BAKED IN LIKE A MUFFIN: THE CULTURE OF WHITENESS IN
ONTARIO ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

by

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THE CULTURE OF WHITENESS IN ONTARIO ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Abstract

As a newly certified teacher in 2015, I began my teaching journey in the Peel District School Board (PDSB) with limited experience developing my critical consciousness nor recognizing the importance of doing so. I thought teaching students equitably could be achieved by treating all students the same. One of the many issues with this mentality was my positionality as a white female dictated my understanding of equity in the classroom. My subconscious/conscious biases, assessments, resources, expectations of students and teaching strategies were influenced by the culture of whiteness. This influence and perpetuation stems from the socialization of race and colonialism, which has been ingrained into society for centuries (Goldberg, 1992; Feagin, 2013). This translates to racialized students experiencing racism and oppression throughout their schooling, which leads to lower graduation rates and educational outcomes (Carr, 2008; Dei, 2003; Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021). Upon personal reflection, I see how I reinforced colonial systems in my teaching. This realization drove my desire to deepen my critical consciousness and conduct this work, as I share white intermediate teachers’ experiences reflecting on the culture of whiteness and systems of oppression within schools in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). The following research questions (RQ) guide this study:

1. A) How is the culture of whiteness perpetuated by white intermediate teachers in the Greater Toronto Area?

B) How does the culture of whiteness impact the pedagogies and resources teachers use in intermediate classes in Ontario?

2. What tools are white teachers using to mitigate the perpetuation of the culture of whiteness and develop their critical consciousness?
3. What changes need to be implemented to mitigate the perpetuation of the culture of whiteness in teaching (i.e., structural, institutional, and/or systemic)?

These questions are addressed through data collected from semi-structured interviews that formed a single case study research design. The findings highlight how the culture of whiteness is maintained, tools to deepen one’s critical consciousness, as well as recommendations to disrupt the culture of whiteness in education.

*Keywords: critical consciousness, critical race theory, qualitative research, the culture of whiteness*
Acknowledgements

In my opinion, completing a Master of Education degree is like completing a puzzle: all the pieces must be present. Each person mentioned below is an important piece of the puzzle and without all the pieces, this work would not have been completed in the same way.

Firstly, I would like to thank my participants: Amanda, Hillary, Oliver, and Liliane. Thank you for sharing your stories and experiences. It meant a lot to me that we were able to connect and virtually conduct this research amidst the complexities of the world. Without you volunteering your time to participate, this work would not have been possible. Secondly, the guidance and academic support provided by my supervisor, Dr. Thashika Pillay and committee member, Dr. Alana Butler cannot go unmentioned. Thank you for guiding me along this journey and asking critical questions to help develop the critical understanding of my own positionality, research, and whiteness. This work would not have developed in the same way if you both were not part of it. Lastly, a huge thank you is dedicated to my family, friends, and boyfriend. This puzzle has not always been obvious, and I am eternally grateful for your support along the way. Thank you for taking the time to answer my phone calls/texts, for reading over proposals, listening to presentations, and bearing with me on this roller coaster ride of my studies. Every puzzle piece matters, and I am so happy that you all influenced this work. I am eternally grateful for the role you play (or played) in my life.

Much love,

Elise
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What follows is a narrative that documents my journey as a researcher through a holistic approach to looking at research and life. It also draws upon my love for gardening and flowers, which stems from both of my beautiful and strong grandmothers.

Blossom began her life sitting in a package on a shelf in a store. Despite how young she was, Blossom was already very curious about what kind of flower she would grow into. She looked forward to being planted in a big garden of flowers in the GTA. With all her curiosities, she began to daydream about her future and the possible flowers she could grow into. As she began to think about the possibilities, the package of seeds was bought by someone and planted in Kingston. Over the next few months, she began to germinate as she sprouted into a seedling. She knew she would have lots of room to grow and she patiently awaited the new Chapter of her life in Kingston.

As the seasons changed, Blossom’s roots began to grow. She met other seedlings who were in the same plot of land as she was, and together they dug their roots into the soil. As the gardeners (i.e., professors) watered the plot of land and tended to the soil, Blossom and her friends grew each day. As they grew more roots and the stems began to peak out of the soil, Blossom remembered something she heard from elder flowers back in the GTA. She remembered that not all seeds grow into beautiful flowers, and there were many weeds all over, specifically where Blossom was born in the GTA. These weeds were so deeply entrenched in the soil, much like racism and whiteness in education, they thought they were superior and didn’t want any flowers or plants who were “different” to grow there. Blossom didn’t understand the various weeds’ thinking, and she was concerned about how fast they grew both in time and quantity. This
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was when she also learned that weeds don’t typically go away on their own. The gardeners had been trying their best year after year, but it was so hard to dig up the roots. What was even worse, was Blossom found out that her family of flowers back in the GTA was actually a garden full of weeds! They were everywhere and she didn’t even know it. This made Blossom think that perhaps she would grow into a weed also, but she remembered a gardener once said to her “knowing your past is important, but it doesn’t dictate your future.” She kept reminding herself of that, and her stem continued to grow.

With her growth came another change of season and Blossom knew she was ready for the next step. Different gardeners took over the garden and Blossom looked forward to new possibilities. She reflected on where she grew up, adamant to break free from the weeds that she grew up around. This part of her growth became increasingly challenging when Blossom was met with self-resistance, as feelings of becoming a weed crept back into her mind. Blossom thought that if she was a weed, her roots would already be impacting those around her, and she wouldn’t even be aware of it. This left Blossom feeling uneasy and worried to grow because she did not want to harm her environment, nor those around her. She took days off from growing to reflect on who she was. It was during these moments that the gardeners took special care of her, nurturing her newly grown leaves and ensuring they were watering her when necessary. What Blossom didn’t realize was that the gardeners could already see the stem and leaves and knew they were not those of a weed, so with their reassurance, Blossom pushed through the resistance she felt.

With newfound energy and her commitment to growth, Blossom realized how much she’d grown as her flower began to sprout. She looked down to the ground and remembered where she
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started. Blossom reflected on the beginning of her journey as a seed, when she wasn’t sure where she was going, or what kind of flower she would become. With the support of those around her, she grew into a beautiful flower, and it was during this time of reflection that Blossom was so appreciative of her surroundings. From the environment to the gardeners, to the other seeds, everything was equally important to her growth. She knew the environment in which a flower grows is vital to whether it lives or dies, and the environment where Blossom found herself was very conducive to growth. She also knows that when the petals fall off a flower, it is not the end of the journey but a signal for rebirth. Blossom’s life is continuous, and she recognizes how important the gardeners were for her growth. She is positive that through this cycle, a larger garden will be cultivated, and eventually there will no longer be any weeds.
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List of Abbreviations

Outlining the abbreviations below will facilitate an understanding of the research presented in this thesis.

**Anti-racist education**: Referred to throughout this study as ARE

**Critical Race Theory**: Referred to throughout this study as CRT

**Greater Toronto Area**: Referred to throughout this study as GTA

**Ontario Ministry of Education**: Referred to throughout this study as OME

**Peel District School Board**: Referred to throughout this study as PDSB

**Professional development**: Referred to throughout this study as PD

**Research question**: Referred to throughout this study as RQ

**Toronto District School Board**: Referred to throughout this study as TDSB

**York Region District School Board**: Referred to throughout this study as YRDSB
The culture of whiteness in Ontario elementary schools

Glossary

Defining the terms below will facilitate an understanding of the research presented in this thesis.

**Curriculum:** There are many ways in which curriculum theories explain curricula (i.e., explicit, implicit, and null curriculum). In this research, participants spoke about “curriculum” in reference to the explicit curriculum that is mandated by the Ontario Ministry of Education. Therefore, when using the term curriculum in this work, I am referring to the explicit curriculum as a structure that upholds the culture of whiteness.

**Pedagogy:** Shaped by a teacher’s beliefs and reflects upon their understanding of culture and learning styles. Refers to assessments, resources, and teaching strategies/styles implemented by a teacher.

**Racialized:** The Ontario Anti-Racism Directorate (2017) uses racialized in lieu of visible minority, as “this more fluid term acknowledges that race is a social construction that can change over time and place. It can be applied to people who have racial meanings attributed to them as a group in ways that negatively impact their social, political, and economic life” (p. 55). This definition aligns with my understanding of the term “racialized,” which is implied when the term is used in this study. Examples of racialized people in this study include, but are not limited to, individuals who identify as Black, East Asian, Indigenous, Latin American, Middle Eastern, South Asian, and Southeast Asian (terminology used in PDSB, 2020b).
Chapter 1

Introduction

During my fifth year of teaching, I taught a history lesson wherein Grade 8 students learned about immigration in the early 1900s. Excerpts were placed around the classroom and students had the opportunity to complete a “scavenger hunt” while completing a worksheet with prompts to think critically about how different groups of people were treated upon arrival in Canada. Examples of groups/topics they were prompted to learn about were: Italian immigrants, Middle Eastern immigrants, the Komagata Maru, the “continuous journey” regulation, Italian immigrants, Africville, Japanese immigrants, and Caribbean immigrants, and the Canadian immigration policies, to name a few. This lesson was intentionally planned to incorporate different perspectives of immigration in the early 20th century after attending a workshop on culturally responsive pedagogy. The inclusion/exclusion of groups were decisions I made as a white teacher. I was very proud of my lesson, and I invited my administration to come and see the students engaged in the lesson. I took photos and shared my lesson on my Twitter account (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Tweet from a grade 8 history lesson
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Figure 1). It was retweeted by many teachers, as well as the school and the school board where I taught at the time. Though I believed this lesson was a success at the time for incorporating diverse perspectives, it is now clear to me that whiteness was perpetuated through this lesson in many ways. As the teacher, I decided whose story was being presented, how their stories were told, and I dictated how students were going to engage in the learning. This “inclusion” did not translate to students’ learning about racialized individuals’ and/or groups’ experiences, stories, and/or achievements accurately. I also blatantly disregarded the people’s lives prior to immigrating to Canada.

What follows in this thesis are similar experiences to the one I shared above, wherein white teachers believe to be teaching equitably, but their explicit and implicit actions demonstrate otherwise. The participants reflect on instances where whiteness prevails in schools through their own teaching and classroom, as well as in their school communities. Like the aforementioned lesson, the intention of the teachers who participated in this study is not to harm students or negatively impact their academic achievements; however, sharing counterstories through a white perspective, or not sharing them at all, silently maintains power structures that oppress racialized students and communities. Therefore, this work is imperative to support teachers in developing their critical consciousness and reflecting on their role in white, Eurocentric structures that are upheld across Ontario and Canada.

1.1 Positionality Statement

It is crucial to highlight one’s positionality when conducting research as many thoughts, expectations, findings, and feelings as a researcher emerges from this standpoint. As a white cisgender female who was raised Catholic in an Italian Canadian family outside of Toronto,
colonialism is entrenched in my upbringing, socialization, education, teaching, and lifestyle. My knowledge is based upon elementary and secondary curriculum that omitted any discussion of systems of oppression, with a predominantly Eurocentric focus. The Catholic schools I attended in the GTA did not acknowledge the role of the Catholic church in colonization, nor their role in the creation of residential schools. In addition, Catholic schools continue to perpetuate white supremacy through the focus on Eurocentric knowledge, which points to why developing one’s critical consciousness is important.

During my time as an undergraduate student at York University, I began to think critically about the role of Catholicism in colonization. I majored in history and in my history courses, counterstories from racialized groups in Canadian history were shared and I wondered why these voices, stories, accomplishments and lived experiences were absent from my education thus far. I was socialized in an environment where I didn’t question or think about why racialized individuals’ stories were being shared by a white professor, through a white lens. I became increasingly interested in why the stories were absent from my education and as I thought about pursuing a Bachelor of Education, I hoped that Eurocentrism would no longer be the dominant narrative in the curriculum.

After the completion of my Bachelor of Education at the University of Toronto, I began my teaching career in 2015. It should not come as a surprise that Eurocentrism was still the dominant narrative in schools, as the OME’s (2020) report of the PDSB exemplified. This document is the most recent of many reports (James & Turner, 2015; James & Turner, 2017; Social Planning Council of Peel, 2015; Turner Consulting Group, 2015) that outlined systemic racism through various systems of oppression within the education system. These reports also
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display how students are negatively impacted by teachers’ decisions, such as pedagogy, 
resources, strategies, discipline, behaviour expectations, and much more. The OME (2020) report 
was the first time I explored literature or research that explicitly named racism within Ontario 
schools, specifically the GTA, which speaks to the privilege I have holding space in education as 
a white individual. As a result, I began to reflect on my decisions and pedagogy as a white 
teacher in a racialized community in the Peel region, which sparked me to review the resources I 
used in the classroom and why I had chosen those resources. Since this critical reflection in 2020, 
I have learned that there are many more areas of education that a teacher should consider when 
doing this work (i.e., assessments, teaching strategies, biases), as many of these areas are where 
whiteness is upheld through white silence and white fragility. This realization and development 
of my own critical consciousness brought me to my research and has triggered me to think 
critically about whiteness at various levels in education.

Recognizing my position and privilege in relation to my surroundings is integral and this 
type of reflexivity and introspection is an ongoing journey for me. It has not been easy to develop 
this reflexivity and introspection, but it is necessary. Thus far, I faced resistance in sticking to this 
topic, as I was unsure of where to begin, what resources provided an adequate framework to use 
when conducting this research, and which resources to use when writing this thesis. These 
feelings of resistance, conflict and discomfort continued throughout the research process and will 
certainly continue as I uncover and interrogate my own whiteness. This interrogation translates to 
addressing my white privilege and using this knowledge to understand my life experiences when 
working against the colonial roots that are entrenched in society.
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1.2 Research Problem

Whiteness (defined in Section 2.1) is rooted in colonialism, capitalism, as well as heteropatriarchy, operating through the perpetuation of white supremacy, Eurocentrism, and other structures of oppression (Ahmed, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Maynard, 2017). The current opportunity gap in Ontario schools demonstrates there are underlying structural forces that prevent Black students from accessing the same kinds of success as non-Black students (i.e., graduation rates and educational outcomes; Carr, 2008; Dei, 2003; Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021). This inequity is manifested daily throughout the education system and is shown specifically by teachers through subconscious/conscious biases, the lack of racial diversity within the profession, as well as whiteness influencing teaching strategies, pedagogy, and resources (Carr, 2008; OME, 2020; Social Planning Council of Peel, 2015; Solomon et al., 2005). In 2017, the government of Ontario created an anti-Black racism strategy to address systemic racism (Ontario Anti-Racism Directorate, 2017); however, various reports suggest the recommendations are not being implemented (James & Turner, 2017; OME, 2020; Toronto District School Board [TDSB], 2020). Due to this lack of implementation, the aforementioned research recommends specific calls to action regarding teachers’ actions and decisions, as teachers shape students’ experiences and success. Considering the impact teachers have on students, teachers must be cognisant of how their racial identity emerges in their daily practices.

Research suggests teachers must examine their own identity in relation to whiteness, analyze course materials, develop their critical consciousness, and have authentic conversations about race to mitigate negative impacts on students (Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021; Sleeter, 2017). Despite these suggestions, it is evident that non-racialized teachers in the United States of
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America are unwilling or lack the desire to analyze their racial identities, biases, and practices (Crowley & Smith, 2015; Sleeter, 2017). This unwillingness is synonymous with white supremacy and white privilege, which was found to be a barrier that limits non-racialized teachers’ capabilities and desires to engage in this work (DiAngelo, 2011; Knowles & Hawkman, 2019). Similar themes of colourblindness and a lack of sociocultural consciousness in non-racialized teachers emerged from Canadian contexts (Carr & Klassen, 1997; Solomon et al., 2003). Therefore, this study explores white intermediate teachers’ experiences reflecting on whiteness in teaching and the development of their critical consciousness in an attempt to disrupt the culture of whiteness and mitigate its negative impacts on racialized students.

1.3 Research Questions

This research responds to the following questions:

1. A) How is the culture of whiteness perpetuated by white intermediate teachers in the Greater Toronto Area?

B) How does the culture of whiteness impact the pedagogies and resources teachers use in intermediate classes in Ontario?

2. What tools are white teachers using to mitigate the perpetuation of the culture of whiteness and develop their critical consciousness?

3. What changes need to be implemented to mitigate the perpetuation of the culture of whiteness in teaching (i.e., structural, institutional, and/or systemic)?
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1.4 Rationale

Resources, instructional strategies, assessment, biases (subconscious and conscious), expectations of students, and lesson plans are all aspects of education that teachers are responsible for and make decisions about daily. These decisions define who teachers are and they reflect who teachers want their students to be. Thus, it is important for teachers to recognize this responsibility and the impacts they have within a learning environment. Sleeter (2017) argued critical self-reflection and reflexivity are crucial to researching and working in education. This is further suggested by Lopez & Jean-Marie (2021) when stating teachers must “reflect on their educational philosophy and practices when it comes to the education and schooling of Black children… the everyday practices of educators and ways in which their practices perpetuate anti-Black racism and antiblackness must be questioned” (p. 51-52). This questioning of everyday practices and subsequent development of one’s critical consciousness is necessary in teaching. It allows for the larger concept of anti-racist education (ARE) to be discussed and if implemented in a good way, the white, Eurocentric narrative can be disrupted.

1.5 Purpose and Significance

The purpose of this study is to respond to recommendations made by various community organizations (i.e., James & Turner, 2017; Social Planning Council of Peel, 2015; Turner Consulting Group, 2015) to provide ongoing anti-racism training and PD to teachers. This research focuses on developing participants’ critical consciousness, which is a critical piece to anti-racism PD. The participants engaging in this work are four intermediate teachers in the GTA, who reflect on their experiences with whiteness in their classes and schools.
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The significance of this research is twofold. Firstly, those involved reflected upon their own practices and how whiteness presents itself in schools. As Sleeter (2017) argued, teachers must recognize and reflect on their racial identity to ensure they are supporting racially and culturally diverse students. I would extend this argument that reflecting on one’s racial identity benefits all students, as teachers can disrupt the white narrative and teach all students about how systems and structures operate in a white racial frame. To further the significance of this research, all four participants who participated in this study are white. Ledesma and Calderón (2015) argued “we must teach [w]hites\(^1\) to understand themselves through the history of the other, in much the same way many communities of colour understand themselves in relationship to [w]hites” (p. 209). This study dives deeper into these lessons for those involved, which develops their reflexivity and critical perspectives on race. In deepening these important aspects of one’s critical consciousness, we work towards ensuring academic success for all students.

Secondly, most of the research conducted on this topic in the Peel region has been led by administration, school boards, and/or organizations outside of the education system (James & Turner, 2017; OME, 2020; Social Planning Council of Peel, 2015; Turner Consulting Group, 2015). This study is teacher-led and is done in the teaching community, which fills the void on teacher-led analysis on this topic in Peel. In addition, three of four participants engaged in this work were teachers from PDSB. This provides a local context when responding specifically to the OME (2020) report. The findings can be used by other teachers who want to work towards developing their critical consciousness. Aside from this thesis, the findings will also be

\(^1\) Ledesma and Calderón (2015) capitalize the word “White” in the original text. I do not want to give power to the word and have thus changed it to a lower-case letter.
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disseminated through an infographic for stakeholders (i.e., board members, administration, and teachers) with the recommendation of teacher self-reflection and analysis. If change does not occur, the racial inequity will continue to prevail in schools alongside the Eurocentric curriculum, which perpetuates whiteness.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

This Chapter reviews the literature and theoretical framework that is relevant and necessary for engaging in this field of research. To provide an overview of the current research in the field of anti-racism and whiteness in teaching, Section 2.1 summarizes literature on the socialization of racism. Whiteness is defined, and the ways in which whiteness is perpetuated in the Ontario education system is highlighted. Following this, the Chapter flows into specific systems in education wherein whiteness permeates such as: hiring practices, the curriculum, and teachers’ professional development (PD; Section 2.2). Within Section 2.3, reports conducted on education in the GTA are analyzed based on some of the aforementioned areas. Table 1 outlines and compares the calls to action made in the localized reports. Section 2.4 reviews the literature pertaining to ARE, as well as the struggles with implementation, diversifying resources, and authentic voices in the classroom. In Section 2.5, critical consciousness in teachers is explored prior to reviewing the gaps in the literature in Section 2.6. Lastly, the theoretical framework that this study is based upon is outlined in Section 2.7. Diving further into CRT, Section 2.7.1 and Section 2.7.2 provides a description for each tenet of CRT that is utilized in this study, while explicitly linking how each tenet aligns with the RQs, as well as the data coding and analysis in this study.

2.1 The History of Race and the Socialization of Racism

The social concept of race has been documented for many centuries and the societal understanding of race has historically been determined by governments, and/or those in positions
of power and privilege. Throughout history, race and racist discourses were referred to in a variety of ways by racist states (Goldberg, 2002). Regardless of the ways in which it was spoken about, the social significance of these terms is longstanding. As Goldberg (1992) outlined, there was an emphasis on one’s origin, breed, and lineage, establishing a biological knowledge of race dating back to the early fourteenth and fifteenth century. From this point onwards, there emerged the management of racial relations prior to the concept of race having a social meaning. This foundation of racialized discourse set the social conditions for racism to take place (Goldberg, 1992). Within these social conditions in a racist society, the concept of Blackness emerged, as Dei (2013) outlined “Black and Blackness only exists as a product of European construction” (p. 121). Thus, it is through this longstanding foundation of racist discourse that colonialism, slavery, and the subsequent socialization of racism and anti-Black racism occurred.

Colonialism and racism are deeply entrenched within many facets of society. Looking at an understanding of racism from the past few centuries, Feagin (2013) outlined a racial frame that “is built on 350 years of extreme racial oppression…this oppression aggressively targeted [I]ndigenous peoples for extermination or expulsion, and targeted African Americans with a bloody slavery system” (p. 23). The everyday operation of this racial frame occurs through overt actions and behaviour, but is also noted in comments, assumptions, expectations, as well as many other nonverbal signs and/or actions (Feagin, 2013). When the socialization of racism is not interrogated, it continues to operate in silence. To further this, Sensoy and DiAngelo (2017) discussed the idea of the socialization of race and gave the analogy that this racial frame is ingrained within society like fish in water. The socialization of racism is all around us and it impacts relations between individuals and within society at large. These relations effect racial
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profiling, law enforcement, incarceration, immigration, labour practices, as well as education through the perpetuation of white dominance and the oppression of Black, Indigenous and people of colour (Maynard, 2017). These systems of oppression were established (and continue to be upheld) to oppress racialized individuals and groups.

Within the implementation of these systems, “a system of policies and practices codified in law and maintained by society that conceptualize white ways of being and thinking to be superior and more deserving” (Corces-Zimmerman & Guida, 2019, p. 94) emerged, which has since been coined as “whiteness.” Though typically invisible to those who benefit from these policies and practices, whiteness positions white bodies to be privileged in society. This includes the creation of a “culture of whiteness” wherein white/European ideas, values, beliefs, and knowledge systems are considered the norm, and superior to those that emerge from non-white individuals (Withers, 2017). In this research study, the term “whiteness” will be used to encapsulate Corces-Zimmerman and Guida’s (2019) definition, as well as this culture of whiteness that was referenced. Due to its permanence and infiltration into Canadian society, whiteness can also go unnoticed by those who are not white. Without specifically interrogating this culture, white supremacy, and hegemonic ways of knowing will continue to oppress racialized individuals and groups. Fortunately, a growing body of scholars are advocating for whiteness to be interrogated and for the invisible structures that maintain white supremacy and white privilege to be made visible (Ahmed, 2007; Applebaum, 2016; Maynard, 2017; McIntosh, 1995). Due to the relationship between this research and whiteness, it is important to think about how whiteness operates within the field of education, specifically in Ontario.
2.2 The Culture of Whiteness in Ontario Schools

This Section explores the history of racialized students in Ontario schools, as well as the impacts of the culture of whiteness on students in Ontario, Canada. The provincial systems that uphold the white, structural foundation in education are also highlighted.

2.2.1 Historical Context

The Canadian education system was established during colonization with the homogenizing intention to create “good Canadian citizens” in the eyes of the British settlers. Those who held leadership positions in 19th century Canada were often white men of British origins, meaning they held British viewpoints and wanted education to serve the purpose of creating Canadian citizens that upheld white/European values. Joshee and Johnson (2005) discussed this concept and noted the exceptions to this practice of educating children and youth in Canada as they outlined “it was widely believed that certain groups could not be assimilated and therefore should remain separate” (p. 58). Therefore, legislation forced certain groups of people to attend segregated schools as they did not look, act, or think in the same way the British settlers did. Examples include, but are not limited to, Indigenous children who were forced to attend residential schools across Canada, African Canadian children in Nova Scotia and Ontario were excluded from public schools during the 1800s to the mid-1900s, and attempts were made to create segregated schools for children of Asian origin in British Columbia (Joshee & Johnson, 2005). In most racially segregated schools in Canada, there was an uncertainty around access to facilities, teachers, resources and/or funding (Winks, 1969). This uncertainty continued during the 20th century, as the racial segregation of Black students in Canadian schools persisted in Ontario until 1965, when the last racially segregated school closed (Winks, 1969). This
oppression through not providing racialized students equitable opportunities for public education had major ramifications, as Du Bois (2015) argued education is key for driving social change. This led to the creation of structures in publicly funded education systems that privilege white individuals’ knowledge systems, and/or experiences.

As racial segregation of Black students in Canadian schools was slowly phased out after the Second World War, initiatives and policies aimed at adding diversity to the citizenship agenda emerged. With this, anti-discrimination seminars were facilitated, and curriculum content was created to expand the meaning of citizenship and address problems of racial and religious discrimination (Joshee & Johnson, 2005). During the mid-20th century, an integrated approach was taken as Black students and teachers were integrated into the Canadian education system. This system was built upon white ideologies, and these decades were detrimental to many Black individuals and communities. hooks (1994) spoke to this approach and the implications of it, as she shared her experience being bussed to white schools that demanded obedience. She said:

> When we entered racist, desegregated, white schools we left a world where teachers believed that to educate black children rightly would require a political commitment. Now, we were mainly taught by white teachers whose lessons reinforced racist stereotypes. For black children, education was no longer about the practice of freedom. (p. 3)

Along with this, hooks (1994) highlighted that Black teachers were among the first to be fired during this time, reinforcing notions that white knowledge, experience, and ideologies were more valuable to the white education system. Though hooks’ experiences emerge from the American education system, similar traumatic events were experienced by Black students in Canada (Joshee
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& Johnson, 2005). This demonstrates that though racially segregated schools were closed, the discrimination and racism in education were felt in different, yet equally detrimental, ways throughout the 20th century.

Emerging in the 1970s, policies were aimed at celebrating cultural diversity, though this was often taken up by white individuals and could only occur through ways in which white people approved (i.e., interest convergence principle). Joshee and Johnson (2005) discussed the history of legislation during this time, noting the creation of the federal Multiculturalism Policy in 1971. This policy was followed by the Multiculturalism Act in 1988, which emphasized cultural identity and cultural sharing. Policies surrounding multiculturalism were adapted to education by various provincial ministries of education with the objective to accept and celebrate student diversity (Harper, 1997). It was during these decades wherein the OME released new curriculum and students were given opportunities to develop and maintain identities informed by their culture, as well as understand, and appreciate other ethnic and cultural groups (Harper, 1997). This multicultural approach to education is vastly different when compared to ARE, as power dynamics, the historical context, and the root causes of systemic racism are not addressed. Hammond (2020) discussed multicultural education in comparison to ARE and notes the objective of multicultural education is social harmony. It lacks the objective of developing one’s critical consciousness, as well as learning for independence and agency. It is not surprising that racialized students were being negatively impacted by these policies and educational initiatives during this time.

