Exploring the Implementation of Everyday Anti-Racism Education by Elementary Teachers in Their Classroom Instruction

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Abstract

The aim of this research study was to investigate the outcomes, successes, challenges, and strategies of teaching anti-racism education in elementary classrooms. The main research question that guided this study was: How is a small sample of elementary school teachers implementing everyday anti-racism education in their classroom instruction? Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with two elementary school teachers currently working in TDSB schools. Findings suggest that anti-racism education results in positive outcomes for students such as the validation of student identity, a social justice perspective, and relationship building. As well, teacher identity plays a significant role in how these teachers approached teaching anti-racism education in their classrooms. Findings also suggest that teachers face serious challenges and backlash when doing anti-racism work from other teachers, administration, and parents. The implications of these findings suggest that more needs to be done to increase teacher and administration diversity, as well as support prospective and current teachers in implementing an anti-racism approach in their teaching practice. Also, more needs to be done to ensure that when there are acts of racism and discrimination, not only students, but teachers and administrators as well, must be held accountable for their action or inaction.

Key Words: anti-racism education, culturally relevant pedagogy, multicultural education
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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.0 Introduction

In 1988, following a recent wave of immigration, and the demands of immigrants for greater inclusion and recognition of social difference, the Canadian government enacted the Multiculturalism Act, which was put in place to preserve and enhance multiculturalism in Canada (Government of Canada, 1988). In response to this, the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training in 1993, published a document entitled *Antiracism and Ethnocultural Equity in School Boards: Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation*, which was “intended to assist schools and school boards in ensuring that the principles of antiracism and ethnocultural equity are observed everywhere in Ontario’s school system” (p. 3). The ministry provided the following mission statement: “The board recognizes the importance of effective school-community partnerships to ensure that perspectives, experiences, and needs of diverse racial and ethnocultural groups are taken into account” (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1993, p. 9). This document signaled the beginning of the discussions in the education community surrounding multiculturalism and anti-racism in the Ontario education system.

The anti-racism in education movement has grown and progressed especially over the last few decades, resulting in a more recent shift from multicultural education to anti-racism education. Multicultural education has been characterized by the idea that “all students should have equal opportunities to learn, regardless of the racial, ethnic, social-class, or gender group to which they belong” (Banks, 2004, p. 391). Kim (2011) argues that although various approaches to multicultural education exist, there is “general agreement that a major goal of multicultural education is to change schools and other educational institutions in order for students from diverse racial, ethnic, and social-class groups to experience educational equality” (p. 203). It is,
therefore, important to understand the anti-racism critique of multicultural education. Proponents of anti-racism education argue that anti-racism goes beyond the limits of multicultural education as it encourages critical thinking and analysis of the origins of racism through the examination of its sociopolitical context (Troyna, 1987). Within the educational and indeed wider societal setting, cultural and racial difference per se is not the problem; it is what we do with the difference and how we respond that is the problem.

Teachers are responsible for educating their students about the importance of not only embracing diversity, but critically analyzing issues of race, inequality, and privilege. Therefore, it is paramount that we look at exactly who is teaching our students anti-racism education and discussing these important and sensitive issues. Data shows that although classrooms are increasingly diverse, there still remains a great disparity in the number of teachers of colour compared to White teachers in North America (Lewis, 1996; Picower, 2009). My research explores the serious implications that this has on Black students (Picower, 2009).

It appears that while research on teaching anti-racism education is abundant in the United States (Land & Stovall, 2009; Pollock, 2006; Tieken, 2008, Troyna, 2009; Young, 2011), less research has been conducted in Canada. This inattention in school curricula raises questions about the prevalence and persistence of racism within Canada. Scholars such as Henry & Tator (2009) and Lund (2006) note the dismissal of historical and contemporary evidence of racism as a serious reality in Canada. Henry & Tator (2009) maintain that Canadians commonly ignore the fact that racism and discriminatory laws and policies are the foundation of significant political, economic, social, and cultural institutions today. This is particularly evident in the education system as my research will show.
1.1 Research Problem

The main problem that this study addresses is the fact that racial minority students are not seeing their identities, histories, or experiences meaningfully reflected in schools in and through everyday curriculum. Research shows that when they do, it is most often done through superficial representation and pedagogy rather than everyday practice (Irvine, 2010; Suzuki, 2006). Simply discussing Black history in February and highlighting ethnic foods and celebrations is not enough (Suzuki, 2006). Research shows that although schools may celebrate diversity, teachers do not commonly explore why discrimination and racism exist, and do not attend to the sociopolitical context of institutional and structural racism (Dei, 2009; Young, 2011). Instead, racism is typically presented as an individual experience and as the exception rather than the norm (Pollock, 2006; Young, 2011).

My research explores the implementation of everyday anti-racism as a tool for addressing and combating this research problem, along with the resulting consequences on Black students—a wide achievement gap between Black students and white students, academic disengagement, high dropout rates, and isolation, to name a few (Martinek & Johnson, 1979; Parhoy and Sensoy, 2011; Rose, 2007). Anti-racism education addresses these issues as it explores how educational outcomes are not simply a result of racial and ethnic cultural differences, but more importantly, are influenced by structural and institutional inequalities (James, 1995).

1.2 Purpose of the Study

In view of this problem, the goal of my research was to examine and report how elementary school teachers are implementing everyday anti-racism education in their classrooms. This research is important to the education community because, as educators, we know that a student's social identity impacts his or her educational experience and success in school.
Research shows that “students of colour...are more likely to pay a higher price from constructing identities where schooling and education are marginal to their sense of self” (Davidson, 1996, p. 596). Teachers have the power to greatly influence students and to change lives. As teachers, it is our responsibility to make sure that all of our students, including those from racial minority groups, have the opportunity to learn about and to discuss their own experiences in the classroom as everyday material for learning.

My research explores the use of culturally relevant pedagogy as an approach for educators to teach anti-racism education. Culturally relevant pedagogy is an approach which incorporates the cultural knowledge, perspectives, and experiences of students of colour in order to create effective and culturally relevant material for learning. Culturally relevant pedagogy is cited by scholars who use it as a lens to teach anti-racism and to combat many of the problems plaguing Black students in the education system (Gay, 2000; Irvine, 2010; Ladson Billings, 1994, 1995). The results of this qualitative study will provide teachers with information on implementing everyday anti-racism education in their own classrooms, strategies for overcoming the challenges of doing so, and data on student outcomes resulting from anti-racism education practice.

1.3 Research Questions

The main research question guiding this study was:

How is a small sample of elementary school teachers implementing everyday anti-racism education in their classroom instruction?

Sub-questions included:

1. How do these teachers conceptualize anti-racism education in theory and practice?

2. How are these teachers prepared or trained to teach anti-racism education in the
classroom?

3. What challenges do these teachers experience in their everyday anti-racism education?

4. What are the outcomes these teachers observe when implementing anti-racism education?

5. What factors and resources support these teachers in this work?

1.4 Background of the Researcher

We live in a diverse, multicultural world, but there is a problem if this fact is not reflected in what we learn in schools. I am the daughter of black parents who emigrated from Nigeria. For as long as I can remember, I have always known that my history, my experiences, and my perspectives would not be learned or explored in the classroom. My parents have always acknowledged this fact and have ensured that my brothers and I know our own history and some of the experiences that our parents and their families have gone through. This is because, as educators, they have always been well aware that the perspectives, histories, and experiences of racial minority groups are overlooked in schools. My parents have always taught us about our culture and provided us with the opportunity to learn more and to do our own research, which is something that appears to be missing from the education experience in schools.

This topic is important to me because I believe that all students need to feel like they are part of their school community. Throughout my schooling, both in Canada and in California, I have often been the only student of colour in my classes and have almost always been the only Black student in my classes, so this experience has not been new for me, even as I have ventured into graduate school. Being the only student of colour in a classroom can create feelings of isolation along with other various negative consequences which will be further discussed in my research.

I always noticed that I was never being taught about my own history and my own
experiences in school. In elementary school, there was no mention of anti-racism education practice. In high school, it was the same thing, although I remember a couple of years, there was mention of Black history in February during 'Black History Month', but that was the extent of it. My mom was asked to help out with the Black History Month committee at my high school simply because she was one of two black teachers at the school. However, she chose not to participate. She was not interested in participating partly because at our school, February was the only month that Black history was actually acknowledged. This fact is one of the reasons that I also chose not to participate. I could never understand why the history of people that look like me was only discussed, or mentioned once a year. I strongly believe that anti-racism education should be incorporated in the everyday curriculum and not be mentioned simply as a sidebar every time February comes around. It is important that all students are given the opportunity to learn about different perspectives, experiences, and histories, while also critically analyzing issues of racism, discrimination, and inequality.

It was not until my freshman year at the University of California Santa Barbara, where I took an introduction to Black history class, that I noticed what I had been missing all those years. Before that moment, I had never had a platform in a school to learn about and to discuss my own experiences as a woman of colour. This was truly an eye-opening experience and a defining moment for me because I am evermore interested and passionate about learning and discussing anti-racism education and the issues that affect Black communities, including racism, discrimination, systemic inequality, and injustice.

1.5 Overview

Chapter one includes the introduction and purpose of the study, the research questions, as well as how I came to be involved in this topic and study. Chapter two contains a review of the
literature on anti-racism education, its importance, strategies for teaching, and the various challenges that teachers face in teaching anti-racism education. Chapter three provides the methodology and procedures used in this study, including information about the sample participants, data collection, and analysis. Chapter three also provides the ethical review procedures and the limitations of this research. Chapter four reports the findings of this research study and what was learned, organized by theme. Chapter five includes implications of this study for me as a researcher and as an educator and the implications and recommendations for the educational community. Chapter five also outlines questions that were raised through this research and identifies areas for future research. References and a list of appendices follow at the end.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

An extensive body of literature has contributed to the development of anti-racism education in the classroom. The following literature review addresses certain themes and topics relevant to the teaching of anti-racism education through everyday practice in the classroom. I begin by giving a definition of anti-racism education, detailing its purpose in schools. Next, I discuss why anti-racism education is important, including a discussion of the anti-racism critique of multicultural education. I then explore the different challenges to anti-racism education. Finally, I discuss different strategies for implementing anti-racism education in the classroom.

2.1 What is Anti-Racism Education?

The anti-racism movement has grown and progressed especially over the last few decades. Defining anti-racism is difficult as the concept involves many different components. Referring to the term 'anti-racism education', I focus mainly on issues of race and racism, although it does incorporate other aspects of intersectionality, such as gender and class. The University of Calgary's Anti-Racism Education Collective (CARED) defines anti-racism as the “active process of identifying and eliminating racism by changing systems, organizational structures, policies and practices and attitudes, so that power is redistributed and shared equitably.” The purpose of anti-racism education is to challenge the status quo in education. Anti-racism education works to “change institutional structures, validate the lived experiences of an increasingly diverse student body, and alter inequitable power relations” (Carr & Klaussen, 1997, p. 67). Anti-racism has both an academic and a political agenda as it works to problematize the education system, specifically paying attention to how schools work to reproduce white, patriarchal dominance (Dei, 2009). Dei (2009) notes that this particular academic and political
agenda is “one of educational and social transformation, and it proceeds from a critical understanding of how contemporary social formations provide the educational and institutional structures through which dominating values, principles and traditions are actualized in everyday experience” (p. 250).

