute to the body of research on anti-racist pedagogy and explores qualitative data collected about participant experiences in the bounded case of the initial offering of an in-service titled “An Introduction to Anti-racist Pedagogy” at JH Workman Middle School in Pensacola, Florida. The research questions addressed in this study are as follows:

1. How do teachers at JH Workman Middle School who self-enrolled in anti-racist pedagogical in-service navigate conversations about racism and react to the strategies presented?
2. What activities presented during the in-service create entry points and what activities halt conversations or exacerbate barriers for teachers during the in-service?

This approach is exploratory in nature since this is an initial offering of antiracist professional development for in-service teachers who have not been exposed to race-related discourse or training in the Escambia County School District. The problem of practice centers around the lack of knowledge of teachers’ own identities as well as their lack of knowledge of systemic racism and how that affects teachers' abilities to develop relationships with their students. There is no single outcome for this professional development session, and the focus, rather than on the outcome, is on an exploration of what occurs during the development itself. This fits the parameters for an exploratory case study (Baxter & Jack, 2008). This chapter provides an overview of the research design, data collection, and analysis, as well as provides information on my own positionality and the limitations of this study. The research design

section that follows will describe participant selection and recruitment methods, provide a detailed description of data sources and collection procedures, and address efforts to enhance the trustworthiness of this study.

## **Research Design**

### **Rationale**

Maxwell (2008) states that when conducting a qualitative study, the “activities of collecting and analyzing data, developing and modifying theory, elaborating or refocusing research questions, and identifying and dealing with validity threats are usually going on more or less simultaneously” (p. 2). This is something I have found to be truer with every iteration of my design and research question development. I conducted an exploratory case study to explore participant interactions and experiences as teachers were introduced to the idea of anti-racist pedagogy through an initial offering of a professional development session in Florida’s panhandle. Specifically, this study explores a variety of approaches of introducing anti-racist pedagogy to understand how the structure of professional learning and language used may be connected to the receptivity of participants while addressing deficit thinking. To understand motivating factors and explore participant interactions and experiences as teachers were introduced to the idea of anti-racist pedagogy, teachers engaged in a two-day in-service professional development based on the *Courageous Conversations* curriculum (Singleton and Linton, 2022). I used qualitative analysis through participant observations, semi-structured interviews, and a content analysis of participant writings and reflections during the in-service professional development.

It is crucial to adhere to the highest standards when conducting research. Eight criteria for excellent qualitative research are provided by Tracy (2010): Worthy topic, rich rigor, sincerity,

credibility, resonance, significant contribution, ethical, and meaningful coherence. This framework not only provides me with a standard to uphold but an additional lens in which to critique each aspect of my work. In order to answer my research questions, a professional development session is a necessary and appropriate platform to explore the introduction to antiracist pedagogy. In this platform, I was unable to dictate the behavior of participants, and I focused on *how* participants experienced this introduction to a topic that, in my local context, is considered taboo. These are two of the core reasons stated by Yin (2002) that justify the case study approach. Yin (1994) defined a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident...[and] relies on multiple sources of evidence” (p.13). In order to explore the ways in which participants navigate conversations and reflect upon an introduction to antiracist pedagogy while gauging their receptivity, the case study approach was appropriate.

### **Study Purpose**

The purpose of this research is to explore participant interactions and reflections as they are exposed to antiracist pedagogy and led through exercises to examine their own identities and the historical systems and structures that have entrenched racism within our educational systems. Analyzing the conversations and the reflections of participants allowed me to analyze the shifts in thinking and attitudes of participants. This is a sensitive topic and required intentional planning of participant groupings, design of content, and facilitation. Research has shown (evidenced in outline for Chapter 2) that teachers, specifically White teachers, can often shut down and push back when learning about White identity and systemic racism. The

methodology I used allowed me to see where roadblocks and shutdowns occur so that, when designing the next iterations, the development can improve effectiveness.

### **Theoretical Frameworks**

The epistemological foundation of this study is a constructivist/interpretive one. As stated by Merriam and Tisdell (2015), the constructivist philosophical underpinning “assumes that reality is socially constructed; that is, there is no single, observable reality. Rather, there are multiple realities, or interpretations, of a single event” (p.#). Additionally, Yilmaz (2013) asserted that knowledge is constructed through social means and reality is constructed through our cultural lenses, values, and worldviews so it is necessary to value individuals’ perspectives of any given situation as their perspective is in fact their constructed reality. In my own personal experience, I have always found interesting the interpretation of a single event by multiple participants. Perception, I believe, is an individual’s embedded reality and that reality can certainly differ from another’s experience of the same event. This framework relates to this study’s focus on participants’ lived experiences, exposure to events, people, places, our cultures, or even stereotypes or preconceived notions about what one expects to happen. Oftentimes these differences, though situated historically and socially, are also heavily affected by power structures, both explicit and implicit, real and imagined. This framework allows space for the individual receptivity of a group of participants to be analyzed to construct general knowledge.

### **Context**

Participants at JH Workman Middle School were introduced to anti-racist pedagogy through the *Courageous Conversations about Race* curricular framework which was presented in a two-day in-service to participants. The title of the professional development in-service was “An Introduction to Race and Anti-Racist Pedagogy Through Courageous Conversation.” This

field guide was originally developed by Glen Singleton, CEO of Pacific Education Group, a consulting firm dedicated to racial equity. Singleton originally developed the Courageous Conversations protocol for a two-day seminar, “Beyond Diversity” in 1995. Since then, the protocol has been used extensively in PreK-12 educational spaces as well as corporations and non-profits to create research-based spaces where participants can grapple with race. The guide outlines both the content and the processes to guide participant through conversation and reflection around race “as a critical sociopolitical construct” (p. 9).

Singleton and Linton (2022) provide the critical factors of “Passion, practice, and persistence” to introduce participants to racial structures, explore individual racial identities, and provide pedagogical anti-racist practices. Singleton (2022) notes

Because language is at the heart of culture, it is essential that we both establish a common language around race and at the same time remain open to understanding how our varied racial experiences shape our own vocabulary and comfort with the conversation in general, as well as with specific word choice.

This, in conjunction with the “necessary degree of ambiguity” regarding language around race, allows me to explore participant receptivity to a variety of word choice, context, and activities as they learn about anti-racist pedagogy and practices. Participants were provided with a journal which contained all prompts, handouts, and reflection activities for analysis.

The two days of training consisted of welcoming activities and an explanation of the focuses of the workshop. The first focus of the in-service introduced participants to the “landscape of education reform and exposes the issue of race as a phenomenon that affects the lives and learning of all children” (Singleton & Linton, 2022). The second focus of the in-service provided participants with the “language, markers, tools, and insights necessary to begin and stay in the dialogue” around race and education (Singleton & Linton, 2022). The third focus of the in-service provided participants with “specific strategies...to use in the implementation of systemic

racial equity transformation” including pedagogical and leadership strategies (Singleton & Linton, 2022). Throughout the in-service, participants read textual excerpts from Singleton and Linton's work, and engaged in small and large group discussions around writing/discussion prompts. Participants engaged in multiple implementation exercises developed by Singleton and Linton (2022) to explore their own racial identities and learn about how race impacts both personal educational journeys and the systemic educational experience.

### **Data Collection**

To collect data associated with this study’s research questions, data was collected before, during, and after the service through the following methods.

1. Data collection before the in-service: Participant demographic information through recruitment email
2. Data collection during the in-service: Document/reflection analysis and field notes
3. Data collection after the in-service: Semi-structured interviews

### **Participants**

Due to the sensitive nature of this study in my local context and reluctance and restrictions around engaging in conversations about race within the Florida K-12 system, it was crucial to have a sampling of participants that have varying life experiences and varying views about race and racism within the K-12 system. Because of this, I cast a wide net and sent an email to the faculty at large, presenting the research study and inviting volunteers to participate.

As practitioners, we often rely on vocabulary to convey specific, job-related actions that are relevant to “the collective work of the group concerned” (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009, p. 163); this is true of education. This required that I use a mix of purposeful and inclusion criteria sampling to ensure that participants are familiar with the K-12 system and teach a diverse student

population which will also mean that the participants are at my former work location.

Participants were labeled eligible if they met the following criteria. They must be in-service classroom teachers with a Bachelor's degree and they must have taught at JH Workman Middle 2021-2022 school year. No remuneration was offered for participation.

Once I secured Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval where clearly delineated how I would address relationships, confidentiality, and potential risks/discomforts, there was a 4-week recruitment window to obtain informed consent for 5-10 participants. For added protection and confidentiality, participants were assigned a pseudonym that was used to identify all documents. These assignments were stored in a separate file folder from the data collection materials. Each participant completed informed consent detailing the purpose of the research study, procedures, risks/discomforts, benefits, and their voluntary participation and right to withdraw. Through this informed consent, participants were also made aware of the confidentiality measures within the study's framework.

