School Leaders Supporting Students of Color in Predominately-White Schools

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School Leaders Supporting Students of Color in Predominately-White Schools

A Dissertation Presented

By

Jonathan D. Swan

Submitted to the Graduate School of Education
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Ph.D. Educational Studies
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School Leaders Supporting Students of Color in Predominately-White Schools

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Graduate School of Education
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Ph.D.  Educational Studies
Educational Leadership Specialization

Approvals
In the judgment of the following signatories, this Dissertation meets the academic standards that have been established for the Doctor of Philosophy degree.

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Abstract

Legal challenges to racial segregation and changes in the racial composition of many suburbs have altered the racial makeup of public schools in the United States. This phenomenological study looked at how principals in predominately-White schools (PWS) and educator facilitators for a state desegregation program (DP) learn about the perceptions of students of color (SOC) in their schools, address negative perceptions of SOC, and attempt to support SOC; it also inquired about hindrances to their efforts to serve SOC more effectively. Thematic analysis of transcripts of interviews with five principals and four desegregation facilitators led to 10 findings. Critical Race Theory counterstories provided an alternative view of the phenomenon.

Participants learn about the perceptions of SOC (a) through impromptu and proactive strategies, but (b) more often become aware after students’ involvement in conflicts. They respond to the negative perceptions of SOC (c) as intervening supervisors, institutional functionaries, or interpersonal facilitators. They support SOC with (d) strategies specifically planned for SOC; (e) use of existing structures to focus attention on SOC; and (f) professional development to inform teachers’ work with SOC. The hindrances to supporting SOC include (g) insufficient design of the DP and maladaptations by schools that disadvantage SOC and (h) stakeholder attitudes and discontinuities with students’ prior schooling. Participants identified needed changes: (i) DP guidance on how schools can help SOC gain a sense of belonging in their PWS, and (j) increased state oversight to compel participating districts to adaptively re-envision their schools. The findings indicate a need for the DP to provide explicit guidance for supporting SOC in PWS, and leadership development for principals in diverse school communities. The findings also suggest further study of the impact of attending PWS on the racial identity development and long-term self-perceptions of SOC.

Keywords: school desegregation, predominately-white schools, school leadership
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DEDICATION

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Racially and economically diverse classrooms provide beneficial social and educational opportunities for students and teachers. The social benefits include students learning to be more accepting of, and comfortable, and open-minded with people of other racial and cultural backgrounds (Wells et al., 2008). Diverse schools and classrooms can also have the long-term effect of reducing racial prejudice and fears (Mickelson, 2007, p. 10). Studies suggest that diverse learning environments can improve critical thinking and problem-solving skills for all students and support higher achievement for students of all racial and social class backgrounds (Mickelson, 2007, p. 9). A comparison of students attending desegregated high schools to students from the same community who attended segregated high schools showed that the students who attended desegregated schools had higher graduation rates, and higher college going rates (Wells & Crain, 1997, p. 198).

Diverse school and classroom environments can also present unique challenges because of administrators’, teachers’, and students’ unfamiliarity with racial and cultural differences, and pre-existing beliefs about race that unconsciously influence the academic and social interactions between teachers and students, and between different student groups, which can result in academic and social struggles for students of color. Studies on teacher implicit bias suggest that teachers hold different expectations for students’ academic ability and behavior based on students’ race and socioeconomic background. This bias can be seen in teachers of students as young as pre-kindergarten who in one study, when told to expect challenging behaviors from students, focused significantly more on Black children, and especially Black boys (Gillian et al., 2016, p. 7). Implicit bias was also evident in another study that indicated that in comparison to White teachers’ expectations for White students, White teachers were 20% less likely to expect
Black and Hispanic students to complete college (Gershenson et al., 2015, p. 9). Teacher implicit bias is one of the factors that may influence the negative perceptions expressed by students of color about their experiences in predominately-White schools. Studies of desegregation programs indicate that many students in predominately-White schools feel like they are treated less fairly than White students, alienated, negatively misunderstood, and unwelcome, which may help to explain the data in the study of the Saint Louis desegregation program, which indicated that 20% of Black students that attended a suburban school through a desegregation program failed to return (Wells & Crain, 1997, p. 219).

The process of desegregating schools through the integration of students from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds presents many complex issues about how schools become learning communities with racially just cultures and equitable and culturally proficient practices.

**Statement of the Problem**

The 1947 California Federal Appeals Court ruling in *Mendez V. Westminster* declared it illegal to segregate California’s Mexican American students from White students (*Mendez V. Westminster*, 1947). This decision helped to set the stage for the 1954 United States Supreme Court ruling in *Brown V. Board of Education*, which declared racially segregated schools to be “inherently unequal” (*Brown V. Board*, 1954). This landmark decision, along with subsequent court rulings such as the 1971 *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg* Supreme Court ruling, and the 1974 *Morgan v. Hennigan* Massachusetts United States District court ruling, which both called for forcibly integrating schools using strategies such as busing, prompted multiple state and local efforts to create integrated learning environments that satisfied court rulings without truly integrating the learning environments in their schools. Although there have been multiple legal battles, and changes to the laws that forced desegregation in many parts of the country in the
decades since these rulings, which have led to increased segregation in schools in many parts of the country, multiple programs that were designed to desegregate schools and reduce racial isolation for students continue to exist today. These programs designed to support school desegregation and reduced racial isolation in schools have increased opportunities for students of color to attend racially diverse schools and have increased opportunities for students of color to attend less racially balanced, predominately-White schools. Since the early efforts to forcibly integrate schools, until the more recent voluntary integration and reduced isolation programs, the schooling of many of these students of color have resulted in positive educational experiences, alongside a range of negative experiences that include overt racial hostility and opposition, to a more-subtle discrimination through inequitable educational access and unequal treatment.

Opposition to the Brown V. Board of Education decision and the resulting efforts to desegregate schools was widespread throughout the country. One of the more known examples of opposition to school integration resulted from the 1974 Morgan v. Hennigan ruling, which led to the Racial Imbalance Act and the busing of African American students to predominately-White Boston neighborhoods to attend school to create more racially balanced schools in the Boston Public Schools. These students were greeted by crowds of White people openly boycotting having Black students being bussed to schools in their neighborhoods. Protesters threw bricks at police officers, threw rocks at Black students and hurled racial slurs and insults, insisting that Black students should “go home” to their own neighborhood schools (Irons et al., 2014). The racial violence and blatant discrimination experienced by African American students during the Boston bussing crisis represents instances of perilously overt hostility and extremely negative encounters faced by students of color attending predominately-White schools. The more common type of negative encounter experienced by students of color attending
predominately-White schools, including those attending school through programs designed to reduce racial isolation in education, occurs when they attend schools with discriminatory practices such as unequal access to higher-level academic course offerings and unfair disciplinary practices, which often engender feelings of not belonging, isolation, and being treated unfairly in comparison to other students.