There is a common misconception that racism operates primarily at an individual level when, in fact, racism operates at an institutional and structural level in everyday life. In her research study of the four personae of racism, Young (2011) notes “disconcerting evidence of how persistently the participants regarded racism as acts of individual pathology rather than as a systemic problem” (p. 1453). This is why everyday anti-racism education is so important. Although people may not experience individual racism on a daily basis, they are, however, experiencing racism on an institutional and structural level. Therefore, through anti-racism education, educators and their students will gain the knowledge necessary to deal with this fact and work towards combating and eliminating everyday racism. Combating everyday racism “requires that educators make strategic, self-conscious everyday moves to counter these ingrained tendencies” (Pollock, 2006, p. 2).

2.2 Why Does Anti-Racism Education Matter?

The purpose of the research study was to gain a deeper understanding of how teachers are incorporating anti-racism education in the classroom. Teaching anti-racism is especially important in the education community for a number of reasons. As educators, we have the power to influence our students deeply and to change lives. As educators we understand that a student's social identity can impact his or her educational experience in school. This is one of the many reasons why anti-racism education matters. Susag (2006) poses the following crucial questions:

If the experiences in our public schools have the power to change the stories of children's lives, what happens to those who don't hear the stories of their own
people? And if children do learn stories about their lives, what happens when their teachers and texts regard those stories as inferior, representing wrong values, and representing inadequate means for survival? What happens to children whose public education is rooted in an alien culture? (p. 201)

It is important to ask how students establish positive identities when their culture is ignored altogether and how students will be able to have self-motivation when they do not see themselves in what they are learning. The diverse and multicultural identities of students are not reflected in curriculum, teaching, or materials, but students are expected to have a love for diversity (Kowalski, 2008; McCarthy, 1990; Schick & St. Dennis, 2005; Parhar & Sensoy, 2011). As anti-racism educators, it is our responsibility not only to problematize this, but to also work towards a solution.

As teachers are responsible for educating their students about the importance of embracing difference and diversity because we live in a multicultural and diverse society, it is important to look at who exactly is teaching our students anti-racism education and discussing issues of race and privilege. In the Toronto District School Board, about 70% are students of colour (TDSB Student Registration Database, 2012), while over 70% of teachers are White (Alphonso & Hammer, 2013). Picower (2009) implores us to “look deeply at Whiteness and its relationship to teaching, particularly as classrooms are increasingly filled with children of colour” (p. 197). As Picower (2009) notes, the disproportionate number of White teachers where there is great racial inequality creates especially serious implications for students of colour. We are asking teachers who do not relate culturally to our students to then go ahead and teach them about that said culture. Therefore, it is crucial that we understand how these teachers conceptualize issues of race, power, and privilege and how they prepare and approach teaching anti-racism education in the classroom.

In order to understand why anti-racism education is so important, it is imperative to
explore the experiences of Black students in schools. Research has revealed a lot about the experiences of Black students, especially emphasizing racism and unequal treatment. Black students experience many challenges in school, which prevent many from being successful, thereby contributing to the very large achievement gap between Black students and white students. Rose (2007) notes the concerns of Black parents about teachers who have low academic expectations of their children and the assumption that these students will turn in poor work. This is problematic as teacher expectations is directly correlated to student achievement. Lower teacher expectations result in poorer student achievement (Martinek & Johnson, 1979). There is also further cause for concern as parents believe that if teachers expect little of these students, they will not feel compelled or motivated to encourage these students to be successful in the classroom (Rose, 2007). The academic disengagement of Black students in schools also contributes to the achievement gap. Reasons for disengagement include the fact that students do not see their histories and perspectives reflected in school curricula and their teachers (McCarthy, 1990; Sleeter, 2008). As Martinek & Johnson (1979) and Rose (2007) point out, disengagement results from such factors as, lack of teacher commitment, low expectations, and the negative treatment of Black students in schools.

2.3 Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

The achievement gap between students of colour, especially Black students, and White students has propelled scholars to demand more representative and empowering ways of teaching. Culturally relevant pedagogy is seen as an effective approach of doing so (Parhar and Sensoy, 2011). Gay (2000) defines culturally relevant pedagogy as “using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them” (p. 29). Ladson-
Billings (1995), who uses the term “culturally relevant teaching”, characterizes this approach as collective, rather than individual, empowerment. With this approach, there is great emphasis on cooperative learning and collaboration in order to maximize student learning.

Ladson-Billings (1994) outlines three critical aspects of culturally relevant teaching: teachers’ conceptions of themselves and of others, the structure of social interactions in the classroom, and teachers' concept of knowledge. A study of teachers by Parhar and Sensoy (2011) reveals that “a positive sense of cultural identity and self-worth are intertwined with academic achievement” (p. 214). Classroom interaction is an important aspect of culturally relevant pedagogy because learning is a socially mediated process, closely related to students’ cultural experiences as culture is passed through socialization (Irvine, 2010). A teacher's knowledge of his or her students is necessary in successfully providing culturally relevant material for learning. This was noted in the observation of a teacher who incorporated multiplication rap song in her lesson, believing that it would immediately engage her class of mostly African-American and Latino students (Irvine, 2010).

When examining culturally relevant pedagogy it is essential to understand that it does not mean “simply acknowledging ethnic holidays, including popular culture, in the curriculum, or adopting colloquial speech” (Irvine, 2010, p. 57). Irvine (2010) also notes the importance of deconstructing certain myths and misconceptions about culturally relevant pedagogy, such as the misconceptions that only teachers of colour can be culturally relevant and that this approach is not for white students. Irvine (2010) found that these myths and conceptions often result in “awkward classroom moments, ineffective instructional practices, and counterproductive teacher-student and teacher-parent relationships” (p. 58).
2.4 Anti-Racism Critiques of Multicultural Education

One common mistake seen with multicultural education occurs when difference is merely acknowledged, but not discussed or analyzed (Sharma, 2008). Merely acknowledging that people are different with regards to race, ethnicity, gender, sex, etc. is not enough. Anti-racism takes it a step further by going beyond the surface and analyzing the issue of racism from a number of different approaches such as: why different groups are discriminated against in various ways, how laws and policies in place discriminate against racial minorities, and how injustice is perpetuated through systematic oppression (Dei, 1999).

Multicultural education has often emphasized “the plurality of cultures and their ways of life in contemporary society, encouraging students to appreciate ‘minority cultures’” (Sharma, 2008, p. 186), while anti-racism education not only encourages students to live with differences, but more importantly, fights for social justice and equality (Dei, 1999). Sharma (2008) argues that unlike multicultural education, anti-racism encourages students to “think critically about how minority groups are so often represented solely in racial-ethnic terms in texts, as all about being racial” (p. 187). Multicultural teaching often simply states facts about racial minorities, rather than ask questions about how and why things are the way they are. For example, whilst multiculturalism celebrates the fact people belong to different racial-ethnic groups, the anti-racism perspective examines “the reasons why darker skinned people have greater difficulty finding work and access to housing, as well as fair and respectful treatment within society at large” (Mehta and Favreau, 2000, p. 3).

Troyna (1987) argues that with multicultural education, racism is primarily understood as the “product of ignorance and perpetuated by negative attitudes and individual prejudices” (p. 311). This contrasts with anti-racism education, which he says, “whilst accepting the persistence
of stereotypes and prejudices, [demands] that a thorough analysis of their origins must derive from an interrogation of the social and political structure” (p. 311).

Epstein (2010) details positive and negative student outcomes of multicultural education. He explores the experiences of fourth and fifth grade students belonging to 'Beyond Today', an urban after school program based on a multicultural education curriculum. Observing students discuss issues of social justice, discrimination, and leadership, Epstein (2010) notes seeing students “build ties of friendship across racial lines and develop activist skills of social critique” (p. 39), but on other occasions, he observed students being cautious and “distancing themselves from students of different races” (p. 39).

2.5 Challenges to Anti-Racism Education

2.5.1 Discussing Race in All/Mostly-White Classrooms

One major challenge that anti-racism educators face is the common misconception that race is irrelevant for white students, and, therefore, anti-racism education misperceived as unnecessary in all white schools. Tieken (2008) lists some of the excuses for avoiding talking about race and racism: “'Race has never been a problem here.' 'Kids are naturally colorblind anyhow, so I don't want them to focus on difference.' 'Isn't it just better to not talk about race at all? Then it'll just never occur to students to discriminate'” (p. 201). Statements like these clearly illustrate why the need for anti-racism education is so great, especially in all-white classrooms.

Researching Toronto teachers’ perceptions about race, racism, and anti-racism education, Carr and Klassen (1997) found that some White teachers believed anti-racism education had nothing or little to do with some subjects like math and science and that anti-racism efforts had been pointless and, therefore, should be discontinued. They simply considered it to be a fad and wondered why it was necessary or important. In addition, some argued race should not be an
issue in the classroom and that education should not be politicized (p. 67-73).

2.5.2 Teacher Preparation

Although classrooms are becoming increasingly diverse, teacher education programs remain predominantly White. (Lewis, 1996; Picower, 2009). Celebrating diversity implies that all students regardless of race and ethnicity, should be educated equitably. However, doing so is problematic since many teachers have very limited personal experiences of diversity and a limited understanding of inequity, discrimination, and injustice (King, 2001). Many new teachers that enter the profession, do so with a lack of knowledge of the “experiences, needs, and resources of culturally and linguistically diverse student populations” (Cho and DeCastro-Ambrosetti, 2005, p. 24). Many teacher education programs today require teacher candidates to complete a diversity or anti-discrimination course. This results in more positive attitudes towards the teaching of multicultural education and anti-racism. However, even with an increased knowledge and appreciation for the experiences and perspectives of students of colour, new teachers have expressed feeling “ill equipped to teach students from diverse backgrounds” (Cho and DeCastro-Ambrosetti, 2005, p. 24).

2.6 Strategies For Implementing Anti-Racism Education

2.6.1 Hip Hop

Hip hop music and culture has been used to teach anti-racism education in the classroom. It has been used as a critical lens by teachers for students to “engage systems of oppression, to understand how race gets conceptualized and operationalized in their daily lives, and to critique traditional ways of schooling” (Land and Stovall, 2009, p. 4) that often fails certain racial groups. Hip hop has been introduced in classrooms to not only acknowledge and discuss, but
more importantly, to challenge racialization in schools and in society.

Research has shown that Hip Hop plays a critical role in how teachers approach anti-racism education in their classrooms by moving beyond old racial politics towards new ones, and as a “vehicle to educate and bring down the walls of ignorance when it comes to American race relations” (Kitwana 2005, p. 132).

Steven Netcoh (2013) discusses how students in secondary and post-secondary classrooms are examining different rappers and the specific subject matter that they discus in their music, such as, “Rick Ross' constructions of authenticity, Lupe Fiasco's anti-racism discourse, Nas' challenges of color-blindness, and Eminem's rearticulation of whiteness” (p. 11). Netcoh views this as an approach for analyzing Hip Hop's democratic potential.