## **Interviews**

Interviews for this study were conducted virtually with four of the five participants after the completion of the in-service. A semi-structured protocol was developed to ensure consistency in data collection (Appendix A). Semi-structured interviews are appropriate for this study because it is narrowly focused (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). When structuring my interviews, my focus was on ensuring open-ended questions and follow-up probing questions are planned to dig deeper into participant responses (Seidman, 2019). Open-ended, semi-structured interview protocol allowed for the stories of our participants to evolve and emerge. Reflection of critical moments during the in-service is of the utmost importance, and I recognize the significance of

the responses naturally unfolding from the participants' memories, and meanings made from their experiences.

With participant approval, interviews were recorded via Google Meet to ensure accurate transcription. The Google Meet Transcript extension was used to create closed-captioning text transcriptions of each interview. At the opening of the protocol, each interview participant was reminded of the purpose of the interview as well as the number of questions, anticipated timeframe, and their right to withdraw at any time. At the close of each interview, I noted highlights and participant observations to track salient points.

### **Document/Reflection Analysis**

Participants received a journal at the opening of the in-service that contained all prompts, handouts, and reflection activities. They were informed that these journals would be collected at the close of the session and at that time, were provided an opportunity to opt out. Through discussion, the participants were reassured that their information would be used to inform the study and would not be connected to them in any way. Participant journals were collected at the close of the in-service and individually coded with their corresponding pseudonyms to ensure security.

### **Participant Observations and Field Notes**

The in-service was facilitated by myself and a current assistant principal of JH Workman Middle School. Each activity was introduced by myself, with my co-facilitator taking over after the initial introduction. This allowed for consistent participant observation throughout the in-service. Though I was not able to observe participants during the entirety of the in-service, this intentional delineation of responsibility throughout allowed me to observe participants during the same active piece of each of the activities. All observations were written into my personal



notebook and transcribed onto a Google Doc at the end of each day to prepare for coding and to ensure secure storage. Once transcribed, I disposed of the original notes. My observations were guided by changes in tone or time in the conversations. I was looking for those who showed signs of discomfort with activities or conversations. I was also looking for participants who showed changes in engagement levels, specifically those who have been quiet and may suddenly begin to engage with the content. Additionally, it must be stated that engagement in anti-racist work looked different for each participant and attention was paid to any and all shifts in demeanor to ensure a holistic view of engagement/disengagement throughout the study.

### **Data Analysis**

Interview transcripts, participant observations, and document/reflections were placed into a consistent format in Google Docs in order to store the data most effectively. This required hand transcription of participant journal entries. Data from these multiple sources were used in an effort to triangulate data to increase the credibility of data collection (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Braun and Clark (2006) highlight the importance that even if a researcher interacts with data, such as in interviews, it is crucial that researchers are intimately familiar with their data. Prior to coding, I read through the data set in its entirety to develop a comprehensive look at what was collected. This better allowed me to effectively identify patterns and emergent themes across data sets (Braun and Clark, 2006). Once data were collected and was structured in a consistent format, I began initial, first cycle coding focusing on participant reactions to, and interactions with, racial language and the activities presented throughout the training.

To code and pinpoint entry points during the session as well as words or activities that halt conversation, I used an emergent thematic analysis. Coding decisions were grounded in an “emergent conceptual framework” (Saldana, 2016). Once categories were created, they were

cross-referenced to ensure they were supported as I continued through the data sets (Saldana, 2016). During first-cycle coding, I used emotion coding to guide my analysis. Saldana (2021) states that emotion coding is appropriate for studies that “explore intrapersonal and interpersonal participant experiences and actions, especially in matters of identity, social relationships, reasoning, decision-making, judgement, and risk taking” (160). Saldana adds that these codes are more readily detectable in personal interactions, so this type of coding was especially useful for interviews and participant observations. In analyzing the codes that emerge, Saldana adds that an effective analysis strategy is “to track the *emotional journey* or *storyline* of the codes through time - the *structural arc* they follow as certain events unfold” (Saldana, 2021, p. 162).

Tracking these emotions allowed me to pinpoint the above-mentioned entry points and better determine the triggers for negative emotions that arose. Critical Race Theory and Critical Whiteness Study frameworks are the foundation for this study and as such, the associated tenets served as a lens with which to organize codes and label themes emerging from the qualitative research. The tenets of each of these frameworks served as a way to categorize codes after first-cycle coding was complete and create an organizational structure with which to view the data.

### **Trustworthiness**

In order to ensure fidelity of participation, entry and exit logs were completed by each participant using their preassigned letter. Participants were expected to attend the full seven hours each day with a minimum of seven total hours necessary for data to be entered into the analysis. I also dictated a minimum percentile of activities that participants would complete to ensure fidelity of data collection and assess whether activities within the professional development session were completed as planned.

Data was triangulated through the comparison of documents and reflections with the semi-structured interviews and participant observation field notes. Co-facilitation also occurred with a site-based administrator and peer-auditing and peer-debriefing were used at the conclusion of each day of training in order to review notes and ensure conversations and events were accurately captured during the in-service.

Additionally, to address my own positionality, I adhered to Milner's framework (2007) of researcher racial and cultural positionality by researching myself, researching myself in relation to others, engaging in reflection and representation, and shifting from self to system in order to avoid dangers throughout the research process, especially as a White female researching race and racism.

### **Positionality**

Having navigated my educational journey having the works of John Lewis, Paulo Freire, and Neil Postman as my go-to reads when I need a lens correction, critical research and a critical perspective are a part of who I am—as a mother, a person, and an educator. Carter and Little (2007), in discussing how epistemology influences form, voice, and representation in method stated:

She should write with her own voice and tell her own story, particularly the story of her participation in the research, alongside that of the participants, including the alternative explanations she has considered and the struggles, defeats, and triumphs of the research process (p. 9).

This is so important in qualitative research because, as much as I try to remove my own bias from my methodology and methods, my lived experiences are a part of me, so I feel strongly that my audience should know that and be able to take that into consideration when reviewing my work and my study. I can set my biases and beliefs aside, but I do not function apart from them.

This research process was motivated by my own lived experience as a White woman educator and my experiences with race and racism as a student, teacher, and site-based school administrator. In my local contexts, I have observed overt racism, unconscious biases, and covert yet intentional racist acts. It is a curiosity that drives both my work and dissertation to uncover the motivations behind deficit thinking and resistance to antiracism, and to uncover strategies that will serve as effective tools to lessen the gap in lived experiences between the dominant White teaching force and diverse student population. Additionally, I previously served as a direct supervisor of many participants for this study. Because I have developed sincere and authentic relationships with most on this campus, there is still a risk that my presence shifted the way in which some participants navigated conversations. Participants seemed to enter the space with a comfort level and ease that would not have been present without that prior positive relationship and trust that was built in my time on the school campus. I attempted to mitigate my own positionality by being intentionally reflexive and ensuring the fidelity of my processes and structures throughout this study. I hold myself accountable as a researcher and remain conscious of my position in relation to both the participants and the context of the research work. As stated above, I adhered to Milner's (2007) framework of researcher positionality. Ortlipp (2008) also advocates for reflective journaling during the research process to review the day's work, analyze patterns, and reflect on one's own lived experiences as it relates to the study's content and I did this as well.

### **Limitations**

There are limitations to this study, the most significant of which is that the study is relegated to a single campus. Though possibly representative of many campuses across the nation, this limits the sample size. It is also possible that the characteristics of the sample are not

typical due to the characteristics of the small pool of participants. An additional limitation is sampling using a self-selection process, which potentially created a pool of participants who were already interested in work around equity and anti-racism, and thus this research may not be relevant to those who are resistant to anti-racist work.

### **Summary**

This exploratory qualitative case study attempts to explore participants' reactions to and involvement in conversations about race and education, specifically, anti-racist pedagogy. The research design allows data to be triangulated through participant observations, document and reflection analysis, researcher field notes, and semi-structured interviews. The goal of this study is to explore how participants navigated conversations during the in-service and what, if any, entry points and barriers were created through conversation and the intentional design of the in-service activities. This research will inform the development of future iterations of this in-service in an effort to most effectively introduce anti-racist pedagogy to practicing teachers in an effort to create a more equitable educational experience.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

#### Study Summary

The demographic and cultural mismatch that exists between the teaching population and the student population across the country has often led to a gap in lived experiences between teachers and the learners that they serve (Gay, 2009; Kailin, 2002). The lack of overlap in lived experiences of a mostly white teaching force with the diverse student population requires a sense of urgency to ensure that those responsible for providing a free and appropriate public education to the next generations of citizens are equipped with the tools necessary to form authentic, caring relationships with their students.

The purpose of this exploratory qualitative case study was to examine teacher receptivity to an introduction to anti-racist pedagogy by analyzing discourse around race and reactions to activities and language used throughout the *Courageous Conversations* in-service training in a Title I school in the Florida panhandle. The school where this in-service was held serves a community that is heavily impoverished and where the income gap is visible along racial lines. In this community that has struggled with race relations for decades, there has been a concerted effort by the school district to provide professional development on poverty and the struggles of low-income students. There has not, however, been any systematic effort to introduce conversations and professional learning about race or ethnicity.