The Massachusetts’s Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity Program (METCO) is one of the country’s longest running voluntary inter-district school assignment programs designed to reduce racial isolation and increase diversity (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2016). Since 1966, the METCO program has bussed students of color from Boston to 35 suburban schools in the Boston area, and students of color from Springfield to four suburban schools in the Springfield area (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2016). A 2004 study of students attending school in Brookline Massachusetts through the METCO program suggested that the students benefit academically over time in the program (Angrist & Lang, 2004, p. 1620). A 2011 study of the METCO program stated that between 2006 and 2010, students in the METCO program outperformed their African American and Latino peers in Boston and Springfield (Eaton & Chirichigno, 2011, p. 16). The comparisons show that during this period, an average of 62.4 % of the Boston and Springfield students in the METCO program performed at the proficient and advanced levels on the sixth grade English Language Arts portion of the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) over this time, compared to an average of 49.6 % of Boston’s Black students, 43.8 % of Springfield’s Black students, 47.4 % of Boston’s Latino students, and 33.8 % of Springfield’s Latino students (Eaton & Chirichigno, 2011, p. 18). Despite these and many more positive data trends, students attending school through the METCO program still report having negative experiences.
A 2012 Boston Globe article detailed the efforts being utilized by some suburban districts in an attempt to reduce the gap between the percentage of students in the METCO program scoring in the “advanced” category compared to resident students in the districts (Hennick, 2012). In the article, some students in the METCO program shared that they do not always feel comfortable being the only student of color in some of their classes, they feel pressure to be successful because of their race, and that at times, they are afraid to speak up in class (Hennick, 2012). The perceptions of students about their experience in the METCO program were a central part of a 2001 study conducted by Brandeis professor Susan E. Eaton. Eaton interviewed 65 former students who participated in the METCO program to capture their perceptions on the long-term impact of the METCO program (Eaton, 2001, pp. 17–18). In addition to the benefits identified by the former students, many of the respondents believed that the adults in the suburban schools they attended had low expectations for them, including over 75 % of respondents who recalled negative experiences when discussing colleges with White guidance counselors (p. 73). Respondents, to varying degrees, also indicated different forms of alienation including: alienation from previous neighborhood friends and family members; alienation from predominately Black communities; and alienation regarding their history and culture (pp. 159–169). This form of alienation was the result of a lack of learning about Black history and culture in the predominately-White schools that they attended (p. 168). Former student recalled feelings of being different and living in two worlds (p. 47). This feeling of alienation often led students in the METCO program to “stick together,” which some respondents believe caused some teachers and administrators to negatively misjudge students in the METCO program as being in gangs, or being loud and obnoxious (pp. 77–79). Eaton indicated that 20 % of respondents provided only positive recollections about their METCO experiences, 70 % provided mixed
recollections, and 10% provided entirely negative recollections (p. 197). In response to Eaton’s question about whether they would repeat their METCO experience and enroll their own child, 57 out of the 65 respondents answered yes to both (p. 198). Interestingly, many of the respondents indicated that their answer to the question about repeating their METCO experience would have been “no” if they were asked in their junior or senior year in high school (p. 198). It is also important to note that six of the 65 respondents left the METCO program prior to graduation.

The feelings of alienation and unfair treatment conveyed by former students in Massachusetts’ METCO program are consistent with the perceptions of former students from St. Louis who attended suburban schools through a desegregation program when interviewed in a 1997 study by Wells and Crain. The authors of the study noted that students often felt unwelcome and that the schools failed to consider the perspectives of Black students (Wells & Crain, 1997, p. 183). These students also expressed feeling like they were caught in between two worlds, and they found it hard to fit into social groups (pp. 201–202). In addition, 75% of the Black students interviewed who had attended suburban schools for a minimum of one year believed that some of their White teachers and administrators treated Black students less fairly than white students (p. 205). Some of the examples that former students provided include: a student realizing his grades were being inflated, even when he intentionally performed poorly (p. 217); a student being grabbed by a teacher and called “boy” for not having a pass (p. 215); one student not being selected to go to Chicago for a concert because it was assumed that his family could not afford to go (p. 206, 215); and groups of students being singled out as “all voluntary transfer students” over the loudspeaker to attend meetings (p. 222). While many of the students
who participated in the desegregation program withstood feelings of alienation and discrimination, one out of five students chose to leave their suburban schools (p. 219).

The experiences of students of color attending predominately-White schools are often negatively impacted by implicit biases and discriminatory practices such as academic tracking, low academic expectations, and unfair disciplinary practices. These biases and practices can result in feelings of isolation, students lacking a sense of belonging, feelings of being treated unfairly, and poor academic performance. Meanwhile, there is an expanding body of scholarship demonstrating how understanding the perceptions of students of color attending predominately-White schools, and intentionally implementing practices that support their learning, and the learning of all students, can help provide equitable learning opportunities and better learning experiences for students. Culturally relevant and culturally responsive classroom instruction is among the practices identified by researchers that support students of color (Ayscue, 2016, p. 328). Culturally relevant and culturally responsive instruction can work to counteract racial inequality, racism and oppression (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Students of color are also supported when curriculum includes fair and accurate representations of different racial and ethnic groups; accounts of historical discrimination, and affirmation of tolerance and acceptance of differences (Ayscue, 2016, p. 328). Additional recommendations for creating learning environments that support diverse learners include: creating processes for fairly resolving issues related to school rules, perceived inequality and discrimination, and interpersonal conflicts; working towards having a diverse school staff that stress the importance of intercultural collaboration; implementing school activities that recognize and value multicultural identities by exploring differences and similarities within and across racial and ethnic groups; engaging families and community-based organizations around the school’s issues and opportunities; and providing
ongoing professional development designed to meet the goals for all students (Hawley, 2007). Realizing the benefits of integrated schools is often elusive. The perspectives of educators in predominately-White schools and their efforts to understand the experiences and perceptions of students of color in their schools have a central importance but require further inquiry.

**Purpose of the Study**

This study seeks to gain an understanding of: the efforts principals in predominately-White schools and Educational Support Organization (ESO) staff members are making to better understand the perceptions of students of color; the efforts principals in predominately-White schools and ESO staff members are making to address the negative perceptions of student of color; the types of practices and strategies that principals in predominately-White schools and ESO staff members are implementing to support students of color; the barriers that prevent principals in predominately-White schools and ESO staff members from implementing practices that effectively support students of color; and what guidance and support principals in predominately-White schools and ESO staff members feel they need to better implement practices that support students of color.

**Research Questions**

The guiding questions that will guide this study are: 1) What do principals in predominately-White schools and ESO staff members report as the ways they become informed about the perceptions and experiences of students of color and the ways they respond to what they have learned? 2) What do principals in predominately-White schools and ESO staff members report as the practices they implement to support students of color? 3) What do principals in predominately-White schools and ESO staff members report as factors that prevent them from implementing practices that support students of color? and 4) What do principals in
predominately-White schools and ESO staff members report as the things they need in order to effectively implement practices that support students of color?

**Definitions of Terms**

The term *negative perceptions* is used throughout this study to describe the unpleasant views and opinions held by students of color about the schooling experience. *Students of Color* is used throughout this study to describe non-White students who attend school through the “Project Hope” program. *Predominately-White schools* (PWS) is used to describe a school whose student population is made up of a majority of students of European-American decent and individuals of other races who attend these schools comprise a minority of the student population. The predominately-White schools in this study are comprised of a student body that has between 62.4% and 94.7% of students of European-American decent.

**Significance of the Study**

This analysis of principals’ perceptions and the perceptions of the ESO staff members assigned to support their schools provides insights and understandings beneficial to practicing and aspiring school principals, district-level leaders, state departments of education, and state and federal policy makers. The investigation into the efforts and perceived barriers of principals at Predominately-White schools and ESO staff members in implementing practices to support students of color provides insights on the types and prevalence of intentional efforts to implement strategies that support students of color attending Predominantly-White schools that participate in a state school desegregation program that has been in place, in some form, since the 1960s (Civil Rights Project, 2015).

The investigation will provide information that can help state departments of education who are considering implementing programs to reduce racial isolation in schools, or considering
ways to assess and/or improve the quality of the educational experiences of students of color who attend predominately-White schools, which may include the experience of students in existing programs that are designed to provide students of color with educational opportunities in desegregated learning environments. The study will provide insights to school districts on ways to support school principals in Predominantly-White schools and principals in racially diverse schools in implementing strategies that help to improve the educational experiences of students of color. This study will provide descriptive illustrations against which current and aspiring school leaders can compare their own beliefs and practices.