Considering the sustained oppression and lack of improvement in educational contexts for racialized students, different approaches were taken in the late 1900s and early 2000s. In the early
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1990s, all school districts in Ontario were mandated to develop and implement policies on anti-racism and ethnocultural equity by September 1995 through the Policy/Program Memorandum 119 (Joshee & Johnson, 2005). Despite the policies and initiatives being undertaken across the country, Dei et al. (1997) researched Black students’ experiences during the 1990s and found the following areas of concern: differential treatment because of their race, absence of Black teachers, and absence of Black history and culture in the curriculum. At the same time, other publications were released by the African Canadian Working Group and the Royal Commission on Learning that advocated for improved schooling conditions for Black students through the creation of Africentric schools (James & Samaroo, 2017). Dei (2013) outlined Afrocentricity as a paradigm shift that:

Constitutes a system of thought that seeks to centre African peoples in their histories, cultures, identities, and agencies. This perspective offers a counter-visioning of schooling…African learners are at the centre of their education. They begin to read the world from that centred position in relation to other experiences. (p. 122)

Advocacy for Africentric schools occurred in cities across Canada, such as Toronto and Montreal, and was spearheaded by Black organizations, parents, community members, and educators. This was perceived as a threat to the white education system, as it resisted Eurocentric ideals, knowledge, and white dominance; therefore, Africentric schools were a controversial topic of debate in the early 2000s (Levine-Rasky, 2014). These debates intensified when TDSB announced its plan to test Africentric social studies in middle schools, and subsequently announced the establishment of an Africentric Alternative Elementary School (AAS) in 2008.
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(James & Samaroo, 2017). The AAS in TDSB opened in 2009 and has since served students from kindergarten to grade 8.

The success of Africentric schools has been debated, as Afrocentricity gives attention and value to African Canadian historical contributions, worldviews, and knowledge. This contributes to nurturing a positive Black identity and community, though there are challenges of creating Afrocentric schools within a white system. Dei and Kempf (2013) outlined the AAS cultivates a positive sense of self, builds community support, and prepares students to be critically aware of their social situation, though funding and resources are limited, and they worry about the long-term future of the school. The institutional challenge that James and Samaroo (2017) outlined is “the school has to grapple with implementing Africentric pedagogy and curriculum within the very same type of Eurocentric, Western framework, and structures of a school board that have been failing Black students in Ontario for decades” (p. 45). Therefore, considering the challenge of creating Africentric schools within a white system, the white system itself needs to be addressed, which is recommended in the discussion of this research study.

2.2.2 Current Context

The historical context outlined above permeates the current education system in Ontario, as white structures, teachers’ whiteness, and racism within the education system prevents racialized students from accessing the same kinds of success as white students. The oppression is ever-present and is aimed at students of all ages, relentlessly persisting at all stages of their journey as a student in Ontario. This is a factor that leads to lower graduation rates and educational outcomes, as Black students are pushed out of the education system (Carr, 2008; Dei, 2003; Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021). For example, Cole (2020) shares the story of Symone, a Black six-
year-old girl who was restrained and handcuffed by Peel Regional Police at a school in the PDSB for “violent” behaviour. The disciplinary actions taken (i.e., calling the police) and the school staff’s inability to support Symone are examples of the white systems that exist in Canadian schools. Having taught in PDSB myself, I wonder what support (if any) was offered to Symone and her mother leading up to this incident. Furthermore, I wonder how this incident would have been handled differently if Symone was a white child, as well as how the racial identity of the school staff and police officers impacted the situation. Definite responses to these questions will never be known, though they are crucial to consider when thinking about racialized students’ experiences in the education system.

Unfortunately, the incident involving Symone is not an anomaly when discussing how racism presents itself in Canadian schools. Racialized students experience subtle and blatant acts of racism daily in the form of microaggressions, resources presenting Islamophobic content, high suspension rates of Black students, and low representation of Latin American students in regional choice learning programs (OME, 2020). Research outlined low expectations of racialized students are held by teachers and other students, translating to surprise when racialized students receive good grades or succeed in post-secondary education, despite being discouraged to pursue higher education (Gray et al., 2016; James & Turner, 2017). In consultations with Black youth in Peel, James and Turner (2015) quote a youth who shared “I think we have to fight an uphill battle in almost everything we do, especially school. I've had teachers tell me straight up that they don't believe my group of people could do certain things” (p. 31). This is further reflected by Statistics Canada (2020) wherein 94% of Black youth (age 15-25) would like to get a bachelor’s degree or higher; however, 60% think that they could obtain it. These limiting beliefs impact racialized
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students’ opportunities to reach their full potential. For decades, Black communities reported
Black students are inappropriately streamed into applied and vocationally oriented programs
(Cummins, 1997; OME, 2020). This was supported by many members of the PDSB as “Black
students are underrepresented in academic level courses and overrepresented in applied level
courses and locally developed credit courses” (OME, 2020, p. 12). These beliefs are often
internalized by white people and can lead to detrimental behaviour targeted at racialized students,
such as the surveillance of Black students in schools.

Gray et al. (2016) discussed Black students feeling as though they are constantly under
surveillance in schools – a place that should offer a safe and comfortable environment. This
differential treatment is often accompanied by stereotyping, racial profiling, and racial policing,
which can lead to higher suspension rates within the Black student population in Ontario. The
OME (2020) report states “Black students are only 10.2% of the secondary school population, but
approximately 22.5% of students receiving suspensions” (p. 9). In TDSB, Black students
represent 11% of the student population but represent 33% of suspensions and expulsions
(TDSB, 2020). Ultimately, all these forms of racism lead to lower graduation rates, as “Black
student graduation rates are still one of the lowest when compared to other ethno-racial groups in
the board” (TDSB, 2020, p. 2). Thus, there are multiple ways in which racism impacts Black
students’ everyday life at school, beginning at a young age and continuing throughout their
academic careers.

Additionally, one can infer that all racialized students experience some aspects of racism
(if not all) in similar ways that Black students experience racism in Ontario schools. Indigenous
education in Canada has a complex history, which is accompanied by intergenerational trauma
and issues that persist across the country. Talaga (2017) shares experiences of Indigenous families and communities as children and youth progress through the school system in Thunder Bay, Ontario. Within this recount of seven tragic incidents occurring between 2000 and 2011, Indigenous youths’ experiences are outlined in the education system, which often includes moving to a new city to pursue secondary school, in a system that was created by European settlers on Indigenous land. To position Indigeneity within this study, a stigma exists to self-identify as Indigenous within GTA school boards (OME, 2020). On top of this, for students who do identify themselves as Indigenous, Indigenous students are overrepresented in suspensions and applied and locally developed credit course pathways (OME, 2020). Regardless of if/how a racialized student self identifies themselves, racialized students experience racism daily in education and this negatively impacts their academic success, as well as their well-being.

Due to the deep roots of Eurocentrism as the dominant culture in Canadian society, most teachers are ignorant of how whiteness is perpetuated in education and how racialized students are being negatively impacted. Love (2019) argued that she does not think “teachers enter the profession wanting to harm children of colour, but they will hurt a child whose culture is viewed as an afterthought” (p. 1). This is accurate with my teaching experience, as I did not intend to perpetuate the culture of whiteness; however, in not addressing whiteness nor white supremacy, I silently maintained the culture of whiteness and upheld white structures. The need to disrupt the culture whiteness and stop the silent perpetuation in teaching is advocated for in many reports conducted by stakeholders in Toronto and the GTA (James & Turner, 2015; James & Turner, 2017; OME, 2020; Social Planning Council of Peel, 2015; Turner Consulting Group, 2015). These reports highlight many overlapping areas where the culture of whiteness permeates in
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education. To align areas wherein the culture of whiteness emerges within this study, the following areas are expanded upon in more detail below: teacher employment, the curriculum, and teachers’ PD.

2.2.3 System Perpetuating Whiteness: Hiring Practices

There is a lack of diverse representation within the teaching population in Ontario, despite the increasing diversity in the student and general population of Ontario (Ontario Ministry of Finance, 2016). This teacher diversity gap was highlighted in Stephen Lewis’ (1992) report on race relations in Ontario and has since been documented by many other reports (i.e., James & Turner, 2017; OME, 2020; Social Planning Council of Peel, 2015; Turner Consulting Group, 2015). Abawi and Eizadirad (2020) discussed the implementation of “bias-free” hiring practices across the province of Ontario in recent years, as school boards created equity and inclusion policies to bridge the teacher diversity gap. During the implementation of these policies, colourblind racism emerged, further perpetuating the culture of whiteness, which is the opposite of what these policies sought to do. Regarding the idea of “bias-free” hiring practices, 90% of participants in a research study felt this approach was problematic, as one cannot be completely bias-free (Abawi and Eizadirad, 2020). With the lack of successful employment strategies to bridge the gap, white teachers are continuously employed, which fuels the cycle of whiteness to continue. Therefore, research demonstrates that the teacher diversity gap in Ontario, and the continued employment of white people (or those who internalize the culture of whiteness), negatively impacts racialized students (Abawi, 2018; Carr & Klassen, 1997).

There are many alarming issues when only one dominant narrative is being taught to the children and youth in Canada. For this reason, Dei (2003) argued teachers need to “respond to the
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challenge and possibilities of difference, by first acknowledging the extent of our diversity, and that they need to do so” (p. 241). This acknowledgement is often met with resistance by non-racialized teachers, as they often do not see the need to recognize the diversity in their classes, and/or they believe they are adequately diversifying their pedagogy to suit their students’ needs (Carr & Klassen, 1997). Regardless of why non-racialized teachers refuse to participate in this work, research demonstrates that the culture whiteness limits the ability of teachers to engage in conversations about race, let alone address it in their teaching (Crowley & Smith, 2015). This refusal emphasizes the issue regarding a lack of diversity in teachers, as the system will continue to silently maintain the culture of whiteness if racialized teachers continue to be discriminated against and not prioritized in hiring practices. Within the OME (2020) report, there are two pie charts that visually highlight the discrepancy between the diversity in the student population, but lack thereof in the teacher population. For example, 45% of students in PDSB identify as South Asian, 17% identify as white, 17% identify as other racial backgrounds, 10% identify as Black, 6% identify as East Asian, and 5% identify as Middle Eastern (OME, 2020, p. 3). In contrast, the top racial identities of staff in PDSB are 67% white, 16% South Asian or East Asian, 7% Black, 6% other racial identities, 3% Chinese and 1% North African or Arab (OME, 2020, p. 4). This indicates that equitable employment measures need to be implemented and stakeholders held accountable. With white staff making up 67% of the racial identities in PDSB, it is crucial to advocate for teachers to critically analyze one’s identity and positionality in relation to their pedagogies and resources they use in their classrooms (OME, 2020). Furthermore, the hiring of racialized teachers would allow for more opportunities to disrupt the Eurocentric narrative and
teach from an anti-oppression lens without the content being viewed and taught through a white lens.

2.2.4 System Perpetuating Whiteness: the Provincial Curriculum

For several decades, Black communities in Ontario have advocated for anti-racist curriculum and pedagogy as a method to increase Black students' engagement in school; yet, for several decades, this has not been implemented (Turner Consulting Group, 2015). Whether this failure is due to a lack of cultural understanding, comfortability, self-efficacy, absence of what white staff believe to be concrete methods to do so, or blatant racism, the results are always the same. Racialized students have not been reflected in the curriculum, nor can they relate to what is being taught, which leads to disengagement, higher dropout rates and achievement gaps on standardized tests, as well as report card scores (Dei, 2003; TDSB, 2020). Examples of the culture of whiteness prevailing in the explicit curriculum include the absence of Black culture reflected in a positive manner in the curriculum (Social Planning Council of Peel, 2015), history as a subject solely presenting a Eurocentric version of the past, as well as using Black History Month as a box to check for celebrating Black peoples’ achievements (OME, 2020). In failing to disrupt the culture of whiteness in the explicit curriculum, teachers view racialized students’ culture and experiences as an afterthought, which negatively affects racialized students in the short and long-term (Love, 2019). Teachers must be held accountable for implementing curriculum and pedagogies that recognize different ways of knowing and being, which will increase racialized students’ academic performance and allow them to feel a sense of safety and belonging in school.

Certified teachers in Ontario are held to standards of practice through the Ontario College of Teachers, which is important to note when discussing curriculum and teachers’ professional
judgement. Teachers use their knowledge and education to make decisions on how to best support their students equitably (Ontario College of Teachers, 2021); however, each teacher interprets the term *equitably* in a different way. For example, a white teacher may develop their critical consciousness, teach from an anti-racist pedagogy, and disrupt the culture of whiteness daily in their classroom through having a Black individual teach the class and share their lived experiences. In contrast, a different white teacher may maintain the status quo but use a book written by a Black author during Black History Month in literature circles. Both teachers may believe they are teaching *equitably*, and both may have negative impacts on Black students; however, the latter scenario is vastly more problematic than the former. By adding a book written by a Black author during Black History Month, it tokenizes Black peoples’ experiences, and demonstrates that they are not valid or worthy of being discussed during the other months of the year. Ledesma and Calderón (2015) argued “it is not enough to include Students of Colour voices; without critical educators, such work does little to critically engage [w]hite supremacist ideology prevalent across pedagogy.” (p. 209). A critical educator not only engages in this ideology, but questions their experiences, resources, PD, and positionality. Therefore, the recommendation to alter the curriculum and audit the resources used in classrooms is one of many necessary steps for teachers to make when moving towards an anti-racist framework.

### 2.2.5 System Perpetuating Whiteness: Teachers’ Professional Development

Research advocates for changes to be made to teacher education programs to address anti-racism in many geographic regions and subjects (Crowley & Smith, 2015; Flintoff et al., 2015; Solomon et al., 2005); however, are these changes being implemented? Also, what is being done for in-service teachers? If teacher candidates are deconstructing the culture of whiteness and race in
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their teacher education programs, does this continue when they enter the workforce? Publications created by school boards in Toronto and the GTA indicate that there are anti-racist initiatives occurring within schools that includes teachers’ PD (i.e., TDSB 2018b; York Region District School Board [YRDSB], 2021). This work is being spearheaded by administration, and/or school success teams. The issue that may arise with this approach to PD is many white administrators/leaders may not have developed their critical consciousness, nor fully understand how race plays into education, which further perpetuates the culture of whiteness in education rather than doing the opposite (Aveling, 2007). In addition, PD sessions often only scratch the surface with a limited number of school staff participating in “professional development on how to engage in conversations and experiment with teaching in ways that can deconstruct the patterns of white privilege and racist educational expectations and outcomes” (Yoon, 2012, p. 609). It is evident that relevant, meaningful, and ongoing PD must be conducted for in-service teachers to begin (or continue) their journey on this road towards anti-racism; we cannot rely on teacher education programs and new teachers to disrupt the culture of whiteness in teaching.

Relevant and meaningful PD on anti-racism is a starting point to a larger conversation and task of deconstructing the culture of whiteness in educational leadership and teaching (Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021). Though the deconstruction of whiteness cannot be accomplished in a single PD session, it is foundational and beneficial for teachers, regardless of where they are in their personal journey with this work. Despite this, there is a lack of a directive in the OME (2020) report on teacher PD, which neglects holding PDSB accountable for teachers’ PD. This is an unfortunate circumstance, as it is argued that the implementation of ongoing teacher education on this topic will “help reduce anti-Black racism, ensure culturally appropriate pedagogy, and ensure
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a curriculum that reflects the full diversity of Ontario students” (James & Turner, 2017, p. 77). This concept of ongoing teacher education is also advocated for in other reports conducted in Toronto and the GTA (i.e., Social Planning Council of Peel, 2015; Turner Consulting Group, 2015), as it increases teachers’ knowledge on anti-racism and can consequently deepen their critical consciousness and lead to mitigating negative effects on racialized students.

2.3 Calls to Action

As demonstrated in Section 2.2, whiteness supremacy has a longstanding history of dominating systems and structures relating to hiring practices, curriculum, and PD for teachers. Dating back to Lewis’ (1992) report on race relations, the following Table compares the recommendations made in various reports on the three aforementioned areas where white supremacy dominates. Though the terminology varies between each report, it is evident that almost all the reports advocate for change in each of the three areas of education. A main objective of these recommendations is to create an education system wherein all students can reach their full potential, being valued, supported, respected, and welcomed (OME, 2020).

Table 1. Recommendations from reports conducted in Toronto and the GTA.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Hiring Practices</th>
<th>Curriculum</th>
<th>Teacher Professional Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lewis, 1992, p. 25</td>
<td>Minister of Education must monitor the employment equity in Ontario schools</td>
<td>Revision of curriculum at every level of education, so that it fully reflects Ontario society</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## THE CULTURE OF WHITENESS IN ONTARIO ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Hiring Practices</th>
<th>Curriculum</th>
<th>Teacher Professional Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Planning Council of Peel, 2015, p. 8</td>
<td>Hiring of Black teachers</td>
<td>Consultation with the Black community on best practices for creating curriculum that reflects and values the diverse student population</td>
<td>Mandatory training of teachers about anti-Black racism, equity, and the provision of educational services to Black students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turner Consulting Group, 2015, pp. 61-65</td>
<td>Deliberate efforts are needed to identify and remove discriminatory barriers to hiring, retention, and advancement of Black and other racialized workers</td>
<td>A curriculum that includes African Canadians, as one important element of supporting the success of Black students, has been consistently advocated for over several decades</td>
<td>All teachers and education staff should receive training to increase their ability to effectively educate Black students. This includes increasing staff understanding and awareness of racism, racialization, and racial profiling and how they affect the success of Black students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James &amp; Turner, 2017, pp. 72-77</td>
<td>Implement an employment equity program, to help create a workforce (both academic and non-academic) that reflect the diversity of the student population</td>
<td>Ensure the Ontario curriculum reflects the full diversity of the student population, in particular the Black population</td>
<td>Provide anti-racism training to educators, school administrators, and staff that reflects their roles and responsibilities. Ensure that anti-racism training is embedded into ongoing professional development and not provided as one-off training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OME, 2020, pp. 39-45</td>
<td>Develop and implement a new, robust, and comprehensive fairness and equity in employment strategy</td>
<td>Audit of schools – including naming, mascots, libraries, and classrooms. This should include evaluating books, media and other resources currently being used</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Due to the impact the OME (2020) report had on my personal journey, my connection to this school board, and my participants’ connections to PDSB, it is important to note the recommendations made within it. This report is the most recent of the reports consulted, yet it lacks tangible recommendations for teachers and excludes a recommendation to explicitly analyze the curriculum. The absence of a recommendation to explicitly analyze the curriculum or engage in PD on anti-racism removes the mandatory obligation for elementary teachers to re-evaluate their practices. This is detrimental in moving forward, and by not including this recommendation, the report falls short of holding teachers accountable in PDSB.

2.4 Anti-Racist Education (ARE)

Kendi (2019) defines an anti-racist individual as someone who is “supporting an anti-racist policy by their actions or expression of an anti-racist idea” (p. 22-23). Kendi (2019) furthers this discussion in saying that one cannot become a racist or anti-racist, rather it is something that one can strive to be through self-awareness, self-criticism, and self-examination. To be anti-racist is a personal choice to face the history and critically think about your actions, behaviour, beliefs, and way of living. To connect this to education, ARE emerged as an educational pedagogy in the late 20th century. ARE is “an active resistance to the ways in which knowledge, status, value, and competence have been framed to give preference to white interests” (Thompson, 1997, p. 14). As King and Chandler (2016) outlined, notable principles of ARE: interrogating power structures and colonialism, making the experiences of historically racialized people central to the curriculum, teaching about stereotypes and microaggressions against racialized individuals, and affirming diversity throughout the curriculum. Through these principles, ARE seeks to address and interrogate the status quo that centralizes the culture of whiteness and is currently being
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maintained in education. In contrast to other approaches to teaching equitably (see Table 2), social justice education (i.e., ARE) prioritizes developing students’ consciousness about the everyday inequity that prevails. This pedagogical approach should not be considered an add-on to a unit or lesson, as sustained efforts to disrupt the inequity is the objective of ARE (Hammond, 2020).

Table 2. Distinctions of equity (Hammond, 2020)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Multicultural Education</th>
<th>Social Justice Education</th>
<th>Culturally Responsive Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focus</strong></td>
<td>Celebrating diversity</td>
<td>Exposing the social political context that students experience</td>
<td>Improving the learning capacity of diverse students who have been oppressed educationally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emphasis</strong></td>
<td>Creating positive social interactions across difference (i.e., diversity and inclusion)</td>
<td>Raising students’ consciousness about inequity in daily life (i.e., anti-racism)</td>
<td>Affective and cognitive aspects of teaching and learning (i.e., ways to accelerate learning)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outcome</strong></td>
<td>Exposing privileged students to multiple perspectives. For racialized students, the outcome is to see themselves reflected in the curriculum</td>
<td>Creating a lens to recognize and interrupt inequitable patterns and practices in society Critical consciousness</td>
<td>Building cognitive capacity and academic mindset by pushing back on dominant narratives about racialized people Independent learning for agency</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Social harmony

2.4.1 Whiteness and ARE

ARE has the potential to positively impact all students, yet it is resisted by teachers due to white privilege and white fragility. White privilege is often referred to as an invisible, weightless backpack full of special provisions that present themselves in the form of unearned advantages,
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all relying on the operation of white supremacy (McIntosh, 1995; Saad, 2020). This privilege allows teachers who are white (or perceived as white) to maintain the status quo without dismantling or engaging in how their racial identity impacts their lives, as well as those around them. If they are benefitting from the dominant set of existing norms and practices, they are less likely to change their practice (Lopez, 2020). Furthermore, Saad (2020) states “people with white privilege often do not want to look directly at their privilege because of what it brings up for them – discomfort, shame, and frustration” (p. 38). This directly mirrors what scholars in the United States of America outlined years prior, as Crowley and Smith (2015) state whiteness “limits the ability of White teachers to engage in conversations about race” (p. 160). This barrier to engage in the conversation leads to white supremacy being maintained as teachers lack the desire and/or capability to engage in ARE (Knowles & Hawkman, 2019). In the Canadian context, researchers have seen similar behaviour for decades, as Carr and Klassen (1997) quote a teacher/research participant who states, “education should not be ‘politicized,’ and that race should not be an issue in the classroom” (p. 73). This blatant view displays the teacher’s whiteness and white privilege, as they can share this perspective because their race is not an issue in the classroom. If this research participant were racialized, their perspective on bringing race and racial issues into the classroom would likely be different. Thus, white privilege creates the space for white fragility to exist.

White fragility emerges from teachers’ resistance, hesitancy, and blatant pushback when implementing ARE. Like white privilege, white fragility can also be invisible, though I believe it is more explicit and white people allow it to surface more often than their white privilege. Examples of how white fragility shows up are: getting angry, defensive, crying, and/or calling
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authoritative figures (i.e., supervisors, unions) on racialized people when they are uncomfortable with what is being shared regarding race (Saad, 2020). Ultimately, the white individual plays the victim card when white fragility presents itself. This is referred to by Tuck and Yang (2012) as the “settler moves to innocence” wherein an individual attempts to reconcile settler guilt (p. 3). I have personally witnessed this during my time as a teacher in PDSB, as I had a colleague who claimed he “treated everyone the same” in discussions of the need to deliver ARE. When prompted by my former administrator to explain this further, he became defensive and stated he “didn’t see colour.” Much like the teacher in the example noted above in Carr and Klassen’s (1997) research, this outlined his whiteness and lack of dedication to ARE, as he would likely not have this perspective if he was racialized and experienced racism. Unfortunately, this resistance is what ARE advocates are up against, as well as what forms of resistance they encounter on the front lines of doing this work. As noted various times in this Chapter, scholars in Ontario have advocated for equitable teaching practices for many decades (Carr & Klassen, 1997; Dei, 2003; James, 2017; Lewis, 1992; Solomon et al., 2005); however, white privilege and white fragility are the forms of resistance demonstrated in education when implementing ARE. Therefore, despite the possibilities of engagement and academic success, ARE is rarely implemented, which further limits racialized students’ learning capacities and opportunities (OME, 2020).

2.4.2 Anti-Racist and Authentic Voices

Eurocentrism and Western ideologies have historically been at the forefront of many teachers’ pedagogies, and thus, these are the dominant perspectives and ideologies shared through resources used in Canadian classrooms. In my personal teaching practice, I believed ARE meant embedding multiple perspectives into a unit and/or lesson; however, Carr (2008) stated
implementing anti-racism education is not a luxury or add-on activity to be drawn on in times of trouble; it should be an organizing principle” (p. 19). Similarly, intertwining anti-racist, and authentic identities, stories, counterstories, ways of knowing (and much more), should not be an afterthought. ARE requires a paradigm and pedagogical shift towards anti-oppressive teaching.

Considering the importance of this pedagogical shift, research documenting teachers’ journeys on this path is limited. Prior literature focuses on the resources being used as a place to begin this shift in pedagogy (i.e., Muhammad, 2020; OME, 2020). This commencement with resources is in part due to the disengagement that accompanies students not being reflected in the content. For example, James and Turner (2015) discussed how Black students are continuously not reflected in the curriculum/content and “the literature concludes that curriculum that does not reflect the reality of Black youth and that does not include people who look like them is a significant contributor to academic disengagement” (p. 34). To counter this disengagement, Dei (2003) argued that teachers need to value the perspectives and knowledges that all people can bring into the school system to ensure “students find themselves in schools in such a way that their knowledges, histories and experiences are validated and accounted for” (p. 251). When this crucial piece of identity is brought into the content being used in the classroom, student engagement increases as they feel a sense of entitlement and belonging in school.

In addition to Dei’s (2003) argument for authentic voices to be intertwined in the curriculum, there is a need to incorporate pedagogies that explicitly go against the prevailing Eurocentric view. When reconsidering pedagogy, it is important for teachers to use resources such as Pashby and Sund’s (2019) tool that supports teachers in questioning their assumptions, worldviews, and power relations. As depicted in Figure 2, the tool lists questions that teachers
can ask themselves to identify and challenge patterns/pedagogies. In using tools like this, teachers can begin to think and plan from an anti-racist lens. This criticality piece is important during the planning process to challenge the culture of whiteness, change pedagogies, and integrate authentic voices.

Figure 2. Snapshot of a reflection tool for teachers (Pashby & Sund, 2019)

2.5 Teachers’ Critical Consciousness

Teachers must think critically and analyze their own positionality and teaching practice through critical reflection and rethinking pedagogies continuously throughout their careers. Teachers’ “personal attitudes and understandings of the ways in which their racial ascription and social positioning inform their actual practices and interactions with students” (Solomon et al., 2005, p. 149), which points to the need for teachers to engage in this reflexivity piece – the development of one’s critical consciousness. Critical consciousness was conceptualized by Paolo Freire (2018)
and emerges from a cycle wherein knowledge is gained about the systems and structures that create and sustain power and inequity, in hopes that critical action will take place. In education, research demonstrates that teachers must consider their positionality, and come to understand what they need to unlearn which includes examining their own racial identity, analyzing course materials, and engaging in reflection and authentic conversations about race to effectively teach students from an anti-racist perspective (Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021; McKay & Dunn, 2020). This self-analysis has been proven to create “deep expertise about eradicating inequities and to secure the constant renewal of advancing freedom and human rights worldwide” (Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021, p. 61).

Considering teacher demographics in the GTA, West-Burns (2015) states teachers “may not engage in developing critical consciousness as many of the teachers are unaware of the inequities; have not received formal or informal training on understanding them or have not personally experienced them” (p. 18). To combat this, it is important that teachers are given opportunities to examine issues of identity, power, and privilege, as well as understand power dynamics in schools and in society to ultimately centre students and student voice (West-Burns, 2015). By being provided these opportunities, teachers have the chance to become aware of and problematize their lived experiences (i.e., exposure to racism) and engage in behaviour or actions in response to their self-reflection (Mosley et al., 2021; Sleeter et al., 2004). Kendi (2019) discussed this as well, stating there is a need for “persistent self-awareness, constant self-criticism, and regular self-examination” (p. 23). Lopez (2020) also argued “those who benefit from the system through existing norms and practices must engage in a process of unlearning and learning, acknowledging the impact of neoliberalism in education in their everyday work” (p.
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1946). This process of unlearning and reflexivity has had major impacts on my positionality and outlook toward teaching, causing me to rethink lessons, my teaching philosophy, and ultimately wonder if I am the right person to be educating students. These changes in my ways of thinking and approach to teaching are noted throughout the thesis but are referenced specifically in Chapters Four and Five, as I analyze and discuss the findings. This research has provided me with an opportunity to develop my critical consciousness and I recognize the integral part it plays in the success of anti-oppressive work.