The two-day in-service, based on Glen Singleton's *Courageous Conversations* framework (2022), provided an introduction to individual and systemic racism and created reflective opportunities for teachers to engage with one another. They did this through reflective exercises, analyzing relevant student achievement data disaggregated by race,

engaging in facilitated discourse on race through structured reading exercises, identity work, and the uncovering of historical contexts.

## **Findings**

To begin an analysis of the findings for this research study, I return to the research questions that serve as the foundation for analysis:

1. How do teachers at JH Workman Middle School who self-enrolled in an anti-racist pedagogical in-service training navigate conversations about racism and react to the strategies presented?
2. What activities presented during the in-service training create entry points that increase participant engagement and comfort with the discussion/reflection and what activities halt conversations or exacerbate barriers for teachers during the in-service?

The forthcoming analysis is presented first, with a brief overview of the participants and their backgrounds followed by a description of themes that arose from emergent thematic analysis for each research question. I then discuss potential implications and make recommendations based on the results of the study. I conclude this chapter with recommendations for future studies and a plan for the dissemination of study results.

## **Overview of Participant Backgrounds**

Throughout my data analysis, when engaging in discourse on race, participants described race talk as “tricky,” and “precarious,” and expressed concern about discussing race in their role as educators, especially due to the recent HB7 legislation banning critical race theory in schools which has stifled racial discourse in schools across the state. Florida's HB 7041 is a bill that was signed into law in 2021. The law prohibits the teaching of certain concepts in K-12 public schools and universities in Florida including critical race theory, white privilege, and race or sex

stereotyping. It also requires that all educational materials used in schools be checked for compliance with the law (H.B.7, 2022). I have been careful to exclude details that would potentially identify participants in these findings.

The hesitation of teachers to engage in conversations about race was evident in the participant pool. Five of sixty instructional educators chose to attend “An Introduction to Anti-Racist Pedagogy” in-service. Four of the five participants were white, and four of the five participants were female. Two participants had attended colleges of education and three participants entered the teaching field through an alternative pathway. The participants' experience ranged from one to five years in the classroom, which is typical in the current hiring environment in Escambia County Public Schools. Table 4.1 displays the participants’ descriptive information.

Table 4.1

*Participant Information*

Pseudonym	Gender	Race	Path to Certification	Years of Teaching Experience
Tina	Woman	White	College of Education	1
Sharon	Woman	Black	Alternative Pathway	1
Robert	Man	White	Alternative Pathway	3
Alicia	Woman	White	Alternative Pathway	6
Janice	Woman	White	College of Education	6

**Navigating Conversations About Race**

In analyzing participant data, five themes emerged indicating the ways that participants navigated conversations about race and reacted to the strategies presented. These five themes are detailed below. It should be stated explicitly, that due to the voluntary nature of this in-service, the participants are each already committed to or at least interested in antiracism and these



findings are solely representative of participants that voluntarily enrolled in “An Introduction to Anti-Racist Pedagogy.”

### **Lacking Language: “I don’t even know what to call ‘them’”**

The first theme that emerged was the lack of language that teachers held to begin, extend, or engage in conversations about race. During the initial day of training, when discussing the motivations for attending the training in a warm-up activity, Alicia described the anxiety that arose when even identifying a student in the classroom by race. She recalled a student's response, “‘You called us African-American; nobody here came from Africa. She doesn’t even know what to call us. She doesn’t know anything...’ And they’re right. Am I supposed to say African-American? Black? I don’t even know what to call...” the participant trailed off, searched for a word, and then found “them.” “Them.” Three of the other participants nodded their heads while Sharon looked down blankly at the papers on the table. This theme emerged throughout activities that spanned both days of learning together, through participants fumbling to describe a way to describe black students or colleagues. Later in the afternoon, Janice shared an answer to a peer’s question, rephrased it several times, and muddled through the attempts. “Some races are prone to...no that’s a stupid and wrong way to say it...poverty affects some races differently than it does others...no...”

This lack of basic vocabulary and terminology to discuss race and ethnicity was woven through the duration of our time together during the in-service. The lack of language to discuss race caused anxiety for the group as a whole as they struggled to engage with the activities. The consequences of this lack of language were particularly impactful for Sharon, the sole Black participant. In her interview, she stated

I feel everyone was very honest. You got a an inside. You can tell what type of people, they are with, you know, with the whole conversation from the day. But how do you get

stuck on what to call me? What to say to kids that look like me? How do you teach here and know me and know your colleagues but not even be able to...I don't know...categorize us or whatever. You know me, you know all of us, I just don't get it and it makes me sad, and confused, and, well, not important enough to get to know I guess.

Though Sharon communicated great patience and understanding for her colleagues' differing life experiences and lack of language, as stated in her quote, she reported feeling confused and minimized by her peers' inability to find the language to describe her and those in her cultural community.

### **Privilege: Silence is preferable to being called racist**

The second theme that arose was the privilege of engaging, or rather not engaging, in conversations about race. Participants generally agreed that a barrier to engaging in discussions about race with students or with colleagues was the fear of being called racist. Though they connected this to the lack of language in the first theme, the distinct idea of willful avoidance of conversations except in situations where avoidance would be neglect of disciplinary action was deemed the safest option to keep from being perceived as "a racist."

Participants commented on the fear of being perceived as racist, with Tina posing the concern that "Being viewed as racist - what are people going to think about me?" Alicia added, "People are getting fired, just for being accused..." Janice also shared her concerns, stating that "In my head, I'm thinking they're thinking 'shut up white woman, you're racist.'" This fear of being called racist or perceived as such led participants to choose silence as a preferable option to the risk of being viewed in this negative light, as Alicia stated "I don't like being vulnerable, like ever. I feel like I would get attacked."

After an exercise where participants engaged in the Color Line experiment, we engaged in a conversation about whiteness. Alicia stated, "I'm fearful of being associated with being

white...It is a physical safety fear” Janice added, “Specifically in a racially charged environment.” Janice extended the conversation and spoke about her feelings after the murder of George Floyd in 2020. “Am I a target?” she asked aloud. The four participants that were present during the second day discussed feeling targeted in the wake of the George Floyd killing. They discussed feeling as if they were being watched and being afraid that everyone thought that they were racist, simply because of their whiteness. In the midst of the conversation, Alicia asked, “Is that what they (Black people) feel like every day? That’s terrifying.” The juxtaposition within the conversation about the killing of an unarmed black man by a police officer was centered, not on the feelings and empathy of the black community, but rather centered in whiteness and the fear of being labeled a racist. That fear was then contextualized by the group as being equal to racism. In this instance and in many others throughout our two days together, barriers discussed during the in-service almost inevitably returned to the phrase “I didn’t want to seem racist.”

This privilege and silence often work together and allow the White teaching community to control the narrative around race and racism, often silencing the voices of people of color. By maintaining this control, they perpetuate systemic inequities that benefit them at the expense of people of color. This privilege of remaining silent also creates an environment that allows them to avoid confronting uncomfortable truths and maintain their position of power and perpetuate institutional racism.

### **Comfort in established relationships and small groups**

All five participants noted that talking about race was something that they felt more comfortable doing in small groups, and in places where they had established relationships with the others within the conversation. All five participants noted positive interactions with one another prior to attending the in-service. They entered the space as familiar colleagues, with an

understanding that all participants were volunteering to engage in learning about race. Additionally, four of the five participants had established relationships with me, the researcher and had positive experiences with me as a site administrator in my previous role. All five participants relayed that fear of engaging in race talk was “losing control” of the situation. As stated in Robert’s quote below, the fear of losing control and being exposed as answerless in front of a group is a fear that was expressed by all of the participants at some point during the in-service. Some were afraid of losing control in front of students, others were afraid of losing control in front of colleagues. The fixation on this fear and the comfort that they expressed in being vulnerable in small group environments with people that they have a professional relationship with was a common discussion whenever vulnerability was discussed. Oftentimes, this was displayed as an introductory qualifier “Well, I can say this to you all...” or as a sigh of relief “I know you guys won’t judge me....”

When we talked about the size of our in-service, Janice noted

I’m not sure how comfortable I would have been with strangers. It was nice to be in a group with people I sort of knew, and we were able to be open and say what we thought without a lot of people judging us and not talking about stuff.

Robert added

I’m just kind of like a person who would rather have uncomfortable conversations in small groups. I mean if a kid says the N-word or something racist in class, I will call them over...or a few of them, and have a conversation. But I feel like if I were to stand up in front of my class and say, alright kids, let’s talk about racism! I’d be hurled out by 12-year-olds as the racist honky. For sure, in a second. It’s not the conversations that make me uncomfortable, it’s losing control of a big group. I get ganged up on, called a racist, and then everyone loses because we didn’t learn anything...except that I’m racist for bringing up race.

In the semi-structured interviews after the in-service, participants were asked to reflect on their conversations during the in-service. All five participants shared that one of the reasons that they were so willing to be vulnerable was due to the professional relationship that they had with

their colleagues. Three of the five participants also discussed the increased vulnerability that they felt because of the size of the group.