Although there are proponents of using Hip Hop as a strategy for teaching anti-racism education (Kitawa 2005; Land & Stovall, 2009; Netcoh, 2013), there are those who believe there are serious limitations and dangers in doing so because of Hip Hop's representations of race (Reyna, Brandt & Viki, 2009). To determine if and how “non-Blacks [could] use their stereotypes of rap to justify prejudice and discrimination against Blacks—especially the Black urban poor”, Reyna, Brandt & Viki, 2009, p. 364, conducted three different studies. They found that negative attitudes of white participants towards Hip Hop was connected to negative beliefs about Black Americans in general and also anti-black policy positions.

2.6.2 Literacy

2.6.2.1 Exploring racial identity through writing

Mott-Smith (2008) explores racial identity through creative writing, especially focusing on the experiences of new immigrant students in the United States. Students new to the United States encounter a number of challenges, including a system of racialization that places them in
specific racial categories or groups that they may not understand or accept. Mott-Smith argues that writing gives these new students an opportunity to “work through racial-ethnic identity categories and to explore and challenge the classification and ranking system” (p. 146). Another added benefit of this strategy is that students also have the opportunity to confront their own assumptions and prejudices and expand their own knowledge. Mott-Smith discusses an experience with a Vietnamese American student whose essay writing “allowed him to develop a school investment by encouraging him to bring his own lived experiences into his school assignment and...helped him to work through his own identification while improving his academic skills” (p. 148).

Mott-Smith (2008) emphasizes the importance of structuring her writing class so that her new immigrant students were given the opportunity to explore their own racial-ethnic identities. She explains that she did this by facilitating class discussions in which students were able to explore racial identity and devoting time to respond to each student's writing through detailed comments and also with individual conferences with her students. However, Mott-Smith explains an experience teaching a group of Haitian students who did not feel that her class was one that would legitimize their voices and perspectives, which was then problematic as she wanted them to write about their racial identities and their resulting experiences. She concludes that she “should have spent more time establishing trust and rapport across racial lines” (p. 148).

Cook (2010) notes having success in the classroom with having his students do journal writing. Reflecting on lectures, reading materials, and/or class discussion, he has his students write semi-structured journal entries about how they make sense of these aspects as relevant or irrelevant to their own experiences, interests, and concerns. However, he emphasizes that he did not want his students to simply state what they thought, but rather take it a step further by clearly
explaining their own perspectives in terms of how they had positioned themselves and why they did so. In addition, these journal entries were written either at regular intervals or as a summative assessment.

2.6.2.2 Selecting diverse reading materials

Race is a lens in which students see the world around them, historical perspectives, and current events. As such, it is important that students encounter materials and texts that incorporate different racial identities and lived experiences. Generally, textbooks and other materials in schools greatly reflect the experiences and perspectives of White students compared to students belonging to other racial groups. Students of colour may see little of their own histories, perspectives, and experiences in school textbooks and other materials, if any at all (Kowalski, 2008; Schick & St. Dennis, 2005; Parhar & Sensoy, 2011).

Textbooks are an important aspect. McCarthy (1990) argues that it is “important to recognize from the outset that textbooks themselves embody real lived relations of representation, production, and consumption that tend more or less to suppress minority identities and reproduce inequalities that exist in society” (p. 122). Referring to representation, McCarthy (1990) moves beyond the presence or absence of illustrations of racial minorities in texts, examining exactly who controls the production of images in society. He views textbook production as part of a much broader sociopolitical context in which racial minorities have very little control over the production of images about themselves and their lived experiences, perspectives, and histories. (McCarthy, 1990).

There are negative consequences for racial minority students when they are not represented in the material they are taught in the classroom. Sleeter (2008) recalls minority college students tell her that they “lost interest in school during adolescence because most
subject matter did not relate to their experiences in the slightest, and later discovered a thirst for knowledge when ethnic studies material connected closely with their lived experiences” (p. 151) was introduced.

On the other hand, students also need to learn about the histories, experiences, and perspectives of those of other racial identities. Observing a second-grade classroom that incorporated both teacher-selected and student-selected material, Sleeter (2008) notes seeing “a girl from Mexico [take] a book about a boy in Cameroon to her desk...a Black girl picked *Chato's Kitchen* by [Latino author] Gary Soto, and a kid from Mexico picked *Happy Birthday Martin Luther King*” (p. 152). The students really enjoyed reading these books and were given the opportunity to pick from a wide variety of options. She discusses how the teacher realized that at times her students chose to read materials that reflected their own racial identities, but they also chose to read materials that reflected the experiences of those belonging to other racial groups.

In a year-long ethnographic study examining two urban tenth grade English classes that were using diversified literature and a new ethnic literature curricula, Steven Z. Athanases (1998) found that these “literary encounters also fostered discoveries about diverse groups (identified by race, ethnicity, gender, religion, and sexual orientation) that helped students move past stereotyped notions of others” (p. 273). Athanases' research supports the belief that providing students with diverse literature increases their awareness of diversity and helps to dismantle the assumption they have about certain racial groups.

### 2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has explored literature in anti-racism education with a focus on six key themes relevant to the teaching of anti-racism education in the classroom: the definition of anti-
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racism education, the significance of anti-racism in schools, culturally relevant pedagogy, the anti-racism critique of multiculturalism, challenges to anti-racism education, and strategies for implementing anti-racism in the classroom.

This chapter has also identified different perspectives on the multicultural education versus anti-racism education debate. Multicultural education has been characterized as curricula simply celebrating and appreciating students' cultural differences. However, proponents of anti-racism education argue for its effectiveness as it calls for students to delve beyond the surface by critically analyzing issues of racism, inequality, and systematic oppression (Carr & Klaussen, 1997; Dei, 2009). This chapter has also discussed the use of culturally relevant pedagogy as an approach for overcoming the challenges that Black students face in schools (Gay, 2000; Irvine, 2010; Ladson Billings, 1994, 1995). Finally, this chapter has outlined several strategies for implementing anti-racism education, focusing on the use of hip hop and literacy.

My study contributes to the existing body of research by reporting specific strategies for everyday anti-racism in the classroom, as the majority of the literature focuses on the bigger picture, specifically discussing its definition and its importance for Black students. However, I want my study to go a step further by providing clear and detailed ways that teachers can implement everyday anti-racism education in the classroom. My study will also contribute to the existing body of research by providing data and analysis on the implementation of anti-racism education as there is relative scarcity of this literature from Canadian scholars. Finally, my study will contribute to research on the various challenges that teachers encounter when teaching anti-racism education and will provide ways for teachers to overcome specific challenges.

Chapter three will detail the methodology I used to carry out my research. I discuss exactly how I examined anti-racism education through everyday practice in the classroom, my
instruments of data collection, and my participants. The next chapter will also outline my data collection and analysis and ethical review procedures, as well as the limitations and strengths of my research.
Chapter 3: Methodology

3.0 Introduction (Chapter Overview)

In this chapter, I describe the research methodology. I begin by reviewing the general research approach, procedures, and instruments of data collection, before discussing more specifically, participant sampling and recruitment. I discuss the data analysis procedures and review the ethical considerations necessary for my research study. I outline the methodological limitations and strengths of my research study. Finally, I conclude the chapter by summarizing key methodological decisions and my reasoning behind these specific decisions.

3.1 Research Approach & Procedures

This research study explores how elementary school teachers are implementing everyday anti-racism education in their classroom instruction. This study was conducted using a qualitative research approach involving a literature review and semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with teachers. I completed an extensive review of relevant literature and research, focusing specifically on defining anti-racism education, its progression and the anti-racism critique of multicultural education, culturally relevant pedagogy, the challenges, and different strategies for implementation. Reviewing the relevant literature and existing research has created a foundation for my study in terms of understanding what was necessary and most important for me to explore in my interviews.

Qualitative research holds value as it “empower[s] individuals to share their stories, hear their voices, and minimize[s] the power relationships that often exist between a researcher and the participants in a study” (Creswell, 2007, p. 48). Qualitative research is significant as it focuses on understanding “how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (Merriam, 2009, p. 5). Rather than
simply looking at the number of teachers that implement everyday anti-racism education, a qualitative approach is key to supporting my need to understand how these teachers are doing so, what challenges they face, and how they conceptualize such complex issues as race and anti-racism education.

In terms of qualitative research, I specifically drew on characteristics of the phenomenological approach with my study. Creswell (2007) describes a phenomenological study as “the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon” (p. 76). This is a suitable approach given my research purpose is to explore the phenomenon of teachers implementing everyday anti-racism education in their classroom instruction. In addition, a phenomenological approach best represents my research as I am focusing on learning and describing how teachers are implementing everyday anti-racism education and their experiences doing so, rather than looking at their experiences from a theoretical standpoint (Bevan, 2014).

3.2 Instruments of Data Collection

Within the field of education, qualitative interviews have been a common research method and data collection technique for decades (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). A qualitative interview’s main purpose is to “obtain descriptions of the life and world of the interviewee in order to interpret the meaning of the described phenomena” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 3).

The primary instrument for data collection used in this research study is the semi-structured interview protocol. The semi-structured format allows for the interviewer to design and plan out an interview that focuses on their research topic and questions, while allowing the interviewees to elaborate on certain questions in order for the interviewer to collect in-depth data responses and to get a deeper understanding of the interviewee's experiences. Semi-structured
interviews can be more effective than simple surveys or questionnaires as the interviewer is able to delve much deeper into the different issues that he/she is trying to explore. The interviewer is able to prompt the interviewee in order to really grasp full understanding, which cannot be done nearly as effectively with a questionnaire or survey.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted in-person. Face-to-face interviews are important because you are able to read your interviewees' facial expressions, tone of voice, body language, etc. (Irvine et al., 2012). The interviewer is able to clarify responses ask follow-up questions in order to ensure they get a clear meaning of the interviewees responses. This method rivals surveys and questionnaires because with these methods researchers may have difficulty grasping a full understanding of certain responses, which could lead to making assumptions about an interviewees' experiences, feelings, beliefs, etc.

3.3 Participants

In this section, I review the sampling criteria and reasoning, along with the sampling procedures and different methods of participant recruitment. I include a section introducing the participants and giving some background information.

3.3.1 Sampling Criteria

The following is a list of the sampling criteria I used for my research study:

- Teachers have a minimum 5 years of teaching experience
- Teachers show a demonstrated commitment to teaching anti-racism education
- Teachers work in the Toronto District School Board

Teachers needed to have a minimum 5 years of teaching experience because this amount of time allows for a wide range of experiences in terms of teaching everyday anti-racism. In addition, I thought it would be interesting to see how these teachers have changed how they
implement everyday anti-racism in their classroom over time and to hear what motivated these changes. Teachers also needed to have a demonstrated commitment to teaching anti-racism education because I was looking to learn from teachers that are invested and passionate about doing this work. In addition, I looked for committed teachers because I believe that this work is so important and as a future teacher, I wanted to learn from others that feel the same way as this will lead to more effective implementation and I also wanted to learn about the different strategies these teachers were using, what the outcomes were, and what challenges they faced doing this work. I recruited teachers that work in Toronto District School Board boards for two reasons. First, growing up and going to school in the Durham Catholic District School Board for the majority of my elementary schooling and all of high school, as well as teaching in both Durham boards, I wanted to learn firsthand exactly what are effective teaching strategies and how curriculum content is being taught. As I alluded to in the previous chapters, growing up, I was never taught about issues of race, discrimination, racism, etc., so I wanted to find out if and how these things were being taught in Toronto schools. It is important to note, however, that the teachers I interviewed are not representative of their particular school board. Second, I plan to teach in one of the Durham school boards and I wanted to learn more about what is being taught, the outcomes, the challenges, and the strategies teachers are using to implement everyday anti-racism so that I will be prepared when I have my own classroom.