2.6 Gaps in the Literature

Based on the information presented in this Chapter, it is evident that there is a lack of insight on teachers in the GTA reflecting on their critical consciousness and the culture of whiteness in their classrooms and school. Most of the literature focuses on the resources being used in classrooms (i.e., Muhammad, 2020; OME, 2020) rather than looking at teachers’ critical consciousness and their explorations of how whiteness is being perpetuated in Ontario schools. For this reason, this study focuses on teachers as the drivers of change as their conscious and subconscious decisions impact students. Through focusing on mitigating the culture of whiteness in teaching through developing teachers’ critical consciousness, this study responds to the RQs and documents teachers’ thinking more critically about whiteness in their classrooms to target these inequities in the education system. Furthermore, this study builds upon the current research in the field and offers a localized perspective on what is occurring in GTA school boards following the OME (2020) investigation and report. This work will address this gap in the literature, as three of the four participants are teachers in PDSB, and I draw upon my own teaching experiences in this board. In drawing upon these experiences in the GTA, this research is teacher-led and provides an
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insight into the experiences of white teachers in geographic areas that have historically been investigated for systemic racism and the perpetuation of white supremacy.

2.7 Theoretical Framework

Emerging from critical legal studies that was pioneered by American law schools in the 1970s and 1980s, CRT focuses on the impact of race and racism in society while addressing the system of white supremacy with the end goal of social justice and change (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). It is based on the presumption that racial inequality and inequity are embedded in daily aspects of life, including education. Though the terminology of the tenets of CRT varies in different fields, the following tenets are adapted from Dr. Kimberley Crenshaw’s et al. (1995) work as foundational critical race theorists: 1) the permanence of racism 2) whiteness as property 3) the critique of liberalism 4) counterstories 5) the interest convergence principle (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). These tenets emerge through more than blatant acts of hatred and discrimination, as it also encompasses the “subtle and hidden processes that have the effect of discriminating, regardless of their stated intent” (Gillborn & Ladson-Billings, 2010, p. 40). Examples of this in education include but are not limited to the following: erasure of racialized voices in the curriculum, racialized and selective pedagogy of “good teaching,” as well as objective assessments (Ladson-Billings, 2004). In this Section, each tenet of CRT is outlined along with how it connects to education and how this framework is used in this study.

2.7.1 Tenets of Critical Race Theory (CRT)

Tenet 1: The Permanence of Racism
DeCuir-Gunby et al (2018) argued race is the dominant and consistent factor that influences laws, policies, relationships, and practices in education, though it is sometimes elusive. Racism is ingrained within society, whether individuals recognize it or not. Many institutions, structures, and systems privilege white people, and have done so for centuries while people of colour face oppression and discrimination. This is shown through white apathy, and all the accompanying ways in which this shows up, which includes but is not limited to: segregation, universalism, individualism, entitlement to racial comfort, racial arrogance, as well as subliminal messaging in the value of being white (DiAngelo, 2011). These ways in which the culture of whiteness presents itself encompass both blatant acts of racism (i.e., streaming racialized students into applied and/or open classes at the secondary school level when their marks indicate otherwise), and less visible and imperceivable acts of racism (i.e., subliminal messaging in the value of being white depicted through European/white individuals being in many photos in a history textbook). Regardless of how racism emerges, both examples outlined display the centrality of racism within society.

In education, Gillborn and Ladson-Billings (2010) argued that the centrality of racism operates through “the routine, mundane activities and assumptions that are unquestioned by most practitioners and policymakers” (p. 40). Examples of this are curriculum design, student assessments, as well as teacher training that replicates the cultural norms about race and racial inequality (Ladson-Billings, 2004). Due to the power and influence that the culture of whiteness has on education, Love (2019) argued that racism is ingrained and maintained when it is not interrogated. For this reason, it cannot be ignored as it is inherent to the education system. It should also be noted that the centrality of racism is demonstrated through Black school leaders’
journeys to leadership positions. Lopez (2020) outlined the struggles that Black school leaders in the GTA face as she states, “school leaders felt anti-Black racism was a constant feature of their leadership journey, experienced mainly through racial microaggressions” (p. 1942). The racial microaggressions occur in the form of people underestimating Black school leaders’ knowledge, skills, and competencies (Lopez, 2020). Microaggressions are often invisible and are part of the socialization of racism and the culture of whiteness in Canada (as discussed earlier in this Chapter). The blatant consequences of racism within Ontario schools emerges through high suspension rates of Black students, and low representation of Latin American students in regional choice learning programs, to name some examples (OME, 2020). These are ways in which the white racial frame operates today, as the permanence of racism is demonstrated within education, as well as within society.

**Tenet 2: Whiteness as Property**

Crenshaw et al (1995) discussed the roots of racial domination in property rights and economic insubordination. It is through these deep roots that people of colour were historically oppressed and continue to be oppressed by the land-owning systems that were created during and after colonization. White supremacy has maintained this domination on property and allows white people to benefit in various ways (i.e., the right to possess, use and enjoy property, as well as the right to transfer, and the right of exclusion; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). In relation to this study, scholars argued that school curriculum is property of the dominant culture in education (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Specifically, Ladson-Billings (1998) discussed the curriculum as property in reference to all students having equal access to opportunities at school. The curriculum, as well as hiring practices, and PD
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historically emerged from a white lens/perspective/ideology. In upholding these aspects of society, the white Eurocentric frame is perpetuated, and racialized groups are disadvantaged.

When analyzing the Ontario curriculum, PD, and hiring practices, it is evident that these systems were built on Indigenous land, but the property now belongs to white individuals. In Ontario, there are provincially mandated curricula for each subject from kindergarten to grade 12. Within each curriculum document, there are subject-specific expectations to be met in each grade, along with examples for teachers to use when teaching these expectations. Teachers can use their professional judgement to decide which resources they will use to help the teaching of these expectations. This indicates the curricula itself is regarded as “property,” which teachers do not have the ability to change, like laws surrounding land. Yosso (2002) argued for a critical race curricula to be implemented, which would acknowledge intersectionality and other forms of oppression that maintain inequality, challenge dominant assumptions and knowledge systems, direct curriculum towards social justice, include counterstories, and pinpoint the link between educational and societal inequality. Without this critical race curricula, teachers’ autonomy is limited within the Eurocentric curricula that was decided upon at the provincial level, alluding to the idea that the Ontario curriculum is the property of those who designed it. Along with this, PD is often mandated and/or designed and written by those who are responsible for the curriculum. Therefore, the PD that is being implemented in schools for teachers is further pushing white dominance and superiority through the Eurocentric values and views instilled within PD. Additionally, hiring practices, as outlined in Section 2.2.1, were created by white leaders, and as the calls to action (Table 1) demonstrates, school boards in Ontario are being asked to analyze these areas that regard white knowledge and experience as property to secure a job (James &
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Turner, 2017; Social Planning Council of Peel, 2015; Turner Consulting Group, 2015). These systems and/or structures within education are regarded as white property that white individuals continue to uphold.

Tenet 3: The Critique of Liberalism

CRT emphasizes a critique of liberalism, which embraces the idea of colourblindness, meritocracy, the neutrality of the law and slow societal change. Gillborn and Ladson-Billings (2010) argued that though these ideologies may seem to be open and equitable, the playing field is not equal, meaning they only further enlarge the racial inequality gap, and hinder the process of interrupting inequity. These ideologies are ever-present in education wherein racialized students may attend schools that receive less funding, have less-qualified teachers, and do not have the same access to educational resources at home (Gillborn & Ladson-Billings, 2010).

Colourblindness has also been referenced in connection to white apathy. DeCuir and Dixson (2004) state “arguing that society should be colourblind ignores the fact that inequity, inopportunity, and oppression are historical artifacts that will not easily be remedied by ignoring race in the contemporary society” (p. 29). Therefore, regardless of the merit a student possesses or how colourblind teachers are, students may find themselves without the same opportunities, access to curriculum/learning experiences, and/or resources. Thus, the idea that someone can succeed on merit alone cannot be justified.

Furthermore, many teachers in Ontario have a false sense of belief regarding slow societal change and the neutrality of the law. Under a liberalist assumption, if a school board funds schools that currently do not have the same funding as others, that would mark the beginning of an incremental change to progress towards equity. The problem with this is “the processes,
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structures, and ideologies that justify inequit[ies] are not addressed and dismantled. Remedies based on equality assume that citizens have the same opportunities and experiences” (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004, p. 29). Taking this approach is not only an ahistorical perspective wherein the school board believes that funding the school will solve the issues, but it is also a quick-fix solution that seeks equality rather than equity. The slow societal change will continue to be slow in this instance, if there is a change at all, because the root causes of the inequities are not being addressed. Lastly, in reference to the neutrality of the law, liberal ideologies would argue that the education system is race neutral. This is not the case, as this Section has demonstrated. There are various systems and structures that were built by white European men, and they are being upheld by ensuring the majority of teachers are still white individuals who maintain this dominance. Thus, the ideologies mentioned prevail as justifications for why racism still exists in schools, as well as the myth of how a student can break out of this cycle.

Tenet 4: Counterstories

Counterstorytelling emerges from the need to disrupt the dominant white narrative in many aspects of society. Counterstories are told by racialized individuals and often present “a different reading of the world, one that questions taken-for-granted assumptions and destabilizes the framework that currently sustains, and masks, racial injustice” (Gillborn & Ladson-Billings, 2010, p. 343). Typically, these experiences, stories, histories, and/or ways of knowing are excluded from the dominant, mainstream curriculum and resources used. Critical race theorists, DeCuir and Dixson (2004), highlight the importance and benefit of counterstories when stating they “allow for the challenging of privileged discourses, the discourses of the majority, therefore,
serving as a means for giving voice to marginalized groups” (p. 27). By permitting this discourse of addressing the culture of whiteness, the centrality of racism is being dismantled.

In education, the white narrative can be dismantled and interrogated through teachers fostering their critical consciousness and implementing ARE. In an ideal world, the reflection and development of their critical consciousness would allow them to see the harm in sticking to Eurocentric resources and push them to see through an anti-racist lens, which should include engaging with authentic voices, if they do not have a racial identity wherein they have lived experiences in a racialized community and can offer authentic counterstories. For example, the dominant narrative in the Grade 8 history curriculum revolves around colonialism, European settlement, white power, and expansion. Rather than teaching this ahistorical perspective of Canadian history that neglects peoples’ lived experiences prior to coming to Canada, an anti-racist approach to history could be taken wherein different cultures, worldviews, knowledge systems and experiences are explored. In doing this, students would be presented with information that would foster questioning the assumptions made, which disrupts the framework that currently silences racial injustice (Gillborn & Ladson-Billings, 2010). In addition to providing students with different, much-needed perspectives, counterstories validate and legitimize peoples of colours’ livelihoods, accomplishments, hardships, and above all, recognizes that their stories need to be heard. This destabilizes the white narrative, while offering different perspectives on society and the world we live in. This tenet in specific directly relates to the power that every teacher has in their classroom, as they can choose how to include/exclude authentic counterstories in their teaching, which is problematic.

**Tenet 5: The Interest Convergence Principle**
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The interest convergence principle is the view that “advances in race equality come about only when white elites see the changes as in their own interests” (Gillborn & Ladson-Billings, 2010, p. 41). This means that only when white people can benefit from the change, will they support the change. This occurs often in education when teachers play into tokenism and celebrate Black History Month, for example, but never speak about Black people, nor their accomplishments, during other months of the year. In this instance, the teacher may be doing it to look good in front of parents, administration, and/or students. It is unlikely that the teacher in this example is teaching through an anti-racist lens, as they would have many counterstories and perspectives embedded throughout the year if they were. It would not be an add-on to their curriculum, but part of their teaching philosophy. This concept of the interest convergence principle is evident within the PDSB report as students reported Black History Month was more for white teachers to feel good about themselves than for Black students to feel empowered (OME, 2020). This poses the larger question of who is driving this anti-racist work and why?

Within the reports summarized in Table 1, it is evident that many racialized groups and/or individuals have called for change in Ontario schools for decades. During the participant interviews, all four participants noted their school boards (PDSB and YRDSB) are engaging with anti-racist work on a larger, and more consistent basis. Participants noted this increase is evident in the focus of PD sessions over the past two years, though PDSB (2021b) exemplifies they are making changes in human resources, community connections, heritage months, and more. It appears the school boards are responding to the calls to action; however, are white leaders at the board level behind this? Are school boards instilling these practices to check off a box, when, in reality, they are not doing the work to address the root causes of the issues? This is an important
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aspect of CRT to consider when thinking about the long-term sustainability of these directives and work.

2.7.2 Critical Race Theory and This Study

As discussed, CRT is the theoretical framework for this study. In educational settings, the permanence of racism operates through the erasure of racialized voices in the curriculum, objective assessments, as well as dismissing microaggressions and not questioning the routine activities and assumptions in schools (Gillborn & Ladson-Billings, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2004). Synonymous with the tenet of viewing whiteness as property by critical race theorists, the permanence of racism maintains a white curriculum and does not allow Black students equal access to opportunities (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). For this reason, the critical discussion of resources and pedagogies being utilized by white teachers is necessary to explore if/how counter narratives are being shared in classrooms to disrupt the culture of whiteness. As mentioned, many scholars advocate for the interruption of the culture of whiteness in Ontario (Carr & Klassen, 1997; Dei, 2003; Lewis, 1992; Solomon et al., 2005) without success (OME, 2020). Through deepening teachers’ critical consciousness and a need to better understand counterstories, CRT serves as the theoretical framework to support the research and the deconstruction of the culture of whiteness (Crenshaw et al., 1995). Committing to social justice and eliminating racism are central to CRT and ARE.

This research study is positioned to be viewed through a critical race lens, recognizing that race is ingrained in all aspects of life, and it dictates peoples’ lived experiences, stories, and daily interactions with others. Each RQ is linked to multiple tenets of CRT (see Table 3). In
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making this link explicit, it demonstrates how the data will be coded and analyzed as the data was inductively analyzed, and the tenets of CRT were reflected upon often for areas of overlap during the creation of categories for coding. This is important to acknowledge and draw the connection as CRT is foundational to this study.

**Table 3. Research questions and tenets of CRT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Tenets of CRT</th>
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| 1. A) How is the culture of whiteness perpetuated by white intermediate teachers in the Greater Toronto Area?  
B) How does the culture of whiteness impact the pedagogies and resources teachers use in intermediate classes in Ontario? | - Permanence of racism  
- Whiteness as property  
- Critique of liberalism  
- Counterstories |
| 2. What tools are white teachers using to mitigate the perpetuation of the culture of whiteness and develop their critical consciousness? | - Permanence of racism  
- Whiteness as property  
- Counterstories  
- Interest convergence |
| 3. What changes need to be implemented to mitigate the perpetuation of the culture of whiteness in teaching (i.e., structural, institutional, and/or systemic)? | - Critique of liberalism  
- Counterstories  
- Interest convergence |
A single case study approach is used in this qualitative research (Stake, 1995). In this Chapter, I outline the critical research paradigm, including my epistemology and ontology before elaborating on qualitative research, case study research, and why I chose this as the methodology. From there, I describe the case analyzed and how recruitment unfolded to gather the four teachers who participated in this study. The instruments used to collect data (e.g., interviews and journals) and inductive analysis are described, as well as the ethical considerations and limitations of this work at the end of the Chapter.

3.1 Research Paradigm

Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) outlined the critical paradigm as one that “seeks to address the political, social and economic issues, which lead to social oppression, conflict, struggle, and power structures at whatever levels these might occur” (p. 35). This paradigm is the basis of this research wherein I sought to address the social issue of racial inequity that leads to oppression in education. Based within social positioning, the concern of this paradigm includes the power relationships in social structures, as well as recognizing the consequences of privileging versions of reality (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). It examines conditions and individuals in a situation. When applying the paradigm to this research study, the conditions and individuals being examined are teachers perpetuating the culture of whiteness through systems, structures, and their daily practices. This critical paradigm reflects my ontology and epistemology, which is outlined below.
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The social ontology of race is based on the premise that race is a social construct which is upheld by practices, policies, and daily interactions amongst human beings. James (2012) argued race “is a social fact upheld by widespread intersubjective agreements that individuals acting alone cannot unilaterally dismiss” (p. 120). Along with this, scholars who hold a social ontological viewpoint, such as race (James, 2012), discussed the potential of individuals acting collectively to enact change and negate social constructs. This is where my ontological beliefs lay, emerging out of social constructivism and historical realism as it relates to oppression. With this, I believe reality is shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender values that are solidified over time (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). I assert that race is a social construct and the way in which we were nurtured (including our environment, interactions with human beings, the universe, etc.) dictate the cultural sets of norms and worldviews that we hold. This is further reinforced through my epistemological views.

Reflecting upon the critical research paradigm and ontology noted, my epistemological beliefs are transactional/subjectivist, wherein the researcher and participants are interactively linked to the topic being researched and who we are is central to how we understand our surroundings (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In noting this, my values as a white individual are inherent to the research process and I cannot separate them from what I know. This comes with the socialization of racism in which I was born into as a child, as Feagin (2013) and DiAngelo (2018) discussed. Along with these beliefs, I also believe in the epistemology of ignorance, which recognizes ignorance as 1) the lack of knowledge/true belief, 2) actively upholding false outlooks and 3) substantive epistemic practice (El Kassar, 2018). Specifically in reference to this epistemology, I believe many white and non-white people in Canadian society do not make
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themselves aware of the knowledge nor information regarding racism and the history of racism in the regions in which they live in. They are afforded this ability because racism has not impacted them negatively, so they uphold this practice/belief by intentionally not seeking out knowledge. When an individual is presented, or seeks out, other norms and worldviews, they deepen their knowledge and experience with race and racial identities. Furthermore, I believe there are individuals who actively work against mitigating racism and continue to uphold racist ideologies. These beliefs align with the theoretical framework being used for this study (CRT), specifically the permanence of racism (discussed in Section 2.7). Epistemologists of ignorance argued ignorance is “a negative condition with detrimental effects on oppressed subjects in unjust societies” (El Kassar, 2018, p. 302), which holds true when discussing the centrality of racism. This ignorance being referred to is also known as white ignorance, and it is upheld by the white racial frame, though it can be perpetuated by white and non-white individuals (Martinez, 2020), as my transactional beliefs argue one cannot separate oneself from what one knows. All aspects of this research paradigm align with the chosen research methodology, as it underpins data collection, as well as the discussion and findings of this research.

3.2 Qualitative Research

Aligning with a critical research paradigm, wherein the researcher deliberately promotes the increase of social justice and addresses issues of power and oppression, qualitative research is classified as in-depth research about human behaviour through gathering information from interviews and/or observations prior to organizing and interpreting the data (Lichtman, 2012). It is interpretive, experimental, situational and personalistic. A common objective of qualitative research is “to better understand human behaviour and experience…to grasp the processes by
which people construct meaning and to describe what those meanings are” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1997, p. 38). As Stake (2010) states, “a good qualitative research project will deal with a few of the complexities of human experience” (p. 38). In education, qualitative research is chosen as the methodology to understand these complexities in schools and the education system at large. Considering this, qualitative research was chosen for this study, as race and the impacts of the culture of whiteness on the education system are the complexities being studied. This will be accomplished by engaging teachers with the concept of whiteness and allowing them to reflect on how it is perpetuated. In specific, a qualitative single case study methodology was chosen to represent and understand a unique case.

3.2.1 Case Study Methodology

Creswell and Poth (2018) define case study research as “a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in depth-data collection involving multiple sources of information” (p. 96). Case study research designs have been used to refine theory, explore areas that require further research, and challenge participants to ask questions in various educational contexts worldwide (Bao, 2020; Hamilton & Corbitt-Whittier, 2012; Liaw, 2008; Smith-Maddox & Solórzano, 2002). To reap these benefits, in-depth information must be gathered to make up a case that can provide descriptions and details to maximize understanding and give deeper insight on a phenomenon (Stake, 1995; Stake, 2013). Research outlined that a case can be bound by time, place, a culture-sharing group, an organization, a decision process, or a community (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2014). The identification of a specific single case within defined parameters is a distinct feature of case study research (Creswell & Poth, 2018).
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Though a case study was not the intended methodology to be used at the onset of this research (see Section 3.2 for further details regarding this), the criterion to be eligible to participate in this data was decided upon before recruitment began. This criterion included: a) teaching in the GTA and b) teaching Grade 7 and/or Grade 8. Therefore, in specifying this criterion, the single case is prescribed as intermediate teachers in the GTA. This was reinforced through the recruitment methods employed as participants had to meet this criterion to be selected. Upon completion of data collection, the single case can be further specified as white Grade 7 and/or Grade 8 teachers in the GTA.

Additionally, instrumental case study research focuses on going beyond the case and exploring a particular phenomenon or condition (Stake, 1995; Stake, 2013). The phenomenon being explored in this case study is the culture of whiteness in teaching. The single case of white intermediate teachers in the GTA act as a tool to gather information on how white supremacy permeates education, while highlighting areas where participants believed it was being interrupted. The means to gather this information is important as the researcher must seek methods to obtain in-depth data. For this reason, semi-structured interviews were conducted, and journal entries were gathered. This data set elicited participants’ thoughts, ideas, perspectives, opinions, and/or descriptions of specific experiences (deMarrais, 2004). In using semi-structured interviews with interview questions, as well as follow-up questions, each interviewee’s experiences were shared. Through these interviews, attention was paid to the case of being a white intermediate teacher in the GTA. Stake (2013) argued the emphasis on the case and phenomenon is more important to case study research than gaining information about the participant specifically, which is what I sought to do.

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As outlined, case study research designs allow in-depth information to be collected to understand a phenomenon (Stake, 2013). This is appropriate to use in this study as the RQs aim to gather information from a case (white Grade 7 and/or Grade 8 teachers in the GTA) on a phenomenon (the culture of whiteness in teaching). Aligning with the objective of case study research designs, these interviews revolved around the real-life contextual problem of racial inequity in schools and sought to answer “how” questions. By conducting research with multiple participants under a single case, in-depth data that answered the RQs was provided and allowed for a deeply thematic analysis to draw significant findings in the case (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This analysis begins with coding each interview prior to categorizing them thematically to understand the phenomenon (Stake, 2013), which is what occurred during data analysis.

In recognizing the phenomenon of the culture of whiteness in education, the belief of critical race theorists must be noted, as these beliefs are the foundation of this research study. Aligning with the tenets of CRT, a permanence of racism exists in society, which is the root of the phenomenon being researched. There exists the belief that the culture of whiteness can be addressed within education and mitigated, though I offer my perspective on this in Chapter 5. This belief that whiteness can be mitigated further reinforces the methodology chosen, as case study research focuses on the phenomenon rather than highlighting individual experiences. By focusing on this, the aim is to analyze how the culture of whiteness is perpetuated and discuss ways in which teachers can develop their critical consciousness to mitigate negative impacts on students. This aim is also shared by critical race theorists, as Crenshaw et al (1995) argued a common interest is “not merely to understand the vexed bond between law and racial power, but to change it” (p. xiii). This idea is further supported by Gillborn and Ladson-Billings (2010).
when they state “anti-racist activism may never entirely remove racism, but, in the absence of resistance, it is certain that racist inequity would worsen” (p. 44). Therefore, the focus on the phenomenon of the culture of whiteness in teaching in this research study is followed by suggestions for how to move forward in this work and take action.

3.3 Research Context and Participants

The technique of criterion sampling was used to recruit participants via professional networks. This included social media (i.e., Twitter and Facebook), and expert/gatekeeper recommendations. Criterion sampling involves selecting cases that meet predetermined criterion of importance, which allows for information-rich data collection (Patton, 2001, p. 238). By using this sampling technique in combination with my professional networks, knowledge was produced on how points of views are constructed, and the findings outline the participants’ experiences, opinions, and concerns from similar backgrounds (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999). This notion of having participants come to the research study from similar backgrounds was important as they may share similar teaching experiences, as well as experience similar initiatives (i.e., school board directives or initiatives) that would allow me to discuss the single case study in greater detail. Thus, the following criteria was mandatory to participate in the research: a) participants teach in the GTA and b) participants teach Grade 7 and/or Grade 8.

The reasons for choosing this criterion are rooted in the prior research in this geographic region, as well as creating a shared experience between participants. Firstly, Ontario was home to 52.4% of the total Black population in Canada in 2016 (Statistics Canada, 2019). Within the province of Ontario, the “905-region” (York Region and Peel Region) are areas wherein the Black population is largely growing (James & Turner, 2017, p. 16). In comparison to the rest of
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the population of Ontario, those who identify as having origins from the Caribbean, Latin America, Central America, South America, as well as Africa were higher in the Peel Region (Statistics Canada, 2017). PDSB (2020a) census data reflects this, outlining 50.4% of students identify as South Asian, 9.2% of students identify as Black, 0.8% of students identify as Latin American, and 0.2% of students identify as First Nations, Metis, and/or Inuit descent. Due to these diverse demographics, the impacts of the culture of whiteness in teaching are exacerbated in these geographic regions, and recent literature calls for changes to be made (i.e., James & Turner, 2017; OME, 2020; Social Planning Council of Peel, 2015; Turner Consulting Group, 2015). The literature also provides an insight to the historical context of racial inequity in Toronto and the GTA, as well as how this inequity continues to permeate through school walls. Through collecting data from these specific geographic regions, it demonstrates how impactful the phenomenon of the culture of whiteness is, as it points to this issue occurring in more school boards across the GTA. Furthermore, in limiting the research to intermediate grades (Grade 7 and 8 specifically), there is an opportunity wherein participants may share similar experiences, as they teach the same curriculum expectations to adolescent students, possibly using similar resources and/or instructional strategies. Additionally, I can actively engage in the conversation as a former intermediate teacher in the PDSB. Therefore, in conducting this research in the GTA with intermediate teachers as participants, it creates shared experiences, and allows the study to be rooted in prior literature published on these geographic regions.

Recruitment occurred from November 1, 2021, to December 1, 2021, via social media (e.g., my personal Twitter and teacher Facebook groups) wherein the criteria necessary to be eligible to participate in the study was outlined in a poster (see Appendix B). During this month
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of recruitment, I posted six times on Twitter, often tagging school boards and unions in the GTA. In total for all six Tweets, the post was retweeted thirty-two times, with most of the interaction occurring after a Tweet on November 16, 2021. I also posted three times on Facebook in the following Facebook groups: Ontario Anti-Racist Educators, Ontario Teachers Grade 7, Anti-Racism & Representation for French Teachers.

On November 1, 2021, I contacted two experts/gatekeepers in this field (two administrators in elementary schools in PDSB). Following this, I also reached out to a superintendent in PDSB on November 15, 2021. Roulston and Martinez (2015) argued experts/gatekeepers (also known as expert recommendations) can assist the researcher gain access to specific populations and settings. Of the three experts/gatekeepers contacted, one gatekeeper agreed to participate, and shared the principal investigator’s email with their professional network of teachers after completing a confidentiality agreement.