Overall, the participants took comfort in the size of our group, and in the relationships, they had already formed with one another throughout the year at school. Participants unanimously agreed that the size of the group and with others that they were familiar with on a professional level allowed them to express vulnerabilities and share experiences that they would not have otherwise shared in a large group discussion.

### **Desire to become anti-racist educators**

The motivating factors of participants for engaging in this training were consistent. Each of the five participants wanted to do what was necessary to be an anti-racist educator and once they were equipped with appropriate language, they stated that they were willing to engage in conversations to move toward that end. They used words such as “fairness,” “justice,” and “opportunity.” In one activity that participants engaged with, they created definitions prior to and after reading an article. One thing that they defined was the term anti-racism. After this activity, the group entered into a discussion about the term, and how it encompassed the work that they wished to do within their classrooms. While the participants lacked language and avoided conversations for fear of developing a label of “racist,” there was sincerity and genuineness in their want to provide an environment where students of color would thrive. Three participants' quotes below capture the essence of this theme.

In the interview after the in-service, while discussing a reflection on the in-service as a whole, Tina stated, “They don’t hate school, they hate school as they know it...How woefully ill-prepared we are to deal with it.” Janice added,

You know, I've grown up in different neighborhoods, I've gone to school with different students of different races, you know, becoming a teacher. I now teach multiple cultures

and races and then also just I've taken courses, it's always been something that interests me. You know, and sometimes I feel like it's nice to get extra information and learn about different races and different things going on. And I think that would be good for a faculty group setting, because we all work together, first of all, and our faculty is very diverse. So, I think that it would be helpful to get ideas and thoughts of other people who are not necessarily like me, you know? I just want the kids to be comfortable and have what they need. I don't want them to have to worry about me and how I feel about them. They should just be able to "do school" like everyone else. I mean, like the white kids do.

At the close of each of the interviews, I asked participants if there was anything that wasn't covered in our time together that they would like to share. Robert shared the following reflection about the in-service.

It just made me feel a little reassured that there are ways to have conversations that aren't, you know, me up there preaching to the kids and kind of letting them lead it. Because they have to happen. I'm reflecting on trying to figure out if I've been ignoring them when they bubble up because I was scared. I'm still scared. But like, there could be kids in my room feeling like that all the time, like every day. I talked in the session about how kind of a lot of these transitional moments in my life were accompanied by a lot of like racial happenings. I don't know if I would say racial history things but, you know, I talked about Obama was elected when I was in sixth grade, Trayvon Martin was killed when I was a freshman in high school, the Ferguson Missouri riots happened when I was a senior in high school. The Confederate Flag dialogue really got ramped up, I think my freshman or sophomore year of college. And, being in college at that time, I think I was exposed to that line of thinking early. And I feel like, fairly organically connected to current events and things like that. I think what happens is people maybe lose their audience in communicating, because there's some, like, scaffolding you have to do if you're talking to your country relatives, right? You can't just throw out the word and just expect them to know what it means. It's the same with our kids. You have to be purposeful and intentional and plan conversations, or at least, like we do now, have a bag of tricks to pull from to make sure the kids are supported when they encounter racism at school.

Despite their lack of language to discuss race, the participants in the training demonstrated a genuine desire to become anti-racist educators and create an inclusive environment for Black students to thrive. They were motivated by concepts of fairness, justice, and opportunity and were willing to engage in difficult conversations in order to achieve these goals. As Tina pointed out, the students they teach may feel uncomfortable or unwelcome in their current school environment, and the participants wanted to work towards creating a more

welcoming and supportive atmosphere. Robert also emphasized the importance of being purposeful and intentional in addressing issues of racism with students and being prepared with the necessary tools and resources. Overall, the participants showed a strong commitment to becoming anti-racist educators and promoting equity in their classrooms.

### **The disconnect: Systemic Racism**

While the prior four themes were generally expected as I conducted my research, this theme was a surprising development. Though participants made connections to individual acts of racism and occasionally referenced systemic issues within the country, there was no connection to the educational system at large playing a part in the perpetuation of racism. Near the close of our second day together, as a final activity before our lunch break, I asked participants to reflect on systemic racism in their role, as it related to their classrooms, their school, their district, and their state. All five participants noted in one way or another that the local systems were doing all that they could do to combat racism and agreed that systemic racism did not exist in their school or in their school district.

Janice wrote, “I do not see institutionalized racism existing at Workman Middle School. I am not sure if I am blind to this, more focused on my ESOL students, or if institutionalized racism is minimal.” Alicia’s entry read, “Workman and Escambia County do a very good job of helping us to help kids. I think that everyone does the best that they can. I do not believe that systemic racism exists here. More just maybe ignorance of how to be anti-racist and how to help white teachers connect with kids of color. But no, I would say there is no systemic racism here.” While one participant, Sharon, stated that “If DeSantis had it his way, there would be systemic racism everywhere,” they added that “we are lucky that we are shielded from all of that

here in Escambia.” There was still no connection between local systems and systemic racism by any participant.

Interestingly, at the close of that question, the participants began to chat about their lives as we waited for everyone to finish their entries. One of the participants was planning to buy a home and all five of the participants discussed “good” neighborhoods and “bad” neighborhoods. They talked about a specific area of town where many of Workman Middle School’s students live as “crime-filled” and one participant stated that “property values there have really dipped, even with all this inflation, no one wants to live there.” This conversation lent credence to the inherent contradictions in what they wrote in their journals. They truly could not see it. Though they were surrounded by evidence of systemic racism, and even engaged in discussion about its effects, they truly were unable to make connections between the systems of our society to the racism that they saw, believed, and wanted to act to remedy in their professional lives.

### **Activities and Language: Courageous Conversations Framework**

This section and the themes that follow focus on my second research question: What activities presented during the in-service create entry points that increase participant engagement and comfort with the discussion/reflection, and what activities halt conversations or exacerbate barriers for teachers during the in-service? While participants engaged in meaningful discussions around race throughout the in-service, based on journal entries and participant interviews, three specific types of learning activities throughout our time together proved to be the most enlightening and provided information that helped to address the participant-identified barriers to engaging in professional and personal discourse around race.

### **Racially Disaggregated Student Achievement Data**



One of the first activities of the in-service on day one, after an introduction of the six conditions of Courageous Conversations, was an analysis of Workman Middle School's standardized test data over three years disaggregated by race. Four of the five participants stated that they had never seen their classroom or school data broken down by racial subgroups. They depended on data broken down by standard and provided by school administration to use for planning classroom instruction. Janice serves on the school improvement committee and stated that she had been in meetings where the administrative team presented racially disaggregated data to the state. "It wasn't really a focus of the presentation though," she added, "we were working on skill deficits and creating lesson plans for each grade level. It was really a breakdown of what to teach." Participant reflections in journal entries and in interviews suggested epiphanies around student achievement and race after seeing the data from their own school. Janice stated in her journal,

Seeing that data on Math and Reading, I feel like the data is constantly changing as far as statistics and things with racism. So, I feel like whenever you see that, it definitely hits an emotional nerve for me. The gap between white students and black students was almost equal to the proficiency rate of black students. I can't believe that is really real, so I looked up my kids' scores from last year after we finished the in-service. And it is. It tracked, and it was actually a little bit more dismal.

The analysis of Workman Middle School's standardized test data, disaggregated by race, was a powerful and eye-opening experience for the participants in the training. Many of them had never seen data broken down in this way before, and the revelations it presented were both striking and emotional. The gap in achievement between white and black students was particularly disturbing, with the proficiency rate of black students being almost equal to the gap between the two groups. This data served as a wake-up call for the participants, highlighting the need for more intentional and purposeful efforts to address issues of equity and racism in their classrooms. As Janice noted in her journal, "Seeing that data on Math and Reading, I feel like the

data is constantly changing as far as statistics and things with racism. So, I feel like whenever you see that, it definitely hits an emotional nerve for me.” By acknowledging and confronting the reality of these disparities, the participants are taking an important step toward creating more inclusive and equitable learning environments for all students.

### **Developing Language for Race Talk**

Participants were introduced to the racial consciousness compass and provided readings on the topics of equity, racism, anti-racism, and institutional/systemic racism. The participants completed the readings in pairs or triads and created presentations for their peers on their assigned topics. The participants also created a personal definition of each of the terms before and after their readings. While the definitions prior to the readings were vague and only partially connected to the terms, the definitions post-reading were thorough and accurate. The conversations following this activity, backed by reflections both in participant journals and interviews, signified the learning that took place as they gained new vocabulary and delved deeply into the meaning of each term. Three participants had never encountered the terms “systemic racism” or “anti-racism” while the other two participants had been exposed to them but had little knowledge about either term beyond a surface level.

### **Stories of Racism and Lack of Bystander Support**

The third activity that resonated with the participants was not a planned activity, but rather a strand that was woven into our activities throughout our two days together. Though not connected to the Courageous Conversations curriculum, the final piece of learning that seemed to stick with participants after the closing of the in-service and throughout the interview process, were stories that were shared by Sharon. The four other participants shared stories of racism as well. Their stories were mostly regretful, experiences in which they had been silent bystanders.