3.3.2 Sampling procedures

I recruited my participants using two different sampling methods. Given the small scope of this research study, one of the sampling procedures I used was convenience sampling. With convenience sampling, the participants are “more readily accessible to the researcher and are more likely to be included” (Suen et al., 2014, p. 105). As a Master of Teaching student, I am
part of a community of teacher candidates, teachers, and professors, and as a result, I relied on my networks and contacts in order to recruit participants for this research study. More specifically, I contacted people that run social justice workshops and scholars/organizations with a demonstrated commitment to fighting racism and discrimination and empowering people of colour. In addition, I attended educational conferences that focus on social justice, anti-discrimination, and racism in education. I also used purposive sampling, which means that as the researcher, I carefully selected participants based on “study purpose with the expectation that each participant will provide unique and rich information of value to the study” (Suen et al., 2014, p. 105). This sampling method helped ensure that the information I received from my participants in the interviews would contribute to giving me a better understanding of my research topic through their shared experiences, feelings, and beliefs. Furthermore, I contacted teacher associations, school boards, principals, and teachers I know, and provided them with an overview of my research study as well as participant criteria, in order to recruit participants.

3.3.3 Participant Bios

Keeley

My first participant was Keeley. At the time of the research Keeley was a thirty-one year old teacher who self-identified as a Black, Venetian-Canadian woman. She had been teaching for six years. In her first year of teaching, she taught grade 7/8 Extended French, but over the last five years, she had taught Kindergarten French Immersion. At the time of the research she was teaching Kindergarten French Immersion at a school in the TDSB.

Sade

My second participant was Sade. At the time of the research Sade was a forty-one year old teacher who self-identified as a White, Jewish, Canadian woman. She had been teaching in
the TDSB for ten years and also had ten years of experience as an early child educator. At the time of the research she was teaching a grade 1/2 class, having returned from working in a central supply position as a study researcher for five years.

3.4 Data Analysis

After conducting my interviews, I analyzed the data. The first step was transcription. I read over each interview transcript carefully and several times before coding the transcripts. After identifying the codes, I sorted them into categories (St. Pierre & Jackson, 2014) and then reduced them into themes, noting the frequent themes and patterns throughout the transcripts (Creswell, 2007). I also paid attention to data that appeared to disagree or contradict other data. Culturally relevant pedagogy is an approach that emphasizes the importance of understanding how an individual's cultural identity, experiences, and knowledge shape their educational experience. This approach is used to empower students and to make classroom instruction more relevant and effective (Gay, 2000). As an interviewer, I have a responsibility to understand this concept and to not only be aware of, but to be sensitive to how an interviewee's cultural identity and experiences may shape their responses and actions. The next step was interpreting the data through the lens of the literature. It is important to note that the interpretation of data and resulting patterns depended on the interview questions asked (Chi, 1997). I interpreted the data by making meaning of the various codes, themes, and patterns found, and also by making connections to existing research literature (Creswell, 2007).

3.5 Ethical Review Procedures

There were several issues to consider in terms of ethical procedures for this research study. Confidentiality is an important issue, especially as this research study covers sensitive issues. The identities of all the participants remained confidential and each participant was
assigned a pseudonym (Kaiser, 2009). Regarding consent, each participant received a consent letter to sign (see Appendix A), which outlined the purpose of the research study and what was expected of the participants involved, along with known risks of participation, for which there were none (Creswell, 2007). I kept one copy of the consent letter on file, and each participant also kept a copy. In addition, all participants were informed that they had the right to withdraw. This not only means that all participants have the right to not answer a question asked by the interviewer, but all participants also had the right to withdraw from the research study at any time, regardless of reason. There were no known risks involved with participation. Each participant was, however, made aware that there was some possibility of minimal risk of participation (Sin, 2005), as the one area of concern is that the research focus does cover some sensitive issues and some of the questions asked could have triggered an emotional response from the interviewee. In this case, the interviewees were assured that they could reserve the right to decline to answer a particular question and they had the right to withdraw from the research study entirely. Member checks is another ethical procedure used in this study. With member checks, each participant had the right to review their interview transcript and may clarify and/or withdraw any statements that they made. Finally, with regards to data storage, all data was stored on a password-protected laptop and phone, with all data to be destroyed after five years.

3.6 Methodological Limitations

In this research study, there were two main limitations that I had to consider: the scope of the research and a limited sample size.

Scope of the Research:

MTRP ethical guidelines stated that only teachers can be interviewed, therefore disallowing interviews with students and parents. The ethical guidelines also do not allow for
classroom observation as an instrument of data collection. This research study would be more thorough without this particular limitation as there are many things an interviewer can learn through observation. In addition, a teacher may give information in the interview, but findings from classroom observation may be slightly different or even contradict this. Classroom observation is important as it would allow the researcher to witness the behaviours of the teachers in both an informal and formal setting and to follow the interactions between the teachers and students. The researcher would get a feel for the environment and would be a part of the process, which is something that cannot be done through interviews alone (Dargie, 1998). Furthermore, using observation as a data collection tool, the researcher would benefit from the “natural responses, opinions, and insights of their research subject” (Dargie, 1998, p. 66).

Limited Sample Size:

MTRP guidelines and time limited the number of participants that could be interviewed. Although the small number of participants helped inform my choice of this particular topic, this research would be more thorough if there were more participants interviewed as I would be able to get an even better sense of teachers' feelings, experiences, beliefs, and practices. In addition, I would be able to see more clearly if these experiences, feelings, beliefs, and practices are widespread or whether they are simply a few unique situations and are outliers. As a result of the limited sample size, I am also unable to generalize my findings in order to discuss my research in a much broader sense.

3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I described the research methodology. I began by identifying my research focus: exploring how elementary teachers are implementing everyday anti-racism education in their classroom instruction. I stated that this research study was conducted using a qualitative
research approach and discussed the effectiveness of the semi-structured interview as the main
instrument of data collection. Next, I elaborated on the participants in the research study,
beginning with the list of sampling criteria and reasoning, followed by an explanation of the
sampling procedures used, convenience and purposive sampling, and ending with a description
of each participant. Next, I explained my data analysis process, followed by a discussion of the
ethical review procedures, including confidentiality, consent, the right to withdraw, member
checks, and data storage. I concluded by elaborating on two main methodological limitations, the
scope of the research and limited sample size. Next, in chapter four, I report my research
findings.
4.0 Introduction

In this chapter I report and discuss the findings that resulted from my interviews with two TDSB teachers who are committed to anti-racism work. I explore the following four themes:

Teacher commitment and learning drive and support their practice; Participants each forefront the significance of teacher identity in their approach to anti-racism education; Teachers observe the validation of student identity, a social justice perspective, and relationship building as student outcomes of anti-racism education; Teachers face challenges in terms of a culture of silence, serious backlash, and low expectations when doing anti-racism work.

4.1 Teacher commitment and learning drive and support their practice

4.1.1 Teachers emphasize lifelong learning as key to evolving their anti-racism practice

Teaching is an ongoing process, and as a result, teachers must be able to always reflect on and evolve their practice. These participants both viewed learning as a lifelong process. As Keeley pointed out, in order to do this work, teachers must be open to being a lifelong learner and must understand that in this profession, “You don’t always have all answers, you’re still learning, you’re always learning.” She believed that if teachers go into the profession having this mindset and thinking that they do not have all the answers, it will be easier for them to be able to constantly evolve in their practice. She added that in doing so, teachers will always be able to build on what they do know or do not know. Both Keeley and Sade have remained committed to staying informed and continuing to learn at all times. For Sade, understanding that her role as a teacher and who she is as a person is important for impacting her students, and has contributed to her commitment to continuing to learn more. Similar to Sade, Keeley discussed how, over time,
she has had to un-learn and re-learn certain things, which is why continuous learning, lifelong learning is important.

4.1.2 Teachers prioritize learning from students in terms of who they are as people and what they know

Both participants expressed the importance of learning from their students as part of their teaching practice. Keeley reflected on an experience having a student of Nepalese descent and how excited she was to learn about Nepal culture from this student. She said, “I think it’s also something that I practice in terms of my philosophy. It’s kind of like learning alongside my students.” She went on to explain that she may not know about her students’ cultures, but she learns a lot from them, particularly the things that they say or bring into the classroom in terms of their culture. Similar to Keeley, Sade discussed having discussion about power with her students and telling them that she wants to learn about them and wants to share more about them. As part of Sade’s teaching practice, she constantly reflects and asks herself, “How do I create a space where I'm inviting the students to tell me what they're learning as opposed to me imposing this is what we're going to do today?” She believed that her job was not to simply tell them what they are learning, but to also allow them to teach her. She emphasized creating a classroom environment with her students and ensuring that this is a space for not only her students to learn, but for her to grow and learn with them and from them as well. Like Sade, Keeley also emphasized being able to co-construct a space with her students and teaching in the co-construction of her students. Part of her teaching philosophy was the fact that everything that her class does, they do together, it is never simply her giving the class activities or work to do, but rather, it is a collaborative approach to education. A key aspect of both Keeley and Sade’s teaching philosophy is the inclusion of student identities in their classrooms. They both discussed
using culturally relevant pedagogy in their own teaching practice as it is an effective way of ensuring that their students are being represented and reflected in the classroom and in the curriculum that they are teaching (Parhar & Sensoy, 2011). They both spoke to the importance of getting to their students and how knowledge of their students informs their teaching, which Ladson-Billings (2000) defines as ‘cultural competence’. Cultural competence occurs when students are given the opportunity to express and share all aspects of their identities and cultures in the classroom and are encouraged to do so (Ladson-Billings, 2000). One particular strategy that Sade has used in her own classroom is sending home a questionnaire at the beginning of the year so that she gets to learn who her students and their families are in terms of family makeup, cultural background, languages spoken at home, where their ancestors come from, etc. Sade then uses this as a springboard for the rest of the year so that she can plan her lessons in a way that is culturally relevant and fits the interests of her students. In relation to using knowledge of students to inform teaching practice, Keeley reflected on an experience with a student who she observed was writing their name backwards, from right to left. This usually is not a serious issue because writing conventions can be easily corrected in Kindergarten. However, for Keeley, knowing that this student comes from a culture that reads right to left, gave her more of an understanding of a possible explanation why this child was writing their name backwards.