From both recruitment methods, seven prospective participants contacted me via email, and I sent all prospective participants the same email outlining the purpose of the study, the Letter of Information and Consent, as well as a link to the web-based demographic survey on Qualtrics (see Appendix C). Six of these prospective participants contacted me from November 1, 2021, to November 17, 2021; however, only four completed the Qualtrics survey. Following this, a period of stagnation occurred where there was little interaction with my posts on both Twitter and Facebook. I followed up with prospective participants who contacted me but did not complete the survey. I did not receive any responses from them, but I was determined to have at least five research participants. Considering the stagnation on Twitter and the other Facebook groups, I posted in a different Facebook group (Ontario Teachers Grade 7) on December 1, 2021.
A participant contacted me via email that day and completed the Qualtrics survey. As I decided prior to beginning the study, the first five teachers who met the criteria would be my research participants, and all five of the teachers who completed the survey met the criteria (see Table 4 for specific demographic data that was collected from each participant through the Qualtrics survey to ensure they met the criteria). Participants were not disqualified based on their race, length of service, gender, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, socio-economic status, nor ethnicity. Nor were participants compensated for their participation. Therefore, on December 1, 2021, I determined my research participants.
Table 4. Participant demographics²

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Amanda</th>
<th>Hillary</th>
<th>Oliver</th>
<th>Liliane</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pronouns</strong></td>
<td>She/Her</td>
<td>She/Her</td>
<td>He/Him</td>
<td>She/Her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race</strong></td>
<td>Caucasian and Hispanic</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>White European</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nationality</strong></td>
<td>Canadian</td>
<td>Canadian</td>
<td>Canadian</td>
<td>Canadian (French, France, as well)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Board</strong></td>
<td>PDSB</td>
<td>PDSB</td>
<td>YRDSB</td>
<td>PDSB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grades Taught</strong></td>
<td>K-8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7, 8</td>
<td>6, 7, 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subjects Taught</strong></td>
<td>French as a</td>
<td>Dance, Drama,</td>
<td>Dance, Drama,</td>
<td>Dance, Drama,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Second Language,</td>
<td>Language Arts,</td>
<td>Health and</td>
<td>Physical Education,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Health and Physical Education,</td>
<td>Math, Social Studies,</td>
<td>Physical Education,</td>
<td>Language Arts,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Language Arts,</td>
<td>Visual Arts</td>
<td>Language Arts,</td>
<td>Math, Music,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social Studies,</td>
<td></td>
<td>Social Studies,</td>
<td>Science, Social Studies,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Visual Arts</td>
<td></td>
<td>Special Education,</td>
<td>Visual Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years of Experience</strong></td>
<td>4-8 years</td>
<td>More than 15 years</td>
<td>More than 15 years</td>
<td>4-8 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Demographics are written above in the language used by participants in their responses

This initial methodology chosen for this research study was collaborative action research; however, the methodology changed during recruitment and the scheduling of focus groups, which is elaborated upon in this paragraph. Following participant selection, the participants were contacted to complete a Doodle poll asking for dates and times when they would be available for two focus groups meetings. After reviewing everyone’s responses, I emailed the participants on

² This chart outlines the demographics of four participants only. The fifth participant withdrew from the study, and their data was destroyed. The details surrounding this are further elaborated upon in the subsequent paragraph.
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December 10, 2021, with the dates for the virtual focus group meetings (January 13, 2022, and
February 10, 2022). On January 6, 2022, and January 11, 2022, two of the five participants emailed me stating they could not make the focus group meetings. One of these participants withdrew from the study completely due to health reasons, and their data has since been destroyed. For the other participant that could not make the focus group, I scheduled a one-on-one interview for the end of January 2022. When scheduling the focus groups, teachers were working remotely due to an increase in Covid-19 cases in Ontario; however, in early January, it was announced that they would be pivoting back to in-person learning on January 17, 2022.

Considering this added stress on teachers and the research participants, as well as holding a focus group with only three participants, Dr. Pillay and I discussed changing my methodology. It was at this time that I changed my methodology from collaborative action research to a single case study research design. I felt the competing demands of teaching during a pandemic, as well as asking them to meet twice as a focus group and journal in between sessions was a lot to ask. Thus, individual interviews were scheduled with each participant and took place from January 13, 2022, to January 26, 2022. With this pivot in methodology, I made the decision that participants had the option to complete journal entries and one of the four participants submitted them. Prior to the commencement of any interviews, verbal consent was gained from each participant, which included the use of audio and video recording over an online videoconferencing platform.

This research is done within a teaching community I am a part of. Considering this and the methods of recruitment used, it was a possibility that I may have former working relationships with participants. When teachers contacted me and subsequently completed the Qualtrics survey, it was evident to me that two of the five participants were teachers with whom I
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had prior working relationships with (see Section 3.6 for the ethical relationality and considerations taken in this research). These relationships allowed the participants to feel comfortable in discussing culturally sensitive questions as the rapport was already established. DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006) argued having this rapport is essential when conducting in-depth interviews as trust likely exists and the interviewee is more comfortable sharing their personal experiences. Furthermore, Garton and Copland (2010) demonstrate existing relationships with participants allows the interview to generate data that may not have been accessed if these relationships were non-existent. It should be noted that ethics were still considered when doing research in community, as these participants were not prioritized to be selected, nor were the interview questions different for them. The same procedures were followed for all participants, regardless of existing relationships. Doing research in a community I am part of has allowed me to share my personal experiences and deepened relationships with all participants, ultimately providing rich information that is shared in this work.

3.4 Data Collection

The data in this study was collected primarily from interviews that elicited the discussion of the culture of whiteness in teaching. Semi-structured interviews were relied upon as the primary instrument for data collection, as they allow a set of open-ended questions to be asked with the possibility of follow-up questions to better understand the experience or data being shared (Garton & Copland, 2010). On January 6, 2022, I emailed the participants a document outlining the questions that were meant to be asked in the focus groups. This enabled participants to think about their experiences before the meeting/interview, if they chose to do so. The same questions/themes were discussed in the semi-structured interviews, which took place on a
videoconference platform (e.g., Zoom), with audio and video recording. The duration of the videoconference varied between each participant lasting between 30-90 minutes. At the onset of each semi-structured interview, I shared a little about myself and my teaching journey and asked the participant to do the same. This part of the interview was important to quickly establish a rapport with participants I did not previously know, as DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006) argue. For participants I did know, the information being shared was not new to me, but I kept the interview procedure the same for all participants. This allowed me to have the information on record and prevented me from relying on information I knew from my working relationship with the participant. From there, interview questions were asked and as the conversation flowed, I asked follow-up questions to better understand the participant’s experience(s). deMarrais (2004) argued this probing method is useful to ensure there is shared meaning of experiences and concepts between the researcher and participant.

Within these conversations, participants were encouraged to reflect on specific resources, experiences, and pedagogies they used in the classroom. This is important as Stringer (2004) states “information related to educational issues investigated in schools can be found in documents and records, and useful insight may be gained by perusing books, materials, and equipment used for teaching, learning, or administration” (p. 83). Examples of this include curriculum, pedagogy, resources used by participants, resources used by colleagues, systems of oppression, leadership, as well as hiring practices, to name a few. I also asked how whiteness is perpetuated in intermediate classes, and participants shared examples of how whiteness has been interrupted in their teaching and/or school environments. Thus, in encouraging and prompting participants to share this information, the interviews elicited data that allowed me to analyze their
experiences and conclude that there is a misunderstanding of counterstories, including my own initial perspective (this is elaborated on in Chapter 5). Each interview concluded with discussions of what changes can be made to mitigate the racial inequities in education. Therefore, through using conversation as the primary method of data collection in conjunction with discussing specific resources used, the participants engaged in accountable talk related to whiteness in teaching.

In addition to the interviews, journal entries were the second instrument used for data collection. Journal entries were originally part of the collaborative research design but when the methodology changed, journal entries were made optional, as noted in Section 3.3. Journaling allows participants to sit with their experiences and thoughts, while they process them in private settings. Milner (2003) argued that this allows participants to be reflective and critical of their race and dive deeper into their critical consciousness. Research advocates this racial reflective journaling must be done on an ongoing, consistent basis to uncover the analytical and underlying beliefs (Gay & Kirkland, 2003). As the interviews concluded, participants were reminded that they have access to a secure OneDrive folder for their optional journal entries. Within the folder, each participant had a document created with the following prompt on it:

The journal entry (or entries) can be resonating thoughts from the interview, or thoughts and/or feelings that arise with regards to anti-racism and/or whiteness in schools. This can be done any way you see fit (i.e., recordings, drawings, point form notes, full sentences, images, etc.).
As noted, the journal entries were not mandatory and only one participant submitted three journal entries. Therefore, the journal entries were not heavily relied upon as an instrument of data collection in comparison to the primary instrument, interviews.

3.5 Data Analysis

This study followed a thematic analysis for qualitative methods. The data was codified with the goal of analyzing raw data for findings emerging from the frequent dominant, or significant themes present (Thomas, 2006). This method of analysis includes data cleaning, a close reading of the text, the creation of categories, overlapping coding and uncoded text, as well as the continuing revision and refinement of the categories (Thomas, 2006). Stake (2013) offers a worksheet to organize the data, which was used as a template to create a chart with emergent themes in this work. Within the themes noted, the tenets of CRT were reviewed, and the final themes shared in Chapter 5 are linked to the tenets of CRT.

The analysis of the data (interviews and journal entries) began in early February, upon the completion of interviews, and continued until mid-March 2022. While I transcribed the four interviews, I noted large recurring themes (i.e., resistance/struggles with implementation, systems/structures, diversifying resources, authentic voices, current support, and next steps). Upon completing the transcriptions, the interviews were printed and bound into four books, which is where I began to code the data. During the first coding of the data, I read the interviews closely and wrote down themes from the interviews in-line with the text. Many of these themes were consistent with the themes that were noted during transcription. Simultaneously, I created a chart on MS Word (similar to Stake, 2013), and as themes emerged, I sorted them under three categories: reasons to do the work, doing the work, and areas to change/next steps, with some
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themes occurring in multiple categories. The second coding connected the tenets of CRT to the data, as I read the interviews again and wrote numbers 1-5 (aligning with the tenets of CRT) in the margins of the transcribed interviews. It was at this time that I changed the categories on my MS Word chart from reasons to do the work, doing the work, and areas to change/next steps to the five tenets of CRT. In doing this, I was able to categorize each theme under a tenet of CRT in the chart. At this time, I reviewed the literature on CRT and the tenets I was focusing on, and I re-read the interviews and coded the data again using the five tenets of CRT. This is when some themes were moved into other tenets based on my deeper knowledge of the tenets of CRT. For example, originally when I was reading the transcribed interviews and a participant spoke about teacher unions, I categorized this as the interest convergence principle, as unions had never prioritized equity work in my experience. After re-reading the literature and reflecting on what the participants shared, I realized this structure in education is upholding the culture of whiteness, and it was moved to whiteness as property. In the fourth read through of the interviews, I coded the data once again with numbers 1-5 of the tenets, confirming the established connections. From there, I went through the list of themes (which were already organized by tenets of CRT) in the MS word chart and inserted the respective participant’s quotes under each theme. Before writing Chapter 4, I went through the MS Word chart and refined the major themes once again, ensuring each theme was classified under my most recent understandings of the tenets. Through the coding of data multiple times, themes were refined, and the five major themes noted in Chapter 4 were finalized.
3.6 Ethical Relationality and Considerations

Adapted from Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991), the ethical relationality used for this study revolves around the four R’s: respect, relevance, reciprocity, and responsibility. When considered, these aspects provide a holistic and appreciative view of the research, participants, and larger community. Though they are closely linked and intertwined, they are outlined individually in this Section.

Respect is vital to this study and flowed from the participants to the researcher and vice versa. It is important to acknowledge that no one in this study held all the knowledge or was the expert on the topic. In recognizing this, mutual respect was fostered as “one’s very existence depends on the web of interconnectedness between the self and the community and between the community and nature” (Bell, 2013, p. 98). To further this notion of there being no expert who holds the knowledge, reciprocity was also demonstrated by the researcher, as I engaged in the conversations and shared experiences with the participants. Furthermore, responsibility was demonstrated through member checking (see below for more details) to ensure participants were represented accurately. By ensuring the participants and researcher fostered respect, reciprocity, and responsibility into this study, it sets the stage for the ethical relationality concerning relevance and responsibility to the community in which this study seeks to serve.

When linking this study to the larger issue of the culture of whiteness and oppression in society, the students and community in which it seeks to serve and improve needs to be included in the ethical relationality. For this reason, having respect for other ways of knowing, living, and being in the universe needs recognition. If respect is shown in this manner, the resources and pedagogies used by teachers will be more reflective of students and will be relevant to their lives.
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As Dei (2003) discussed, teachers need to acknowledge the extent of our diversity and intentionally plan to respond to the challenge and possibilities of difference. This has been proven to increase engagement in students and links the concept of respect to relevance in this study, because when diversity is celebrated and embraced, the relevance increases for those involved.

Throughout this study, it is important to recognize the ethical procedures required for all participants to be protected and valued. There are three main ethical issues that can arise in qualitative research: respect for persons, concern for welfare, and justice (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To ensure these issues do not arise, this study adhered to the Tri-Council policy, and was approved by the Educational Research Ethics Board (EREB) and the General Ethics Research Board (GREB) at Queen’s University prior to recruitment. After clearance was given from these groups, recruitment began and the qualified participants were sent a letter of information (LOI) via email that outlines their voluntary participation in the study, along with the aim of the study, the absence of risks involved, as well as procedures, and contact information. Within the LOI, it also states there is no obligation to participate in the study. This was reviewed verbally with each participant prior to the commencement of the interviews, where the participants verbally consented to participating in the study.

In addition, ethical considerations were taken to ensure confidentiality, anonymity, and accurate representation of participants during data collection, as well as after the research. During the verbal consent process, the researcher asked participants to pick a pseudonym that would be used in lieu of their name to de-identify the data. Additionally, the names of participants’ schools were replaced with pseudonyms. At the beginning of each interview, I reminded participants they
had the option of not responding to any questions. These pieces ensured participants’ confidentiality and anonymity were respected and protected. To further this, the researcher ensured participants are accurately represented in the study through member checking. Sagor (2010) states “member checking is an informal process used at the close of data collection to help validate findings” (p.79). In addition, Wilson (2008) argued, the analysis and representation must not only be true to the voices of participants and researchers, but also must reflect their understandings. Therefore, member checking ensures the participants, and their thoughts/experiences were accurately and appropriately represented in the findings. This is widely used in inductive analysis (Thomas, 2006) and occurred during the months of March and April 2022. Participants were sent the transcribed interviews digitally and were given time to review the transcriptions. One participant responded to this email and confirmed that she was accurately represented in the interviews.
Chapter 4

Findings

The findings noted in this Section are emergent themes from the participant interviews. The quotes shared from participants refer to their personal experiences, as well as what they witness and/or hear in their respective schools and/or school boards. There are five major themes that emerged from the interviews that revolve around the culture of whiteness in teaching. Those themes are resistance/struggles with implementation, systems/structures, diversifying resources, current support, and next steps. Each Section in this Chapter is dedicated to one of these themes, with the overarching finding that the culture of whiteness is being perpetuated in intermediate classes across the GTA, despite the changes being made to intentionally address it. Throughout this Chapter, I outline specific instances where participants shared their experiences related to the theme being discussed. Emphasized using vignettes in blue boxes, these experiences were extracted from block text in the interview transcripts. Through a combination of paraphrasing and my interpretations as the researcher, as well as directly quoting participants, their experiences are emphasized in these vignettes. This Chapter demonstrates the overarching finding from this research study, which is ways in which the culture of whiteness is being perpetuated.

4.1 Resistance/Struggles with Implementation

Controlling the Narrative

Historically, teachers make many day-to-day decisions in the classroom, such as how desks are arranged, what materials are read/used, who is assigned classroom jobs, etc. With this, the idea of control emerges, and participants shared they felt their colleagues always wanted control in the
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classroom. Oliver spoke about how teachers often teach the way they were taught, which is “really problematic when you do that for four generations in a row.” In discussing the problems associated with this, Oliver spoke about teachers teaching the same novel year after year. He feels that if teachers are not challenged to change their ways, they will continue to perpetuate the culture of whiteness. This was also noted by Liliane, who spoke about the systems in education and society and how they are intentionally structured to allow teachers to control the narrative. She spoke about the idea of objectivity and the power dynamic that exists in schools wherein teachers dominate the space and control it. She said “things that I’ve considered normal practice in education are really white supremacy culture. This idea of controlling, directing the narrative, controlling who has power, that defensiveness.” As Liliane notes, these are ways in which white supremacy functions in society. In teaching, this idea of controlling the narrative includes deciding what content to cover, what resources to use, and/or lessons being teacher-driven, to name a few examples. Teachers want to be an expert on the topics they teach, allowing them to hold the power. This causes me to ask: why do they want to control the narrative…what are they holding onto that they do not want to relinquish? In my interview with Hillary, she offered a response to these questions when she spoke about why her colleagues don’t take up this perspective/equity work. Hillary noted “they like the white supremacist system that they were brought up in, and they have the benefits from that, and they don’t want to change.” This quote explicitly demonstrates that some teachers are aware of how they hold privilege in society, yet they still want this control and will continue to refuse to relinquish their power. This points to society at large, and makes me question who holds power in society, and why has this power not been deconstructed considering the negative impacts it has on racialized people.
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Taking a step back and analyzing how narratives are controlled on a larger scale became a point of conversation during three of the interviews. The ways in which participants spoke about this was in reference to spirit days and celebrations at school that are organized and/or supported by the school, or the school board. At the school level, Hillary spoke about her school and how they celebrate spirit days, with staff members advocating for them specifically around Christmas, saying “it includes everybody,” but Hillary noted that it doesn’t. She said, “a lot of them are sexist, ableist, racist, classist.” When prompted to discuss who is controlling this narrative in this instance and who oversees organizing spirit days, she provided me with the background information that a student-run organization (i.e., student parliament) decides on the spirit days. This group of students is also responsible for running schoolwide contests during spirit week, which is typically the last week of school in December at Hillary’s school. Termed by Hillary as the “holiday season,” she spoke about a door decorating contest that was held recently at her school. The decorated doors focused on holidays such as Christmas, Diwali, Chinese New Year, Hanukkah, and Kwanza. A schoolwide vote took place on which door should be the winner of the contest and a Christmas-centered door won the contest, with the most votes from the student body. Hillary said this outcome “shows you how ingrained it [whiteness] is.” In Brampton, where Hillary teaches, 17.1% of students identify as Christian, though most of the student body voted for the Christmas door to win at her school. This example demonstrates how students internalize the culture of whiteness and schools uphold these values through the celebration of spirit days.

Another instance of the culture of whiteness being perpetuated is through the celebration of heritage months, such as Asian heritage month, or Black History Month (BHM) at schools, which is often orchestrated by school boards. In my teaching experience, I recall school board
staff sending BHM resources to school staff via email. The resources sent out often reinforced stereotypical celebrations, whether the school board realized it or not. To exemplify this, Liliane talked about how the school board perpetuates the stereotypical, negative connotations associated with BHM because they send teachers resources every February, and teachers feel the need to “drop everything to engage in the schoolwide work of BHM.” She went on to state “that’s the challenge I have with it coming from the board level…it doesn’t have that human aspect to it.”

Personally, I have seen teachers teach the same units every February to align with BHM, despite school boards sharing more culturally responsive and relevant resources. It is up to the teacher to implement these resources and what teachers decide to engage with will always be based on their positionality and critical consciousness.

In PDSB, 67% of the teaching population is white (OME, 2020), which means that over half of the percentage of teachers in the school are viewing BHM resources from a white perspective/lens. On top of this, it is important to note that the socialization of racism and the culture of whiteness can also emerge in racialized staff who have internalized the culture of whiteness and oppression. Considering this, these months dedicated to the celebration of specific heritages often end up being problematic and tokenizing rather than empowering. Amanda spoke about how “most people are trying to not strictly just focus on specific heritages on a specific month…we want to reflect [these heritages] in various different ways all throughout the year, but yeah, we still do focus on specific heritages on each of the months that we are celebrating them.” The problem with this, which Liliane spoke about, is how teachers at her school use this one month a year to focus on Black people’s achievements. She shared that she has offered different methods of approaching BHM to her colleagues, as she typically embeds diverse perspectives
within her teaching all year; however, other staff at her school have not followed through with taking up the ideas she shared. Overall, these methods of celebrating specific heritages during calendar months of the year allow for teachers to focus on those heritages for a month, while relying on colonial and Eurocentric perspectives for the rest of the year.

**Defensiveness**

Towards the end of our interview, Hillary noted “whiteness presents itself in fragility, tears and ego” and that phrase is an accurate description of what participants shared about their colleagues regarding teachers’ defensiveness around this work. In addition to controlling the narrative, participants recalled events wherein colleagues shared how they felt about implementing ARE. Oliver spoke about how teachers “do not want to even go there” when bringing up issues such as race or identity. He said, “if they’re teaching something that they’re not comfortable with, even if it doesn’t directly relate to race or identity, they’re uncomfortable teaching it because they don’t feel like they’re like an expert in it, so they just avoid it.” Similarly, Amanda shared that teachers at her school are uncomfortable having conversations with students about equity, and they also avoid the topic. In avoiding the topic, the culture of whiteness is not interrogated, which Hillary spoke to when sharing a story about how her colleagues refrained from engaging with instructional coaches at her school. The instructional coaches were there to support teachers with their equity work, but her colleagues were afraid they were “going to get yelled at, or [they’re] not doing things the way [they] should, so [they’re] going to get reprimanded.” She noted that these same teachers are not doing anything at all, which is worse than their perceived actions in attempting to interrogate the culture of whiteness and participate in the support provided by instructional coaches. Furthermore, Liliane noted other
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ways she has witnessed struggles with implementing this work as the culture of whiteness is displayed through her colleagues’ actions and mindsets. In her journal entry, she shared excuses that she has heard such as “perfectionism, sense of urgency, defensiveness, quantity over quality, objectivity, paternalism, either/or thinking.” This list provides examples of how the culture of whiteness presents itself in teachers’ mindsets, which are known as white apathy (Saad, 2020). This defensiveness and lack of comfort when implementing this work is one of many ways that the culture of whiteness is silently maintained and not interrogated.

Resistance: Using the Pandemic as an Excuse

Another area that cannot go unnoticed when discussing the resistance to this work is the context in which this study occurred. In March 2019, schools were closed because of the emerging COVID-19 pandemic. This is important to consider as many of the experiences, discussions, PD, and stories shared by participants occurred remotely. Additionally, the interviews were conducted remotely, as the data collection occurred in January 2022. Though all participants had been in schools physically at some point during the 2021-2022 school year, public schools in Ontario were closed during the time of data collection and teachers were returning to in-person learning on January 17, 2022. The closing of public schools in Ontario and transitioning to remote learning impacted education greatly. Oliver made the analogy that everybody was on their own island during the pandemic, and you didn’t have time to plan together or break things down. Oliver said, “we’re not in the library together doing stuff, people don’t stay after school and work through things so unstructured times for teachers to get together to plan stuff or talk has been reduced.” To further discuss how the pandemic impacted the progression of this work, Liliane spoke about how there used to be a lot of collaboration amongst
teachers, but they haven’t been able to do so because of the social distancing regulations and buildings being closed. As a student who engaged in multiple collaborative initiatives, coursework, and research during the pandemic, I believe it is being used as a scapegoat for this work not to be done, or it is being referenced as a reason for the work taking slower than anticipated. This could be in the form of discussing how collaboration is not the same as pre-pandemic, as my participants did, as well as talking about how teachers are not able to mentally cope with the pandemic and embedding ARE in their classroom. Teachers who want to engage in this work recognize the harm that is being inflicted upon racialized students, and are willing to make changes, despite the pandemic. For teachers who do not want to engage with this work, the pandemic provided an outlet to blame their lack of engagement on something outside of their control.

**Resistance: The “Students Are Not Ready” Excuse**

Teachers that are comfortable perpetuating the culture of whiteness will find many reasons to not do this work. When the pandemic isn’t the excuse that is being used, my participants spoke about how their colleagues are under the impression that students are not ready to engage in these conversations. This was also something that I experienced as a teacher in PDSB, as my former colleagues would often share that students weren’t aware of racism at the intermediate level. My own teaching experiences, as well as Hillary and Amanda’s experiences were contrary to this outlook. Amanda talked about how her students are knowledgeable and have opened up about these topics, which shows students are interested in talking about this and it should not be swept under the rug. On the same sentiment, Hillary spoke about how her students talk “about the systems and who built the systems.” With this, she shared a story about a
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Grade 7 student of hers who wrote to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and members of parliament about residential schools and the calls to action for clean water on Indigenous reserves. Hillary recognizes the importance of having these conversations with students because “getting started now makes them more effective adults so that we’re not in this situation when they are adults.” She also noted that some of her colleagues wondered how to integrate social justice and equity issues into conversations with their students if they’ve never had the conversations before. In response to this, Hillary said “that’s why all teachers need to be on board… it is something that has to be embedded into all that you do…but you gotta start somewhere, and the problem is we haven’t started in kindergarten, it’s just now.” In addition to Hillary’s response, I would reinforce the idea that students are aware of racism and social injustice, especially by the intermediate grades. Though they may not always have the language/terminology to explain it, students experience racism at young ages, and they are often interested in having these conversations. Furthermore, if teachers do not have these conversations with students, because they assume students are not ready and/or capable of having them, how will teachers know if students are ready or not? This excuse allows the teacher to remain in their comfortable bubble of control where they continue to teach from a Eurocentric, colonial perspective, while justifying (to themselves and others) why this work doesn’t need to be done with intermediate students.

Resistance: White Apathy

Saad (2020) discussed contributing factors to white apathy being white privilege, white fragility, white silence, white exceptionalism, colour blindness, as well as anti-Blackness. This is furthered by DiAngelo (2018) and Bonilla-Silva (2010) who discussed white fragility and the minimization of racism specifically presenting itself through guilt, shame, discomfort, and many
more defensive emotions. These factors do not escape any white person, and though people may think they are not racist, racist behaviours, thoughts and actions are ingrained into Western society. Common excuses that teachers at Hillary’s school use when discussing equity work in their classrooms and their own behaviour are “I don’t see colour,” “I’m kind and that’s all that matters,” and/or “I treat everybody the same.” These thoughts and beliefs relate to the theory of colour-blind racism, and its operation through Hillary’s colleagues’ minimizing racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2010). In doing this, her colleagues are dismissing the historical and intergenerational impacts of racism and not acknowledging they are part of the problem. This also emerged when Hillary shared that her white colleagues felt they were ganged up on by other teachers and/or the equity team at her school, and they are now afraid of saying something wrong. In placing their needs over the needs of racialized staff and/or their administrator, they are positioning their white lives to be more important than those of racialized individuals.

This minimization of racism that Bonilla-Silva (2010) speaks to was also shared by Oliver, who voiced that his colleagues are uncomfortable addressing their privilege. He said that he has heard excuses such as “that’s not my fault, I’m not like that.” With this, Oliver mentioned it becomes personal very quickly and a lot of walls go up in these conversations. He also mentioned he has heard other excuses such as “I’m not to blame for 500 years of this,” “my life was hard too,” and “I haven’t had it easy just ‘cause I’m white.” These sentiments of individualism and colour-blind racism are roadblocks to moving forward. Oliver acknowledges his colleagues’ mindsets are a big impediment to changing the system because “we can’t have a conversation where I want to dismantle these white power structures and then be personally
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offended.” This form of white fragility and minimization of racism came up during my time as a teacher in PDSB and it is still present within many conversations happening in schools.

White apathy also emerges through ways in which white people engage in conversations about social justice, oppression, and equity with other white people. Saad (2020) discussed this, as well as white silence and solidarity, wherein the culture of whiteness is protected by individuals remaining silent when racism occurs, not calling out racism, as well as not holding each other accountable for their racist actions/behaviour. Hillary noted her white colleagues have said things to her such as “we thought you were on our side” when referencing a conversation she had with administration at her school. Her principal at the time was a Black woman, and though Hillary was not sure if they were including her as a white person “on their side” or if they were referring to her being a teacher against implementing accountability pieces to ensure equity work was being done in the classroom. Either way, the comment is unacceptable and displays the blatant racism evident within PDSB staff and consequently, in PDSB classrooms and schools. Hillary went on to note these colleagues recognize their privilege and are okay with it. What these teachers fail to realize, as pointed out by Hillary, is “the harm they are doing by not doing any of these things is far worse than any mistake they perceive they may make.” These excuses are examples of white apathy presenting itself within teachers’ perspectives.