The personal connections that they made while listening to Sharon describe how racism affected her and her family made an impact on the group. Sharon was unable to attend the second day of our in-service, and during the opening activity of that second day, Janice tearfully shared how a specific story stayed with her over the night.

Something that [Sharon] said that really stuck with me and I know I've heard of this many times before, but she had mentioned, you know, having a child who is black...as he's getting into his teenage years having to have "that" (air-quoted) conversation with him. Little things like if you're passing by and you see a cop and they tell you to stop, you don't question them. You just do what they tell you to do. How to behave...even going into stores and different things like that because everyone's always watching you and assuming that you may end up doing something wrong. I felt bad for somebody to have to explain that to their child. When I've never had to explain that to my daughter. I've never had to say, 'Well be careful where you're going and what you're doing as far as people watching you and your behavior.' And if a cop stops you and tells you...anyway, I've never had to tell her that. You know, I've never had to tell her, not to question them and just follow the rules no matter what. I mean, she knows to follow rules anyway, but I think that really stuck with me because I felt bad. For her, for her child, for people who have to go through that.

Listening to this story led to a breakthrough for Janice. The realization of the effects of racism felt by a colleague and her son impacted Janice. She felt empathy, and her understanding of racism grew.

The other participants joined in and engaged in a reflection about times when they were silent bystanders when they encountered situations where racism was at play. Alicia reflected on a memory from her childhood,

Like I said yesterday...when I was little, we were just taught to cross the street and walk on the other side if we saw a Black person. So, I never thought about it as bad, it was just something that we did. I remember doing it one time in middle school. The guy was older, and it was the first time I felt weird about it. Like, icky or something. I didn't know the man, but I wonder how [Sharon] would have felt after that. I think I just figured black people have to have really thick skin. I don't often think about how a person *feels* after someone says or does something racist to them.

The sentiment was echoed in the room through silent nods and downward gazes. In the end, it was the personal connection, the sharing of the lived experience of someone with which

participants had a relationship, that sparked the empathy that began to move participants into a space where they could understand the lived impact of individual instances of racism.

Critical Whiteness Study calls attention to the lack of visibility of racial power and all of the associated privileges afforded to Whites (McDermott & Sampson, 2005). Still, in this moment of learning, the racial power was in the hands of the white participants. The learning that occurred was through the work, the pain, and the vulnerability of Sharon, the sole Black participant.

### **Implications**

The journey to becoming anti-racist educators begins with the will and want to learn, as well as the identity work that participants engaged in during the “Introduction to Anti-Racist Pedagogy” in-service at Workman Middle School, but it does not end there.

Because teachers enter classrooms either from educational programs that generally under prepare them to work with diverse student populations (Ed et al., 2011) or from alternative pathways where learning often occurs on the job, it is imperative that teachers are introduced to anti-racist pedagogy and are then provided the ongoing support to continue to engage in conversations about race and create equitable and excellent learning environments for their students, especially students of color.

Hambacher and Ginn discuss the importance of using Critical Race Theory to disrupt colorblind ideologies embedded into the fabric of our educational systems (2020). They express concerns regarding professional learning focused on diversity, oversimplifying issues, and avoiding the more charged topics of race and racism (Hambacher & Ginn, 2020). While I do not believe that the in-service at Workman Middle School oversimplified issues using the *Courageous Conversations* framework, this concern stays with me, not in the simplification of content, but with time. Though

adequate to answer my specific research questions, the two days of time I spent with participants did not allow time for the deep work and ongoing reflection that Hambacher and Ginn recommend to develop a thorough and nuanced understanding of systemic racism, at the core of Critical Race Theory (2020).

Because this was a voluntary in-service, participants arrived with intrinsic motivations or at least a curiosity to learn about anti-racism, the basis for the theme of will and want to become anti-racist educators. This motivating factor was increased through the exposure to stories of racism and lack of bystander support from all participants, but especially impactful from the single Black participant. This finding supports the crux of White privilege embedded in Critical Whiteness Study (Hambacher & Ginn, 2020). The White participants were able to make strides in their understanding of anti-racism, but it was the work and the story of the sole Black participant that created revelations for the group at large.

Through the in-service, participants were able to develop language through activities that provided contextual historical and societal information about terminology around race. This was in part due to the explicit instructional practices embedded in the Courageous Conversations framework based on Wagner's (2005) findings that there is an increased effectiveness of an in-service when there is intentional goal setting, normalization of tension and discomfort, and norm-setting. This allowed participants to navigate conversations vulnerably and without unnecessary roadblocks and shutdowns. This intentional structure of the in-service also provided a safe space for participants where honest conversations could take place (Haltinner, 2016). This instructional planning was enhanced, as evidenced by the theme of comfort in established relationships

and small groups, by the size of the group, and by prior relationships developed by the participants.

The unintentional actions of White practicing teachers who are unconscious of systematic racism can negatively impact Black students (Matias, 2013). The themes that emerged from data analysis of participant observations, journal entries, and post-in-service interviews show the need for continued, ongoing development for teachers, even those within this initial in-service offering. Though participants displayed moments of understanding the concept of systemic racism, they were so entrenched in the systems that they were often unable to see it when it was in front of them. The participants still clung to deficit models of thinking evidenced in conversations where they discussed “bad” neighborhoods and securing “bags of tricks” to address racism in the classroom. Goode et al. (2020) posit that the framework of Critical Race Theory can be used to disrupt colorblind ideologies and shift teachers’ practice and while there were moments of disruption during the in-service, it is clear that ongoing learning and unlearning are necessary for the participants to shift from being non-racist to antiracist work.

While this in-service adhered to Romjin et. al. 's (2021) recommendations to “target knowledge, skills and belief systems simultaneously,” it only served to provide the language that teachers lacked: a beginning (p. 10). After this type of introduction, teachers will need ongoing support in small group settings to continue to make connections to systemic racism and develop ways to disrupt said system within their own roles in their classrooms.

## **Recommendations**

The findings of this study show that work is necessary at every level to create an educational environment where race is considered, discussed, and valued rather than being relegated to hushed conversations in rooms only where teachers feel that it is safe. The lack of connection between individual and systemic racism highlights the need for ongoing professional development for teachers in the K-12 system. Even though we discussed individual and systemic racism at length during our time together, the teachers continued to lack the ability to connect their individual experiences to the systems in which they were a part. Because of the wide-reaching needs, recommendations from the findings of this study will be articulated by stakeholder groups, beginning with the stakeholder group that holds the power to allow conversations about race to permeate educational institutions.

### **Florida State Legislators**

Florida State Legislators should immediately repeal HB7 prohibiting Florida school districts from providing the necessary professional development to combat racism within their systems. As long as this bill is enshrined in law, it strangles the ability to create structures that support students of color and their teachers in engaging in authentic conversations about the impact of race and racism in the state of Florida. Though this recommendation is unlikely to occur under the current administration and in the current political climate, it is a recommendation that has a groundswell of support from many in the legislative body.

Once the repeal of HB7 is complete, legislators should consider penning legislation that codifies the state's commitment to dismantling inequitable education systems. This would include a plan to adjust the current funding mechanisms like vouchers that contribute to inequitable funding practices across Florida's public schools. It would also include outlining specific learning standards within English Language Arts courses at each grade level to teach

racially conscious language and enable students to graduate the K-12 system with the knowledge and skills to engage in racial discourse with competence and confidence.

### **Escambia County Public School District Leadership**

The Escambia County Public School District Leadership should create a strand of connected coursework within their professional development plan to provide anti-racist professional development in a two-pronged approach: through teacher onboarding and for continued professional learning. It should be noted that the first recommendation, regarding the repeal of HB7, must precede this work.

Teachers new to the Escambia County Public Schools should be provided with job-embedded, competency-based professional learning opportunities by entering cohorts based on Glen Singleton's *Courageous Conversations* framework where they are required to engage in identity work, language development, and content/grade-level relevant racially disaggregated data analysis. This commitment should be document and embedded in the job description for district teachers for clarity in the hiring process. They should take a district-created year-long book study paid for by stipends through Title I funds where they engage in monthly hour-long meetings after school through a facilitated *Courageous Conversation* course. This should be modeled after the effective poverty book study courses created through the Title I departments that are currently completed with more than ten faculties in Escambia County.

Experienced teachers within the system should spend at least one professional development day per marking period engaging in the same structured training as those receiving onboarding until they have completed and proved competency in anti-racist pedagogical practices as determined by their school principal through classroom observations and professional reflections. As of the 2022-2023 school year, Escambia County School



District has incorporated one mandatory half-day of professional development time per month. This new structure would allow for four dedicated training days for instructional staff.

The nature of this professional learning is crucial to clearly teach the instructional staff about institutional and structural racism. There will be resistance to this idea as shown in the findings, but the nuance and shape of these professional learning sessions will be the key to drawing connections between the systems that teachers are a part of and the structural inequities that exist.