4.1.3 For these teachers, learning from experience is key to their growth as anti-racism educators

Both participants underscored the importance of learning from experience. When discussing how teaching of anti-racism education and culturally relevant pedagogy has changed over the years, Keeley pointed to experience as the main reason for the significant changes and improvement of her practice. Keeley discussed how “you learn over time the things that work,
the things that don’t work. You take risks. Like in teaching period, you take risks.” She highlighted the importance of teachers trying things out in their classroom to see if they work, and if they do not work, then you simply try something new. Like Keeley, Sade believed that the more a teacher experiences, the more they learn. In addition, both participants highlighted the significance of discomfort in terms of learning and teaching. Sade advised, “Be okay with the messiness, be okay with the complexity, and be okay with being uncomfortable. You need to be uncomfortable in order to learn.” Keeley echoed this sentiment by explaining that there should be a level of discomfort in the classroom because with discomfort comes learning. It is important for teachers to feel discomfort as this is a sign of growth and the fact that they are not only challenging themselves, but challenging their students. Doing this may be difficult and frustrating at times, but it is essential that teachers do not give up as anti-racism work is so important.

4.1.4 Learning from scholarship and self-directed learning is significant to the development of these teachers’ practice

A major source of learning for these two participants was learning from scholarship and self-directed learning. These participants showed a commitment to anti-racism education through their reliance on scholarship as a foundation of their learning and knowledge. Both participants spoke about how research has informed their own practice. Keeley specifically drew on her experience as a Master’s student and working on her PhD as evidence that “research goes a long way and that it effects quite a bit in terms of the educational sector.” For her, it is always important to not only learn from research, but to give back in terms of scholarly work because it informs the classroom and has definitely informed her own classroom.
Although both participants addressed the importance of learning from scholarship, Sade in particular, addressed her use of scholarly research and theory as support when she was challenged doing this work. Sade reflected on a particular instance when she was sitting in a meeting with policymakers, all white, who were discussing whether to place a five-year-old student on a behavioural IEP. She stated, “I didn’t just push back and say no, but I said let’s take a look at this data and who is this going to serve?” She explained the importance of having the support of theory so that she is not simply sharing and saying what she thinks, but she is able to relate directly to theory and say exactly what research has said what the TDSB data is showing.

Keeley also addressed the challenge of using research to inform her own pedagogical practice. She reflected on learning about the research and theories while working on her Master’s and PhD, but admitted that she wondered how she would actually implement the research and theories and make them practical. Speaking about her own education as a Master’s and PhD student, she did receive some concrete ways of doing this, but she felt the strategies were not “primary enough” in terms of being appropriate and accessible for younger students. She spoke about being confident in engaging anti-racism work when she was teaching grade seven and eight. However, when she started teaching kindergarten, she had a hard time and wondered how she could bring this important work into the classroom.

Sade specifically pointed to Gloria Ladson-Billings, Lisa Delpit, bell hooks, Glenn Singleton, and Debra Applebaum as scholars that she looked to in terms of research to support her own pedagogical practice. Like Keeley, she admitted that learning from research did present a challenge for her. While she reflected on her own classroom experience and understood that doing research and reading scholarly articles are extremely important, she had difficulty finding
the time to reflect on her practice and application theory as well as doing her own research because she was with her students all day without breaks.

A lot of what Sade does in her own classroom comes out of research. She reflected on one particular experience when she had to write about a student who was having some difficulty in her classroom and she was struggling, thinking about what to write about the student, trying to make sure it was not biased, a result of her own limitations, or her own belief of the student. An article a friend and fellow educator sent her, *Are You Making Me... Or Are You Making Me a Fool?*, was central to her taking a step back, really focusing, and thinking critically about what she was writing and whether it was going to serve the student as a learner or whether it was serving herself, based on her own beliefs.

### 4.2 Participants each foregrounded the significance of teacher identity in their approach to anti-racism education

Both participants emphasized the influence that their own identity had on their approach to anti-racism education. Keeley discussed how her approach to anti-racism education is influenced in terms of her identity as a Black educator. She reflected on particular negative experiences that she had as a student as inspiration for becoming a teacher and implementing anti-racism education in her own classroom. Keeley spoke to a lack of diversity in the education system, especially when she was younger, and how she did not have a teacher of colour until she was in high school, but she recognized the importance of having teachers that reflected the identities of the students:

> There was always a need to see someone model what that would look like, to model success, and model what it would be to be a teacher of colour. And so I think that this was something that I yearned for. In yearning for it, I think it was something I wanted to do to give back because I wanted children in my community to be able see people that looked like them.
She spoke to a need for students of colour to see models of success and this is what shaped her commitment to teaching and anti-racism education. Keeley also reflected on having difficulty in school and understanding the stereotypes and assumptions about students of colour and their academic ability, stating, “I didn't want to fit that stereotype of what it meant to be a person of colour, what's exceeding and what's achieving.” Her experiences as a student of colour helped her to understand what her own students of colour go through every day at school and through her practice, she took into account these experiences.

Understanding that there are low expectations for the achievement of students of colour, specifically Black students, one of Keeley’s approaches to anti-racism is always having high expectations for all of her students. She understood the dominant narrative of students of colour and as a result, part of her anti-racism work involved challenging that narrative and believing in the ability of all her students. Similarly, Sade spoke to the importance of believing that all students can be successful and shed light on her experience as a researcher, explaining that she “spent a lot of time trying to convince teachers that yes, Black students can learn, and kids in the inner city are brilliant.” This is significant because if teachers do not believe in their students and continue to perpetuate the damaging narrative about students of colour and achievement, then the students themselves will believe it and will have low expectations for their own achievement. Teacher expectations is directly correlated to student achievement and consequently, lower teacher expectations result in poorer student achievement (Martinek & Johnson, 1979). In terms of her own approach, Sade stated that “high expectations [are] always there and the kids live up to it. And they see you believe in them, they do it.”

Sade discussed how her approach to anti-racism education was influenced significantly in terms of her identity as a white female educator. She addressed the challenge of always having to
build trust in certain spaces because of her whiteness and did admit that although it is hard work, she was willing to do it, and has done so. Sade recognized that because of her whiteness, she had to be conscious of how she entered different spaces and the conversation of anti-racism work. She acknowledged this and explained that she continued to do this work because it is important, stating, “I cannot be a leader in these spaces, I can be an ally. It's hard, but I always do it and I hope that I can walk my talk. That I am there because I am genuinely interested and genuinely committed.” Throughout the interview, Sade really emphasized the fact that she always acknowledges her own power and privilege as a white female educator. A significant part of Sade’s anti-racism work in the classroom is her focus on issues of power and privilege. She conceptualized racism and oppression through a focus on the interplay of power and privilege. She challenged not just herself, but her students and colleagues, to recognize and be conscious of their own power and privilege in terms of how they navigate the classroom and the world. Sade emphasized that as a White woman, it was not her place to take the lead in certain spaces of anti-racism work and discussion, but rather, she was there as an ally and a supporter. She translated this to her anti-racism practice in the classroom by encouraging her students to really reflect on their own power and privilege by providing a model. She explained her approach, stating that “part of it is the fact of acknowledging power, privilege into the space, acknowledging that I am a white woman teaching students' various backgrounds and that holds certain power as well and I have to acknowledge that.” Sade highlighted the fact that as a white woman talking about race, she does not come from a space of experience. As a result, she could not be a leader, but rather, an ally; someone there to provide spaces for students to have these difficult, but critical conversations. Furthermore, an important part of her approach was how she grappled with her role in terms of taking a step back and being a facilitator in the classroom and a “supporter of the
students who have the knowledge already and to bring that out in a space.” This was one of the challenges she faced, but was something that was important to her practice as she valued her students’ experiences and encouraged them to share their own stories. Sade’s approach to anti-racism contrasts with findings by Carr & Klaussen (1997) in which they detail some white teachers who questioned the importance and necessity of anti-racism in the classroom, as she is a white educator that is clearly committed to this work. As a White teacher doing anti-racism work, Sade's work is supported by Irvine (2010) who argues that the belief that only teachers of colour can be culturally relevant is a common misconception that needs to be deconstructed. Sade's experiences demonstrate that one does not have to personally experience issues of racism and discrimination in order to facilitate conversations about these issues in the classroom.

4.3 Teachers observe the validation of student identity, relationship building, and students gaining/building a social justice perspective, as student outcomes of anti-racism education

4.3.1 Anti-racism education promotes the validation of students’ identities

One significant student outcome of anti-racism work is the validation of student identity. Keeley alluded to this when she said, “I also feel like it validates who they are…and what their cultures represent to them or what their identities mean to them.” Carr & Klaussen (1997) support this finding as they deem one of the purposes of anti-racism education is to “validate the lived experiences of an increasingly diverse student body.” This outcome is significant as the identities and experiences of students of colour, especially Black students, are rarely, if at all, represented in the curriculum. (Kowalski, 2008; McCarthy, 1990; Schick & St. Dennis, 2005; Parhar & Sensoy, 2011). In her classroom, she noticed that there were certain students that would shy away from their culture, but through encouragement and trust, they began to bring that piece into the classroom on their own and “eventually start[ed] embracing their culture a little more
within the class.” In doing this work, Keeley observed that it not only gave her students a sense of self, but a greater sense of confidence and self-esteem as well.

4.3.2 Anti-racism education results in strong teacher-student relationships

Relationship building is a significant outcome that both participants address. Sade in particular recounted how she finds different ways of connecting with her students and as a result of the anti-racism work that she does in the classroom, she has built strong relationships with her students. She noted that there is a “certain bond when students really believe and know that you are genuinely interested in them and you value their lives, you value their history, you value their families and the narratives, the relationships with the parents.” She stressed the importance of building trust with students and as a result, she had built strong, meaningful relationships with them. Mott-Smith (2008) supports this finding as she discusses the importance of spending a sufficient amount of time “establishing trust and rapport across racial lines” (p. 148). Similarly, Keeley discussed having a great relationship with her students as well, specifically pointing to how she shows a genuine interest in getting to know her students and their cultures and having them bring those pieces into the classroom. She noted how her students are appreciative of this and her genuine interest in them and their lives. In addition, both participants expressed that their anti-racism work has resulted in community building in the classroom and an improved classroom environment in terms of it feeling like a safe space for students to express themselves, share their personal experiences, and have critical conversations about important, but difficult issues, such as race, power, and privilege.

4.3.3 Anti-racism education helps students develop a social justice perspective

Keeley’s anti-racism work and culturally relevant teaching fosters “more than tolerance, but a deeper understanding of our world and the diversities within our world” in her students.
She emphasized moving beyond tolerance, but rather, supporting her students to develop a better understanding of the great diversity that surrounds us, ensuring that this is not done in a superficial sense, which does often occur in schools. Through her work in the classroom, Keeley was able to get her students think more deeply, not just about themselves, but about the world and her own teaching as well. Like Keeley, Sade found that her students showed higher level thinking and improved critical thinking skills.