Finally, this study is significant within the context of the national political and social climate that has become more polarized in the years preceding, and since the 2016 presidential election on issues such as race, immigration, and discrimination (Pew Research Center, 2017). According to one study, this increased polarization has had a direct impact on schools, including having a negative impact on students’ moods and behaviors, heightened anxiety on the part of marginalized students including students of color, instances of derogatory language being used towards students of color, and other specific incidents of bigotry and harassment (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2016). This study can help foster dialogue about the need for improved actions to follow through on the promise of racially just educational practices

**Delimitations of the Study**

This study has four delimitations. First, the principals selected for this study will have at least three years of experience as a practicing principal in a predominately-White school. This delimitation was chosen to ensure that participants have had sufficient time to experience the challenges of leading inclusive schools and to influence school-based practices. Second, the principals selected for this study will be practicing principals at a middle school or high school
within the same state. Third, the principals selected for this study will be practicing principals in predominately-White schools that participate in the state’s Project Hope desegregation program. Fourth, ESO staff members will be selected based on roles that have direct, ongoing interactions with principals, staff, students, and families who attend predominately-White schools through the Project Hope program.

**Literature Review**

The bodies of literature reviewed for this dissertation were selected to support an understanding of the historical context and factors that facilitated the magnification of the problem being explored; an exploration of the problem within a variety of contexts; and a basis of the research through an examination of school conditions, practices, and strategies that support students of color attending predominately-White schools. The review of literature begins with a review of literature on school desegregation in the United States (Aguirre, 2005; Anderson, 2016; Brown v. Board, 1954; Brown v. Board, 1955; Cooper v. Aaron, 1958; Crawford v. Los Angeles, 1982; Cready & Fossett, 1998; Dudziak, 1987; Eaton, 2001; Eaton & Chirichigno, 2011; Goss v. Board, 1963; Griffen v. County School Board, 1964; Hunter & Donahoo, 2004; Mendez v. Westminster, 1946; Mickleston, 2002; Milliken v. Bradley, 1974; Pasadena v. Spangler, 1976; Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg, 1971; Westminster v. Mendez, 1947), the resulting student experiences, and the responses of the impacted communities and schools. These bodies of literature will help to provide the historical and political context that led to significant changes in school enrollment practices and demographics, and the creation of programs designed to established educational conditions that foster the problem being explored.

The review of literature will provide a brief examination of literature on the changing demographics in suburban school districts and literature that explores the perceptions of students
of color that attend predominately-White and racially diverse schools (Education Trust, 2014; Frey, 2011; Wells et al., 2014). The review will provide an examination of the perceptions of students of color attending predominately-White schools (Angrist & Lange, 2004; Eaton, 2011; Eaton & Chirichigno, 2011; Wells & Crain, 1997; Wells et al., 2004) and their experiences with academic tracking and segregation within suburban schools (Diamond, 2006; Ferguson, 2002; Mickelson, 2002; Kettler & Hurst, 2017; Wells et al., 2004; Welton, 2013) to illustrate the nature of the problem being investigated. The review of literature will also explore literature on the factors and conditions that negatively impact the educational experiences of students of color in predominately-White schools including: teacher implicit bias (Boser et al., 2014; Gershenson et al., 2015; Gilliam et al., 2016; Lee, 1999; McGrady et al., 2013; NCES, 2012; Staats et al., 2015); race and students’ academic self-identity (Borrero et al., 2012; Fergus, 2004; Goodenow, 1993; Murrell, 2007; O’Connor, 2001; Russell, 2015; Steele, 1997); and race and social acceptance (Morgan, 2006; Page, 1997).

Finally, the review of literature will examine the educational conditions and practices that support academic achievement and a sense of belonging for students of color in Predominantly-White schools including: fostering positive intergroup relations (Allport, 1954; Henze et al., 1999; Henze et al., 2002; Tatum, 1999); culturally proficient leadership (Cross et al., 1989; Lindsey et al., 1999; Magno & Schiff, 2010); school adaptations and community building (Frankenberg & Orfield, 2007; Hawley, 2007; Henze et al., 2002; Holland, 2012; Moody, 2001; Nieto, 1999; Tatum, 1999); culturally responsive teaching (Brown, 2007; Gay, 2002; Hawley, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Nieto, 2004; Quick, 2019); affirming students’ identities (Gandara, 2008; Henze et al., 2002; Irizarry, 2015; Tatum, 1999; Valenzuela, 2008); and learning from students’ perspectives (Cook-Sather, 2009; Phelan et al., 1992; Rennie Center, 2019).
Design of the Study

This study was designed as a qualitative inquiry into the leadership practices employed to support students of color attending predominately-White schools. The study employed a phenomenological approach focused on the lived experiences of leaders related to educating students of color in predominately-White schools. Consistent with Creswell’s (2013) description of phenomenological research, the study was designed using a phenomenological approach based on the importance of understanding the shared experiences of leaders who help to shape the educational environment for students of color in predominately-White schools, in order to provide a better understanding on current practices and challenges, and to help inform policies and practices designed to support leaders in educating students of color attending predominately-White schools (p. 81).

Participants and Sites

Based on criterion sampling, the study sought the participation of up to 10 principals in predominately-White schools that participate in the state funded “Project Hope” desegregation program, and up to 10 staff members at the Educational Support Organization (ESO) that provides support to the schools and students. Schools participating in Project Hope are suburban schools that voluntarily enroll students of color who live in a nearby urban center. One hundred and twenty-eight of the 129 Project Hope schools are comprised of a predominately-White (between 62.4% and 94.7%) student population. ESOs consist of three agencies in the state that is legislatively mandated to manage the statewide Project Hope program.

The principals were selected from the Project Hope schools that are predominately-White. The proposed ESO staff members include staff members who work directly with schools to support students attending predominately-White schools through the Project Hope program.
Instruments

Interviews were conducted with principals and ESO staff members. Interview questions were designed to better understand the practices that principals utilize to gather the perceptions of students of color and implement practices that support racially and ethnically diverse learners. Other interviews questions were designed to help describe what principals and ESO staff members perceive they need in order to effectively implement practices that support students of color.

Data Collection and Analysis Process

Interviews were recorded and transcribed. Interview data was initially analyzed through “horizontalizataion,” by identifying key words and phrases that provide an understanding of how principals and ESO staff members gather the perceptions of students of color and how they implement practices that support racially and ethnically diverse learners (Creswell, 2013, p. 82). The data was then organized into “meaning units” and themes (p. 193). The last step of my data analysis was the creation of critical race counterstories, which draw from and are grounded in the findings and themes from this study. Tara Yosso (2006) described the use of critical race counterstories as a technique for describing the experiences and viewpoints or racially and socially marginalized people (p. 10). Consistent with Yosso’s definition, the counterstories created for this study are composite counterstories that draw on multiple forms of data to recount the experiences of people of color.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

Participants were provided with a consent form and an explanation that informed them of the purpose and procedures of the study, the protection of their confidentiality, the known risks of the study, the expected benefits for the participants of the study, and their right to voluntarily
withdraw from the study at any time. The participants and researcher signed the consent forms. Precautions were also taken when detailing participant reports as not to reveal the location and names of the schools, agencies, programs, towns and state of the participants involved in this study.

**Chapter Outline**

This study is presented in six chapters. The first chapter will provide an overview of the problem being explored and the purpose of the study. It will also provide an explanation of the guiding research questions, definition of terms, significance of the study, and a definition of terms. Finally, the chapter will provide an overview on the organization of the study. Chapter 2 will present a comprehensive review of literature regarding the experiences of students of color attending predominately-White schools, including bodies of literature that support an understanding of the historical context and factors that facilitated the amplification of the problem being explored; an exploration of the problem within a variety of contexts; and a basis of the research through an examination of school conditions, practices, and strategies that support students of color attending predominately-White schools. Chapter 3 will explain the research design and methodology. It will explore the role of the researcher and explain the process used to select participants, and the interview protocol used. Chapter 3 will also explain how the data was collected and analyzed. Chapter 4 will present the findings from the study along with the correlating analysis. The chapter will explore how the identified themes from the participants’ responses align, with each of the guiding research questions. Chapter 5 explores the findings presented in Chapter 4 through the lens of Critical Race Theory (CRT) counterstories. The counterstories depict occurrences similar to those described by the participants of this study, however, they are told with the sensibilities of the students, families, and staff of color that
experience these interactions. The final chapter will explore the possible implications of the study, recommendations, and questions for consideration in future research.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The bodies of literature in this review were selected to support an understanding of the historical context and factors that impact the problem being explored; an exploration of the problem within a variety of contexts; and a basis of the research through an examination of school conditions, practices, and strategies that support students of color attending predominately-White schools. The chapter begins with a review of literature on school desegregation in the United States, the responses of the impacted communities and schools, and the resulting student experiences. These bodies of literature will help to provide the historical and political context that led to significant changes in school enrollment practices and demographics, and the creation of programs that provide educational opportunities to students of color in predominately-White school settings.