Additionally, as Escambia County Public Schools use the Charlotte Danielson framework for evaluation (Danielson, 2007), the leadership team should devise a local anti-racist teaching rubric as a subset of 2a. Development of Respect and Rapport under the Danielson framework. The component 2a of the Charlotte Danielson rubric currently provides a rubric for educators to be evaluated on the respect and rapport in their classroom practices. Educators can earn ratings on a four-point scale ranging from unsatisfactory to distinguished. The rubric provides teachers with critical attributes and possible examples for each level of the scale. These critical attributes and examples would be enhanced by the development of additional locally created critical attributes and examples steeped in and explicitly articulated antiracist practices.

The rollout of this rubric would highlight the school district's dedication to anti-racist pedagogy and provide school administrators language to discuss race with their teachers in connection to the classroom environment and student achievement. This initiative, of course, should be coupled with training for school administrators on anti-racist classroom practices and how to assess the presence of the practices in instructional walk-throughs. It is also necessary to provide professional development for this stakeholder group, based on

Singleton’s *Courageous Conversations* framework, to ensure administrators are competent in anti-racist pedagogy and can facilitate conversations with teachers, parents, and their community.

In the current political environment, it is still possible to make strides toward anti-racist teaching practices. Escambia County Public Schools should design a professional learning course aligned to the framework of *Courageous Conversations* that is accessible to current instructional staff, with a process embedded to fold the course into the onboarding process as optional training. Under HB7, school districts cannot mandate training as a “condition of employment.” It is permissible, however, to provide opportunities to engage in training where participants learn about and discuss race in an “objective manner without endorsement of such concepts” (H.B.7, 2022). Providing access to this training for those who wish to engage with the content can create leaders in schools and further educational equity throughout the system using a grassroots approach.

### **School Administrators**

One administrator meeting per month should be dedicated to collaboration and calibration efforts as school administrators learn and grow in their knowledge of anti-racist practices along with their faculty members. These work sessions should be led by a trained outside professional knowledgeable in anti-racist pedagogy in partnership with the district’s curriculum and instruction leaders (i.e., level directors, subject area specialists, and the assistant superintendent of curriculum).

In the current political environment, steps should be taken toward this end by using the time described above to review disaggregated student achievement by subgroups, including race, and providing a structured and facilitated conversation to begin addressing the gaps in achievement.

### **Classroom Teachers and other School Staff**

Classroom teachers and other school staff should be provided with the time and space to complete these professional learning activities within the confines of their contracts. They should be provided coaching when competency is not reached and held accountable for adhering to anti-racist frameworks within the four walls of their classrooms. Classroom teachers and other school staff should engage in collaborative problem-solving through shared leadership at their respective schools to hold one another accountable as they shift their practices to create equitable learning opportunities for all students.

Under the current confines of HB7, classroom teachers and school staff should seek out voluntary and objective opportunities based on the *Courageous Conversations* framework provided by Escambia County Public Schools. They should also seek out professional learning provided by organizations outside of the state of Florida where they can access anti-racist teaching methods that can be incorporated into their classrooms without violating HB7.

### **Recommendations for Future Studies**

The findings of this study, as discussed in previous sections, were limited by the voluntary participation of participants. As an initial step for future research, this study should be repeated as a mandatory in-service on a similar school campus in similar small group settings, in a setting where this type of training would be possible. The increased participation and mandatory nature of implementation with a whole faculty would create an opportunity to

compare themes developed from voluntary and mandatory experiences. This, coupled with ongoing coaching cycles throughout the school year as practices are implemented, would provide a larger context that is more representative of the teacher workforce as a whole.

As a next step, future studies should also extend their research to include student perception data of student teacher relationships prior to and in months following a future iteration of this in-service. Tracking of student achievement before and after future iterations of this in-service would also benefit the research community in triangulating anti-racist classroom practices, student-teacher relationships, and student achievement to see what connections can be made that could further strengthen support for anti-racist in-service teacher development.

### **Conclusion**

The patterns that I have identified in the data show that educators encounter natural opportunities to discuss race. However, they consistently avoid engaging in these discussions, with the exception of mandated disciplinary action, for many reasons. Participants experience discomfort in using “correct” language to discuss race and are concerned about offending others with “incorrect” actions, or any action. This includes being taken out of context, defensiveness of staff members in a false assumption that they are being accused of being “a racist,” and fear of the conversation becoming political, especially as Florida laws continue to restrict conversations about race within the school setting. Additionally, there are fears that engaging in these conversations will exacerbate the issue or “make things worse,” potentially doing more harm to the students or staff members.

Systematic efforts are necessary to improve the overall experience of Black students in schools through improving teachers’ knowledge of the consequences of systemic racism and

providing them with small group opportunities to develop language and a lens for what is possible through creating structures of professional learning opportunities where educators do what they do best: analyze data, share stories, and learn the language to best support and connect with their students.

As referenced at the onset of this Dissertation in Practice, Neil Postman, author of *Teaching as a Subversive Activity* (1972), states that it is when we are able to ask questions, relevant and important questions, that we are truly able to learn and be free. It is at the point that educators are willing and able to ask these questions about the lived educational experiences of Black students within their classroom, that they will be able to develop experiences that will begin to repay the educational debt to students of color in this nation.

### **Dissemination Plan**

Dissemination of my findings will begin with my participants and the school where the in-service was held. I will create an infographic to share with participants and the school administrative team detailing the frameworks underpinning the study, site-specific information, methodology, findings, implications, and recommendations. Additionally, I will set up a virtual meeting with the school district superintendent to share my findings with him and his executive team as well.

During the process of completing this dissertation, I became employed as Director of Student Personnel Services in Summit Public Schools in Summit, New Jersey. In my new role, I am responsible for diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging work within our system as well as creating programming and systematic structures for our most vulnerable students. I will share the findings of this dissertation as part of our professional learning efforts in combating implicit and explicit bias within our system.

I annually attend two state conferences. New Jersey School Boards is a conference for school board members and central office administrators through New Jersey School Boards Association. The New Jersey Leadership Conference is structured for school-based administrators across the state. I will submit my work in this dissertation to present at each of these conferences in an effort to reach stakeholders both within the educational system, and those who provide governance of these systems in order to reach those with the highest level of impact on educational systems in the state.

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

### INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Hello. Thank you for agreeing to talk with me about your experience with the "Introduction to Anti-Racist Pedagogy using Courageous Conversations" in-service. I would like to record the conversation, is that ok with you? You can ask me to stop recording at any time. I am interested in understanding how you experienced the in-service, specifically, how you felt as you engaged in conversations, how specific language and activities made you feel, and the different ways it may have affected you and your ideas about race and education.

1. (RQ 1 & 2) Think back to your thoughts when you received the email inviting you to participate in this study. When you thought about delving into the topic of race with your colleagues, what did you think about it?
  - a. Were you comfortable with the idea?
  - b. Was there anything that created a sense of discomfort?
  
2. (RQ 1) How would you describe your experience with conversations throughout the in-service?
  - a. What was your comfort level during these conversations? Did you talk a lot or a little? Did you feel safe to say what you were thinking or feeling?
  - b. Is there anything that stands out for you - either positively or negatively?
  - c. Were there comments from people or from a facilitator that made you feel more willing to participate or that was difficult for you? Can you elaborate?
  - d. Can you describe a time when you wanted to say something, but did not share it with the group? Or you felt unwilling to participate? To what would you attribute to that decision not to share?
  
3. (RQ 2) How would you describe your experience with the activities during this in-service?
  - a. What was your comfort level during these activities?
  - b. Were there activities that made you feel more or less willing to participate or an activity that was difficult for you? Can you elaborate?
  
4. (RQ 1 & 2) Would you say there has been any change in how you think about race and education since participating in this in-service?
  - a. Tell me a little bit about your experience with race before this in-service began.
  - b. What kind of thoughts did you have about race prior to beginning this conversation? Is that at all different from how you think about race now?
  - c. Have there been changes have you noticed regarding your thinking about race?

5. (RQ 1 & 2) What part of the in-service (book excerpts, small group conversations, activities, other conversations) would you credit to that learning/ change in thinking?
6. (RQ 1 & 2) Some of the research about race and education says that it is important to uncover what people do not say when talking about race, and why people do not say it. I know that sometimes a thought comes into my head and I choose to omit it in my conversation with another person. I am curious, was there a time during the in-service that you did this?
  - a. What concerns made you omit that thought or feeling from the conversation?
  - b. Is there anything that you think would have made you feel comfortable enough to express what you were thinking at that time?
7. (RQ 1 & 2) Since beginning this in-service, a few times you have been prompted or asked to reflect on your experience. What goes through your mind when you sit down to write your reflection? What did you write about?
  - a. Are there other ways you reflect or process? Could you tell me about it?
  - b. How do you reflect on your thinking about race and equity in school? Can you walk me through that process?
8. How do you think your race influences your work as a teacher with students of color?
9. How do you think your students of color's race influence your role and work as the teacher?
10. How do you think this work with anti-racist pedagogy impacts your responses to those questions?
11. If you had to choose a word to sum up your experience throughout this in-service, what would it be? I'll give you some think time. Why did you choose this word?