Reflecting on a class discussion about disability and accessibility of the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) subway system, Keeley discussed how her students encouraged her to send a letter to the TTC, which was written as a class, asking why they did not have accessibility within every station. The TTC sent a message back saying that in 2017 or 2018, every station would be accessible. This experience highlights how Keeley was able to get her young students to look at an issue through a social justice lens. Her students not only identified the issue of accessibility, but also wanted to know why this issue existed. In addition, her students demonstrated initiative and social justice action by asking her to send a letter to the TTC. She was also able to show her students that they can be involved in issues of social justice regardless of their age.

Sade also reflected on a specific series of lessons that she did with her class where they were talking about local heroes and interviewed different community members. They also sent letters nominating particular members. The students did everything within in the curriculum, such as working on their literacy skills and data collection, but Sade noted different outcomes than what she would have observed if the activities had simply been worksheets. She observed that her students found “a lot more enrichment, higher level thinking, a lot more critical thinking skills, and a lot more feeling of empowered,” as students were having a meaningful learning
experience. By meaningful learning experience, Sade refers to the fact that her students were learning about their own community, what matters to them, and their voices were heard as well.

These experiences highlight what Ladson-Billings (1995) defines as ‘critical consciousness’. Ladson-Billings (1995) argues that “beyond those individual characteristics of academic achievement and cultural competence, students must develop a broader sociopolitical consciousness that allows them to critique the cultural norms, values, mores, and institutions that produce and maintain social inequities” (p. 160). Keeley and Sade both spoke to the importance of helping their students to develop a social justice perspective. They both emphasized teaching their students to think critically about the world they live in and not only to recognize or identify issues of inequality, but to question why these inequalities exist and to think about possible solutions.

4.4 Teachers face challenges in terms of a culture of silence, serious backlash, and low expectations when doing anti-racism work.

4.4.1 Discrimination and racism in the education system result in a culture of silence

Based on their years of experience in the education system, both participants alluded to what can be termed as a “culture of silence”. In their own way, both participants discussed a culture of silence with regards to the racism and discrimination in their respective schools, as well as in the education system as a whole.

Keeley detailed her own experience:

There are teachers who make discriminatory or racist remarks, but often times it's like shoved under the rug, no one really says anything about it, there's almost a culture of silence where people don't speak up or people won't say anything about it.
Teachers have a lot of power and are responsible for providing good examples for their students to follow, but as Keeley pointed out, there are teachers who often make discriminatory and racist remarks. This in itself is problematic, but what is also very troubling and problematic is the fact that these teachers are being allowed to say these things and there is nothing said or done about it. Henry & Tator (2009) and Lund (2006) note that racism in Canada is often dismissed as a serious reality. In addition, the fact that Canadians often ignore the existence of racism and discriminatory laws and policies only adds to the problem (Henry & Tator, 2009). If racism and discrimination are not seen as real and serious issues, then this makes it much more difficult for teachers like Keeley and Sade to actually do this important work in their classrooms. When asked why racism still persists in the Canadian education system, Keeley discussed how when acts of racism and discrimination occur, these incidents are “masked and ignored”; they are not at all addressed. She also said that in incidents when these acts occur and there is a discussion, the acts of racism and discrimination are minimized. The casual nature of this minimization suggests that when educators speak or act out against racism and discrimination, they may face oppression that extends beyond the level of individuals teachers, to that of the education system in which they work. As a result, this minimization of racism and discrimination can not be simply seen as isolated incidents, but rather this may signal an institutional issue and an institutional oppression. Young (2011) alludes to this when he notes “disconcerting evidence of how persistently the participants regarded racism as acts of individual pathology rather than as a systemic problem” (p. 1453).

Both participants also expressed the lack of accountability from staff colleagues and administrators in terms of anti-racism education as a very prevalent issue in their own education careers. The silence that follows when discriminatory and racist remarks are made not only
signals that this kind of language is okay, but also works to perpetuate the assumptions and stereotypes that are made by teachers. This illustrates a significant barrier to those that are doing anti-racism work as they are challenged by these same teachers, teachers that believe it is okay to use discriminatory and racist language. In addition, if teachers are using this language regularly and nothing is being done about it, this suggests that there is or there will be a negative response to teachers doing this important anti-racism work and the amount of support that they will receive.

4.4.2 Teachers experience negative backlash when they are doing anti-racism work

Sade expressed the negative backlash she received and the negative perceptions white colleagues had of her because she is a white educator doing anti-racism work. She shared her experiences sitting in spaces where other white educators will have conversations and make discriminatory and racist statements about students that they would not make if she was not white and looked like them. In her experience, some white educators believe that it is okay for them to use discriminatory and racist language simply because they are not in the presence of people of colour. However, Sade always challenges what these educators are saying and pushes back in terms of their comfort of what they are saying about students. Sade also discussed the negative backlash that she faces when she brings up topics of anti-racism and the Black Lives Matter movement:

People get very angry at me, and they almost feel like I’ve betrayed them in some way, that we have this connection simply because we are white. That how could you bring this up, why would you bring this up? So I’m almost viewed as a troublemaker and it’s not the best feeling, but it’s not about me feeling good.

Sade discussed how the conversations she has about racism make a lot of her colleagues, specifically white colleagues, uncomfortable and then also points how these white educators feel
like she is attacking them. However, this does not deter her from continuing to have these critical conversations because she knows how important they are.

4.4.3 Teachers are challenged by low expectations in terms of the importance of anti-racism education, student achievement, and teacher ability and knowledge

These participants face the challenge of low expectations in terms of the importance of anti-racism education. Schools do not see anti-racism work or equity work in general as important or a priority. This creates further challenges for educators trying to do this work, such as a lack of support from colleagues and administration and a lack of resources. Keeley and Sade addressed the implementation of anti-racism education as an individual effort, not a school-wide (or board-wide) one. To them, this work occurs on an individual basis, meaning a single teacher doing this work in a school. There appears to be no collaboration, but rather, individual teachers are tackling the task of implementing anti-racism education on their own, usually with minimal or no support from their colleagues and administration. As Sade noted, “There's lots of people out there doing a lot of good things and doing it almost in silos.” The responsibility of anti-racism education falls on individual teachers that are really committed to this work and those who truly see its value and importance in the education system. Both participants discussed a history of having colleagues and administration who provided little, and often no, support for them to do this work, but they remained committed because they recognize and understand how important this work truly is.

As equity and anti-racism education are not prioritized in schools, they are treated as additive in terms of curriculum in the education system. Keeley spoke to this issue, specifically shedding light on her experience as a French immersion teacher. In her experience, there was never any talk about diversity within the French realm of education. She did note that there have
been small improvements, but for the most part it is like French is “completely separate to equity and it's almost as if because of French, and because there's another layer of language, it almost like trumped equity and inclusion, which it shouldn't, but it often times would.”

In addition, access and the availability of reflective resources and curriculum is a challenge that both participants work hard to overcome in order to do this work. This finding is consistent with the literature as students of colour rarely see their own experiences and histories reflected in curriculum and texts (Kowalski, 2008; Schick & St. Dennis, 2005; Parhar & Sensoy, 2011). Keeley in particular emphasized really having to advocate for what she needs in her classroom in terms of anti-racism practice. She noted that “it's not that the principals or admin can't push for that, but typically they aren't the ones to look for the texts.” Sade added she definitely has to go out of her way and order them because they simply are not available in her school. She also explained that sometimes she is even forced to buy the resources necessary to do this work out of her own pocket:

A lot has recently come out of my personal budget because I go to supplies store that aren't on the TDSB list so if I want like, even, again, the tone paint or the construction paper that's like skin tone, multi-skin tone, the dolls that I buy, the books that I want, they come out of my own personal budget.

Both participants did say that their current principals were supportive in terms of getting them reflective books and other resources when requested. Keeley spoke to the importance of her having a good relationship with the school librarian who was in charge of bringing in books, as a strategy for having better access to the material she needed to implement anti-racism education in her own classroom. This was especially important for her because as she has had difficulty finding reflective texts in French and texts that represent a diverse population of French speakers, more than just French speakers from Canada and Europe. Sade added that her principal sent her out to get a bunch of reflective books for the school. Sade also added that her principal
was going to buy more supplies from the specific art supply store that she referred her to. However, like Keeley, she was adamant about the fact that much more needs to be done and that anti-racism educators need to be supported. The responsibility of getting reflective resources should not fall solely on the shoulders of these teachers; administration needs to take responsibility and be accountable as well.

Both participants spoke to the fact that their colleagues and administration have low expectations of their teaching abilities and knowledge and as a result, they are often challenged when doing anti-racism work. Keeley specifically spoke to the fact that there are low expectations of Black educators’ teaching abilities and knowledge, reflecting on a particular racist experience that she had at a previous school:

There was an incident where I had completed report cards and a teacher apparently went through the official documentation, the document, the OSR, Ontario student records, and withdrew the ones I had done and was looking for, to see if there was mistakes in what I wrote and came to the principal and said that it wasn't worded in the right way.

Keeley’s experience illustrates the prevalence of negative assumptions about the ability of Black teachers in the education system. Keeley noted that she felt that this incident definitely had something to do with her skin colour and the fact that she was the only teacher of colour in the school. Furthermore, Keeley talked about her principal coming to her classroom on the last day of class and telling her to re-do her report cards when the same principal had already approved her report card comments. She went on to explain that she did get the union involved, but the union’s response was simply, “Because you're not working with these colleagues anymore next year, we could do mediation, but it wouldn't serve you any purpose because you're not going to be in the same school together next year.” Keeley’s experience highlights a culture of silence, as well as a lack of accountability and action in the education system. Her experience was not taken
seriously by the union. Nothing was done. This serious incident was simply brushed under the rug, so to speak, and was left unresolved.

Sade also reflected on a particular experience when an artist was brought into the school to teach the grade three classes how to make Aboriginal teepees out of toilet paper. She immediately challenged the activity, articulating why it was problematic, only to get into trouble with her principal. Sade took issue with this activity because she believed it to be cultural appropriation of Aboriginal people and culture for students to simply make teepees out of toilet paper.

I said I’m not doing that and I began trying to tell them why we’re not going to do this appropriation, why we don’t make tepees out of toilet paper rolls and I wasn’t going to do it. I actually got in trouble by the principal who didn't believe that what I was saying was factual or correct and so the other three grade three teachers went on with all their students and made tepees while my students made playgrounds.