The review of literature will provide a brief examination of literature on the history of school desegregation efforts in the United States, the subsequent responses at state and local levels, and later court decision that brought about changes to existing desegregation efforts. The review will then discuss literature on the academic experiences and perceptions of students of color in PWS. This review will present scholarship that examines the factors and conditions that negatively impact the educational experiences of students of color in predominately-White schools. Finally, the review of literature will examine scholarship that discusses the leadership dispositions, practices, and educational conditions that support academic achievement and a sense of belonging for students of color in Predominantly-White schools.

School Desegregation Efforts in the United States

Legal battles to desegregate public schools in the United States began decades before the United States Supreme Court made their ruling in Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka...
Multiple lawsuits challenging school desegregation were filed between 1935 and 1950, including the lesser known *Mendez v. Westminster School District* (1946) and its subsequent appeal case *Westminster v. Mendez* (1947), which was the first federal court case to rule that separate schools for students of color were a violation of students’ rights because the schools were unequal (Aguire, 2005, pp. 321–322). *Mendez v. Westminster School District* (1946) arose from a Mexican American father and his Puerto Rican wife’s experience of trying to enroll their children in a California school that was close to the farm that the family leased. When Mr. Mendez’s sister attempted to enroll his children along with her own children, she was told that she could enroll her children, who were fair skinned and had a non-Hispanic sounding name, but could not enroll Mr. Mendez’s children because they were dark skinned and had a Mexican sounding last name (Aguire, 2005, p. 323). The judges in the *Westminster v. Mendez* (1947) case found that four Orange county California school districts intentionally established systems that segregated Mexican American students into segregated schools exclusively because of their Hispanic surnames and/or the color of their skin (Aguire, 2005, p. 322). Consequently, the courts ordered the school districts to end the unconstitutional practices.

Also in the late 1940s, lawyers for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) demonstrated, in multiple court cases across multiple states, that southern states were incapable and/or unwilling to meet the “separate but equal” standard outline in the United States Supreme Court *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruling (Anderson, 2016, p. 71). In culmination, NAACP lawyers argued before the United States Supreme Court in 1952 that racial segregation, including in the nation’s schools, were in violation of the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, and the due process clause of the Fifth Amendment (p. 71). Some southern states had already begun preparing for this moment even before the case was argued in
1952. One example was in the state of Georgia where the Governor began making efforts in 1949 to amend the state constitution that would allow the state to eliminate the entire public school system and use state funds for tuition grants that white students could use to attend all-white private schools. Governor Talmadge declared “as long as I am Governor, Negroes will not be admitted to white schools” (Dudziak, 1987, p. 369).

In 1954, the Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* that segregation violated the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment (Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, 347 U.S. 483, 1954). This landmark decision was a joyous occasion for many in the Black community and there was anticipation that there would be implications that stretch well beyond the public schools. The following year, in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, 349 U.S. 294 (1955), the Supreme Court delegated to district courts the charge of desegregating school systems. Many states took immediate actions to resist the 1954 *Brown* ruling. In his autobiography, civil rights activist and one-time leader of the NAACP Roy Wilkins (1982) reflected on these acts of resistance subsequent to the *Brown* decision in light of his initial elation when the ruling was made. He wrote, “My sense of euphoria was a bit naïve. Swept away, elevated, exalted, I failed to anticipate the ferocity of the resistance that quickly grew up in the Deep south.” There was a “cold, clinical cruelty of the response” (p. 215).

**Resistance to School Desegregation**

The resistance to school desegregation after the *Brown* ruling took on different forms and evolved over time. Resistance to school desegregation wasn’t isolated to the southern states, although it took on a more blatant tone in the south. Milwaukee’s school board instituted a practice in 1957 that brought Black children to White schools, but intentionally kept them in segregated classrooms (Anderson, 2016, p. 76). Many southern states including Alabama,
Georgia, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Virginia used the legal theory of interposition\(^1\) to argue that states had a legal right to stop the enforcement of federal laws, such as the *Brown* ruling, that they disagreed with or deemed to be unconstitutional (pp. 78–79). A more emphatic statement of resistance was made in March of 1956 when 101 members of Congress signed the “Declaration of Constitutional Principles,” also known as the “Southern Manifesto,” which declared that the Supreme Court’s decision was in violation of states’ rights and violated the separations of power (p. 80). This declaration set in motion a series of state-led stall tactics using the legal system to pass multiple unconstitutional laws to prevent the implementation of school desegregation efforts (p. 80). By 1963, nine years after the Brown ruling, not a single Black child attended a public school with a white child in Mississippi, Alabama, or South Carolina, and only 1.63% of Black children attended desegregated schools in Virginia. These percentages were not much better in other southern states (Cherminsky, 2014, p. 139).

In addition to the overt resistance put forth by school districts, Cready and Fossett (1998) suggested that one way that White families responded to the pressure to integrate schools was by withdrawing from public school systems and enrolling in private schools (p. 674). The study found that the percentage of White students increasingly declined between 1960 and 1980 with declines being greater in the counties with larger Black populations, while White public school enrollment in predominately White counties actually had slight increases (p. 674).

**Change in Direction of Supreme Court Desegregation Rulings**

Many additional legal challenges were filed to combat the stall tactics and resistance used by districts to avoid moving forward with legitimate school desegregation efforts. Among the

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\(^1\) Interposition is a constitutional theory that establishes the right of a state to position (interpose) itself between the Federal government and citizens when the state declares a Federal statute or court decision to be unconstitutional or harmful within the state’s jurisdiction.
legal challenges filed were: *Cooper v. Aaron* (1958), which saw Supreme Court allow Little Rock Arkansas to implement a gradual desegregation plan but refused to allow Arkansas legislators to suspend integration efforts while they prepared legislation that would allow them to prevent it from moving forward; *Goss v. Board of Education of the City of Knoxville* (1963), which saw the Supreme Court rule that the transfer plan in Knoxville Tennessee that allowed for transfer requests based on a school’s racial composition was unconstitutional because it violated of the Fourteenth Amendment; *Griffin v. County School Board of Prince Edward County* (1964), which saw the Supreme Court rule that the Prince Edward County Virginia could not close its public schools and provide tuition grants to families that enable them to attend private schools that could lawfully discriminate against students based on their race; and *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education* (1971), which saw the Supreme Court declare that judges in North Carolina could order school districts to use busing to desegregate schools (Hunter & Donahoo, 2004, pp. 343–346). These legal decisions along with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 provided increased pressure for states to desegregate their public schools (Cready & Fossett, 1998, p. 674).

The Supreme Court’s rulings on school desegregation cases in the 1970s were far less favorable to the advocates for school integration. In *Milliken v. Bradley* (1974), the Supreme Court ruled that a federal court in Michigan could not impose a remedy for desegregating a school district that involves other school districts (Hunter & Donahoo, 2004, p. 348). Contrary to the Court’s rulings in multiple cases in the 1950s and 1960s that emphasized expedience in desegregation efforts, in *Pasadena City Board of Education v. Spangler* (1976), the Supreme Court overturned a lower court decision by deciding that the courts in California could not lawfully require that a school board has to continually change their attendance zones to sustain
racially mixed schools, even if it meant that it would delay desegregation efforts (Hunter & Donahoo, 2004, p. 349). In *Crawford v. Board of Education* (1982), the opinion of the Supreme Court appeared to be in direct contrast to their prior rulings that overturned state legislation that stalled desegregation efforts. In an 8-1 judgement, the Court upheld a California proposition that made it illegal for California’s courts to use busing or student assignments to desegregate schools (Hunter & Donahoo, 2004, pp. 350–351).