## APPENDIX B

### FACILITATION PLAN

Day 1

Welcoming Activity (10 minutes)

Purpose of Workshop (5 minutes)

- Explore why an examination of race, racism, and institutionalized racism is critical to closing racial achievement gaps
- Introduce *Courageous Conversation* as a strategy to achieve equity in schools and present the definition and goal of anti-racist pedagogy

Chapter 1. Breaking the Silence: Ushering in Courageous Conversation About Race (1 hour)

- Small group discussion: have participants discuss their response to journal writing prompts (#1&2). Record conclusions in the journal
- Introduce the Racial Achievement Gap, as found on page 2 of the book
- Present JH Workman Middle School & Escambia County School District data that illustrates the racial achievement gap
- Present the Essential Questions on page 3 of the book
- Think-Pair-Share Discussion Question #1
- Respond in Journal to writing prompt #3

Part I. Passion: An Essential Characteristic of Anti-Racist Leadership (30 minutes)

- Define *Passion* in equity work, as described in the book
- Have the group answer discussion questions #1 and #2

Chapter 2. What's So Courageous About This Conversation? (45 minutes)

- Briefly introduce the four agreements and six conditions of courageous conversation

- Have participants respond in journals to prompt #1
- Conduct the implementation exercise *Got Passion*
- Introduce the Courageous Conversation Compass and engage participants in discussion question #1

Break (15 minutes)

Chapter 3. Why Race? (1 hour 15 minutes)

- Present discussion question 1 and have tables discuss as a small group
- Introduce “The Problem of the Color Line” on page 26 of the book
- Present figure 3.1 “Average SAT Scores by Parental Income and Race/Ethnicity,” on page 30 of the book. Describe the chart in detail and explore its implications with participants
- Engage participants in discussion question #2
- Conduct the implementation exercise, *Equity Terms*
- Have participants reflect in writing on journal writing prompt #1 or #2 (choice)

Lunch (45 minutes)

Chapter 4. Agreeing to Talk About Race, Part 1 (1 hour 30 minutes)

- Present the quote by Pine and Hillard on page 53 of the book
- Engage participants in discussion questions #1 and #2
- Introduce the concept of “I don’t know what I don’t know” and Figure 4.1, the *Racial Consciousness Flow Chart*, on page 56 of the book
- Have participants reflect in writing on journal writing prompt #1
- Conduct the first part of the Implementation Exercise, *Four Agreements of Courageous Conversations*, that deals with the *Racial Consciousness Flow Chart*

Break (15 minutes)

#### Chapter 4. Agreeing to Talk About Race, Part 2

- Introduce the Four Agreements of Courageous Conversation, described on pages 58-65 of the book
- Present to participants discussion question #3
- Conclude by completing the Implementation Exercise and having all participants agree to and sign the *Four Agreements* worksheet

#### Part II. Practice: The Foundation of Anti-Racist Leadership (30 minutes)

- Define *Practice* in equity work, as described in the book
- Have the group answer discussion question #1
- Use a think-pair-share to answer discussion question #2

Summary and Evaluation (15 minutes)

Homework: Read and summarize “A Brief History of Race” on pages 158 to 166

Day 2

Welcoming Activity (10 minutes)

Review of Day 1 (5 minutes)

- Review Why Race?
- Remind participants of the Four Agreements of Courageous Conversations that they committed to during the previous workshop

#### Chapter 5. The First Condition: Getting Personal Right Here and Right Now (45 minutes)

- Engage participants in discussion question #1
- Present the *First Condition of Courageous Conversation*
- Have participants reflect in writing to journal writing prompt #1

- Conduct the Implementation Exercise *Race In My Life*
- Have participants respond in writing to journal writing prompt #2

Chapter 6. The Second Condition: Keeping the Spotlight on Race (45 minutes)

- Introduce the *Second Condition of Courageous Conversation*
- Present discussion question #1 and conduct a whole group discussion about the ad
- Engage small table groups in discussion question #2
- Have participants respond in writing to journal writing prompt #1
- Conduct the Implementation Exercise, *Isolating Race*
- Present additional exercises #1 and #2 to the group. Find volunteers to conduct both of these, and have them report to the group at a later time
- Have participants respond in writing to journal writing prompt #2

Break (15 minutes)

Chapter 7. The Third Condition: Engaging Multiple Racial Perspectives (45 minutes)

- Have participants discuss discussion question #1 with a partner
- Introduce the *Third Condition of Courageous Conversation*
- Present the terms of “social construction of knowledge” and “internalization” or “transfer of racism”
- Engage participants in discussion question #2
- Conduct the Implementation Exercise, *Engaging Multiple Racial Points of View*
- Have participants reflect in writing on journal writing prompt #1 or #2 (choice)

Chapter 8. The Fourth Condition: Keeping Us *All* at the Table (1 hour and 15 minutes)

- Introduce the *Fourth Condition of Courageous Conversation*
- Present discussion question #1

- Describe to group Racialized Communication and White Talk Versus Color Commentary beginning on page 120 of the book
- Have participants reflect in writing on journal writing prompt #1
- Conduct the Implementation Exercise: Part 1, *Interracial Dyad*
- Engage participants in discussion question #2
- Briefly present “Creating Safety” from pages 127 to 134 in the book
- Have small groups share responses to discussion question #3
- Conduct the Implementation Exercise: Part 2, *The Promise of Racial Healing*

#### Working Lunch (1 hour)

Prior to breaking for lunch, have each participant define himself or herself according to race, ethnicity, and nationality. Over lunch, participants should discuss how they arrived at their descriptions and notice differences and similarities in their thoughts and meanings

#### Chapter 9. The Fifth Condition: What Do You Mean By “Race”? (1 hour)

- Have partners engage in discussion question #1
- Introduce the *Fifth Condition of Courageous Conversation*
- Presentations on “A Brief History of Race”
- Have participants reflect in writing on journal writing prompt #1
- Engage table groups in discussion question #2
- Conduct the Implementation Exercise, *Three C’s of Identity*
- Present discussion question #3
- Have participants reflect in writing on journal writing prompt #2

#### Break (15 minutes)

#### Chapter 10. The Sixth Condition: Let’s Talk About Whiteness (2.5 hours)

- Introduce the *Sixth Condition of Courageous Conversation*
- Present both “White Is a Color” and “White Privilege” on pages 182-184
- Conduct the Implementation Exercise: Part 1, *Understanding White Privilege: The Color-Line Exercise*
- Present table 10.2, *Cultural Differences*, on page 191 of the book
- With partners, have participants engage in discussion question #1
- In small groups, have participants consider discussion question #2
- Present Whiteness as Examined in the Five Conditions on pages 196 to 203 in the book
- Conduct the Implementation Exercise: Part 2, *De-Centering Whiteness*
- Have participants briefly reflect in writing on journal writing prompts #1 and #2
- Provide Equity Action Plan template for the school and have participants engage in a summative reflection by responding to journal writing prompt #2

Summary and Evaluation using Seminar Evaluation Form (10 minutes)

## APPENDIX C

### INFORMED CONSENT RECRUITMENT EMAIL

#### Informed Consent Recruitment Email

**Purpose of Research Study:** The purpose of this research study is to explore educators'

**Procedures:** To participate in this study, please complete the linked form. It should take no more than three minutes to complete. Participants will be asked to engage in a two-day professional development session on June 13 and 14, 2022 from 8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. in JH Workman Middle School's media center. Participants will also be asked to participate in a virtual interview after the in-service has concluded.

**Potential Risks/Discomforts:** The risks associated with this study are minimal. Participants will engage in discussion around race and identity. Participants may choose to discontinue any activity or stop the interview at any time if they wish to do so.

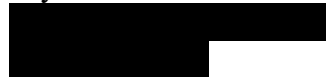
**Benefits:** Although we are unable to directly compensate you for your participation, your engagement will help scholars, administrators, and the educational community develop a better understanding of factors that are

**Voluntary Participation and Right to Withdraw:** Participation in this study is completely voluntary and open to teachers and instructional staff who hold a bachelor's degree, taught at JH Workman Middle School during the 2021-2022 school year.

**Confidentiality:** Please note that your data will be coded and protected. Though your interview responses, written activities and reflections will be triangulated, your name will not be used or published within the study.

**Questions or concerns:** If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please contact

Crystal Marr



**Consent:** If you understand the information presented above and wish to participate in the study, please click the continue button below and complete the information requested on the next screen.

**APPENDIX D**  
**CONSENT FORM**

**STATEMENT OF CONSENT**

I have read and considered the information presented in this form. I confirm that I understand the purpose of the research and the study procedures. I understand that I may ask questions at any time and can withdraw my participation without prejudice. I have read this consent form. My signature below indicates my willingness to participate in this study.

I consent to participate in this study.

---

Printed Name of Adult Participant

---

Signature of Adult Participant

Date

**Researcher's Signature**

I have fully explained the research study described by this form. I have answered the participant and/or parent/guardians' questions and will answer any future questions to the best of my ability. I will tell the family and/or the person taking part in this research of any changes in the procedures or in the possible harms/possible benefits of the study that may affect their health or their willingness to stay in the study.