Although she did get the push-back from the principal who actually yelled at her and from parents who questioned why their children were not making teepees, Sade stood by what she said and refused to participate in an activity that she believed was offensive to the Aboriginal community and appropriation.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed my research findings which I sorted into four main themes and sub-themes as well. Through my first theme, teacher commitment and learning drive and support their practice, I found that in terms of supporting their anti-racism practice, teachers emphasized lifelong learning, learning from students, learning from experience, and learning from scholarship and self-directed learning. Through my second theme, participants each foregrounded the significance of teacher identity in their approach to anti-racism education, I found that my participants’ identities as Black and white educators influenced their practice in different ways in
terms of how they implemented anti-racism education in their classrooms. Existing research does speak to the significance of teacher identity, specifically the fact that in the TDSB, the majority of students are of colour, while the majority of teachers are White. Existing research also alludes to the disconnect that can occur when teachers who do not have an understanding of race, power, privilege, and inequality or have not experienced these things, are then expected to implement anti-racism education in their own classrooms. Sade, as a White educator, gave tremendous insight into this issue, emphasizes the importance of acknowledging her Whiteness, as well as her own power and privilege, whenever discussing these issues in her classroom, as well as in other educational spaces. With my third theme, teachers observed the validation of student identity, a social justice perspective, and relationship building as student outcomes of anti-racism education. My fourth theme is teachers faced challenges in terms of a culture of silence, serious backlash, and low expectations when doing anti-racism work. I found that there was a culture of silence in terms of racist and discriminatory behaviour, teachers experienced serious backlash and reprimands for doing anti-racism work, and they were faced with low expectations in terms of the importance of anti-racism education, their own ability and knowledge, and student achievement. My participants’ experiences were significant in terms of shedding light on these specific challenges that they faced, as well as, how they have responded to these challenges. Existing research does speak to some of the challenges that they have encountered doing anti-racism work, but Keeley and Sade provided detailed accounts of some of these challenges and what they did in particular situations, which is something that is missing from existing research literature. For example, research literature does discuss the importance of having high expectations for all students, especially students of colour, to combat the negative stereotypes surrounding the assumed achievement of students of colour. My participants both spoke to this.
Sade even took this a step further when she discussed how she ensures that students know that she believes that they all have the ability to be successful in the classroom. Sade also spoke to the importance of being vocal and standing up for her students when other teachers speak poorly of them and have low expectations of them. As with all aspects of anti-racism education, disrupting negative narratives is key. In chapter five, I discuss the implications of my research study and my recommendations for the educational community.
Chapter 5: Implications

5.0 Introduction to the chapter/overview

In this chapter I discuss the implications of my research study. I begin by providing an overview of the key findings of my research and their significance. I discuss the broad implications of these findings for the educational community as well as the implications for me as a teacher and as a researcher. I make recommendations for policy and practice, including various stakeholders in the educational community (e.g. teachers, administrators, school boards, professional development, and teacher education). Next, I identify important areas of further research. Finally, I conclude by summarizing my findings and speaking to the significance.

5.1 Overview of key findings and their significance

I organized my key findings in four main themes. My first theme is: Teacher commitment and learning drives and supports their practice. Both participants emphasized lifelong learning and learning from experience as key to evolving their anti-racism practice. As teaching is an ongoing process, they believe it is important to have opportunities to reflect on their practice in order to effectively do anti-racism work. They also spoke about prioritizing learning from their students in terms of their identities and backgrounds as well as knowledge and creating opportunities for exploration in the classroom. In addition, learning from scholarship and self-directed learning have been significant to the development of their practice.

Participants each forefronted the significance of teacher identity in their approach to anti-racism education. Keeley discussed her identity as a Black educator and reflected on negative experiences she has had, including a lack of diversity in the education system in terms of staff and administration and low expectations of achievement for students of colour. Sade discussed her identity as a white educator. She emphasized the importance of always acknowledging her
own power and privilege as a white female educator, as well as the challenges she faced as a white educator doing anti-racism work. Teacher identity does play a significant role in how teachers approach and implement anti-racism education. As research points out, in the TDSB the majority of students are of colour, but the majority of teachers are White. This can create a disconnect because White teachers are being asked to teach and discuss issues of race, power, privilege, and inequality with their students; issues that they most likely have never experienced. Therefore, it is critical to think about who exactly is teaching students anti-racism education. In addition, we must find a way so that all teachers, especially teachers who have little or no understanding of issues of race, power, privilege, and inequality, can be educated in order to appropriately and effectively implement anti-racism education in their own classrooms.

Teachers observed the validation of student identity, a social justice perspective, and relationship building as student outcomes of anti-racism education. My participants found that as a result of their approach, students were more willing to bring in and discuss their own cultures in the classroom. In addition, they observed that anti-racism work and culturally relevant teaching helped their students to develop a social justice perspective and to look at the world with a critical lens. My participants were also able to build strong and meaningful relationships with their students. Research has shown that as students’ identities can impact their educational experiences, classrooms need to be places where the expression and sharing of students’ identities and cultures are accepted and more importantly, encouraged. Validating student identity is key to creating a safe and inclusive classroom environment which in turn creates more opportunities for students to succeed.

Finally, teachers faced challenges in terms of a culture of silence, serious backlash, and low expectations when doing anti-racism work. Both participants discussed facing serious
challenges when doing anti-racism work in their classrooms. In particular, they spoke to the minimization of the prevalence of racism and discrimination as well as the oppression possibly faced for speaking out against racist and discriminatory acts and for doing anti-racism work in the classroom. Furthermore, both participants spoke to the challenge of anti-racism work and equity work not being seen as important. Supporting the insight from my participants, existing literature speaks to the fact that issues of racism and discrimination are not always seen as institutional and structural oppression, but rather the acts of individuals. This represents a bigger problem as this leads to the minimization of these issues and also the fact that the experiences of students and teachers who are marginalized may not be validated or treated as such.

5.2 Implications

In this section, I outline the implications of my research findings. I begin by discussing the broad implications of my research findings for the educational community (as a whole). Next, I discuss the implications of my findings for me both as a teacher and as a researcher.

5.2.1 The Education Community

The literature on anti-racism education, as well has my participants' experiences, has emphasized the need to implement school-wide initiatives and efforts. Both participants spoke to doing this work 'in silos'. But this is not enough. As we understand how important this anti-racism work truly is, this demonstrates a need for this work to be widespread, and not simply occurring in a classroom or two. In addition, the implications of my research study includes the need for schools and school boards to provide teachers with practical and effective strategies and resources that can be used in the classroom to implement everyday anti-racism education.

The research literature also spoke to the fact that students achieve at a higher level when curriculum is relative and reflective of their identities and lives. A key component of anti-racism
education is ensuring that students and their identities are being reflected in the classroom. As teachers, we want all of our students to be successful and to achieve at a high level. Therefore, if we are not allowing students to bring in and share all aspects of their identities and experiences and do not teach a curriculum that is reflective, then we are not providing the best opportunities for our students to succeed.

The lack of accountability witnessed by both participants in regards to the response to acts of racism and discrimination implies the need to educate both teachers and administrators about what exactly constitutes discriminatory and racist acts, as well as what is an appropriate response in terms of action and consequences. This lack of accountability, which has led to what can be termed as a 'culture of silence' implies that issues of racism and discrimination are at times not taken seriously and that these types of things are acceptable in classrooms and schools, when clearly this should not be the case. This needs to be done in order to ensure that the experiences and identities of students that are marginalized, and face discrimination and racism, are being valued and respected.

Lack of diversity in education occurs at all levels, from teachers to administration to policy makers. Sade particularly discussed this in-depth. She detailed a specific experience that she had which underscored the different barriers that are present as a result of institutional oppression in the education system:

So sitting in a room of policy makers in terms of Spec. Ed. I was in a Spec. Ed. meeting today where six people sat around a room, all white, and talking about putting a young child onto a behavioural IEP at age five, and recognizing that this is the norm that happens too often.

Sade addresses a number of issues here. First, she highlights the fact that all of the policy makers were white. She notes that it is normal for white policy makers to make the decisions about students’ needs in terms of behaviour. She also notes that there is a lack of diversity in terms of
policy makers and this is something that often occurs. The fact that often those who are creating the policies do not always reflect who the policies are directly affecting is problematic. Although Sade did not specifically say if this was a student of colour, a student’s race does typically play a part in how they are viewed in terms of their behaviour. Students of colour, especially Black students, are much more likely to be seen as ‘behavioural’ students compared to their white counterparts. As a result, it is necessary for those that are creating the policies and those that are in charge of making these major decisions, to not only reflect the identities of the students themselves, but to also be conscious and sensitive to the negative light in which these students are perceived. Sade also recognized how it was the norm for students to be placed onto a behavioural IEP at such a young age. She challenged this process (as a whole) stating that based on policies, institutions are “setting up students for success or for containment.” Sade understood both the short-term and long-term effects of labelling a student as “behavioural” and placing them onto a behavioural IEP. Labelling a student as behavioural changes the trajectory of their schooling and often determines how that student is perceived by their peers, teachers, and administration, how they are treated, and what the belief in their ability to succeed is. As Sade notes, it is important to be aware of how we see our students because it is too easy to label a student and for them to then fall into this assigned stereotype because this is something that will follow and hinder them throughout their schooling experience. She argued that institutions are currently set up to easily label students as behavioural and placing them on behavioural IEP’s without truly looking at our beliefs of these students and taking into account the various factors that affect children and their behaviour. Sade emphasizes the importance of looking at exactly who are the ‘behavioural’ students and the need to have critical conversations about this. Why are certain students, especially students of colour, and particularly Black students, seen as
‘behavioural’? It is important for all educators to not only ask this question, but to reflect, and more importantly, challenge this as being labelled as behavioural has especially serious implications for Black students.

5.2.2 Implications for Myself as a Teacher and Researcher

In this section I identify and discuss the implications for me as a teacher and as a researcher. I have gained a deeper understanding of what it is like to be an anti-racism educator in school today. I am aware of the fact that when I do have my own classroom, I may be the only teacher of colour, and as a result, I must be conscious of the challenges that do come with that. In addition, possibly being the only teacher doing anti-racism work in a school, I am aware of the possible push-back, oppression, and challenges that I may face doing this work. Sade and Keeley spoke to doing anti-racism work and equity work in silos. They spoke about having to look beyond their respective schools for support for their anti-racism practice in terms of resources, research, strategies, people to talk to and collaborate with, etc. In terms of my own practice, it is critical that I have a strong support system like-minded people who are committed to anti-racism and social justice, people that I can go to for advice, to share ideas and strategies with, and to reflect on my teaching. I also understand that at my school, I may not have access to reflective texts necessary for doing this work so it is my responsibility to advocate for these essential resources. It is also my responsibility to search for the necessary resources on my own as I know how beneficial it is for students to be able to see themselves in the curriculum and in the texts they are given. Through my research, I have learned about the correlation between achievement and low expectations for students of colour, especially Black students. The implication of this on my own teaching is that I always have high expectations for all of my students and believe that they all have potential and they are all capable of achievement.
What I have learned will impact my own classroom practice. In the classroom, I always make it my priority to get to know my students in terms of who they are, where they come from, their interests, etc. In terms of my own practice, it is important for me to make sure that my students are able to bring in and express their own identities in the classroom so this is something that I will continue to do. I believe it is very important to create a safe and welcoming environment where students feel comfortable and are encouraged to share their experiences and to express themselves.

What I have learned will also impact my research practice. Keeley and Sade both spoke to the importance of being lifelong learners and how teaching and learning is ongoing. As a teacher, it is important that I continue to do my own research to find more strategies and ways that I can effectively implement anti-racism education in my own classroom. I believe it is a matter of being open and staying committed to doing this work which does require me to stay updated and to continue to find ways to improve and evolve my practice. Continuing to do my own research will help with this.

5.3 Recommendations

In order to create transformative change in the education system as a whole, changes must be made at all lower levels. Although there are existing policies, I make recommendations based on my research and learning to ensure that these policies are being put into practice. I have organized my recommendations into three key areas: faculties of education, schools, and teachers.
5.3.1 Faculties of Education

- It is important that teacher candidates be taught the fact that racism and oppression do not occur simply on an individual level, but are systemic issues and require opportunities to learn how these operate in the education system.