Inactive and Inconsistent Implementation

Keeping teachers’ defensiveness and white apathy in mind, a recurring theme that emerged in the interviews was the low percentage of teachers actively interrupting the culture of whiteness. All participants spoke about how they’re uncertain about the number of teachers in their schools who are following through and implementing changes to their pedagogies daily.
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Amanda shared that the equity team at her school introduced ARE and social justice work; however, “maybe 20% of the teachers would reciprocate and acknowledge that [racism] was happening and then put it into practice.” She recalls the school buying new resources that were culturally responsive and she thinks “5 of the 80 teachers actually open those cupboards and take out those books.” When prompted to continue the discussion about teachers engaging in this work, Amanda said some of her colleagues do the bare minimum. She said, “they do what they need to do or what they feel they need to do, and then they don’t address it as much.” This inconsistent implementation was also spoken about by Oliver when he discussed his colleagues being interested, but they don’t know where to start and the immediacy of lesson planning, marking, solving problems, makes them revert to what they know. This immediacy that Oliver spoke about are excuses I heard while I was a teacher in PDSB, as teachers didn’t have time to “add” this onto their teaching. When this mentality is prevalent, the culture of whiteness is maintained.

Lip Service at Hillary’s School:
Hillary shared a story of the staff at her school creating action plans for culturally relevant practices wherein they were asked questions such as “What are you doing? How are you going to measure this? What sorts of things are you going to do? How are you going to be held accountable?” When sharing this story, Hillary noted the pushback from other staff and how she believed many of them completed their action plans but then put them “away in a drawer somewhere…and keep doing things the way that [they] normally do, but [they were] part of it, [they] checked it off.” To address this, her administration created a schedule for staff members to share aloud at staff meetings. Teachers were expected to share how they were incorporating their action plans into their teaching and some staff refused to share. In these cases, Hillary said the administration shared what the teacher has done. When reflecting on this, Hillary said these teachers should be asking themselves questions such as “Why am I uncomfortable and angry?” and “Why am I feeling this way?” This lip service that is being executed in this example by teachers is yet another way in which the implementation of ARE is inactive.

The inactive and inconsistent implementation was further discussed through participants sharing teachers’ desires to change the system, yet no one is actively doing it. Oliver stated
there’s “legitimate interest. It’s not just lip service, but it is hard for people to change their practice.” This lip service was also spoken about by Liliane when she shared “everyone is saying the right things, but then when it comes down to it in the right setting, they’re not backing up their words or comfortable having those real conversations.” When discussing why these conversations are not being followed up by action, Liliane mentioned “we think that people are going to be resistant to the work, so we set the bar really low, but really staff have been working with racialized students and people deserving equity for a long time.” This sentiment was expressed by all participants, as a shared common theme was that they want to dive deeper with this work, but other staff members are much more hesitant.3 When discussing this hesitancy/resistance with Hillary, I asked Hillary if it was primarily white teachers who were voicing this resistance. Hillary said that at her school, “it is overwhelmingly the white teachers…but there are absolutely people who are using their proximity to whiteness and perpetuating that white supremist system.” She said, “there are a handful of racialized teachers at the school that just don’t want to have anything to do with it.” This makes me reflect on why Hillary’s colleagues are okay with perpetuating this dominant narrative and colonial education system. It is possible that these colleagues of Hillary’s may be under the impression that in addressing the culture of whiteness in teaching, they will lose a privilege of whiteness that they want to hold onto. Hillary spoke about this in our interview as she said, “you’re not taking rights away from everybody, you are giving them to everybody.” In teachers holding onto their privilege and inconsistently implementing ARE, the negative impacts on racialized students will continue. For

3 Upon further reflection, I wonder if the participants would take action and dive deeper in this equity work to deconstruct their own whiteness. In Chapter 5, I outline the ways in which the participants perpetuate the culture of whiteness through their teaching, and I wonder how receptive they would be to engaging in this critical reflection.
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teachers to be held accountable long-term, this work must be taken up by all teachers and sustained on a consistent basis.

Struggles with Professional Development

PD is dedicated time throughout the year for administrators and school boards to educate in-service teachers on emerging trends in education. The findings in this specific area encompasses the struggles with implementing PD around anti-Black racism, and/or equity in schools. These struggles emerged with all participants through the discussion of equity work being a journey. In conversations with Amanda, Oliver, and Hillary, they noted how 2-3 years ago, the mindset of administration was everyone was on their own journey with equity work, and they would meet the individual wherever they are on that journey. The issue with this, as Oliver notes is if you’re going to “engage everybody where they’re at, then the system is designed to not change.” It is incredibly difficult to create and facilitate PD when this is the mentality of facilitators/administration, as teachers who have yet to begin their journey cannot engage in the same way as teachers who already teach through an anti-oppressive lens.

Changes to the education system have been advocated for in PDSB for 30 years and as Hillary shared, the discourse is still “we’re going to wait for people on their journey’ and 30 years later, nothing has happened.” She continued this thought stating, “why are we still catering to the feelings of white educators…people are still being harmed every day by what [white educators are] doing because they’re not quite ready yet.” Though Hillary shared this mindset was present in her former administrators, Hillary shared that there has been a shift within the perspective of her new administrator. Hillary’s new administrator doesn’t care whose feelings are hurt in the process of implementing accountability pieces, and they are ensuring teachers are
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implementing ARE. In talking about her administrator, Hillary said that her administrator adopted the “you’re on board or you’re not. And if you’re not, then you can find another school” mindset. Hillary said this sets the tone in the school, but she spoke about the benefits of this mindset as the administrator got the ball rolling and was tired of waiting for teachers who were resistant to change. This leads to disrupting the permanence of racism, though Hillary notes the sad thing is teachers who do not get on board will “find a school where they can just do what they’ve always done for 20 years and not be held accountable.” Therefore, as noted above in the discussion of inconsistent implementation, accountability pieces must be implemented within larger systems in education and mandated to school boards for this work to continue on a long-term scale.

This shift in the mindset and holding teachers accountable for their pedagogies is often the aim of PD, though the struggles to implement successful PD on ARE was felt by many participants. Amanda said administration will “initiate PD and the first thing they’ll say is what do you want to do?” This idea of teachers coming up with the direction of the PD session/content was mirrored by Liliane, as she notes occasions where they were given time to plan with colleagues. During the PD, the teachers asked for direction on what to do and were given none. Following the session, administration informed the teachers they were supposed to be planning for new resources that were purchased. Without clear direction and miscommunication, Liliane said “you’re going to have different personalities that accept that responsibility differently,” which will lead to the culture of whiteness being maintained by those who do not choose to address it. Furthermore, she said “there needs to be more support to support the 75% of white teachers… a lot of staff will not engage in that work unless they’re given clear direction about
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what they can and cannot do.” Similarly, Hillary noted that teachers at her school want a binder of lesson plans to follow. She spoke about how concerning this was, as the problem with being given a clear direction to follow means the teacher may not be putting in the work to address their critical consciousness and make it meaningful. Hillary said the teachers at her school are “not understanding that they need to change as well.” This emerged in my own teaching, as I do not think I understood the gravity of my whiteness and how that impacted my teaching practices. Teachers need to embark on this journey of PD to interrogate their own positionality and critical consciousness to effectively be anti-racist in their classrooms.

To demonstrate how the culture of whiteness plays out at Hillary’s school on multiple levels, she shared an incident that occurred wherein the union was called because teachers at her school had release time to work on planning using the *Cultivating Genius* (Muhammad, 2020) framework. From there, teachers from the equity committee were going to go in and observe classes to see student engagement and culturally relevant practices being implemented. She said, “people called the union on that because they said it was an observation and an assessment…and this goes against our rights as a teacher.” When I heard this, I was intrigued to hear about how the union acted as a method to protect teachers’ whiteness at Hillary’s school, which is further discussed in Chapter 5. What also proved to be an intriguing point was the discussion of her colleagues wanting accountability with this work, but then in reference to the union being called, Hillary said “as soon as [they’re] being held accountable, oh no wait, nope, we don’t want accountability.” This juxtaposition displays how the culture of whiteness is being interrogated, or attempting to be interrogated through PD; however, the culture of whiteness is still being perpetuated through multiple systems within education such as labour unions and lack of
accountability. These systems and structures are outlined in Section 4.2 by participants and discussed in Section 5.1.

4.2 Systems/Structures

Colonialism, capitalism, and other forms of oppression created many of the systems that still exist in Canadian society. These systems have pushed racialized communities and individuals to the margins, instilling power through white superiority and continuously perpetuating the culture of whiteness to be dominant in society. In her journal entry, Liliane wondered “are all systems/institutions established with people profiting off of others?” This was further expanded upon in her interview, as Liliane thinks “we’re blind to [the systems] as white educators because we don’t see the harm in this system, but we weren’t people that were harmed by it necessarily, so it’s really hard to identify it.” This idea of being ignorant to these systems also emerged when Hillary said:

People are just so willfully ignorant, and they don’t realize who built the systems and who are the systems benefiting?... Education, healthcare, law enforcement, politics, everything is built upon white supremacy because those are the people who built those systems. They’re not broken. They’re working quite well for the people who built them.

She advocates for teachers to think and say “I am a muffin baked in this white supremacy system. I need to acknowledge that and then fix it. It’s not that I’ve done anything wrong, but I’m helping to uphold that system.” As pointed out, education is a system that upholds the culture of whiteness through many power structures and power relations. Oliver discussed the emphasis on anti-Black racism in the classroom, specifically how “the whole system is already racist.” With
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this, he also spoke about how the structures and systems in education are aspects that are slowly being targeted and spoken about amongst staff to change because of their racist foundations. He highlighted changes that are being made to push against this racist system, such as challenging resources and the way things are set up in his classroom. This challenging of resources is one step teachers are taking towards mitigating the culture of whiteness, but it is important to understand the larger picture here that white teachers are still those making the decisions, and those who have power in the educational systems and structures. It is imperative for teachers to consider who created these systems and how they are upheld, including teachers’ roles in upholding it.

A few areas where power dynamics are demonstrated and the white system is exemplified is through administration, their relationship with staff members, and teacher unions. Oliver and Liliane spoke about how administrators don’t truly have the power to help teachers on their equity journey. This lack of support from administration was noted from Liliane, as she shared an instance when she brought in Indigenous contributions, knowledges, and perspectives in her teaching but was reprimanded for it. When this occurred, Liliane’s administration did not know how to deal with it, and they called in a curriculum lead teacher from the school board to support her. Liliane notes there wasn’t a lot of guidance or support for how to move forward in intertwining Indigenous teachings, and the guidelines to do so have changed many times over the course of the past few years.

On the topic of administration and the power dynamics within schools, Oliver thinks the structure of work relationships and teacher labor relationships don’t allow for the interrogation of teachers’ teaching practices and teachers are able to continue doing what they’ve always done. He notes there is a lack of accountability and if 10% of staff are challenging themselves to do
this, then “it’s taking too long to change, which is what systems are like. Systems don’t want to be changed, and they resist change.” Ultimately, when situations arise where administration do not feel they are equipped to support the teacher, instructional coaches at the board level, as well as unions, are typically involved. In these instances, these hierarchical structures in education perpetuate the culture of whiteness as power is typically in the hands of white individuals in these leadership roles (or racialized people who may have internalized the culture of whiteness and oppression), which protects teachers from engaging in this work in meaningful ways.

In the interviews, three of the four participants spoke about the union in a way that alluded to their power and authoritative position in education. As mentioned, Hillary shared the incident wherein her colleagues called the union because the equity committee was going to observe lessons happening in teachers’ classrooms. She referenced her colleagues saying, “this goes against our rights as a teacher,” which puts teachers’ rights above anyone else’s, including students. A similar instance where the power of the union was exemplified was in a discussion regarding PD with Liliane. She shared that the union runs the anti-Black racism PD at her school, which gives authority to the union to decide what should and should not be covered in teachers’ PD. In the examples shared by Hillary and Liliane, the union ultimately had the power to stop teachers from being observed, as well as dictate what was going to be focused on for PD sessions. This was further demonstrated in Oliver’s interview, when he spoke about how changes could be made to the system to mitigate the perpetuation of the culture of whiteness, and he referenced the teacher unions as a piece in the puzzle that would need to prioritize this work. After stating that administration would need to be on board, he said “you need to run this through unions... I don't know why unions would argue [implementing accountability pieces to ensure
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teachers are taking up equity work in their classrooms], but they would. It's extra work for staff.”

This quote exemplifies how much power unions have, as they are crucial to the success of this work and can dictate if, and how, teachers will engage in this work. It should be noted that the union is mandatory for all teachers in Ontario to join and the collective agreements outline teachers’ responsibilities. Within the collective agreements, the amount of PD and staff meetings are specified, as well as the ability that teachers can rely on their professional judgement to make decisions in their daily practices. Therefore, teachers’ unions are another example of a white, colonial system that upholds the culture of whiteness.

Hiring Practices

Another structure that has upheld the culture of whiteness in teaching is the hiring process. In the GTA, most school boards use Apply to Education, a website where employers can post job postings and applicants can apply directly to postings of interest. At times, these postings are for a specific job and/or school, wherein other postings are pools of teachers (i.e., PDSB posts a yearly French as a Second Language [FSL] permanent teacher pool). From my understanding and in discussion with multiple PDSB administrators over the years, the applications are reviewed by school boards’ human resources personnel, and then applicants that meet their criteria are selected for interviews. The interviews can be done with school administration, board personnel, or both.

Historically, the initial interviews for occasional teaching lists and long-term occasional teaching lists in PDSB are done with a predetermined set of questions wherein the interviewers have a list of “look-fors.” As the applicant speaks to the look-fors, they are checked off. Personally, I also have seen school boards that have a rubric with buzzwords for each question
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that are checked off when participants say them. Oliver remembered this process and said when he was interviewed, the interviewers had “a chart with tick boxes and as you answered questions, you said words and they checked off that you said those words.” He reflected on people who may not have the correct buzzwords as part of their vocabulary during the interview process when he said, “if English isn’t your first language, you could still do all those things, but you’re not saying the words. That’s going to discriminate against you.” Hillary spoke about this issue as well as she talked about how the system discriminates against people who don’t know the look-fors or buzzwords. She said this is how the predominantly white profession of teaching continues to be predominantly white. When prompted to talk about why this is the case, Hillary said “who [the systems] filter through, who they allow through, and who don’t have the barriers that so many other groups have” all point to the culture of whiteness. It is evident that white people created the system, and the systems allow the same type of people through with the same type of knowledge.

Hiring practices are one factor of many that directly contributes to most elementary teachers in Ontario being white, female teachers (OME, 2020). Amanda noted that this is true at her school where many teachers are white females, with European origins. She said they currently have “2 Black teachers, 2 Indian teachers in a staff of maybe 80…the student population is made up of Eastern Europeans, Asians, Hispanics – a lot of diversity.” When this diversity is not represented in the teaching population, colonial and Eurocentric perspectives, worldviews, and lived experiences are often what is shared and learned in schools. Amanda continued to discuss the lack of diversity within the teachers at her school and shared that said “[admin] vocally have said they are trying to hire people of various backgrounds” to be more
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reflective of students. This is further discussed in Chapter 5, in the discussion of whiteness as property.

Furthermore, Oliver noted that there are more Asian and Black teachers now at his school than in the past; however, in reference to leadership at their schools, both Amanda and Oliver noted diversity is not reflective in administration at the school level. Oliver said he could “think of very few administrators that aren’t white.” With this, he notes there are very few people at the board level who are not white, and “every time [students] get a greeting from the director of education at York region, it’s always a white person.” He spoke about how this impacts students’ perceptions of school and the education system when a white person is always telling you what to do. We then discussed the ramifications for this long term, Oliver highlighted “if people don’t feel comfortable in these systems because they don’t see themselves in these systems, then they’re not going to pursue jobs in these systems,” which further perpetuates the cycle of white dominance within education.

Curriculum

In the province of Ontario, the curriculum is provincially mandated for public schools, which is where all the participants teach. The elementary school curriculum encompasses one curriculum document for each subject, some of which have not been updated since 2006 (OME, 2006). The exclusion of anti-racist, culturally relevant and/or responsive curriculum expectations, resources, and examples in these older curriculum documents are poignant. Even within the more recent curriculum, it is evident that the culture of whiteness and Eurocentrism is perpetuated (OME, 2018). The explicit curricula are what teachers follow to plan lessons, assess students, and create long-range plans. These documents are rooted in colonialism and participants spoke about
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the curriculum in reference to how colleagues of theirs use it as a method to uphold the culture of whiteness. A few participants also noted how they embed ARE in their teaching through the curriculum.

In their interviews, Hillary, Oliver, and Liliane referenced the curriculum documents as a structure that upholds and dismantles the culture of whiteness. In discussing the curriculum, Hillary asks “who got to decide what’s curriculum and what’s not?” She believes the “curriculum needs to be completely scrapped and then representation from multiple perspectives brought in and rewritten. It all needs to be set on fire.” With this, Hillary talked about how teachers use the curriculum as an excuse to not engage in the work because they say “I don’t have time. I have to do curriculum.” She talked about how she integrates equity work and social justice into the curriculum, despite there not always being a specific curriculum expectation that is mandated. Liliane also mirrored this idea of integrating equity work into her teaching when she said, “we want to be teaching ABR [anti-Black racism] but there’s nothing in the curriculum that explicitly tells us to do that.” Liliane spoke about how she incorporates it throughout the year into the content of her lessons. This concept of adapting the curriculum and bringing in diverse perspectives based upon teachers’ professional judgement is what Oliver liked about the Ontario curriculum. He said the curriculum in Ontario is “not prescriptive as to what you teach, you can bring in any resources you want to teach those skills.” Oliver also spoke about how some subjects are harder to teach and adapt equitable teachings to than others (i.e., subjects such as math,

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4 As anti-Black racism efforts are being taken up by school boards in the GTA in various contexts, I observed my participants referring to anti-Black racism as “ABR.” This acronym is problematic as it downplays the importance of naming anti-Black racism specifically. This is reflective of how the culture of whiteness permeates through professional development and schools, as power is still in the hands of white systems and structures, who also use this acronym. In this work, the acronym “ABR” will only be used when a participant uses it directly in a quote.
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Science and history are harder because he believes you are stuck to a specific time frame or skillset, whereas in language arts, you can use the content and resources to address issues of culture and colonialism). Though the curriculum prescribes the skills and expectations of students, the participants exemplified how they use the curriculum and adapted it to their teaching needs. After reflecting on this, I would further add that there are many ways you can interrogate the culture of whiteness through more than the explicit curriculum (i.e., pedagogy). Though you can integrate ARE and anti-Black racism into the content, anti-oppression is more than merely bringing in diverse perspectives (see Section 5.2), which none of the teachers spoke of.

4.3 Diversifying Resources

When I graduated from my Bachelor of Education in 2015, the discussion to move away from textbooks and use other resources to integrate different perspectives was already present. This idea came up with all participants, as classroom resources were a major interest of mine at the onset of data collection. Due to resources being the focal point of the discussions, there is a lot of data that was collected, which is why this Subsection has 3 sub-headings, each with a lot of depth and detail, all under the umbrella of diversifying resources. The first heading discusses resources that teachers use in their classrooms for students. With this, the topic of textbooks emerged, as well as discussing how teachers chose new/different resources. From there, I elaborate on student voices and how the participants believe student voices mitigate the perpetuation of the culture of whiteness in schools. To wrap up this Subsection, under the heading of authentic voices, I discuss how powerful authentic voices can be in the classroom, as participants spoke about this in the interviews. These three headings fall under the overarching finding of the diversification of resources to mitigate the perpetuation of the culture of whiteness. In Chapter 5, I discuss the
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flawed aspect of analyzing resources only when attempting to disrupt the culture of whiteness, as it neglects pedagogy and the paradigm shift that is needed to adequately implement ARE.

**Resources for Students**

In attempts to provide all students with a reflective, representative, and more equitable educational experience, schools have undertaken the responsibility of analyzing resources in the classroom and/or school library. From my understanding, this is being done in PDSB specifically to address the OME (2020) recommendation #19, which asks PDSB to

Undertake a comprehensive diversity audit of schools – including naming mascots, libraries, and classrooms. This should include evaluating books, media and other resources currently being used in schools for teaching and learning English, History and Social Sciences to ensure that they are inclusive and culturally responsive, relevant, and reflective of the student bodies and voices, and broader school communities. (p. 43)

Amanda noted the school board asked them “to throw out certain books by specific authors… that said things that didn’t align with teachings that we’re trying to take on now.” She continued this by stating “that was being told to us from a board standpoint and then from our school standpoint, we’ve thrown out textbooks too.” She described this decision-making process as she shared, “we have thrown out a lot of books simply because they didn’t embody new cultural perspectives. We’ve spent a good amount of our budget and our funds purchasing new books that would reflect our students.” When asked about what types of resources were being brought in, Amanda shared they were bringing in novels that were written by authors “from various different backgrounds, religions, whatever it might be, experiences, socioeconomic status… [the resources] talk about social justice, activities, or problems that people might be experiencing in
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their own home.” This resource analysis was not occurring in the school I taught in prior to pursuing my Master of Education in 2020, which shows there is a change that is occurring within PDSB. Both Amanda and I have heard this resource analysis becoming more commonplace in other schools in PDSB, as teachers re-evaluate their chosen resources, and move away from textbooks.

As teachers move away from using textbooks, Hillary, Oliver, and Liliane spoke about their reasons for doing so, as well as what resources they are using instead. Hillary spoke about how there is no accurate information in textbooks when she said, “history books are written by the system that it was constructed by…the system was built for people who colonized this place, so of course [the history books] are written by white Europeans who built the systems. It’s their perspectives.” Discussing the movement away from textbooks for a similar reason, Olive spoke about how it is beneficial to move away from textbooks that only present one perspective. He said that he pieces things together and pulls in different perspectives through a variety of resources. This concept of piecing things together emerged in my conversation with Liliane, who plans lessons in the same way, using various resources. She said “you’ll get a great comic, but then you need to build a program around it, and when doing that, you have to be careful about the narrative you’re creating around it. Are you tokenizing an element of it?” This critical aspect is discussed further in Chapter 5 around the idea of counterstories that are brought into the classroom; however, the idea of finding one resource and planning lessons/units around it was something I experienced myself as a teacher. It is through intentional planning and critical thinking that teachers must seek out diverse knowledge systems, ways of knowing, instructional strategies, and experiences to integrate them into their classrooms and pedagogies. When
discussing this with Hillary, she said she uses the following questions to guide her selecting of resources and planning: “Whose perspective is this? Who’s excluded? Whose voices are excluded? What are the biases that are in here, inherent, or not?…Whose voices do I need to include and whose voices are missing?” These questions help guide Hillary when she is selecting new resources to bring into the classroom. It is evident that many textbooks being used do not present multiple perspectives on the Eurocentric curriculum being taught in Ontario (as well as blatantly ignore other forms of oppression). These questions that Hillary shared allow teachers to take one step towards presenting diverse perspectives, as well as developing their own critical consciousness.

Participants shared that the resources currently being used in classrooms are those they believe incorporate diverse perspectives, stories, experiences, and/or worldviews. These resources were collected through colleagues, teacher librarians, and/or professional learning communities such as Twitter, or at times provided by administration/school boards. Though I asked all participants about the resources they used, only a few specific examples were shared. One example shared by Amanda is MathUP (MathUP, 2020), an online resource that teachers and students can access to support student learning in math. She notes how it demonstrates diversity through mentioning activities that are seen to be more culturally relevant (i.e., cricket over hockey). Teachers at Amanda’s school were given the choice to sign up for the resource and she believes a lot of teachers use it. Amanda’s administrative team has also given teachers access to unlearn posters (unlearn, n.d.), which came with lessons to guide students’ learning when discussing social justice in the classroom. Amanda said, “that’s one of the only resources that was laid out for [teachers], which was helpful.” When Amanda discussed this, I wondered if the
teachers who engaged in this work were doing so from an anti-racist pedagogical perspective, or if they did the lesson and then carried on teaching the rest of their daily subjects centered around Eurocentrism and whiteness. If the latter is the situation, which Amanda alluded to when she shared that 20% of her staff actively engage in this work with their students, I wonder how these one-off lessons impact students who are racialized, as well as the message it sends non-racialized students. Though the lesson incorporates social justice, or diversity, this tokenizes the topic at hand, and it is not carried through the rest of the teacher’s pedagogy. This idea of how the work is taken up, and why, is expanded upon in Chapter 5, through the discussion of the interest convergence principle.

In addition to the resources that Amanda shared, Liliane and Oliver spoke about the diverse resources they use in their classrooms. For example, Liliane shared an activity she does with her intermediate students where they analyze a map of Turtle Island at various times throughout history. Students are asked critical questions such as “Where did people who lived on the land immigrate to? Who created the map?” She shared that she speaks to her students about how these types of resources are often “old resources that are now poor examples” and she uses these older resources to embed critical thinking into teaching the subject of history. In Oliver’s classroom, he spoke about the ease of integrating diversity in language arts units such as spoken word because teachers can rely on their professional judgement to select the poems and bring in a diverse range of poets. He said, “if you want to have a wide range of races, ages, people’s physical appearance, sexuality, gender, you’re able to show little bits ‘cause it’s not a novel.” Oliver also referenced using podcasts such as Song Exploder (Hirway, 2017) throughout the year to incorporate diversity to supplement curriculum concepts. For example, when talking about the
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Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the 94 Calls to Action, Oliver has used The Marrow Thieves (Dimaline, 2017) to make connections between history and language with his class. Bringing diversity into social sciences was a common theme noted by all participants, as they shared effective ways to integrate diverse perspectives into their teaching and lesson content. Amanda, Liliane, and Oliver believed these examples shared were effective examples of integrating diverse resources for students.

On the contrary to the effective examples shared above, Liliane also spoke about the difficulties she experiences as a French Immersion teacher, while noting what she does to address these issues. Liliane said, “I find it very hard to find French resources that counter the Eurocentric vision… We often get all these resources, which is great and then I have to translate it all or make it work.” From my personal experiences teaching FSL, this is a common issue that arises and is felt by many of my colleagues who teach French. When Liliane and I spoke about what resources are provided to discuss equity and/or social justice in the classroom, she referenced choice grids that were sent to teachers by the school board. She said, “I don’t find [choice grids] meaningfully engage with [students],” as she shared they are often not relevant to her students, so she relies on other resources/tools in her French classroom to engage students in discussions. She said “when I show music, I show examples of Black musicians, or Muslim musicians. It’s challenging, but it’s helping them understand that French culture exists across races, and often because of colonization.” In doing this through music shared and class discussions in English, Liliane integrates diverse cultures and perspectives when the resources provided to her are not effective at doing this for her students.

Student Voice(s)
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During the interviews, participants made it evident that they value student voice and recognize the importance of intermediate student voices, as they are often very aware of their surroundings, and what is occurring in society. When discussing the unlearn posters (unlearn, n.d.) that administration provided to staff at Amanda’s school, she spoke about how the resource was made up of a variety of different pictures, with talking points to initiate discussions with students. This allowed her to hear her students’ voices and experiences, which Amanda shares is helping her “think differently.” On the same wavelength, Hillary spoke about how informative it was to talk to her students about their families, communities, and cultures. She said the simplest way to start this work is to “stop with yourself and listen to other people to get other perspectives.” In doing this, we can learn a lot about our students, and how the culture of whiteness is perpetuated from their eyes. To add to this, Liliane said, “we have to value the direction of what [students] want.” This direction would often not be what teachers want, as it would stray away from what they have always done and shift some of the power to the students. As discussed earlier in this Chapter, teachers do not want this power shift to occur, which is likely why many teachers do not listen to, or rely on, student voices in their teaching. Oliver spoke about this when stating that when you give the kids more power in the classroom, “you’re automatically addressing the issue of whiteness, when you are no longer just the white person in front telling the other kids what’s right.”\(^5\) He went on to say, “the minute you start decentralizing the source of information and asking the students what they’re interested in and meeting them where they’re at, I think that helps a lot.” This benefits the students, as they see themselves

\(^5\) This mindset is problematic as students may not think about the hegemony, saviorism, and other forms of oppression in society. This is discussed in Chapter 5, as the culture of whiteness is still being perpetuated due to a white teacher (i.e., Oliver) having the power in this situation.
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reflected in the learning, and the teacher is not the only source of knowledge in the classroom.

Students will often want to explore what they know and what they are surrounded by (i.e., family, background, languages, etc., issues around the world that resonate with them), which is a step towards mitigating the culture of whiteness in the classroom.