The earliest court decisions that deemed school segregation to be unconstitutional prompted strong resistance by many states and districts. Many states passed legislation intended to delay desegregation efforts, and when these efforts continued to be overruled in court, many White families chose to enroll their children in private schools that were not beholden to the court rulings, instead of allowing them to attend schools that enrolled students of color. The desegregation efforts that were employed by school districts included intra-district integration efforts that attempted to change the racial enrollment patterns within a school district through efforts such as mandating the bussing of students across their racially segregated neighborhood zones to attend schools in neighborhoods where students from other racial groups lived; and school-choice opportunities that allowed families to select schools outside of their neighborhood zones, such as magnet schools that were designed to attract students from neighborhoods throughout a school district. Some states also utilized inter-district integration efforts that attempted to desegregate schools by allowing students from racially segregated urban communities to enroll in schools in neighboring suburban communities. These inter-district desegregation programs were considered necessary due to the extent of racial segregation that existed across neighborhood zones in some urban communities. Although the ability for states to require cities and towns to participate in inter-district integration programs was weakened by the
Milken V. Brandley (1974) Supreme Court decision, some states continue to employ voluntary inter-district desegregation programs.

One outcome of the legal challenges and ongoing advocacy to desegregate the public schools in the United States has been the creation of desegregation programs designed to provide racially integrated learning environments for students. In some cases, desegregation programs were created at a grassroots level in response to the inaction of some school districts to comply with court decisions on school desegregation (METCO, 2020). Some desegregation programs were designed to change the enrollment processes in districts that reinforced school segregation based on the practice of enrolling students according to geographical neighborhood zones that were based on racially segregated neighborhoods, while other desegregation programs sought to integrate schools by allowing students to enroll in suburban schools outside of their segregated communities of color. Despite the court rulings that have weakened desegregation efforts across the country, some of these programs continue to exist and multiple studies have been conducted to understand how students of color who attended predominately-White suburban schools through desegregation programs feel about their learning experiences and how they perform academically.

In addition to increasing school diversity through specific programs, there have also been widespread changes in the racial compositions of many suburbs and suburban schools that are unrelated to any intentional desegregation efforts. According to Frey (2011), by 2010, 35% of suburban residents were non-white, and more than 50 per cent of all minority groups in large metropolitan areas lived in the suburbs (p. 1). A 2014 report by the Education Trust declared 54% of African American students attend non-urban schools, and 26% of African American students attend majority-White schools (Education Trust, 2014, p. 3). Stuart-Wells et al. (2014)
detailed suburban demographic shifts involving low-income families and indicated “by 2006, the number of people living below the federal poverty line was greater in the suburbs than the cities” (p. 5). The changing racial composition of many suburbs has been attributed, in part to the following: increasing growth and dispersal of minority populations, compared to the minimal growth of an aging white population; increasing diversity amongst the population of children in the nation, making suburbs more appealing to racial and ethnic minorities; and the exodus of Black families from cities with large African American populations, igniting minority suburbanization in northern and southern cities (Frey, 2011, p. 2).

While a majority of the studies I will discuss are based on the perceptions and academic performance of students of color that attended suburban schools through desegregation programs, some of the studies focus on the academic performance and perspectives of students of color who have attended integrated schools as residents of suburban communities (Diamond, 2006; Ferguson, 2002; Kettler & Hurst, 2017; Welton, 2013).

**Perceptions and Academic Performance of Students of Color in Predominately-White Schools**

**Perceptions Held by Students of Color**

The following review of literature will discuss the perceptions of students of color who attend predominately-White schools as a result of their participation in desegregation programs, and the perceptions of students of color who attend predominately-White schools because they reside in suburban communities. The Massachusetts’s Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity Program (METCO) is one of the country’s longest running voluntary inter-district school assignment programs designed to reduce racial isolation and increase diversity (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2016). Since 1966, the METCO program has bussed
students of color from Boston to 35 suburban school districts in the Boston area, and students of
color from Springfield to four suburban school districts in the Springfield area (Massachusetts
Department of Education, 2016). The perceptions of students who participated in the METCO
program were a central part of Eaton’s 2001 study. Eaton (2001) interviewed 65 former students
of the METCO program to capture their perceptions on their experiences in the program. Eaton
set out to ascertain the former students’ perceptions on the long-term impact of the METCO
program by asking questions about: the respondents’ memories of the program and the meaning
they have attached to those memories; the long-term effects of their integration experiences; and
their current beliefs on the value of their experiences, including would they choose to repeat the
program if they could go back, and if they would consider putting their children in the program
(pp. 17–18). Eaton believed that it in order to gather perceptions on the long-term benefits of the
program, it was important to gather opinions of former students from their adult perspective as
opposed to interviewing those who were current students in the METCO program (p. 17). The
former students’ perceptions on the benefits of the METCO program included: feeling more
comfortable in settings that are predominately white, which allows them to be more confident
and successful in such settings; and gaining access to social networks that connected them to
opportunities (p. 118). Some respondents also indicated that they benefited from positive peer
pressure to attend college in ways that they didn’t in Boston schools (pp. 141–142). This was
contrasted by the perceptions of many respondents who believed the adults in suburban schools
had held low expectations for them (p. 141). Former students shared that some of the ways that
adults demonstrated their low expectations of METCO students’ academic potential was by
assigning students in the METCO program to lower level courses, and by limited, often
discouraging college counseling conversations with students in the METCO program, even with students who excelled academically (pp. 72–73).

Respondents, to varying degrees, also indicated different forms of alienation including alienation from previous neighborhood friends and family members; alienation from predominately Black communities; and alienation regarding history and culture (Eaton, 2001, pp. 159–169). This form of alienation was the result of a lack of learning about Black history and culture in the predominately-White schools that they attended (p. 168). A group of former students reflected on feeling angry because teachers and administrators failed to acknowledge that they were Black, while others shared feeling “invisible” because of the failure to recognize students’ racial identities (p. 96). The failure to acknowledge that students of color and their families have unique experiences, perspectives and opinions related to curriculum topics compared to White students and teachers was described by one former student who reflected on an interaction she had with one of her teachers who openly expressed the opinion that anyone that doesn’t vote is irresponsible and without right to complain, without acknowledging how many Black citizens have been disenfranchised in the United States throughout the history of the country (p. 96). The student’s willingness to share her contrasting opinion with the teacher did not lead to validation or open dialogue about the student’s perspective; instead, the teacher responded, “Are you finished with your speech young lady” (p. 97). Former students recalled feelings of being different and living in two worlds (p. 47). This feeling of alienation often led students in the METCO program to “stick together,” which some respondents believe caused some teachers and administrators to negatively misinterpret the students in the METCO program as being in gangs, or being loud and obnoxious (pp. 77–79). Eaton indicated that 20% of respondents provided only positive recollections about their METCO experiences, 70% provided
mixed recollections, and 10% provided entirely negative recollections (p. 197). In response to Eaton’s question about whether they would repeat their METCO experience and enroll their own child, 57 out of the 65 respondents answered yes to both (p. 198). Interestingly, many of the respondents indicated that their answer to the question about repeating their METCO experience would have been “no” if they were asked in their junior or senior year in high school (p. 198).

Like Eaton, Wells and Crain (1997) utilized retrospective interviews in their study on the educational experiences of the Black students in St. Louis, Missouri who attended predominately-White suburban schools through the district’s inter-district desegregation program, most recently known as the Voluntary Inter-district Choice Corporation (VICC). Wells and Crain’s five-year study included interviews with more than 300 individuals and observations in classrooms and meetings (pp. 347–348). In addition to analyzing performance data, the authors gathered data from students, parents, teachers, and administrators as they sought to understand why some families remained in city schools, why other families participated in the desegregation program, and in some case, why some decided to return to schools in the city after attending suburban schools through the desegregation program.