Crystal Marr

---

Printed Name of Research Team Member Obtaining Consent

---

Signature of Research Team Member

Date



# APPENDIX E

## IRB APPROVAL FORM

FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY  
OFFICE of the VICE PRESIDENT for RESEARCH



### APPROVAL

June 3, 2022

Crystal Marr



Dear Crystal Marr:

On 6/2/2022, the IRB reviewed the following submission:

Type of Review:	Expedited (6) Voice, video, digital, or image recordings; (7)(a) Behavioral research; (7)(b) Social science methods
Title:	An Introduction to Anti-Racist Pedagogy for Practicing Teachers
Investigator:	Crystal Marr
Submission ID:	STUDY00003185
Study ID:	STUDY00003185
Funding:	None
IND, IDE, or HDE:	None
Documents Reviewed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EJ's Story, Category: Other;</li> <li>• Equity Exercise Reading, Category: Other;</li> <li>• Human Research Study Permission, Category: Consent Form;</li> <li>• Implementation Exercises, Category: Other;</li> <li>• Informed Consent Recruitment Email, Category: Consent Form;</li> <li>• Informed Consent Recruitment Email, Category: Recruitment Materials;</li> <li>• Interview Protocol, Category: Protocol;</li> <li>• IRB Protocol, Category: IRB Protocol;</li> <li>• Participant Journal, Category: Other;</li> <li>• Presentation, Category: Other;</li> <li>• Professional Development Inservice Plan, Category: Other;</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School Permission to Conduct Research, Category: Consent Form;</li> <li>• Workman Data, Category: Other;</li> </ul>
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The IRB approved the protocol, effective from 5/31/2022.

COVID-19 Information for Research Involving Human Subjects: Note that the U.S. is operating under the national emergency Proclamation 9994 concerning the COVID-19 pandemic and that this national emergency remains in effect until rescinded or terminated by the President of the U.S. (go here for the Proclamation letter). Conditions are dynamic and related policies or guidance evolve accordingly; as applicable, refer to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website specific for universities or refer to our COVID-19 and Human Research Studies web page to learn more about how you should or may protect persons (whether vaccinated or unvaccinated) involved in any of your in-person research activities.

Other Information:

You are advised that any modification(s) to the protocol for this project must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to implementation of the proposed modification(s).

Federal regulations require that the Principal Investigator promptly report any new information related to this protocol (see Investigator Manual (HRP-103)).

In conducting this protocol, you are required to follow the requirements listed in the Investigator Manual (HRP-103), which can be found by navigating to the IRB Library within the IRB system.

Sincerely,

Office for Human Subjects Protection (OHS P)  
 Florida State University Office of Research  
 2010 Levy Avenue, Building B Suite 276  
 Tallahassee, FL 32306-2742  
 Phone: 850-644-7900  
 Email: [humansubjects@fsu.edu](mailto:humansubjects@fsu.edu)  
 OHS P Web: <https://ohsp.fsu.edu>

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# BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Crystal A. Marr

## Philosophy

Through the fostering of authentic learning experiences and by forming an intentional school culture, all students can find meaning and motivation to achieve. It is the responsibility of a school administrator to create an environment in which educators can design culturally competent, accessible, and relevant curricula to engage all students and challenge them to discover unique solutions to problems by providing instructional experiences that grow them both as learners and as human beings.

## Education

University of West Florida 2014 M.Ed. Educational Leadership  
Alabama A&M University 2007 B.A. Secondary English Education  
Florida State University Ed.D Educational Leadership & Policy

## Skills

Strategic planning & design	Simulation/Problem-Based Learning Experience Development
Community Outreach Coordination	DEIB strategy development
Data Disaggregation & Storytelling	Organizational Network Development
Organizational Culture Planning	Evaluative systems: assessment and development
Legislative Advocacy	Innovative Problem-Solving

## Administrative Experience

Director of Student Personnel Services: Summit Public Schools August 2021 - Present

- Create innovative solutions to strengthen diversity, inclusion, and cultural competencies across the organization
- Interface with executive staff, school board members, and special interest groups to influence policies and processes that support an inclusive work environment
- Lead District's Equity Advisory Committee charged with ensuring communications, policies, and curriculum are aligned with district goals and strategies

- Provide professional leadership in organizing, administering, supervising, and evaluating curricular decisions within the school district as they relate to multi-lingual learners and Basic Skills programming
- Facilitate district level decision making to create and systemize multi-tiered systems of supports for students
- Identify homeless children and youths and coordinate activities with other entities and agencies as required through McKinney-Vento legislation

#### Assistant Principal

JH Workman Middle IB July 2018 - July 2021

- Created schoolwide onboarding program for instructional staff
- Created teacher recruitment & retention initiative on campus to address unfilled positions
- Rebranded school campus, social media presence, and community outreach program
- Created academic MTSS model currently serving as school district's middle school model
- Oversaw progress monitoring data disaggregation and directed data-driven instruction efforts
- Restructured academic and disciplinary support systems for teachers and staff to embed restorative practice, protocols for student aggression, and ensure mental health services were interwoven into disciplinary practices decreasing referrals by 280% over three years
- Implemented and oversaw social media campaign: You Are Who You Follow
- Collaborated with district personnel and outside agencies to develop and oversee a professional learning model centered around International Baccalaureate education and differentiated needs of staff on campus
- Managed school budgets and oversaw implementation of growth strategies in partnership with the FLDOE on a CS&I campus
- Decreased achievement gap for students with disabilities and Black students by 8% with focus on discourse strategies and cultural competency training (Based on progress monitoring data from 18-19 SY to 20-21 SY)
- Designed and implemented innovative hybrid teaching model to ensure safety of students and staff while adhering to state and district requirements in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic
- Lobbied and work closely with Florida Association of School Administrators

#### Assistant Principal

Jim C Bailey Middle School June 2015- July 2018

- Created individualized professional learning model: Keep Educating Yourself (KEY) and Facilitated 1:1 Chromebook implementation with individualized educator learning plans
- Piloted reentry projects for at-risk youth with integration of mindful practices
- Oversaw curriculum and facility decisions for a staff of 100
- Facilitated and guided reflection of collaborative/integrated planning for core subject areas
- Monitored and evaluated both instructional and non-instructional support staff
- Served as a District Evaluative Leader, mentoring fellow administrators
- Served as Board of Review Member for S.T.A.R.T. novice teacher induction program

## Instructional Experience

Novice Teacher Evaluator

Escambia County School District 2014-2015

- Composed evidence-based observations and evaluations for 12-14 novice teachers in the 22 components of the Charlotte Danielson Framework ensuring a minimum of three pieces of objective, concrete evidence in each component to create a rating
- Mentored novice teachers in lesson design, curriculum, instructional practices, and classroom management
- Created small and large group professional development based on teacher need at school and district level
- Tracked and logged all data related to teacher
- Presented bi-annually to Board of Review recommending continuation or dismissal of novice teachers
- Collaborated with subject area specialists, district directors, administrators, teachers and other stakeholders
- Created evidence-based reports detailing evidence collected in novice teacher classrooms
- Assigned, wrote, and supervised strategies for improvement for teachers who receive unsatisfactory ratings based upon individual teacher needs

Literacy Coach 2013 - 2014 Bellview Middle School

- Analyzed data and create professional development based upon both teacher and student need
- Created Department of Education Comprehensive Action Plan to address school wide initiative as Differentiated Accountability School to improve student writing scores
- Provided professional development, individual mentoring, and provided specific feedback to teachers regarding the implementation of DOE Action Plan
- Language Arts/Social Studies Teacher 2007-2013 Bellview Middle School
- Developed and executed rigorous lesson plans aligned with state and national standards in Language Arts, Social Studies, and Math
- Utilized test scores and student assessments as a measurement of curriculum effectiveness and differentiated instruction as needed for students above and below grade reading levels
- Developed and implemented relevant, rigorous lesson plans to accelerate student progress beyond basic grade-level competency.
- Taught engaging and motivating lessons aligned with best instructional practices.
- Created an intentional classroom culture centered around mutual respect and responsibility
- Responsible for disaggregating academic and behavioral data and communicating findings to administration

## District and Professional Leadership experience

### Escambia County School District Recruitment Team (2014-2020)

- Created strategic plan for recruitment of teachers to ECSD in critical-need areas (1-year and 5-year plans)
- Created budget for annual recruitment efforts
- Researched and planned recruitment trips, coordinating with school districts and universities

### WitMarr Publishing (2013-present)

- Co-founder of WitMarr Publishing, an educational publishing company focused on teaching children the history of Pensacola, Florida through historical fiction and student-centered activities
- Co-Author of Curriculum for *Beyond the Sundial: Unknown Voyage* now taught in 13 ECPS schools based on Florida State Standards

### District Quality Teaching Leadership Cadre **Member** (2010-2012)

- Selected by district specialist to serve on research and curriculum-based leadership committee
- Worked closely with University of West Florida History and Reading departments to increase Escambia County's college readiness
- Wrote and published via UWF document-based questions based on local history