Student Voice at Oliver’s School:
At Oliver’s school, the staff administered a student survey and found there was a disconnect between the teachers and students’ perceptions of students having a trusted adult in the building. To address this, the leadership committee at his school created an activity in consultation with coaches from inclusive schools in YRDSB. In the activity, students shared a time when they felt connected to others in the school and one time where they felt isolated or disconnected in the school. Students handed in responses to their teachers and were given the option to keep it private or have it shared in the halls along with the rest of the students’ responses. He noted one of the student’s responses to feeling connected after the student immigrated to Canada and during his first month at school, there was an announcement made about the celebration of Diwali. He quoted the student saying, “I didn’t see myself in the school but then to hear that was to know that my culture was accepted.” Oliver notes how important student voices when he said, “if you empower students and listen to them, if you really give them real opportunities to voice themselves, then a lot of these institutional white things don’t hold the power they used to have because now the power is not in the hands of the white people.”

Authentic Voices

Having authentic voices in this research is so important, and it wasn’t until I had a conversation with Dr. Pillay during data collection that I realized the importance of hearing about the lived experiences of racialized individuals. Prior to that conversation, I was under the impression that embedding diverse perspectives into lessons was a solution to mitigate the culture of whiteness in the classroom. This perspective comes from my positionality/privilege as a white individual and teacher, which is also reflected by my participants. As noted in OME (2020), 67% of the staff population in PDSB is white, which means that over half of the teaching population in that geographical region decides how students are going to interact with diverse perspectives. The teacher decides whose perspective is embedded, when these perspectives are embedded, how
they are embedded, the frequency of this, etc., which leads to teachers dictating how students perceive these stories, worldviews, and experiences. For example, Oliver spoke about “bringing things in from [his] interests… and picking things that [he’s] interested in.” He does this in conjunction with the school librarian, who has brought in a lot of resources with various points of view and perspectives. The aforementioned questions should be asked in this scenario, as the power is in the hands of white teachers. The answers to these questions are not easily identifiable, which is why bringing authentic voices into the classroom/school is important. Authentic voices can be made in reference to hiring teachers who are racialized, as well as inviting guest speakers into the classroom on a continual basis. This would allow individuals to share their personal perspective with a (hopefully) limited white lens. In this Section, the concept of authentic voices is discussed. Due to authentic voices not being the focus of my RQs, these discussions emerged organically with participants, as there were no prompts to engage in this topic.

In the interviews, Hillary, Oliver, and Liliane spoke about resources they use that are created/written by racialized individuals. These resources include student resources, and/or resources used by teachers for the classroom and/or for developing their critical consciousness. At Oliver’s school, a teacher-led equity team facilitates book clubs each year. This year, they are reading #BlackInSchool (Cooper Diallo, 2021), and Oliver thinks it is interesting because it presents someone’s lived experiences. He said, “it’s not up to you to decide whether this is offensive or not,” in reference to colleagues who have debated racism and resisted book clubs in prior years. The perspective presented in this book is from a Black individual going through the school system in Canada. The text documents their story as a student, which highlights the racism and the culture of whiteness embedded in the education system.
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Learning from and/or reading about racialized experiences was mirrored by Liliane, who seeks out resources written by racialized people and incorporates them into her teachings in a non-tokenizing way. During the interview, she noted a time where her staff gathered last year to talk about the conflict in Israel and Palestine. She appreciated the sharing of resources and getting the perspective from an educational assistant who is Palestinian. Liliane said it helped her understand different perspectives and she “got to ask really innocent questions in the space that [she] felt like there was no judgment. [She’s] not sure if that would have happened if [she] wasn’t vulnerable enough to show that [she] knew nothing.” With this, she said “sometimes I don’t know how to seek clarity and direction from my colleagues that are Black or Indigenous and know how to do so properly. Sometimes just hearing their experiences can be a source of learning.” She notes listening to the Anti-Racist Educator Reads podcast (Clyne, 2020) and following people on Twitter such as Natasha Henry, a Black historian, supports her learning. Natasha Henry also came up in my interview with Hillary, as she shared that she also intentionally reads books, articles, and other resources from authors who are not white. She uses Henry’s resources in her classroom and will continue to do so. At Hillary’s school, there is a staff-created Google Classroom that is dedicated to equity resources for staff, wherein teachers can post resources for the rest of the staff. Hillary shared that she posts a lot of Natasha Henry’s resources in there, alongside Indigenous, Islamic, and Sikh resources that are shared. This schoolwide Google Classroom is available for the entire staff to access, though Hillary noted not all staff use the database. In sharing resources, the hope is that the perspectives/stories being shared are brought into the classroom and authentic voices can be heard.

**Indigenous Teachings in Liliane’s Classroom:**
Liliane shared her experience incorporating Indigenous ways of knowing in her intermediate classes. She began by explaining how she has come to learn this knowledge, which was passed on to her through learning with Elders in PDSB. Over the years of her career, Liliane has discussed Indigenous individuals, communities, and stories with students, embedding Indigenous teachings into her pedagogy. Students in Liliane’s school think of her as the guru and all-knowing teacher around Indigenous knowledges, but she acknowledges and shares with them that she is trying to educate them on something that she didn’t have exposure to growing up, and that they don’t have exposure to typically in the school. Liliane shared a specific example of her own growth as a teacher when she was reprimanded by her administration for cultural appropriation after teaching her class about cedar tea. She spoke about how the administration did not know how to support her, and staff from the school board were called in to support Liliane. In this experience, Liliane did not feel there was enough support or guidance for how to not repeat the same mistake in the future. Liliane notes that there is a lack of Indigenous teachers in the space, and the Indigenous lead at the board calls for “an Indigenous voice telling you this information” to avoid cultural appropriation. With this, she highlights hiring Black, Indigenous and/or racialized teachers would address that, but she worries about the effect of tokenism on these individuals. She is aware that these bumps in the road are part of stumbling through equity work in the classroom and she was reflective on how to ensure this does not occur again in her teaching practice.

4.4 Current Support

All participants spoke about the current support being offered in the school in reference to PD, support from administration, as well as what is currently being offered to students. This Section reviews these three areas of support being offered, as participants discussed how these supports perpetuated and/or attempted to interrupt the culture of whiteness in schools.

Focus on Professional Development

With the OME’s (2020) report, there was a spotlight put on school boards in the GTA, which consequently began the re-evaluation of systems, policies, and practices on various levels within school boards, including PD. Speaking from experience working in PDSB, there are typically PD days throughout the year where the school board mandates specific content to be covered. On top of this, PD occurs at staff meetings, which may or may not have a focus that was
mandated from the school board. From the conversations with participants, including Oliver who does not teach in PDSB, it is evident that racism and anti-Black racism have become the focal point of many of the mandated PD days.

When speaking about anti-Black racism, Oliver notes “it’s been a major focus of all of our PD from the board down into the schools for the last 2-3 years. It’s usurped all other PD.” He recalls doing all different types of PD prior to this focus, but now he said, “there’s no more time to debate whether racism is really happening at schools…these are the fundamental understandings of what’s happening, and we need to get better at all these things.” Oliver’s experiences come from teaching in YRDSB, but Liliane also shared a similar experience at her school in PDSB. Liliane spoke about how anti-Black racism has “become a priority because of the Ministry” in PDSB. She highlights how staff are directed by the board for every minute of PD and she questions who controls the narrative in these sessions, because “the educators that are working directly with students don’t really feel they have a voice…we are the ones implementing the work at the front, and I sometimes feel that these power systems are not allowing us to do the work authentically.” This reflects on the discussion of controlling the narrative (see Section 4.1).

Both Oliver and Liliane spoke to how PD over the past few years has focused on anti-Black racism. My burning question with this is: how is this PD actively mitigating the perpetuation of the culture of whiteness?

The idea of mitigating the culture of whiteness through PD has been taken up by various school boards within the GTA, and teachers are cognizant about how this impacts the work that is being done. Liliane voiced that she was at a “weird place” with this work and how it is being carried out in her school/school board because she is ready to move on to more actionable items,
yet she thinks they are only glossing the surface. She said, “if we’re professionals taking this work seriously, we’d be doing the reading on our own and then coming together and doing actionable things.” She finds that currently, they are talking a lot about the work, but the follow-through is not there. This was also seen at Amanda’s school, as she notes there are instructional coaches from the school board who have come in a few times a month to discuss anti-Black racism. During these sessions, they discussed ways to improve, including looking at resources. These instructional coaches have led PD and guided staff towards implementing ARE in their classrooms; however, Amanda was unsure how much of this is being sustained by staff members at her school. Therefore, I can gather that depending on the school and school board, the PD being implemented has been somewhat effective, but the extent of the long-term impacts will be determined in time.

**Accountability**

Methods to ensure accountability have been discussed in many reports surrounding this work (James & Turner, 2017; OME, 2020; Turner Consulting Group, 2015), and it is an important aspect that was mentioned by participants. When talking about the possibilities of this work, Oliver spoke about adding an equity piece to annual long-range plans (ALP), with occasional meetings between administration and teachers wherein these goals can be discussed to ensure teachers are held accountable. He voiced that adding questions such as “How are you changing your practice to represent the diverse needs of your community? How are you changing your practice to meet the goals of our ABR committee?” would be good entry points for the ALP. We then discussed other measures to ensure accountability, aside from the ALP, and Oliver noted the systems in education that would also need to implement accountability pieces. To exemplify
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this, Oliver began by naming the school board, and the trickle-down effect to administration who would be implementing this within schools through PD. The next step in this thought process is to look at administrators, as they play a key role in how successful schools are implementing sustained change. Oliver noted that if “admin truly empowers teachers to have those conversations but if something comes up, they [administration] don’t know how to handle it.”

This was exemplified earlier in the discussion of Liliane and her integration of Indigenous knowledge in the classroom. If administration is not willing/able to hold staff accountable and support them in bringing this learning into their classes, then the white, Eurocentric power structures will continue to be perpetuated. He also mentioned that unions need to be consulted in this work, as teachers will rely on the union to support their refusal of doing this work unless it is added to a collective agreement. He ended these thoughts by stating, “it would take a lot of political will to take this from this idea to actually implementing this when everything always just comes down to salaries and sick days.” This displays the truth to how the culture of whiteness is perpetuated and where the importance of this work lies. He states, “if there’s no push to make everyone accountable to try and do this, then you’re still only going to have the people who want to do this doing it.” A paradigm shift is needed wherein school boards, administration and unions will prioritize equity in schools.

Organized Student Groups

In elementary schools, groups such as Black Students’ Associations (BSA) and Gay Straight Alliances are being created/organized by staff, administration, and students. The priority of these groups is to support students/voices that have been, and continue to be, pushed to the margins. Amanda, Hillary, and Liliane spoke about these student groups at their schools, along
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with the purpose of the groups, and the struggles in creating them. In the K-8 school where Amanda teaches, students were given the opportunity to partake in a BSA where they could “voice their concerns, voice their struggles, voice things that they would like to see improve in their school experience.” This allows for staff involved to relay the information back to the administration/school staff and one would hope that changes would be made shortly thereafter.

In an example shared by Hillary and how the BSA was created at her school, it demonstrates how racism (and specifically the socialization of racism) permeates thought processes and individuals’ actions, despite not having racist intentions. Hillary shared that when students were chosen for the BSA at her school, her administrator (a Black woman) individually chose students based on names and pictures of students in the school’s electronic database. This became known after one of Hillary’s students (who passes as white) was not invited to the BSA. Her parents got involved after finding out that she wasn’t invited and took the issue up with Hillary. Hillary said she spoke to the principal and found that “what our principal was trying to advocate for, she did the complete opposite.” This was not the only instance that Hillary shared where administration wanted to implement a diversity initiative and it was not well implemented. This brings into question the validity of these actions and if the desire is to do things and make change is genuine, or if it is being done for other people’s perception of the school changing. Regarding this, Hillary said staff at her school believe “a lot of the things that are happening feels like it’s for show so administration can say look at what our school is doing because unfortunately a lot of people who have been on board and doing.” This is discussed further in Chapter 5 through the analysis of the interest convergence principle. Thus, despite student groups having the potential to interrupt the culture of whiteness and enact change based upon the
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experiences of Black students in schools, the sustainable changes and successful implementation has yet to be seen from the participants in this research study.

4.5 Next Steps

Throughout the interviews, the participants spoke about the possibilities and changes that need to occur for this work to continue long-term. Upon refining the data and categorizing the themes that presented themselves, the main areas that participants spoke about changing were PD, and larger structures within the education system. Regarding PD, participants desired different things. Hillary spoke about the benefits of having more time with her colleagues to talk about the implementation of culturally relevant practices, as well as talk freely about what they’re afraid of, and what is working for people. To contradict this, Liliane referenced a PD session where the staff at her school were given time to talk and plan, but they felt they had no clear direction of what they were doing during this session.

On another note, Hillary spoke about how staff at her school want everything planned out and given to them, noting that this is not what an anti-racist educator would do. In contrast to this, Amanda enjoyed using the unlearn posters (unlearn, n.d.), because “they showed examples of a conversation that could be had so that [teachers] can visualize if we’re doing it right or it’s appropriate…I think that there should be more examples.” Therefore, it is evident that the participants all proposed different ideas of what they want for PD moving forward with this work.

During the interviews, I prompted participants to think about larger systems of oppression they would like to change. In reference to institutional and systemic changes proposed, Hillary said “it all needs to be scrapped. It all needs to be burned down. That’s what I tell my kids too, it
doesn’t need to be fixed, it needs to be completely burnt down and rebuilt.” She said that school boards across Canada need to be held accountable, including people holding leadership roles, as well as the provincial Ministry of Education in Ontario. Hillary shared that she tells her students “you’re the ones that need to figuratively light that match and burn it all…rebuild it bigger and better because right now it’s benefiting a very specific group of people. So, burn it down and have it benefit everybody.” This dismantling of the system was also reflected upon by Liliane.

Liliane spoke to the larger systems in education and the change she wants to see when she states:

I would like to see policymakers that are addressing these issues also doing the work to change the laws and the policies because it really does direct the staff…right now, they’re not backing their words and telling us what’s valued, so it’s mixed messaging. I do want to focus on anti-Black racism, but is it required for me to report on at the end of the day? No, so it takes away from the things that I need to legally get done.

These structures that Liliane notes, are the same structures that Hillary was referencing need to be set on fire, and I would agree with Hillary – set fire to the systems.
At the onset of this research study, the purpose of this study was to gain insight into how intermediate teachers address or maintain the culture of whiteness in their teaching practices. It has since been tweaked to gain insight into how intermediate teachers believe they are addressing the culture of whiteness and developing their critical consciousness. To do this, I recruited four teachers; three of which teach in PDSB, and one teaches in YRDSB. I collected data from each participant through semi-structured interviews and I analyzed these interviews as a single case study of white intermediate teachers in the GTA. The interview questions (see Appendix A) aligned with my RQs: 1A) How is the culture of whiteness perpetuated by white intermediate teachers in the Greater Toronto Area? 1B) How does the culture of whiteness impact the pedagogies and resources teachers use in intermediate classes in Ontario? 2) What tools are white teachers using to mitigate the perpetuation of the culture of whiteness and develop their critical consciousness? 3) What changes need to be implemented to mitigate the perpetuation of the culture of whiteness in teaching (i.e., structural, institutional, and/or systemic)? In case study research, the researcher should present the data in a way that ensures the reader feels as close to the case as possible without the boundaries of time and place being realized (Stake, 2013). Therefore, in this Chapter, I discuss how the findings presented in Chapter 4 connect to the theoretical framework. This is done by first reviewing the major findings/themes that emerged from data collection prior to connecting these findings/themes with CRT, as well as relevant
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literature. Following this, I answer the three RQs. Due to writing the Chapter this way, the most important quotes from Chapter 4 will be repeated.

5.1 Connections Between Findings and Tenets of CRT

The theoretical underpinning of this study is CRT, and when considering the tenets of CRT to the emerging themes from the interviews, there are direct correlations. Throughout the coding process, I continuously coded and recorded the data based on the tenets of CRT as my understanding of the tenets developed. Each tenet was demonstrated at various times throughout the interviews. This Section outlines these connections between the tenets of CRT and the findings of the study.

Connection #1: The Permanence of Racism

Through asking how the culture of whiteness is being perpetuated by teachers (RQ 1A), the participants shared many different experiences of how racism is ever-present in the education system in the GTA. Ranging from teachers disliking not being in control to the way in which celebrations are implemented in schools and the struggles in the implementation of ARE, all these findings demonstrated this tenet of CRT. Oliver said, “if [teachers are] teaching something that they’re not comfortable with, even if it doesn’t directly relate to race or identity or anything, they’re uncomfortable teaching it because they don’t feel like they’re like an expert in it, they just avoid it.” By avoiding the topic completely, the culture of whiteness is silently maintained, and racism continues to permeate in the school system. Through discussing the celebrations that occur in schools, such as spirit week, Hillary recalled staff members saying, “they include everybody,” but she noted they do not and a lot of these celebrations, such as Black History
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Month, perpetuate the idea of teachers leaving topics/themes to specific months of the school year, often excluding racialized experiences, perspectives, and stories for the other nine months of the school year. Teachers’ level of discomfort and the perpetual celebration of heritage months/days throughout the year are two ways in which participants discussed the permanence of racism.

In addition, the discussion of the struggles implementing this work further demonstrates how racism is socialized into society, and there are many teachers who do not recognize the culture of whiteness and the subsequent negative impacts on students as issues. A theme that emerged in all the interviews was the small percentage of teachers who are implementing this work. Amanda notes 20% of a staff of 80 are implementing this work. The other 80% potentially engage with aspects of the work and do what is required to be done for administration purposes, but she does not think this is being implemented consistently. This is how the permanence of racism is being maintained at her school specifically, and it gives an insight into the likelihood of this being the case at other schools across the GTA. This brings up the idea of accountability, as administrators have historically been met with resistance when attempting to implement accountability measures. Hillary spoke about this when she referenced the union being called when the equity team at her school planned observations in classrooms. These are ways that racism continues to permeate in schools.

Regarding the implementation of ARE, participants often heard excuses from their colleagues regarding their responsibilities and what is directed at them in PD. Administration currently has the responsibility to prepare PD on topics such as anti-Black racism, but it is evident that racism is ingrained within society and the likelihood of PD being implemented
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through a white lens is high for white administrators, as well as racialized administrators who may have internalized oppression and the culture of whiteness. Furthermore, Liliane spoke about PD and how “a lot of staff will not engage in [equity work] unless they’re given clear direction about what they can and cannot do.” This idea of wanting to be told what teachers can and cannot do mirrors the discussion of teachers not being comfortable in areas they are not experts in. The teachers that Liliane is referencing want things handed to them, and lessons to be explicit, but the truth is this work is bumpy, with many stumbles and falls along the road. As Liliane experienced regarding intertwining Indigeneity in her classroom, there should be points where teachers are experiencing discomfort in this work, because that is interrupting racism. The permanence of racism will continue unless teachers put the time and effort into this work themselves, which begins with developing their critical consciousness.

Connection #2: Whiteness as Property

In the interviews, power structures and systems of oppression (i.e., rules, code of conduct, provincially mandated curriculum, teacher unions) emerged in multiple interviews, which directly demonstrates how whiteness is viewed as property in the education system. The power being held by white individuals perpetuates European, colonial perspectives within school boards across the province of Ontario. These perspectives have a central role and place in education, as if they are the land on which the schools were built. Within these structures and systems, the provincial curriculum comes into play, teacher unions, as well as hiring practices – all of which were created in colonial spaces. Therefore, in this Section, I discuss the systems and structures that are regarded as “property” in the education system such as the curriculum, labour unions, and hiring practices, to name a few examples.
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As mentioned in Chapter 4, the curriculum in Ontario is created provincially, and participants were very aware of how this mandated curriculum not only perpetuates the culture of whiteness, but also how colonialism impacted the creation of the curriculum. While Hillary discussed her colleagues who used the curriculum as an excuse to not engage in equity work in their classrooms, Oliver praised the curriculum for being interpretable and not prescriptive, allowing teachers to bring in diverse sources and topics in their teaching. Regardless of how the curriculum is being used, Hillary drives the connection to colonization home when she states, “Who got to decide what’s curriculum and what’s not?” This is an extremely important question as DeCuir & Dixson (2004) discussed whiteness as property being maintained in education through educational policies and practices, such as the provincial curriculum. Teachers like Liliane “want to be teaching ABR but there’s nothing in the curriculum that explicitly tells [them] to do that.” This creates a buffer for teachers who are not engaging in this work, as they are not legally required to report on social justice and/or anti-racist topics in their classroom. As the current curriculum continues to be mandated, white, Eurocentric perspectives, worldviews, ways of knowing, etc., will be the property that upholds whiteness at the elementary school level.

In discussing the systems and structures that uphold whiteness as property, teacher hiring practices need to be reviewed. As discussed in Chapter 4, hiring practices were created by white individuals, which often means the interviewers are looking for white knowledge and experiences in interviewee’s responses. This malpractice for hiring does not support the interrogation of the culture of whiteness but does the opposite instead. In seeking white knowledge and experiences from interviewees, the cyclical pattern of hiring white teachers and white, Eurocentric pedagogies being at the forefront of the education system will continue. This solidifies whose knowledge is
being held in places of power, and acts as a stake in the ground to claim white knowledge as the land in which the education system is built.

Additionally, participants in this study acknowledged the lack of diversity within the teaching population, though I did not get the sense that they saw this as an endangerment to their jobs, likely because they are all permanent teachers. For example, Oliver was aware of the white structural hiring practices, referencing interviewers having a rubric with a list of buzzwords and spoke to how this discriminated against racialized groups. Furthermore, Amanda spoke about how her administrative team is seeking out teachers from diverse backgrounds. In both these discussions, I did not think the participants demonstrated white fragility or white apathy because they are not currently seeking jobs. They already benefited from this white system, as did I when I was hired in 2015. I wonder how this conversation would have gone differently if any of the teachers were in positions where their whiteness would no longer put them in a position of privilege when seeking employment. The system of hiring worked for us when we entered the job force, though there are many people it discriminates against.

These discriminatory practices in the structural system of hiring were discussed in the OME (2020) report when investigators found 50% of files submitted in a job competition file audit had interview process irregularities. This includes “missing, incomplete, or misused scoring rubric; inconsistent interview questions; [and/or] no clear rationale for selection of successful candidate” (OME, 2020, p. 33). Furthermore, 26% of interviewees listed the interviewers as references (OME, 2020). This raises huge red flags and can be viewed as a reason why white individuals continue to be the largest racial demographic for teachers in PDSB. Being white and having connections to other people in the school board puts individuals at an advantage. White
people feel they have the right to knowledge-keeping, including the participants, as if they have title on the property and/or land. What they fail to realize is the land was never ours to give away.

Furthermore, Canadian teacher unions were created as early as 1920, during a time when white individuals monopolized the power to create systems such as unions. This system acts as property a century later, as white individuals’ livelihoods, perspectives and worldviews are placed at the forefront of their priorities. It is evident that teacher unions are being used to protect the culture of whiteness and teachers’ unwillingness to engage in this work, however, unions in the GTA fail to address and remedy their role in this perpetuation of the culture of whiteness. For example, Rottmann (2008) researched Canadian teachers unions’ commitment to this social justice through an analysis of 20 teacher union websites. She uncovered that Canadian teacher unions’ websites listed advocating for social justice in public education through the following tasks: organizing equity-oriented divisions and committees, providing justice-minded PD, structuring leadership opportunities for traditionally underrepresented groups, issuing equity audits of organizations, and devising internal policies on controversial issues to name a few (Rottmann, 2008). Despite this commitment, Rottmann (2008) highlights that “very few of the organizations surveyed articulated a commitment to all projects” (p. 983). This same sentiment was highlighted by Dhamoon (2020) when she states, “while universities and unions/associations certainly aim/claim to promote workplace social justice, the principles of anti-racism are NOT the basis of union-worker-employer relations” (p. 7). This discrepancy between what a teacher union advocates for, versus what is happening in schools is exactly what the participants spoke about. The power that the union has is upholding the culture of whiteness by not including anti-racism nor anti-oppressive policies in the collective agreement.
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Considering this, collective agreements must be discussed as they are politically driven contracts between an employer (i.e., school board and by extension, provincial government) and a bargaining unit (i.e., teachers) that outlines the roles and responsibilities for employees. Depending on which political party is in power, collective agreements reflect the ideologies of the government, can limit and/or restrict race-based data to be collected, as well as prioritize or deprioritize initiatives (Carr, 2006). Historically, collective agreements do not include or consider the workload involved in dealing with racism by racialized teachers (Dhamoon, 2020). To further the notion that unions are holding the culture of whiteness and the power they created, it is important to note those in leadership positions in teacher unions. Like the demographics of the teaching population, white leaders and teacher unions in Canada have worked hard to maintain those in power positions and ensure they uphold the white structure. Racialized members of teacher unions have formed a collective and advocated for representation by more racialized members within the union (Francis, 2021). This was previously noted by Rottmann (2008) when she outlined that 25% of teacher unions surveyed in her research indicated there was “program/material support for members of underrepresented groups to enter union leadership” (p. 994). This is quite a low amount of teacher unions, especially considering their commitment to social justice and equity. Keeping white individuals in leadership positions, as well as not including anti-racism policies in the collective agreements are ways in which the culture of whiteness permeates teacher unions and is another form of whiteness as property.

The idea of whiteness being regarded as property was discussed by participants, though it was not explicitly spoken about in the same terminology used in this Chapter. This idea emerged when talking about structures in society more generally, as well as how the culture of whiteness
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is perpetuated in these structures daily. For example, Hillary said, “people are just so willfully ignorant that they just don’t realize who built the systems...education, healthcare, law enforcement, politics, everything is built upon white supremacy because those are the people who built those systems.” These systems were built during colonialism and were built on the property that was stolen from Indigenous communities (Feagin, 2013). To this day, these systems continue to function on the same stolen property. In this discussion, we spoke about how systems do not want to change, especially if that means the people at the top of the system are negatively impacted for the benefit of others. Oliver and I also spoke about this idea of systems being constructed to uphold whiteness and Oliver said, “nitpicking little parts of the argument, or making it personal, those are in themselves things that resist change, those are in themselves part of the system.” This ties back into how systems and structures in education have the authority/power to resist change, and ensure these structures continue to hold onto the power they have.

An aspect that was neglected by all participants, as well as absent in my criticality when conducting the research, was the power and privilege the participants and I have as pieces in the system of education. Due to the dominance of white supremacy, all four white participants and I could engage in this work if we chose to, and if we decide not to engage and continue to perpetuate the culture of whiteness, there are structures (i.e., labour unions) that will protect us. Though each participant spoke about the systems and structures within education, and they acknowledged they are on this journey to teach in anti-oppressive methods, none of them blatantly said that they are actively perpetuating whiteness, while each of them are perpetuating it daily through being white in a white supremacist system. To dive further into this, it is important to
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consider how racialized teachers would navigate the same situation. For example, can racialized teachers turn their back towards ARE and inclusion? What would this mean for them and for their professional career? As noted, Lopez (2020) spoke about racialized leaders often feeling responsible for racialized students. Thus, it is unlikely that racialized leaders would be able to turn their back towards ARE and not engage. Additionally, their lived experiences and embodiment of ARE is not up for negotiation. This aspect of the continual perpetuation of the culture of whiteness through being a teacher in this white supremacist system was not acknowledged, displaying how entrenched the culture of whiteness is in the minds of the participants, as well as myself.

Connection #3: The Critique of Liberalism

DeCuir & Dixson (2004) discussed CRT and the three basic liberal notions that “have been embraced by liberal legal ideology: the notion of colourblindness, the neutrality of the law, and incremental change” (p. 29). With respect to education and this study, these three basic notions persist by changing the neutrality of the law to the neutrality of education. When asking questions that addressed RQ 1A, this concept emerged through the reasons (or excuses) why other teachers are not engaging in this work. Hillary shared her colleagues’ responses when discussing this work, quoting them saying “I don’t see colour,” “I’m kind and that’s all that matters,” and/or “I treat everybody the same.” These responses align with the liberal notion of colourblindness. Her colleagues believe “if people work hard enough, they will overcome the myriad obstacles. There is limited interrogation of the way in which the ideals of meritocracy and individualism are also impacted by social conditions” (Solomon et al., 2005, p. 160). This dismisses the impacts of centuries of colonization and systemic oppression have on racialized
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communities and individuals. This means the people who make these claims have likely not experienced systemic oppression and/or racism because they are able to turn a blind eye to the colour of one’s skin. This critical piece and deeper critical consciousness are thoughts teachers need to reflect on as they hold individualistic and meritocratic views of education.