Many positive parental perceptions were captured during the interviews conducted for the study. Some of the parents believed that the concern and support from the suburban school staff was the most appealing thing about the school their child attended (Wells & Crain, 1997, p. 205). Most of the parents interviewed believed that the suburban high schools were doing a good job of preparing their children for the future (p. 207). Fifty-nine percent of parents agreed that their children learned to understand and get along with white students through the desegregation program, and 74% indicated that they would favor allowing more students an opportunity to
participate in the program, and none of the parents criticized the academic program of the suburban schools (pp. 206–207).

Former students expressed a mix of positive and negative experiences from their time in predominately-White suburban schools. The authors noted that students often felt unwelcome, and that the schools failed to consider the perspectives of Black students (Wells & Crain, 1997, p. 183). Some of the former students felt that they received more college awareness in their suburban schools, and that the school staff helped them in this regard, even to the point of having a Black college fair in the predominately-White suburb (p. 201). Similar to the sentiment shared by participants in Eaton’s 2001 study, students in Wells’ and Crain’s study also expressed feeling like they were caught in between two worlds, and that found it hard to fit into social groups (pp. 201–202). Some students believed that the suburban schools provided them with a safer environment and fewer distractions (p. 186). Seventy-five percent of the Black students interviewed who had attended suburban schools for a minimum of one year believed that some of their White teachers and administrators treated Black students less fairly than white students (p. 205). One example that a former student provided was based on his realization that one of his teachers had lower academic expectations for him than for his White classmates, after validating that his grades were being inflated by intentionally performing poorly on a book report and still receiving a good grade (p. 217). The student shared that he “gave the worst speech I ever gave. My information was totally wrong, my sources and everything” (p. 217). Other examples of unfair treatment included: a student being grabbed by a teacher and called “boy” for not having a pass (p. 215); one student not being selected to go to Chicago for a concert because it was assumed that his family could not afford to go (p. 206); and groups of students being labeled as “all voluntary transfer students” when they are summoned over the loudspeaker to attend
meetings (p. 222). While many of the students who participated in the desegregation program withstood feelings of alienation and discrimination, some students chose to leave their suburban schools.

The authors report that in a given year, approximately one out of every five Black students that attended a suburban school through the desegregation program did not return the following year (Wells & Crain, 1997, p. 219). Based on the exit survey data of students who left during the school year, the reasons range from students no longer being eligible to attend because they moved, students deciding to go to a city magnet or other alternative school, personal reasons, or school-related reasons (p. 221). At least eight of the 13 former students who left their suburban schools and participated in the study indicated that their reasons for leaving the program were related to racial discrimination (p. 223). Interestingly, half of the parents of these eight former students had no complaints about the suburban schools (p. 232). It is also worth noting that the students who participated in the study and left their suburban schools prior to graduation were more likely to have started their suburban schooling at an older age (p. 225).

Wells also contributed to a 2004 historical study of six high schools that became racially diverse through desegregation efforts in the late 1970s. Wells et al. (2004) expressed their belief that school desegregation has been beneficial but contend that societal factors have negatively impacted its implementation (p. 1723). The study gathered the perceptions of former students who graduated from these schools in 1980, because they would be one of the first graduating cohorts to attend the desegregated schools for multiple years (p. 1724). The high schools selected were located in Austin, TX; Charlotte, NC; Englewood, NJ; Pasadena, CA; Shaker Heights, OH; and Topeka, KS (p. 1726). Four of the six high schools had at least 50% of their student body made up of White students (p. 1727). Two-hundred and forty-two former students
(40–50 per high school) were interviewed to gather their perceptions on the impact of their desegregation experiences (pp. 1724–1726). The authors explained that desegregation efforts in many districts were done in ways to try to appease White and middle-class families, to prevent them from leaving their communities, often, at the expense of poor students, and students of color (p. 1729). One trend identified in the study is the marginalization of students of color that was caused by the Eurocentric school curriculum, teachers’ unfamiliarity with teaching outside of the curriculum, and an unwillingness to talk about race (pp. 1738–1744). A former student shared that he would “get tired and frustrated sitting and listening to what all these great White people [had done]” (p. 1741). Another Black female student shared how her White teacher dismissed her opinion about a Black female character from a novel by a Black author as “reading it too deeply” (p. 1741). The authors explained this as an example of the teacher’s uncertainty on how to teach new content outside of their traditional Eurocentric norm (p. 1741). The authors also contended that the unwillingness to talk about race, and the Eurocentric curriculum resulted in a system of assimilation that forced students of color to “fit in” (Wells et al., p. 1739). One example from the authors that very clearly illustrated that students of color were expected to “fit in” was their account of an exchange between a Black choir teacher and Black students, as described by a White graduate of West Charlotte High School. The student explained that Black male students came to choir practice with their hair braided into cornrows, and the Black choir teacher told them that they needed to “get rid of those cornrows” (p. 1743).

**Academic Performance of Students of Color in Desegregation Programs**

In addition to the perceptual data gathered from former students about their beliefs about the academic benefits and challenges of their school experiences, many studies have examined a variety of performance data for students of color who have attended school through
desegregation programs. A 2004 study of the METCO program in Brookline Massachusetts found that students enrolled through the METCO program benefitted academically during their time in the program, despite a significant gap between them and students who are Brookline residents (Angrist & Lang, 2004, p. 1620). A 2011 study of the METCO program stated that between 2006 and 2010, students in the METCO program outperformed their African American and Latino peers in Boston and Springfield (Eaton & Chirichigno, 2011, p. 16). Data from a 2016 Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education report showed that students in the METCO program had higher attendance rates and lower rates of chronic absence than Boston, Springfield, and the State average, and a higher 2014 graduation rate than Boston, Springfield, the State average, and, perhaps surprisingly, the average of the receiving suburban districts (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2016, pp. 9–10). The report also showed that, based on the 2015 Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System, students in the METCO program had a higher percentage of students scoring at proficiency in English Language Arts than Boston, Springfield, and the State overall (p. 8). Students in the METCO program also had a lower percentage of students in the “Needs Improvement” and “Warning/Failing” categories than Boston, Springfield, and the State average (p. 8). A higher percentage of METCO scored in the “advanced” category than Springfield and Boston, but a lower percentage than the State average (p. 8). The report also showed similar trends in mathematics with two exceptions: (a) the percentage of students scoring in the “Needs Improvement” category, where students in the METCO program had a lower percentage than Springfield and Boston, but a higher percentage than the State average; and (b) the percentage of students scoring in the “Advanced” category, where METCO had a higher percentage than Springfield, but a lower percentage than Boston and the State average (p. 8). A 2012 Boston Globe article detailed how some suburban districts
were attempting to reduce the gap between the percentage of students in the METCO program scoring in the “advanced” category compared to some of the suburban districts (Hennick, 2012). In the article, some students in the METCO program shared that they do not always feel comfortable being the only student of color in some of their classes, they feel pressure to be successful because of their race, and that at times, they are afraid to speak up in class (Hennick, 2012).

According to Wells and Crain’s (1997) study, the performance data for Black students who participated in the desegregation program in comparison to students attending city schools in St. Louis would suggest that the VICC program was academically beneficial. The graduation rate for St. Louis students in the graduating class of 1994 was 27%, while the graduation rate for Black students attending predominately-White suburban schools was almost 50% (p. 198). It should also be noted that the overall graduation rate at the suburban schools that participated in the desegregation program, on average, was close to 75% (p. 198). Additionally, 48% of high school graduates from city schools in St. Louis attended college while 68% of the suburban Black graduates from the desegregation program attended college (p. 198). The overall college going rate in the suburban schools was 75% (p. 198). A noteworthy point made by the authors, however, is that the students who attended suburban schools through the desegregation program scored higher on pretransfer tests than their peers who remained in the city schools of St. Louis (pp. 183–184).