- A mandatory two-year anti-discrimination course that critically analyzes issues of race, power and privilege, and oppression would allow teacher candidates to explore and reflect on their own identities and experiences with these issues.

- It is important that teacher candidates are taught how to critically engage their students in conversations about issues of race, power and privilege, and oppression across the age and grade spectrum.

- It is critical that the admissions process of teacher education programs makes an effort to be diverse in terms of the applicants chosen. This means working to have a diverse group of teacher candidates. In addition, the admissions process can also involve asking applicants why they think anti-racism education is important as well as how they would address acts of racism and discrimination in their own classroom.

5.3.2 Schools

- It is essential that schools hire staff (teachers, administration, support staff, etc.) that are diverse and reflective of the students within them.

- It is important that anti-racism education and culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy are implemented through a school-wide and board-wide approach. Anti-racism education should be present in every classroom.

- It is critical that schools hold their staff accountable for incorporating anti-racism education and equity work as this would result in school-wide approaches. As the leader
of the school, the principal would be responsible for outlining necessary guidelines in terms of what issues should be discussed and taught in classrooms regarding anti-racism. The principal must be clear in terms of what is expected and the consequences for those who are not doing this work. In addition, the principal should be meeting with the teachers regularly, individually and collectively, to find out from the teachers themselves what they are teaching and discussing in terms of anti-racism education. Regular staff meetings are important not only because they allow the principal to have an idea of how the teachers are implementing anti-racism in their classrooms, but they also allow teachers to share ideas, strategies, and lessons.

5.3.3 Teachers

- Learning about your students’ identities, cultures, families, experiences, etc. and using this knowledge to inform your teaching practice (in terms of decision-making, classroom management strategies, instructional approach, and curriculum) will make a difference in the lives of your students and their achievement.

- It is important that teachers create opportunities for students to authentically learn about and engage their own cultures and identities in the classroom. This could include having students write their own autobiographies and sharing with the class, allowing students to research and discuss their own cultural backgrounds, and reading books that reflect the cultures and identities of the students in the classroom.

- Ensuring that curriculum and classroom materials are reflective of students’ identities is key to authentically implementing anti-racism.

- It is essential that teachers do not avoid having the difficult, but critical conversations about race, power and privilege, and oppression.
- Participating in regular professional development opportunities will help teachers learn how to implement culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy and anti-racism education in their everyday classroom instruction.

- It is critical that teachers avoid tokenizing students’ identities and cultures by limiting learning to cultural celebrations and holidays. There should be more of an explicit emphasis on ‘everyday’ anti-racism, meaning that anti-racism education should be implemented throughout teaching curriculum and not simply taught in isolation.

- Teachers who regularly reflect on their own instruction and teaching practice are more likely to be culturally relevant and responsive as they are constantly checking themselves and what they are teaching.

- Having high expectations for all students, and especially for students of colour is critical in order to counter dominant stereotypes about the academic abilities and behaviours of students of colour.

5.4 Areas for further research

In this section I outline areas of further research based on my research findings and what I have learned. One area for further research is a focus on providing specific strategies for implementing everyday anti-racism education in classroom instruction. Through my exploration of related literature, I found that there is a lack of research providing specific lessons and strategies for anti-racism. Although I did learn about specific strategies and approaches from my participants, I do believe that this area is one that should be researched further. Both participants spoke to challenges they faced while doing anti-racism work in their classroom in terms of backlash from parents, other teachers, and admin. As a result, I believe that another area for
further research is a focus on providing strategies and solutions for teachers who are challenged and encounter conflict for doing this important work.

Both of my participants showed a true commitment to anti-racism education and culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy. For various reasons, my participants have been motivated to implement anti-racism in their classroom instruction. Keeley spoke to how her experiences as a student have inspired and informed her practice as an educator of colour. I would pose the question: How are teachers who do not identify as people of colour motivated to teach through an anti-racism perspective?

Keeley and Sade both spoke to how they do anti-racism work in silos. Often, they have been the only educators at their respective schools that do anti-racism work or equity work. They both spoke to how they see anti-racism education in schools occur on a classroom-by-classroom basis. This work tends to be viewed as an individual approach and is treated as such. As a result, I believe that further research should look at school-wide approaches and examine all aspects in order to provide strategies for schools to shift from an individual teacher/classroom anti-racism approach to a school-wide one.

5.5 Concluding Comments

This research study has helped me to better conceptualize anti-racism education and what it encompasses, such as its aim to eliminate racism and discrimination by changing social and organizational structures, as well as, addressing issues of inequality in terms of power and privilege. Through my exploration of the research literature and my interviews with Keeley and Sade, I have become more aware of the challenges that I will probably encounter doing this work, some challenges more serious and difficult than others, such as encountering backlash from parents, other teachers, and administration. Finally, this research study has further
cemented for me the importance of anti-racism education. I understand how students’ identities can impact their educational experiences positively and/or negatively. Specifically, students of colour face serious challenges in the education system, such as low expectations of achievement, an achievement gap, a lack of teacher diversity, student disengagement, and a lack of accountability for acts of racism and discrimination. These are challenges that can be addressed with the implementation of anti-racism education in terms of improvements in areas of teacher and administration diversity, curriculum and materials that reflect all students and are culturally relevant, and accountability for acts of racism and discrimination. This study, particularly the research process and the insight from my participants, has inspired me to go out and to do this important anti-racism work.
References


Appendix A – Interview Consent Letter

Date:

Dear ____________________________,

My name is Adaeze Okolie and I am a student in the Master of Teaching program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). A component of this degree program involves conducting a small-scale qualitative research study. My research will focus on exploring how teachers are implementing everyday anti-racism education in their classroom instruction. I am interested in interviewing teachers who have a minimum 5 years of teaching experience, show a demonstrated commitment to teaching anti-racism education, and work in either of the Durham school boards. I think that your knowledge and experience will provide insights into this topic.

Your participation in this research will involve one 45-60 minute interview, which will be transcribed and audio-recorded. I would be grateful if you would allow me to interview you at a place and time convenient for you, outside of school time. The contents of this interview will be used for my research project, which will include a final paper, as well as informal presentations to my classmates and/or potentially at a research conference or publication. You will be assigned a pseudonym to maintain your anonymity and I will not use your name or any other content that might identify you in my written work, oral presentations, or publications. This information will remain confidential. This data will be stored on my password-protected computer and the only people who will have access to the research data will be my course instructor, Dr. Angela MacDonald-Vemic. You are free to change your mind about your participation at any time, and to withdraw even after you have consented to participate. You may also choose to decline to answer any specific question. I will destroy the audio recording after the paper has been presented and/or published, which may take up to a maximum of five years after the data has been collected. There are no known risks or benefits to participation, and I will share with you a copy of the transcript to ensure accuracy.

Please sign this consent form, if you agree to be interviewed. The second copy is for your records. I am very grateful for your participation.

Sincerely,
Adaeze Okolie
905-706-0151
adaeze.okolie@mail.utoronto.ca

Course Instructor’s Name: Angela MacDonald-Vemic
Contact Info: angela.macdonald@utoronto.ca
Consent Form

I acknowledge that the topic of this interview has been explained to me and that any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can withdraw from this research study at any time without penalty.

I have read the letter provided to me by Adaeze Okolie and agree to participate in an interview for the purposes described. I agree to have the interview audio-recorded.

Signature: ________________________________________________

Name: (printed) ________________________________________________

Date: ________________________________________________
Appendix B: Interview Questions

Prompt: Thank you for participating in this interview. The aim of this research is to learn how elementary teachers implement everyday anti-racism education in their classroom instruction. The interview should take approximately 45 minutes to an hour. I will ask you a series of questions focused on your understanding of the topic and context, advantages and challenges, and strategies for implementation. I want to remind you of your right to choose not to answer any question. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Background information

1. How long have you been teaching?
2. What grades and subjects do you teach? What grades and subjects have you previously taught?
3. Where do you teach? Can you please describe your school for me? (size, student demographics, program priorities). Can you please describe the racial demographics of your students? And the school staff?
4. Why are you interested in participating in this research study? What experiences contributed to developing your interest in and commitment to anti-racism education?
   *probe re: personal, professional, educational experiences
5. What, if any, is your experience of racism?
Understanding of the topic and context

6. What does racism mean to you?

7. How, is at all, do you see racism operating in schools? *listen, then probe as necessary re: relationships between people, representation of particular identities and stories in texts and curriculum resources and curricular absences, policies and practices re: discipline etc.)

8. Why do you believe racism persists in the Canadian education system?

9. Why do you believe it is important to implement anti-racism education? In your view, who benefits from anti-racism education?

10. How would you define anti-racism practice? What does that involve, in your view? What does everyday anti-racism mean to you? What is the role of culturally responsive pedagogy and reflexive practice within your understanding of everyday anti-racism practice? How do you understand these terms?

11. How/where, if at all, do you see evidence of anti-racism education operating in schools?

12. What experiences contributed to preparing you for enacting your commitment to everyday anti-racism education in practice?

Strategies for implementation

13. What does everyday anti-racism look like in your teaching practice? *listen and then probe re: curriculum and instruction, relationships with students, colleagues, the community, involvement/participation on committees etc.

14. What are some of your key priorities when implementing everyday anti-racism in your teaching practice and professional role?

15. Can you give me an example of a lesson that you conducted that included a focus on anti-
racism education?

1. What grade and subject/strand were you teaching? How this focus align with the curriculum?

2. What were your learning goals?

3. What opportunities for learning did you create and why? What resources did you include and why?

4. How did your students respond? What outcomes did you observe from them?

16. How do you address sensitive topics when implementing everyday anti-racism education in the classroom? Can you give me an example?

17. How do you address discriminatory and/or racist language/behaviour in your classroom and/or in the hallways or playground? Can you give me an example?

18. What specific strategies do you use when implementing everyday anti-racism education in your classroom instruction?

19. What specific strategies do you use in order to be culturally responsive to your students?

20. What resources do you rely on in order to do this work?

21. How, if at all, has your teaching of anti-racism education changed over the years? Why do you think that is? What factors motivated this change?

22. How, if at all, does your school, as a whole, implement everyday anti-racism education?

Advantages and Challenges

23. What advantages have you observed from teaching everyday anti-racism education?

24. Can you please describe how students react to being taught everyday anti-racism, generally speaking?

25. Can you please describe how co-workers react to you teaching everyday anti-racism in
your classroom?

26. What challenges do you face doing this work? How do you respond to these challenges? How might the education system further support you in meeting these challenges?

27. Was there a specific time when you felt uncomfortable implementing everyday anti-racism education? If so, why did you feel uncomfortable? How did you overcome this?

28. How are you being supported in doing this work? What extra support do you need in order to continue doing this work?

29. What resources are available in order to do this work? Where do you access these resources? What are some of your favourite resources and why?

30. What advice, if any, do you have for beginning teachers who are committed to implementing everyday anti-racism education in their teaching practice?

Thank you for your time and participation.