Furthermore, the idea of incremental change in equity work (i.e., we are further along this journey than 5 years ago) is one that is seen in schools through the concept of everyone being on their own “journey” with this work. Oliver talked about how there are more people interested in equity work than 10-15 years ago but the reality of this is the act of implementing this work and putting it into practice is very slow. He said, “I think the focus is genuine, and people are receiving it, but the pace of progress is so slow and part of that is people don’t necessarily have the time…unless they’re already motivated to do that in their spare time.” This notion will allow the culture of whiteness to continue to perpetuate the education system. The approach taken by Hillary’s administrator is more rigorous in stating “you’re on board or you’re not. And if you’re not, then you can find another school.” Hillary’s white colleagues voiced that they felt ganged up on and are afraid to say something wrong. She continued this thought when she said that “the harm [they are] doing by not doing any of these things is far worse than any mistake [they] perceive [they] may make.” This is accurate for the adoption of these liberal ideals as they will persist, and the change will continue to be slow if teachers do not realize they are part of the problem and think/act critically to change that.

Lastly, some teachers in Ontario believe students are not ready to discuss social justice issues in intermediate grades. What I heard from teacher participants was the exact opposite of this. Students are ready and wanting to have these conversations. As demonstrated by Hillary, she
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shared how she talks to her students about the systems and who built the systems. With this, she shared a story about a student of hers that wrote to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and members of parliament about residential schools and the calls to action for clean water on Indigenous reserves. This was mirrored in Amanda’s experiences as she spoke about how her students were knowledgeable and have opened up about these topics, which shows that students are interested in these topics. These interviews serve as examples of teachers seeing student interest in the topics, which breaks the excuse that liberalism provides about students not being ready to talk about this. The students themselves are actively interrogating racism and going against the permanence of racism in these discussions and are likely interested in having more of these discussions.

Connection #4: Counterstories

Milner (2007) discussed counterstories as emphasizing and valuing racialized individual’s knowledge construction, lived experiences, as well as their voices/perspectives. Counterstories often present a different reality of the world and targets assumptions and frameworks that mask racial injustice (Gillborn & Ladson-Billings, 2010). The integration of counterstories can be done through hiring racialized teachers who bring authentic voices to the classroom. This tenet of CRT is an area wherein my positionality and whiteness emerged, as I initially thought counterstories were told when teachers brought in diverse perspectives (i.e., including multiple viewpoints/stories of immigration in 19th century Canada for a Grade 8 history unit). Through this research and diving deeper into my understanding of counterstories, it is evident that these are not authentic counterstories, as they were likely still taught from my white lens/perspective. When participants spoke about embedding diverse perspectives into their teaching
Regarding diversifying resources, teachers spoke about bringing diverse perspectives into their teaching. Aside from Liliane sharing “I find it very hard to find French resources that counter the Eurocentric vision,” the term “counterstories” never emerged in the interviews. This could be reflective of my whiteness when conducting the interviews, as well as the participants’. As a former teacher myself, I had not heard of the term “counterstories” until graduate school. I believe the absence of using the term in schools and larger educational contexts reflects on the teaching population’s understanding of diversity in the classroom. This is reflective of in-service teachers, administration, as well as school board staff at all levels. The common term being used to describe bringing diversity into the classroom is through embedding “diverse and/or different perspectives” in teaching practices. All participants spoke about how they were seeking out “different perspectives” to bring into their classrooms as they move away from textbooks and towards resources that are more “diverse.” This encompasses the content, images, perspectives, and/or authors of resources.

When discussing why teachers are moving away from textbooks and towards more diverse perspectives, Hillary said:

History books are written by the system that they were constructed by…the system was built for people who colonized this place, so of course it’s written by
white Europeans who built the systems. It’s their perspectives…it’s baked in like a muffin, it’s all baked in there and it’s hard to separate it.

This idea of racism and the culture of whiteness being baked into a muffin is similar to Sensoy and DiAngelo’s (2017) analogy of the socialization of racism, and how it is like a fish swimming in water. We are immersed in the water of our culture, which makes it hard to separate and make sense of the world in which we know it. This does not mean that the task is impossible to achieve. It requires the acknowledgement of the water that surrounds us, and a conscious mind to recognize this and push against it.

What I found to be absent from the conversations regarding diversifying resources was how these “diverse perspectives” are being shared. Are these perspectives being shared during one-off lessons, or on a consistent basis? Do these resources explicitly address racism, or are they being used to educate students on what their white teachers think they should be learning about? Are these resources showing a different way of knowing that explicitly targets the current power structures (i.e., the Eurocentric/white curriculum) in society? Though the participants spoke about finding resources for the classroom written from diverse perspectives, they were not explicit with how they are embedding these resources and changing their pedagogies. Counterstories are a method of “exposing and critiquing normalized dialogues that perpetuate racial stereotypes” which allows for the challenging of privileged discourses, “serving as a means for giving voice to marginalized groups” (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004, p. 27). Following these interviews and a close reading of the transcriptions, I am not certain the integration of diverse perspectives by the participants is actively challenging privileged discourses.
In contrast to student resources, the resources shared by participants for their own self-growth and PD specifically tackle issues of power while empowering racialized individual’s voices and experiences. Participants recognized the need to read resources that were written from racialized individuals. Hillary and Liliane specifically spoke to this and said they seek out information from racialized individuals (i.e., Black historians) or look for racialized authors when selecting resources/books. The important aspect of this work that is crucial to tie into this discussion of counterstories is to hire racialized teachers, as well as bringing racialized community members into the school. Without having a white person interpreting racialized peoples’ lived experiences and stories would be allowing counterstories to enter the classroom in an engaging and authentic way. In a journal entry, Liliane questioned participants in this study being white and she wrote:

What does this suggest about how we include BIPOC [Black, Indigenous, People of Colour] into our spaces, in education and elsewhere? What does this say about how, we, as white people, help or don’t help?…How can teachers bring in authentic voice into the classroom, regularly, if student body does not reflect important learning (e.g., re: Black/Indigenous experience). How can we diversify our spaces without tokenizing or being white saviours?

This questioning is crucial for how we move forward with this work, and how we envision bringing in counterstories (see Section 2.7.1 for the parameters of a counterstory) to educate students authentically.

**Connection #5: The Interest Convergence Principle**
The interest convergence principle emerges when individuals take up equity work only when it is advantageous for them to do so. In this Subsection, I outline how this principle presented itself in the research. The three ways in which this occurred are through participants’ experiences with the implementation of ARE, as well as the support from administrators/school boards, and the creation of student-led groups.

Participants’ reasons to volunteer for this study varied, though most expressed the desire to mitigate inequities for their students. In all four interviews, I sensed the participants had been engaging in equity work with their students and in their own PD for a few years. This came from their wealth of knowledge in teacher resources, as well as their discussion for how long they were involved in this work on equity teams at their schools. The interest convergence principle emerged in the discussion of other people within the school possessing a desire to do this work, including administrators. This aligns with Ledesma and Calderón (2015) as they state, “whites will only support race-conscious remedies when perceived costs are outweighed by the perceived benefits to be gained by the majority” (p. 216). This support from white and non-white individuals was discussed by participants through implementation, support from administration, and the creation of student-led groups.

Regarding examples of this work being implemented, all participants spoke about how they were unsure of how any teachers in their school actively engage in equity work and teach through anti-oppressive lenses daily. Hillary said “I think it’s happening because they think, well, I have to do it anyway” but she questions the validity of the conversations and genuine interest that some teachers in her school have with equity work. She thinks many of her colleagues complete the accountability task but then put it “away in a drawer somewhere or they file it off.
and just keep doing things the way that [they] normally do, but [they were] part of it, [they] checked it off.” This was the sentiment shared by all participants, which makes me question the genuine interest in this work. Are teachers doing this work to check off a box, are they genuinely interested? Or are they doing this work to move towards a larger societal change?

Considering the emerging importance of this work, and to avoid any negative press/criticism from the public, I argue a lot of school boards have made anti-Black racism a focus over the past two years. Prior to that, there was little to no discussion of these issues in education, which I can speak to from my experiences as a teacher in PDSB. For this reason, the interest convergence principle comes into play, as the school board was certainly aware these issues were occurring. Specifically, in the GTA, decades of research have advocated for a change (Lewis, 1992; OME, 2020; Social Planning Council of Peel, 2015; Turner Consulting Group, 2015), so why is the school board engaging in the work now? Likely, this is due to the OME (2020) report and the directives within it. When discussing the school board and their increased interest with the topic, Liliane spoke about PDSB sharing resources for BHM and said, “that’s the challenge I have with it coming from the board level, because they are sharing links with us, but it doesn’t have that human aspect to it.” The human aspect lacking points to the school board doing something to look good in the eyes of the public; however, root issues are not being addressed, and there is limited support for teachers and administrators in this work.

Additionally, the participants spoke about taking up this work in their respective classrooms. This is important to analyze when discussing how the interest convergence principle is demonstrated, as the participants are not above this way of thinking. In the interviews with Hillary and Oliver, they both brought up reasons to do this work. This was not something I
prompted them to speak about, and it was interesting to hear their perspectives. Hillary discussed the desire to move away from a single perspective/narrative, despite the makeup of students in her classroom. She asked, “why would you not want yourself and your students to be critical thinkers and present multiple perspectives?” Along the same thought process, Oliver spoke about how “it’s good teaching practices to provide a wide range of resources with different points of view and different representation, regardless of racism in your board.” He said the minute he was standing in front of twenty-two Chinese students and five Sri Lankan kids and two Indian kids and one white kid in his class, he realized that he had to educate himself and represent these kids. With this, he notes that if you look around and see a lot of white teachers, and not a lot of white students, it is important to think about the effects of this. When considering these reasons to do the work against interest convergence, I would argue these reasons shared by participants are not to benefit themselves, though the following Subsection demonstrates how actions from administrators and/or school boards do fall under this principle.

Lastly, Hillary’s experience with her administrator choosing students for the BSA based on photos and names must be analyzed. During an early draft of this thesis, I classified this as interest convergence without critically reflecting on the complexity of race and identity. It does not go unnoticed that if the correct supports were in place from the school board (i.e., PD on intersectionality and understanding the historical context of racial identities), this administrator may have acted differently, and the situation may not have unfolded in the way it did. In speaking about her administrator, Hillary felt privileged enough to critique her Black administrator, stating her administrator wants to be able to say, “look at what our school is doing.” The reality within Hillary’s statement is that much like Black students, “Black people have always had to work
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harder than their white counterparts to prove themselves worthy of a position and leadership roles” (Lopez, 2020, p. 1943). Thus, if Hillary’s administrator is proud of what is occurring in her school and shows others what is occurring, the intention may be to reinforce the notion that she possesses the skills, knowledge, and competence for the position she holds. Historically, it was assumed that Black leaders obtained their roles due to affirmative action and they are not actually capable of these roles (Lopez, 2020). Furthermore, the action of Hillary’s administrator creating the BSA may reflect the idea that Black school leaders feel they are responsible for the success of Black students. Lopez (2020) states Black school leaders felt that “the needs of Black students were left entirely up to them, as some White teachers and principals did not want to spend the time getting to know Black kids so that they could support their learning in meaningful ways” (p. 1944). This often leaves Black school leaders with the responsibility to serve Black students, like Hillary’s administrator did in creating a BSA at her school. Therefore, after a deeper analysis of the situation, it is evident that Hillary has an ahistorical perspective of the event, and the complexity of race and identity are outlined within this situation and the administrator’s actions.

5.2 Discussion of Research Questions

This study itself perpetuates the culture of whiteness, and each white teacher attempting (as well as those not attempting) to mitigate the impacts of the culture of whiteness, perpetuate whiteness. Regardless of how far along they are on their journey of professional growth and critical consciousness, it is nearly impossible to make decisions without one’s racial identity creating biases from within. As noted in Chapter 2, the socialization of racism impacts all individuals and

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6 As mentioned, this can also be perpetuated by racialized teachers, as they can internalize the culture of whiteness and oppression.
there is a white racial frame that continues to permeate all aspects of society (Feagin, 2013). Therefore, when discussing the research questions, it is essential to remember the tenet of whiteness as property and the permanence of racism. Through racial capitalism and many other structures of oppression, race is central to many systems and power structures around us. Therefore, it is possible for teachers to use resources to mitigate the adverse impacts of the culture of whiteness on their students; however, it is not possible to remove the racial frame or eliminate racism. If this happened, the tenet of the permanence of racism in CRT would be negated. Therefore, what follows in this Subsection is a discussion of the research questions with the understanding that the research was conducted before I came to the realization of how integrated the culture of whiteness is in daily life and my positionality.

This Subsection examines the RQs in relation to the five primary themes and their corresponding sub-themes, which is displayed in Table 5. In the columns beside the RQs, the primary themes are noted, with the corresponding sub-themes in the next column. Following Table 5, I review each RQ and respond to the questions using data from this research study. For RQ 1A and RQ 1B, I use participants’ responses about other teachers, as well as analyzing their own experiences to answer the RQs. For RQ 2 and RQ 3, I am relying on what the participants shared about their own pedagogies, as well as my own teaching experiences to respond to the questions.

**Table 5.** Connections between research questions and themes

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Primary Themes</th>
<th>Subthemes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1A) How is the culture of whiteness perpetuated by</td>
<td>Resistance/struggles with implementation</td>
<td>- Power dynamics</td>
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<td>- Celebrations in schools</td>
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### Research Question

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Primary Themes</th>
<th>Subthemes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>white intermediate teachers in the Greater Toronto Area?</td>
<td>- Controlling the narrative</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1B) How does the culture of whiteness impact the pedagogies and resources teachers use in intermediate classes in Ontario?</td>
<td>- Defensiveness</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Excuses</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Struggles with PD</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Systems/structures</td>
<td>- Curriculum</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Hiring practices</td>
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<td>- Labour relations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Diversifying resources</td>
<td>- Student resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>2) What tools are white teachers using to mitigate the perpetuation of the culture of whiteness and develop their critical consciousness?</td>
<td>Diversifying resources</td>
<td>- Teacher resources</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Student voice</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Current Support</td>
<td>- PD</td>
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<td>- Accountability</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>- Student groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>3) What changes need to be implemented to mitigate the perpetuation of the culture of whiteness in teaching (i.e., structural, institutional, and/or systemic)?</td>
<td>Systems/Structures</td>
<td>- In society</td>
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<td>- In education (hiring practices)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Diversifying Resources</td>
<td>- Resources</td>
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<td>- Authentic voice</td>
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<td>Next Steps</td>
<td>- PD</td>
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<td>- Structures in education</td>
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### Research Question #1

1. A) How is the culture of whiteness perpetuated by white intermediate teachers in the Greater Toronto Area?

   B) How does the culture of whiteness impact the pedagogies and resources teachers use in intermediate classes in Ontario?

   Controlling the narrative, resisting and/or struggling to implement ARE, and maintaining existing systems/structures in education are examples of how white intermediate teachers
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perpetuate the culture of whiteness in the GTA. Teachers control the narrative through exerting their power over students, making classroom decisions daily without the input of students, as well as not having control and being uncomfortable with this lack of control. All my participants noted that teachers disliked being uncomfortable. They shared that if teachers are not an expert on the topic, such as racism, then they would not bring it up in their classrooms. With this lack of explicit interruption, it will continue to allow the culture of whiteness and white supremacy, along with Eurocentrism, to be the dominant ideology that is taught to students. Oliver said that this perpetuation and continuation of Eurocentric pedagogies is problematic when it continues for multiple generations. He noted that if these generational pedagogies are not challenged, they will continue to impact students and maintain the culture of whiteness in their classrooms.

In addition to teachers not wanting to be uncomfortable, celebrations at schools are being dominated from Eurocentric perspectives and is another way in which the culture of whiteness is being perpetuated in schools. The school calendar often revolves around European, religious celebrations. With this comes schoolwide celebrations (such as Christmas), as well as having specific months that are dedicated to celebrating different heritages. Though Amanda and Hillary spoke about how their schools are trying to move away from focussing on these specific heritages and celebrations, the school board continues to distribute and push the celebrations onto teachers and schools. An example of this is the school board sending out resources every February for BHM. Teachers can use their professional judgement to create learning opportunities from these monthly celebrations; however, a precedent has been set and it must be explicitly interrupted for the culture of whiteness to stop controlling the narrative during these times of the year.
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As mentioned, white intermediate teachers in the GTA also perpetuate white supremacy through their resistance to implement ARE, as well as the struggles within the implementation of these pedagogies. Participants noted colleagues’ hesitation and defensiveness when bringing up ARE, claiming they cannot be blamed for years of systemic racism and oppression. Hillary continuously noted the blatant pushback at her school from colleagues who claimed to be anti-racist. This emerged in examples of how they were kind to all students, which only perpetuates the notion of the culture of whiteness rather than interrupting it. These feelings of white fragility and white privilege that were shared by Hillary’s white colleagues are an exemplar for the rhetoric that is seen across the GTA. To further this, the level of engagement regarding PD also exemplifies how the culture of whiteness is seen in GTA schools, as Chapter 4 noted the many struggles that were shared by participants. These struggles emerged from both the administrator’s side, as well as the educator’s side with neither knowing what needs to be done or how to plan for implementing ARE. With this, there seems to be no clear direction from administration nor PDSB and YRDSB for how teachers can implement ARE. In instances where administration did have a clear direction of what they wanted to do, pushback from teachers and consequently, teacher unions have stopped this from occurring. Thus, the struggles when implementing effective PD are another aspect of the education system where the culture of whiteness is perpetuated.

Furthermore, when discussing the structures and systems in place and education, the provincial curriculum and teacher unions are two examples that emerged from this research that perpetuated the culture of whiteness. The provincial curriculum (seen as property when reflecting on the tenets of CRT) mandates subject specific expectations, as noted throughout this thesis.
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Teachers that participated in this research study claimed that some of their colleagues would reference the curriculum as a reason why they cannot cover racism and anti-oppression in their classrooms. Hillary noted that she intertwines social justice issues into the content she is teaching. On the same wavelength, Oliver shared that he felt there is an open-endedness of the curriculum that allows teachers to embed social justice issues/content in language arts quite easily. This demonstrates that the colleagues who claim the curriculum is to blame for not speaking about social justice issues in their classrooms are using this as an excuse because it can be done, as participants in this study discussed. Also, when equity teams were planning to visit classrooms to see student engagement during culturally responsive lessons at Hillary’s school, the union was called, and union staff put a halt on this endeavor. This was noted by Hillary in our interview, as we discussed how unions protect teachers and act as a facilitator to perpetuate the culture of whiteness. The question now becomes how can unions take an active role in interrogating and addressing the culture of whiteness to ensure that they are not part of the societal structures that allow Eurocentrism and white supremacy to permeate the school boards and classrooms?

It should be noted that this research study perpetuates the culture of whiteness, as the participants, as well as myself, all identify as white individuals. We are not above the socialization of racism, nor are we above whiteness impacting our teaching and daily lives. I am fortunate that my participants volunteered for this study, but I question how this work would have differed if I was not a white female. The ease of the conversations with participants, especially on a topic that many individuals are hesitant to speak about, makes me reflect on my privilege.
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within this work. Perhaps the examples shared and the ways in which participants spoke to me about their experiences was because we share the common identity of being white.

When reflecting on this, it is important to analyze how the participants themselves perpetuate the culture of whiteness in their teaching. For example, Amanda and Hillary both spoke about how the same groups of teachers are continuously being asked to take on leadership roles on equity teams. Through this, Amanda felt that she was being asked to do a lot, which is why she did not participate in the team this school year. This brings up the question, if we are called upon time and time again to engage in this work, does it mean that it shouldn’t be done? Can our black colleagues turn their heads away from this work? This work is important and necessary. White individuals need to be mindful of how they engage in equity work, and how their decision to not participate can perpetuate the culture of whiteness. The longer it takes for people to prioritize equity work and engage in the development of their critical consciousness, the more students will be negatively impacted by the systemic racism in education.

In addition to the example of Amanda and the equity team at her school, Oliver and Liliane perpetuate the culture of whiteness through the selection of resources used in their classrooms. Oliver shared his method to picking resources when he spoke about how he often picked resources based on topics that he thought were interesting and thought his students would be interested in. This is often done by many teachers, without talking to students, nor asking them if they are truly interested in these topics. As a white man, Oliver is perpetuating the culture of whiteness by choosing topics that he is interested in and bringing those into the classroom. Also, Liliane spoke about how she was reprimanded for embedding and integrating Indigenous teachings in her classroom, which she notes is part of her learning. She shared that she
understands the problematic aspect that accompanied the method of integrating these teachings, yet she perpetuated the culture of whiteness in this situation. This was done through adapting a simple solution (i.e., desiring guidelines for how to best move forward), without acknowledging the complexities nor root causes of the issue. These examples are all instances where the culture of whiteness cannot be fully removed from the equation, despite the teachers’ intentions and active engagement in this work. As Hillary had mentioned multiple times in our interviews, we are all baked into this white supremacist system, and we must continuously go against it to bring about change.

Regarding the resources that teachers use in their classrooms, the white systems and ownership of these resources/tools are typically in the hands of white individuals and/or systems. This impacts how this work progresses, and who is involved in this process. As participants shared, school boards and schools are putting money towards purchasing more diverse resources that represent their students, though this is often done by white administrators and/or white teachers. With this, there is a move away from textbooks and towards more equitable resources in the classroom. All participants spoke about content that was more culturally relevant and used examples of race, age, physical appearance, sexuality, gender, and religious beliefs, as diverse content that is embedded in new resources that were being purchased for students. By bringing in these new resources, teachers and administrations and school boards are hopeful that students will begin to see themselves reflected in the learning and will not be as negatively impacted as using solely Eurocentric resources. 7 Considering most of the teaching population in PDSB is

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7 The problem with this perspective and simple solution is the root causes of systemic racism are neglected. Teachers’ biases, assessments, teaching philosophies, instructional strategies, and/or pedagogies are not being interrogated for the ways in which they perpetuate the culture of whiteness.
white (OME, 2020), those who have the power and authority to decide which resources are bought and utilized are still white teachers. This means a white individual will be picking the resources, from a white perspective, regardless of where they are in their journey towards anti-oppressive pedagogies and ARE. Whiteness will once again be centered in these decisions. The directives in the OME (2020) report explicitly ask for schools to audit their resources and libraries, and as Amanda discussed, schools in PDSB are beginning this process. This re-evaluation is a step towards deepening one’s critical consciousness, though the extent of this re-evaluation is yet to be determined, especially considering who is responsible for purchasing the new materials.

**Research Question #2**

2. What tools are white teachers using to mitigate the perpetuation of the culture of whiteness and develop their critical consciousness?

Upon feedback from Dr. Pillay and deep reflection, I realize that this question is flawed and perpetuates the culture of whiteness from the onset. My critical consciousness when I created these questions in comparison to what I believe now has changed. Like Moody Maestranzi et al. (2021) advocates for, I needed to engage in necessary self-work before engaging in this topic. I am now questioning how white teachers can mitigate the perpetuation of the culture of whiteness through tools they use in their classroom, when we (white teachers) are also part of the systemic problem? Dr. Pillay prompted this critical reflection when she asked if it was possible to dismantle the system using the tools created by the system that created the problem. Lorde (2003) states “only the most narrow parameters of change are possible and allowable” (p. 1) when using the tools of a racist patriarchy to examine the outcomes of the same system. Therefore, the tools
teachers use is one aspect of this conversation and can have the outcome of mitigating the negative impacts on racialized students; however, a paradigm shift must occur along with this, that encompasses a teacher’s pedagogy, mindset, and critical consciousness. Even with a paradigm shift, white teachers cannot remove their racial identity from the equation and a lot of work on developing their critical consciousness is needed. Whiteness and the way in which they interact in society are dictated by their identities and claiming that they are using tools in the classroom to mitigate the perpetuation of the culture of whiteness is not enough. The power they hold in these situations overpowers decisions to audit classroom resources and integrate anti-oppressive perspectives. For this reason, the research question that will be answered is: “What tools are white teachers using to develop their critical consciousness?”

Regarding the development of participants’ critical consciousness, the participants spoke about many books, podcasts, and social media platforms they consult to diversify their resources. When picking resources, Liliane, and Hillary both spoke about how they are considerate of who the author is, and they specifically seek out racialized authors. Examples of this are: *Cultivating Genius* (Muhammad, 2020), *#BlackInSchool* (Cooper Diallo, 2021), *Unsettling Canada* (Manuel & Derrickson, 2021), and *This Book Is Anti-Racist* (Jewell, 2020). These books were discussed in reference to both personal reading, as well as book clubs that occur in the participants’ schools. These book clubs are often facilitated by administration or teachers in leadership positions in the schools, which are aimed to develop all teachers’ critical consciousness in the school. From my personal knowledge of these books, they shed light onto ways in which teachers can become more conscientious in their planning and personal journey addressing the culture of whiteness. In addition to the books shared by my participants, I believe *Me and White Supremacy* (Saad, 2020).
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should be added to the list of resources that teachers can use to mitigate the culture of whiteness and develop their critical consciousness. I read this book during data collection, and many of my revelations and ways I think about race emerged from this book and the journal prompts that accompany it. This resource is a reason why I have gone deeper in my thinking of how I perpetuate the culture of whiteness. It is an excellent tool that can be used in book clubs, and I believe it is effective to deconstruct one’s whiteness. This list of resources, shared by the participants and me, are examples of tools being used by white teachers in the GTA to develop their critical consciousness.

Other areas of teaching that help teachers develop their critical consciousness are PD, accountability, and the creation of student groups for racialized students. The PD that is being implemented in schools right now is largely focussed on anti-Black racism and equity. These are often organized by administration and/or the school board, and teachers are often asked to engage with reflecting on their own pedagogies. Though the participants noted that the PD being implemented is not always beneficial, it is good to know that there is a focus on equity during school board-mandated PD. With this, there are accountability pieces that are being implemented in schools to support teachers’ critical consciousness. These accountability pieces have not been well received in all schools, though multiple participants noted the benefit that these pieces could bring to the classroom. The creation of student groups and clubs within schools also reinforces the mitigation of the culture of whiteness and allows racialized students’ voices to be heard. When students tell teachers that there needs to be a change, it should be hard for a teacher to ignore this request. Therefore, in the creation of student clubs that are targeting racialized groups,
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this further reinforces how teachers and schools are deepening their critical consciousness and making efforts to mitigate the effects of the culture of whiteness.

Lastly, when discussing tools white teachers are using to mitigate the perpetuation of the culture of whiteness and develop their critical consciousness, all participants spoke about the importance of empowering students and giving them a voice when doing this work in the classroom. Specifically, Oliver and Liliane shared their beliefs that listening to students decentralizes the role of a teacher. For example, Oliver believes that by asking students what they’re interested in, he can tailor his lessons/topics/resources to reflect students’ perspectives. Additionally, Liliane spoke about how we should be valuing the direction of what students want more often, which speaks to how teachers think they are mitigating the perpetuation of the culture of whiteness. Liliane believes that when racialized students share how they would change the curriculum and resources in the classroom, it is a step towards addressing the culture of whiteness in the classroom. Considering Liliane’s and Oliver’s beliefs, it is important to ensure patterns of paternalism and saviourism do not emerge. In both instances and beliefs held by participants, they (white teachers) ultimately have the power to make decisions. It is their positionality and knowledge that is creating the lessons and choosing resources. Therefore, though the participants believed this was a method to mitigate the perpetuation of the culture of whiteness, I do not agree. I believe that listening to student voice and empowering them to share what they are interested in is a good teaching strategy; however, it is not a teaching approach or tool that supports the development of one’s critical consciousness, nor the mitigation of the culture of whiteness in teaching. This addresses the issue of Eurocentrism in the classroom but fails to address the history and saviour mentality that emerges when white teachers continue to hold the
power. In suggesting that adding diverse perspectives and listening to student voice addresses the culture of whiteness, teachers suggested a simple solution to an extremely complex problem. The culture of whiteness is still being perpetuated and centered in doing this, which ultimately continues to uphold the white system.