**Academic Tracking**

In their 2004 study, Wells et al. found that high school students of color had unequal access to upper-level courses (Wells et al., 2004, p. 1735). The study identified a variety of ways that schools tracked students, from labelling students “gifted” or “non-gifted” as early as
Kindergarten, to requiring teacher recommendations for admittance in upper-level courses, created segregation within the desegregated schools (p. 1735). Students from each of the high schools shared that the same students were in all the upper-level courses (pp. 1735–1736). This was even true in the high schools that were predominately Black. A White graduate from a high school in Englewood, New Jersey recalled having only one or two Black students in some of his AP classes, even though the school was 60% Black (p. 1736). A White teacher who had previously taught an honors class at West Charlotte High School that was made up entirely of Black students shared that after schools became integrated, her “very bright” Black students lost their seats in the honors class to White students who in her opinion, weren’t more deserving. (p. 1738).

Wells et al.’s (2004) analysis showing the practice of placing students of color who attend predominately-White suburban or desegregated urban schools in lower academic tracks is consistent with findings in other studies on district and school desegregation. The impact of the desegregation efforts made in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school district was the focus of a 2002 study that attempted to examine the academic consequences of desegregation and segregation by, among other things, identifying how tracking reduced the possible benefits of school-based desegregation, and why desegregated learning environments are of higher quality than learning environments that are segregated (Mickelson, 2002, p. 1). Data from the study was gathered from survey results given to a random sample of about 50% of the district’s 1997 8th grade and 12th grade classes about their family background, school experiences, attitudes toward education, and plans for the future, and combined with information about participants’ grades, test scores, and educational histories. One key finding in the study is the longer Black and White participating students attended desegregated elementary schools, the better they performed.
academically (pp. 5–7). The study also found that tracking in desegregated schools placed disproportionate numbers of White students in higher tracks, and Black students in lower tracks (p. 12). The study noted that the higher tracked classes were better resourced, starting with the qualifications of the teacher (p. 7). When interviewed for the study, principals in the district acknowledged that while it was possible that lower tracked classes would be staffed with certified and experienced teachers, it was almost a certainty that the higher tracked classes would be staffed with certified and experienced teachers (p. 7).

**Academic Tracking and Performance of Suburban Resident Students of Color**

Academic tracking and racial disparities in the participation levels of higher-level courses also affect suburban resident students of color that attend predominately-White suburban schools. A 2017 longitudinal study analyzed the participation rates of different racial groups in Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate\(^2\) (IB) courses from 2001 to 2011 in 117 suburban high schools from 79 public school districts (Kettler & Hurst, 2017, p. 3). Based on research that suggests students’ high school course rigor is a strong predictor of bachelor’s degree attainment, the study sought to identify if there was an increase, over time, in the participation rates for all students in AP/IB examinations; if there were disproportionate rates of participation for racial groups in AP/IB; did the disproportionate rates in AP/IB racial group participation change over time; and if there are school factors related to AP/IB participation and disproportionate racial group participation (p. 8). The study found that there was an 8.8 % increase in the total number of students taking AP/IB examinations including an 8.45 % increase for Black students, an 8.54 % increase for Hispanic students, and a 10.50 % increase for White

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\(^2\) The International Baccalaureate® (IB) Diploma Programme (DP) is an academic program for students aged 16 to 19. Considered by many to be academically rigorous, the program provides an internationally accepted qualification for entry into higher education that is recognized by many universities.
students (p. 10). Additionally, the study found that there were disproportionate rates in the percentages of students who participated in at least one AP/IB exams between White and Black students (10.91% gap in 2001 and 12.96% gap in 2011), and between White and Hispanic students (6.92% gap in 2001 and 8.88% gap in 2011) (p. 10). While there was no single school-level factor that predicted the disproportionate racial participation rates in AP/IB testing, the study did find that schools with a higher proportion of minority faculty had a decreased disproportionate racial participation rates in AP/IB participation between Hispanic and White students, and schools with higher overall performance in advanced academics had larger disproportionate racial participation rates in AP/IB participation between Black and White students (p. 13). Interestingly, the study also found that despite an increase in the percentage of low-income students between 2001 and 2011, and a decrease in the number of White students, these changes did not have a strong association with the changes in the participation gap (p. 14).

The role of academic tracking on students of color was included in University of Wisconsin professor John Diamond’s (2006) study on race, opportunity and student performance in suburban schools. The study examined race and opportunity through the study of Lakeside High School, a 3,000-student suburban high school where almost 50% of the student body was White, 40% were Black, seven percent Latino, and two percent Asian (p. 497). Diamond found that students often attended many of the same classes in their early elementary years, but they began to be separated into tracks by their fifth-grade year (p. 500). In 2001 at Lakeside High School, Black students made up 40% of the student body, but only nine percent of the students taking AP calculus (p. 500). White students made up 50% of the student body, but 82% of the students taking AP calculus (p. 500). Across the four course levels at Lakeside High School (level 1, level 2, honors, and advanced placement), Black students were highly concentrated in
levels 1 and 2; with only 10% taking AP courses (pp. 500–501). Also in 2001, 75% of all failing grades were given to students of color (p. 498).

A 2013 study of students of color attending a racially and economically diverse high school in an affluent predominately-White neighborhood, found that most students of color were placed in the lowest course and programmatic tracks, despite the time spent by the school’s leadership on planning intentional ways to improve the learning experiences for students of color (Welton, 2013, pp. 1–2). Data gathering for the study included interviews with 17 students of color (seven Latino, six Black, one Asian, three multi-race), looking at achievement data, observations, school documents, and field notes from student focus groups (p. 2). Students of color who transferred into the high school were labeled as a point of reference by school faculty members as “north side” or “at-risk,” which led to lower expectations from school staff (p. 25). Students of color who had previously been enrolled in AP or pre-AP courses shared that they were often alone or with very few other students of color (p. 30). Latino students made up 43.4% of the student body, but only 18% of the students in AP courses, and students who were economically disadvantaged made up 10.5% of the students in AP courses, although they made up 35.7% of the student body (p. 30). The study found that many of the students of color that transferred to the racially diverse high school found themselves re-segregated into racially isolated academic tracks that resembled the racial isolation of their previous schools (p. 34).

Ferguson’s (2002) study examined the racial and ethnic academic disparities in a group of 15 suburban school districts that participated in the Minority Student Achievement Network (MSAN). The schools, by becoming involved with MSAN, made commitments to find ways to improve the educational experience for African American and Latino students (p. 2). Ninety-five of the schools in the participating district administered a survey to middle and high school
students to gather data on students’ self-reporting around: effort; comprehension; grade point averages; achievement motivations; course-taking patterns; quality of instruction; and enjoyment of studies (pp. 2–3). In addition to identifying that White and Asian students had greater socioeconomic advantages than Black and Hispanic students, the results show disparities in the self-reporting of achievement, based on grade point average, understanding of teachers’ lessons, and comprehension of school materials that they read between Black and Hispanic students compared to White and Asian students (p. 4). The self-reporting of lower grade point averages by Black and Hispanic students was also consistent with the official school records (p. 4). The results also indicated that nonwhite students were far more likely to identify teacher encouragement as an important reason for working hard in school and exerting maximum effort, in comparison to White students, who were far more likely to identify teacher demand as their motivation for working hard, suggesting a significant importance for teacher-student relationships for nonwhite students (pp. 14–15).

This review of literature on district desegregation programs and the experiences of students of color who reside in predominately-White suburban communities provide valuable information on the experiences, perceptions and performance of students of color attending predominately-White suburban schools. The literature also provide insight into factors that hinder the educational progress of students of color and negatively affect the perceptions of students of color in diverse school settings.