**Research Question #3**

3. What changes need to be implemented to mitigate the perpetuation of the culture of whiteness in teaching (i.e., structural, institutional, and/or systemic)?

The current system and structures in society, as well as the voices that allow these power structures to be upheld, are the changes needed to mitigate the perpetuation of the culture of whiteness, as the participants discussed. Hillary spoke very bluntly about the systems and societies and said that the systems all need to be burnt down. After sharing this figurative phrase, she specified that institutions (i.e., OME, PDSB) need to be held accountable for their actions in creating this system, people in authoritative positions (i.e., trustees, leadership within the school board) need to be removed, and the curriculum needs to be “scrapped.” She said that she speaks to her students about this and how they can be the ones to “light the match,” though she was skeptical of this ever happening due to the permanence of racism. With this, Hillary also spoke about how the systems were created from colonizers and these are the systems that are still being maintained because those in society who have the power don’t want to relinquish it. This negatively impacts anyone who is not white, as well as those who do not follow the European and/or Western traditional viewpoints.

Within education, this points to hiring practices, the structure of education, the curriculum, codes of conduct, leaders within the board, PD, and the lack of accountability for
teachers doing this work. Participants argued for the curriculum to be rewritten, for boards to be more cognizant of who the leaders are and how students receive messages from these leaders, as well as how PD is administered. All aspects of these processes have been historically created and dictated by white individuals (specifically men), and this needs to change. This includes changing hiring practices, as Oliver notes people hiring at the school board level have a checklist and check off buzzwords during interviews. I personally experienced this when I interviewed for a Catholic school board in the GTA. This is one example of how discrimination presents itself towards individuals who do not speak English as their first language. These recommendations to changing hiring practices have been advocated for in the GTA for years, as demonstrated in Table 2. Thus, the structures that are being upheld today in education such as hiring practices, the structure of education, the curriculum, codes of conduct, leaders within the board, PD, and the lack of accountability for teachers doing this work all need to be changed.

Another change that has been advocated for is the integration of authentic voices in schools through incorporating lived experiences of people from marginalized communities. One explicit way to do this is to hire critical anti-racist racialized teachers through making changes to policies and collective agreements. Changes made at this systemic level would instill accountability within school board hiring practices to ensure anti-racist individuals are being hired. This would stop the culture of the culture of whiteness from persisting, as well ensure racist teachers are not being hired nor interpreting racialized individuals’ experiences. This change would allow authentic voices to come into the classroom and share lived experiences with students. This would also help in changing the dominant white population of teachers in the GTA. Hiring more critical anti-racist racialized teachers would allow for better representative and
reflection of students in the GTA. Amanda spoke about how her administration has been vocal in attempting to hire teachers from diverse backgrounds, though this has not been reflected in the teaching population. Making this change to hiring practices and targeting critical anti-racist individuals would allow authentic voices to be brought into schools.

Lastly, when discussing changes that need to be made in education, Oliver spoke about the trickle-down effect and what would be needed for this work to be implemented. The first point of contact that Oliver began his explanation was the school boards. He shared that school boards must be on board with engaging in this work in meaningful ways rather than just lip service. This would include supplying school administrators with budgets to do this work, which may include funding for better resources, and/or funding for teachers to be released to work through this and develop their critical consciousness in meaningful ways. From there, administrators at the school level need to be on board and have genuine interest in this work and a desire to change the system. An aspect that Oliver noted was that teacher unions would also need to be on board with this to ensure teachers are not falling back on the union to protect their whiteness. In practice, this would include unions supporting anti-oppressive PD and ensuring collective agreements do not allow for teachers to use the union as protection, which Dhamoon (2020) outlined are currently absent from current collective agreements. For example, adding accountability methods/tools to the collective agreement, as well as having racialized individuals in leadership positions in the union would be taking steps in the right direction. Without the support of unions, and the acknowledgement that they (unions) are part of the problem, this work will not happen, and short-term change will continue at slow rates of progression.
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5.3 Conclusion

This Chapter discussed the findings and analyzed them against the tenets of CRT and the RQs. In the discussion, I relied on both the experiences of my participants, as well as my own experiences working in PDSB. In many instances, we had similar experiences, especially regarding teachers’ pushback and resistance to this work. This is an alarming reality, as I have been out of schools for the past two years as I was in graduate school, and I was hopeful that more teachers would be invested in developing their critical consciousness. The data that emerged and the unique case of PDSB specifically points to where action should be taken, though I believe similar findings would emerge in this research if it was conducted elsewhere in other regions of the province, and country. When reflecting on these findings, I am considering the following two questions: 1A) What are the gaps with teachers who are open to doing this work? 1B) What kind of support and resources do they need? And 2) What data does this study offer when analyzing who did/did not participate in this research?

In reference to the gaps with teachers who are open to doing this work, it is evident the participants in this research study are beginning to engage in some form of anti-oppressive pedagogies. Though their desires for how this work should continue are vastly different, I believe each of them should dive deeper and think about how they are part of the whiteness puzzle. This may include them making changes to their pedagogies or deepening their critical consciousness. Upon reflection, Liliane was the only participant who spoke about counterstories from a perspective of understanding them in relation to CRT. She noted the need to hire more racialized individuals and spoke about bringing Elders into her classroom in her journal entry. The lack of understanding of counterstories was also something I grappled with during this time, as it took a
deeper analysis of my own positionality to internalize the importance of people’s lived experiences not being filtered through a white lens.

Furthermore, an area that was absent from all the conversations was the discussion of the different areas of ARE. I am aware that I focused on resources when developing this study, but a gap that was not discussed in depth by any participant was larger pedagogical pieces such as teacher expectations, biases, assessments, and many other factors of education that can be implemented in an anti-racist manner. I believe this is the support needed for teachers. Teachers need to deepen their critical consciousness about how they are silently maintaining the culture of whiteness through their teaching, though not only focusing on the resources they use, and the content they teach about. According to Freire (2018), this development must be done through 1) critical reflection 2) critical motivation and 3) critical action. Therefore, the next step for them would be to critically reflect on how they engage with students, and this would mean making the invisible, more visible. It requires a deeper look inward, which teachers may think they are doing already, but this work is ongoing, and an essential part of this work is to undertake it daily. Through this deeper development of their critical consciousness, the culture of whiteness that is being maintained daily will begin to be interrupted.

In reference to teachers who did not participate in this research, it is likely that many of them are the teachers my participants referenced who resist implementing ARE. It can be assumed that they do not want to interrogate or address their whiteness, nor the culture of whiteness in teaching. If they do want to address it, the desire is not enough to drive them to make the change. Mandatory courses, training, PD, or a combination of the strategies mentioned above will likely not help many of the teachers who are not volunteering for a study such as this
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one. Whether they did not volunteer because they were afraid to say something wrong, or they
did not volunteer because they do not think they have anything to contribute to the conversation,
they do not want their whiteness to be challenged. The desire to change needs to be intrinsic, or
the long-term effects will not last. My follow-up question is: how can we ensure there are
changes made to legislation, union policies, and OME mandates that will force all teachers to
interrogate their whiteness, and/or their relationship to whiteness?
Intermediate teachers in the GTA are responsible for educating one of the most diverse student populations in Ontario (PDSB, 2020b; TDSB, 2018a; Yau et al., 2015; YRDSB, 2019). The region has been the site of many reports and investigations where systemic racism has been documented, and many changes have been advocated for. Despite this, the participants echoed and embodied what research has been exemplifying for years – the culture of whiteness continues to permeate classrooms and schools in the GTA, specifically PDSB. This research study demonstrates how the culture of whiteness is perpetuated by intermediate teachers in the GTA in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century, while highlighting ways in which white teachers are developing their critical consciousness. Other findings relate to changes being suggested at different levels of education to work towards mitigating the impacts of the culture of whiteness on students.

6.1 Summary of Major Findings

This work set out to investigate how the culture of whiteness is perpetuated in the GTA by intermediate teachers, as well as explore how teachers are interrupting the culture of whiteness and implementing change in their teaching, if any. The resistance and struggle to implement ARE in the classroom, as well as controlling the narrative and relying on existing systems and structures are ways in which the culture of whiteness is perpetuated by intermediate teachers in the GTA. White teachers are upholding the white supremist education system in Ontario, and they want to keep the power that comes along with it. They do not want to relinquish the power nor the authority they have, as they may fear for the future of their jobs if they let go of this
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oppressive system. They want to continue to control the narrative for this reason. Examples of how teachers are attempting to control the narrative and how they are resisting the implementation of equity work in their classrooms are noted in Chapter 4. Teachers have been diversifying their resources to include diverse perspectives, races, ages, cultures, background, genders, sexualities, and religious backgrounds, to name a few; however, this is continuing to perpetuate the white narrative as shifts in teachers’ pedagogies are neglected, as is the discussion of counterstories. When attempts to make teachers accountable in their work are made, the current systems and structures protect teachers who refuse to adequately engage in this work. This discourse would be vastly different if navigated by racialized teachers. Therefore, in order to implement the most optimal result for the highly diverse student population in the GTA, I call upon white teachers to step aside. They should acknowledge the harm and adverse impacts they inflict as being a piece of this white supremacy puzzle, and allow racialized individuals, communities, and groups to implement new systems that will no longer allow whiteness to reign supreme and dominate education.

At the onset of this work, I focused on the mitigation of the culture of whiteness as an outcome of participants’ actions; however, this has shifted to focusing on the development of their critical consciousness. The study displays that teachers are developing their critical consciousness by reading books and resources written by racialized authors. The participants spoke as though they are engaging in this work in meaningful ways with their students, but I think they neglect to realize the impact of their identities and subconscious behaviour on students. I believe teachers need to dive deeper into this work and recognize that they are also part of the problem. In thinking about ways to move forward, there are many changes to the
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systems and structures in place that need to occur for the maintenance of the culture of whiteness and teaching to be stopped, which are noted in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5.

6.2 Study Limitations

The limitations for this study are as follows: commitment to the methodology by in-service teachers, as well as the narrow scope of a larger societal issue.

Firstly, teachers are inundated with responsibilities throughout the academic school year, which impacts their likelihood to participate in research studies. The main weakness of any research study is the concern of workload and release time for participants to engage in the study. Jaipal and Figg (2011) argued that studies that minimize workload and provide release time “may be more conducive to facilitating sustained and consistent engagement” (p. 69). Particularly at a time when the workload and anxiety about teaching during a pandemic were at an all-time high, I made conscious efforts to minimize what was being asked of participants. For example, this study took place outside of school hours, meaning participants did not need release time from their teaching responsibilities. Additionally, I changed the research methodology and made the number of meetings less, as well as removed the obligatory journal entries. Through these approaches to participants’ involvement in the study, it is my hope that the effects of the workload were mitigated.

Secondly, this study is only the starting point for an ongoing journey to deconstruct the culture of whiteness in teaching. It should not go unmentioned that by focusing mainly on resources being used, only one aspect of a much larger societal issue was explored. There are other aspects of this much-needed paradigm shift, such as pedagogies, instructional strategies, expectations of students, ways of knowing, and teachers’ self-efficacy, that were not explored in
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this study due to the duration of the Master of Education program, as well as my preconceived notions of whiteness in schools. Creswell and Poth (2018) argued that interviews “are based on the researcher’s agenda, [and] leads to the researcher’s interpretations” (p. 173). My level of knowledge on the topic deepened during this research study and it is important to recognize my positionality as a researcher when analyzing the data collected. Therefore, the ongoing journey to deconstruct how the culture of whiteness is perpetuated in teaching is one being traveled by many teachers, including myself.

6.3 Suggestions for Future Research

This research highlighted areas in which white systems allow for the perpetuation of the culture of whiteness, which negatively impacts racialized students. Areas that would benefit from further research would be any of the systems highlighted, though there is a need to research hiring practices and the role of teacher unions specifically in the GTA. The data from this study displays discriminatory hiring practices (i.e., buzzwords and/or rubrics being used), as well as inconsistency in the application and interview process (i.e., OME, 2020). Due to recent OME (2020) recommendations, PDSB is in the process of investigating fairness and equity in employment strategies, as well as reviewing algorithms connected to teacher recruitment websites and occasional teacher callouts (PDSB, 2021a). Therefore, future research focusing specifically on this region and the change in hiring practices would be fruitful. Additionally, the role of teacher unions, and how unions in the GTA perpetuate the culture of whiteness is an area of education with limited prior research. As the school boards in the GTA focus on anti-Black racism and anti-oppression, it would be interesting to document the number of times the union is contacted by teachers seeking protection for their whiteness. This data would indicate situations
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in which teachers feel their white supremacy is being targeted/attacked, as well as display how teachers use the union to protect their whiteness. Furthermore, as school boards focus on anti-Black racism, unions may begin to shift their priorities and consider changing the collective agreement to reflect this. If this occurred, it would also be informative to document union members’ and union leaders’ experiences during this time. These two systems in education (hiring practices and teacher unions) are examples of areas in which further research can be done to explore how these systems uphold the culture of whiteness, or how they work against it.

Furthermore, at the onset of this research study, I intended it to be a collaborative action research study. With that methodology, there is the opportunity to revisit the findings and begin the collaborative action research cycle again. Despite the work not being carried out as collaborative action research, it is my desire to revisit these findings and speak with participants about where this work can go. The possibilities for future research include diving deeper and analyzing critical consciousness on an individual or group basis with teachers. West-Burns (2015) demonstrates the possibilities of this work occurring through critical practitioner inquiry, which may be a method used to continue this research. Also, many of the participants noted the desire to collaborate with others and collaboration in equity work is key. For this reason, future research done in focus groups or collaboratively with a group would be beneficial to support all participants.

It would also be beneficial to reflect deeply on the role that white resistance plays in this work at all stages of the research process, specifically in reference to participants and the positionality of the researcher. For a better analysis of the white resistance and hesitancy that was shared by participants about their colleagues, it would be insightful to partner with educational
institutions and seek out participants who are not volunteering for these types of studies and are uncomfortable doing this work. This population of teachers would benefit from developing their critical consciousness and documenting this research would fill the void in the current literature, as well as add an important (yet absent) perspective to this research area.

Additionally, one’s racial identity impacts how they engage in this work. Therefore, it is also important to analyze how a researcher’s positionality comes through and upholds the culture of whiteness during research. For example, when reviewing my interview questions and transcripts, there were many times when my lack of knowledge of counterstories emerged, as well as blatant perpetuation of the culture of whiteness through what was being asked and assumed in RQ 2. In addition, there were many points when I could have interrupted the culture of whiteness being displayed by my participants, but I remained silent. These examples are part of my personal reflection on the research study, and it aligns with Corces-Zimmerman & Guida (2019) as they argued “scholars should actively consider the roles that race, and whiteness play in the various stages of the research process” (p. 92). Along the same thought, Kenyon (2022) argued there is a need for more autoethnographic studies that connect the work of white individuals to the structures of whiteness in education. Though I was under the impression that I was cognizant of my positionality and how my whiteness emerges, I now realize there were many times in this research where deeper reflection and interrogation of the culture of whiteness was necessary.
6.4 Final Thoughts

Whiteness is baked into education like ingredients are baked into a muffin; unless there is explicit acknowledgement and removal of the ingredients, they are cooked into the muffin along with everything else. In stating this, teachers play a huge role in how entrenched the culture of whiteness is in education. They make many decisions daily that impact students, further enlarging or diminishing the racial inequity gap. Considering how this shapes students’ experiences and identities, it is important for teachers to be cautious of how the culture of whiteness impacts these decisions both consciously and subconsciously. I acknowledge that I was socialized in a society where racism prevails all around me and I have not addressed or disrupted the racism. I attended university and pursued my ambitions with little to no adversity, but due to the nature of racism, oppression, and perpetuation of the culture of whiteness, this is often not the case for many racialized students. I refuse to be silent anymore in a system that perpetuates this inequity and because of this, I agree with Dei (2003), who argued teachers need to reflect on their own identities, biases, and teaching practices to cater to their students. This reflection and discussion somewhat occurred in this study, as participants analyzed resources they use in the classroom and reflected on experiences of whiteness in schools. They shared resources they use to deepen their critical consciousness (though I believe more work must be done with respect to this), which is a necessary and ongoing step in this work. The findings will be disseminated to stakeholders in education (i.e., teachers, administration) via an infographic with the recommendation of self-reflection and analysis of teacher pedagogies. Through these reflexivity tools, teachers can work towards unlearning colonialism and developing a critical consciousness to ensure future muffins no longer have the culture of whiteness baked into them.
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Appendix A
Interview Protocols

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Focus</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reflecting on how whiteness impacts teaching</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Research Purpose</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Document how intermediate teachers reflect on whiteness through resources used in intermediate classes. Propose strategies/changes to mitigate the effects of whiteness</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Discuss what whiteness in teaching is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Establish a vision of the disruption of whiteness in teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Share resources that maintain/disrupt whiteness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Analyze how resources are chosen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Discuss how whiteness impacts teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Identify strategies that are being implemented to ensure whiteness is not perpetuated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Share methods to unlearn and discuss areas of need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Discuss changes that can be made on a broader scale to mitigate the impacts of whiteness in teaching</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
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</table>
| 1. A) How is the culture of whiteness perpetuated by white intermediate teachers in the Greater Toronto Area?  
  B) How does the culture of whiteness impact the pedagogies and resources teachers use in intermediate classes in Ontario? |
| 2. What tools are white teachers using to mitigate the perpetuation of the culture of whiteness and develop their critical consciousness? |
| 3. What changes need to be implemented to mitigate the perpetuation of the culture of whiteness in teaching (i.e., structural, institutional, and/or systemic)? |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Introducing Question: Background</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thank you for taking the time to be here. Before we get started, it is nice to share a little about our journeys as teachers. Would you like to share a bit about your journey? For example, how long you’ve been teaching and in what geographic area.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indirect Question: Opinions &amp; Values</th>
<th>Whiteness permeates our daily lives, including our classrooms daily. In your opinion, how does whiteness present itself in teaching?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indirect Question: Opinions &amp; Values</td>
<td>When thinking about the possibilities of education, how do you envision the disruption of whiteness in the classroom?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specifying Question: Behaviours and Experiences</td>
<td>Teachers use many resources in their classes from books, to videos, podcasts, textbooks, and novels. Thinking of the resources in your class, tell me about any specific resources that either maintain or disrupt the white, Eurocentric narrative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow-Up Question: Behaviours &amp; Experiences</td>
<td>Reflecting on the resources mentioned, how did you choose these resources? How often were resources provided and/or suggested to you rather than you choosing your own resources?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structuring</td>
<td>We are now going to move on to discussing the resources used by other teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect Question: Opinions &amp; Values</td>
<td>In what ways is whiteness perpetuated by other teachers?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structuring: Opinion</td>
<td>Are there any other areas where whiteness is being maintained at the school level?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specifying Question: Behaviours &amp; Experiences</td>
<td>When thinking about mitigating whiteness in teaching, it is evident that change is needed. Tell us about some of the ways that you disrupted whiteness in the classroom or heard of a teacher doing so. This could be in explicit or implicit lessons that were conducted in your classroom, or in other classes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specifying Question: Knowledge</td>
<td>What has helped you on your journey to unlearn and mitigate the effects of whiteness?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow-Up Question: Behaviours &amp; Experiences</td>
<td>Professional development in the form of a reading circle or workshop are often methods of engaging in this work. Has your school engaged with any PD around this topic?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structuring</td>
<td>Let’s move on to thinking about what the future holds for teachers in relation to this work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect Question: Behaviours &amp; Experiences</td>
<td>In relation to disrupting the whiteness in teaching, what would you like to learn more about?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect Question: Behaviours &amp; Experiences</td>
<td>What would help a teacher continue, or start, to do this work (i.e., professional development, AQ courses)?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In this work, whiteness in teaching is maintained by stakeholders and is sometimes out of teachers’ control (i.e., Ontario Ministry of Education, school boards, policy makers). This last part of the session focuses on this aspect.

**Indirect Question: Opinions & Values**

In what ways is whiteness perpetuated systemically?

What changes (i.e., systemic, structural, institutional) would you like to see to address whiteness in teaching? How can teachers advocate for these changes?

As we conclude, is there anything else you would like to share?

Thank you so much for your participation in this work. If you would like to journal, the One Drive has been shared already. The next step for this work is for me to code and analyze the data. If you would like to be part of the coding and analysis aspect of the research, please email me. Once this is complete, I will be emailing you the findings. Do you have any questions? Thank you again!
Appendix B
Social Media Recruitment Poster

Calling Grade 7 or Grade 8 teachers who teach in Toronto or the GTA

I’m exploring how the culture of whiteness impacts teaching, specifically teachers’ pedagogies and the resources used in intermediate classes. If you are interested in participating in a research study, please email 9ev4@queensu.ca

Principal Investigator: Elise Visentin
(Master of Education Candidate at Queen’s University)
Appendix C

Letter of Information and Web-Based Survey

Study Title: Do not follow the yellow brick road: A journey to address the culture of whiteness in teaching through collaborative action research

Part 1: LOI and Consent

Principal Investigator: Elise Visentin, Faculty of Education, Queen’s University Supervisor: Dr. Thashika Pillay, Faculty of Education, Queen’s University

I am inviting Grade 7 and/or Grade 8 teachers who teach in Toronto or the Greater Toronto Area to take part in a research study. The purpose of this study is to explore the ways in which a culture of whiteness impacts the resources teachers use in their classrooms. This web-based survey is the initial stage of the research study. The data being collected is as follows: your name and email to contact you during the study, school board name and grades taught to confirm your eligibility to participate in this study, preferred pronouns to be used in dissemination, as well as your race/ethnic identity, nationality, subjects taught, years of teaching experience and reason for participating for data analysis and dissemination. Completion of the survey does not guarantee your participation in the study. The researcher will contact those selected to participate via email.

If you decide to withdraw your participation in the survey, you can close the browser while completing the survey, or contact me at 9ev4@queensu.ca or my supervisor, Dr. Thashika Pillay, at tp61@queensu.ca to withdraw. Your participation will end immediately, and any data collected will be destroyed. If you are chosen as a participant and the focus group sessions have begun, you may withdraw by closing your browser/app on the chosen online video-calling software or by emailing me. If you are not chosen as a participant, the data collected from the web-based survey will be destroyed when the focus group sessions begin. After the first focus group session, the withdrawal of your data may not be completely possible as it may compromise information provided by other participants.

Your confidentiality will be protected to the extent permitted by applicable laws. The survey data will be stored on an encrypted hard drive on Queen’s University servers. I will keep your data securely for at least five years per Queen’s University Policy, after which the de-identified data will be deposited into the Queen’s University’s Institutional Repository. Access to survey data is limited to the study’s principal investigator and supervisor, as well as the Queen’s General Research Ethics Board (GREB) may request access to study data to ensure that the researcher has or is meeting their ethical obligations in conducting this research. GREB is bound by confidentiality and will not disclose any personal information.
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My supervisor, Dr. Thashika Pillay, and I are happy to answer any questions you may have about the survey/study at any time by email. Please contact me at 9ev4@queensu.ca or my supervisor, Dr. Thashika Pillay, at tp61@queensu.ca. If you have any ethics concerns, please contact the General Research Ethics Board (GREB) at 1-844-535-2988 (Toll free in North America) or email chair.GREB@queensu.ca. Call 1-613-533-2988 if outside North America. If non-English speaking participants wish to contact the Chair for ethics concerns, translation assistance may be necessary, as the REB Chair communicates in English only.

This Letter of Information provides you with the details to help you make an informed choice about completing the survey. All your questions should be answered to your satisfaction before you participate in this survey. You have not waived any legal rights by consenting to participate in this survey.

Do you consent to participate in this study? Check the box that applies:
• Yes
• No (Skip logic → End of survey)

Part 2: Demographic Information

1. What is your full name?
2. What is your email?
3. What are your preferred pronouns?
   o He/him
   o She/her
   o They/them
   o Prefer not to say
   o Other

4. How would you best describe your race/ethnic identity? Please list all that apply.
5. What is your nationality?
6. What school board do you work for?
   o Dufferin Peel Catholic District School Board
   o Durham Catholic District School Board
   o Durham District School Board
   o Halton Catholic District School Board
   o Halton District School Board
   o Peel District School Board
   o Toronto Catholic District School Board
   o Toronto District School Board
   o York Catholic District School Board
   o York Region District School Board
   o Other
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7. What elementary grades have you taught? Click all that apply.
   - Kindergarten
   - Grade 1
   - Grade 2
   - Grade 3
   - Grade 4
   - Grade 5
   - Grade 6
   - Grade 7
   - Grade 8
   - Other

8. If you taught Grade 7 and/or Grade 8, what subjects did you teach?
   - Dance
   - Drama
   - English as a Second Language
   - French as a Second Language
   - Health and/or Physical Education
   - Language Arts
   - Mathematics
   - Music
   - Religion
   - Science and/or Technology
   - Social Studies (including history and geography)
   - Special Education
   - Visual Arts
   - Other
   - Not Applicable - I have not taught Grade 7 and/or Grade 8

9. How many years of teaching experience do you have? This includes long-term occasional positions.
   - Less than 1 year
   - 1-4 years
   - 4-8 years
   - 8-12 years
   - 12-15 years
   - More than 15 years
   - Other

10. Why do you want to be part of this research study?
Appendix D

Ethics Clearance Letter

October 27, 2021

Ms. Elise Visentin
Queen's University

Title: "GEDCU-1074-21 DO NOT FOLLOW THE YELLOW BRICK ROAD: A JOURNEY TO ADDRESS THE CULTURE OF WHITENESS IN TEACHING THROUGH COLLABORATIVE ACTION RESEARCH," TRAQ # 6034708

Dear Ms. Visentin:

The General Research Ethics Board (GREB), by means of a delegated board review, has cleared your proposal entitled "GEDCU-1074-21 DO NOT FOLLOW THE YELLOW BRICK ROAD: A JOURNEY TO ADDRESS THE CULTURE OF WHITENESS IN TEACHING THROUGH COLLABORATIVE ACTION RESEARCH" for ethical compliance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (TCPS 2) and Queen's ethics policies. In accordance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (Article 6.14) and Standard Operating Procedures (405), your project has been cleared for one year.

You are reminded of your obligation to submit an annual renewal form prior to the annual renewal due date (access this form at http://www.queensu.ca/trac/signon.html; click on "Events;" under "Create New Event" click on "General Research Ethics Board Annual Renewal/Closure Form for Cleared Studies"). Please note that when your research project is completed, you need to submit an Annual Renewal/Closure Form in Romeo/traq indicating that the project is "completed" so that the file can be closed. This should be submitted at the time of completion; there is no need to wait until the annual renewal due date.

You are reminded of your obligation to advise the GREB of any adverse event(s) that occur during this one-year period (access this form at http://www.queensu.ca/trac/signon.html; click on "Events;" under "Create New Event" click on "General Research Ethics Board Adverse Event Form"). An adverse event includes, but is not limited to, a complaint, a change or unexpected event that alters the level of risk for the researcher or participants or situation that requires a substantial change in approach to a participant(s). You are also advised that all adverse events must be reported to the GREB within 48 hours.

You are also reminded that all changes that might affect human participants must be cleared by the GREB. For example, you must report changes to the level of risk, applicant characteristics, and implementation of new procedures. To submit an amendment form, access the application by at http://www.queensu.ca/trac/signon.html; click on "Events;" under "Create New Event" click on "General Research Ethics Board Request for the Amendment of Approved Studies." Once submitted, these changes will automatically be sent to the Ethics Coordinator, GREB, at University Research Services for further review and clearance by GREB or the Chair, GREB.

On behalf of the General Research Ethics Board, I wish you continued success in your research.

Sincerely,

Professor Dean A. Tripp, PhD
Chair, General Research Ethics Board (GREB)
Department of Psychology, Anesthesiology & Urology
Queen's University