The literature on the experiences of students of color in predominately-White schools identifies a combination of positive outcomes and perspectives from former students, in addition to academic disparities and negative perspectives that were informed by the adverse experiences of students of color in predominately-White schools. Positive perspectives and perceived
benefits shared by former students of color include having fewer distractions in school, positive peer pressure to attend college, and being better prepared for and feeling more comfortable in predominately-White spaces as adults (Eaton, 2001; Wells & Crain, 1997). The literature reviewed also show that students of color that attended predominately-White schools had higher high school graduation rates and higher rates of college attendance (Angrist & Lang, 2004; Mickelson, 2002; Wells & Crain 1997). Alongside the positive perspectives, the literature also identified a variety of negative perspectives and dispirited experiences shared by former students as well as inequitable academic opportunities.

About the years they spent as students of color in predominately-White schools, the adults interviewed by Eaton (2001) and Wells and Crain (1997) recalled that they often felt misunderstood and treated unfairly compared to their White peers. They described experiences that illustrated how adults in predominantly-White schools had lower expectations for them compared to their White peers including incidents of inflated grades on classroom assignments and a prevalence of limited guidance and encouragement for the college aspirations of students of color (Eaton, 2001; Wells & Crain, 1997). They remembered feeling as though they were caught between two worlds, one that included their family, neighborhood friends, family, and their culture, and the other being the customs, expectations and cultural norms permeating their predominately-White school (Eaton, 2001; Wells & Crain, 1997). The feelings of alienation experienced by former students of color in predominately-White schools were compounded by the Eurocentric curricula at their schools, and the unwillingness by teachers and other staff to engage in conversations about race, resulting in feelings of marginalization by students of color (Eaton, 2001; Wells & Crain, 1997; Wells et al., 2004).
The literature reviewed also identified prejudicial academic experiences faced by students of color and inequitable outcomes. Students of color in predominately-White schools were often tracked into lower level courses and offered fewer opportunities to take advanced coursework, and despite having higher graduation and college going rates than students of color in their home districts, academic disparities continued to exist between students of color and their White peers (Angrist & Lang, 2004; Ferguson, 2002; Hennick, 2012; Massachusetts Department of Education, 2016; Wells & Crain, 1997).

Factors that Negatively Affect the Educational Experiences and Perceptions of Students of Color

Teachers’ beliefs in students’ academic ability play a critical role in students’ level of academic attainment. Studies show that with all things being equal, students who have teachers with high expectations are far more likely to graduate from college than students who have teachers with low expectations (Boser et al., 2014). Teachers’ beliefs about their students are shaped by many factors, including their implicit biases about race and class. Implicit bias refers to the unconscious, positive and negative stereotypes that influence our interpretations, actions, and decisions (Staats et al., 2015).

Teacher Implicit Bias

Recent studies show that the effects of implicit racial, gender, and class bias affect students’ educational experiences as early as preschool. In 2016, the Yale Child Study Center released findings from their study that attempted to identify if implicit gender and racial bias affected preschool teachers’ behavioral expectations and recommendations for suspensions and expulsions (Gilliam et al., 2016). The study included observations of 132 teachers watching a video after being told to expect challenging behaviors. Observers found that when tracking the
eyes of teachers, the teachers focused more on Black children, and especially Black boys, and when asked which of the children required most of their attention, 42% identified the Black boy, 34% identified the White boy, 13% identified the White girl, and 10% identified the Black girl (p. 7). The study also recorded teachers’ responses to a standardized vignette about a student with behavioral difficulties, as if the student was in their class. Participants read a vignette and rated the child’s behavior on a five-point scale from “not at all severe” to “very severe.” When the vignette was altered to include stereotypical names intended to imply that the student was either a Black boy, Black girl, white boy, or white girl, teachers identified the behaviors to be more severe when demonstrated by White children then by Black children (p. 9). This difference suggests that teachers hold different expectations for student behavior based on race, and that teachers are more likely to expect Black children to misbehave. When the vignettes included family background information that suggested a turbulent family household, teachers had less hope that students’ behavioral struggles could be remedied. The findings also indicate that implicit bias may vary depending on the race of the teacher. When given the turbulent family background information, White teachers rated White children and Black children’s behavior as equally severe. Black teachers who were not given family background information rated Black children’s behavior as more severe. When given family background information, Black teachers rated White children’s behavior as more severe, and recommended harsher consequences for Black children (p. 10). This suggests that there are different expectations for students depending on what teachers know about their family background. Although the family background information provided in the vignette was not explicitly about economic class, some elements could easily be interpreted to suggest a lower economic class including: the mother being a single parent; the mother requiring multiple jobs; and childcare being provided by multiple
The difference in implicit bias based on teacher and student race is an important consideration when examining the educational experience of low-income students of color in predominately-White suburban schools, given that approximately 83.6% of suburban teachers are White (NCES, 2012).

A 2013 longitudinal study of English and math teachers’ perceptions of 10th grade students attempted to analyze the differences in teachers’ perceptions by teacher race, and by student race. The analyses included teachers and students who were either Asian, Black, Hispanic, or White (McGrady et al., 2013, p. 7). Teachers were asked a range of questions about students’ classroom behaviors and students’ academic ability. The results were analyzed (a) to compare the views White teachers held about nonwhite students and their views toward White students; and (b) to examine nonwhite teachers views of nonwhite students, to see if nonwhite students would be better served if there were more nonwhite teachers (p. 3). The findings suggest that compared to White teachers’ evaluation of White students, Asian students were rated more favorably on classroom behaviors and academic aptitude, Black students were rated lower on classroom behaviors and academic aptitude, Hispanic students were rated lower in classroom behaviors by math teachers but not English teachers, and their academic aptitude was not rated much different than White teachers’ rating of White students (pp. 11–13). White teachers rated students equally across racial groups in regard to how well they relate to classmates (p. 12). When looking at nonwhite teachers’ classroom behavioral ratings, there was no difference in how students were rated as it relates to students’ effort and being attentive, and for nonwhite English teachers, Asian, Black, and Hispanic students were rated more favorably than White teacher’s rating of White students in the area of “relating to others” (p. 12). Overall, the study concluded that when controlling for racial differences in tests scores, socioeconomic
status, and school characteristics, Black students who are evaluated by White teachers often receive more negative ratings than White students that are evaluated by White teachers, which suggest that White teachers are susceptible to racial stereotypes that depict Black and Latinx students as having lower academic potential; and nonwhite teachers appear to be less susceptible to racial stereotypes, as illustrated by the rareness of nonwhite teachers viewing White or Black students significantly different than White teachers’ views of White students (p. 14).

A 2015 Upjohn Institute study attempted to identify the impact of demographic mismatch on teachers’ expectations for students’ educational attainment. The study compared expectations of the same students by teachers who racially matched the student, and teachers that did not racially match the student (Gershenson et al., 2015, p. 4). The study was based on data gathered from surveys taken by the teachers of 8400 10th grade students. The surveys were given to two different teachers (one racially matched, and the other racially mismatched) for each student, and asked questions about how far the teacher predicted the student would go in school. Teacher results for White students tended to match one another while the results for Hispanic and Black students, and especially Black boys, showed significant differences. The results showed that in comparison to their expectations for White students, White teachers were 20% less likely to expect Black and Hispanic students to complete college and 16% more likely to expect Asian students to complete college (p. 9). The findings also showed that teachers have much higher expectations for the educational attainment of students from higher-income households than students from low-income households (pp. 9–10).

The impact of teachers’ expectations on students’ academic achievement was also highlighted by Patrick Lee, the former Director of Research and Assessment for the Oakland Unified School District. In his 1999 study, Lee gathered data based on the perceptions of
African American and Latino students who had academic and behavioral challenges, about the in-school and out-of-school factors that they believe led to their struggles. The study found that a lack of personal teacher-student relationships, a lack of caring, and low teacher expectations were among the school-based factors that students said contributed to their underachievement (Lee, 1999, p. 224).

Studies show that teacher implicit racial bias affect their beliefs about students’ academic abilities, influence the ways that they interpret students’ behaviors, and effect their capacity to build relationships with students. Implicit bias is present in teachers of all races and affects all students in positive and negative ways. Understanding how implicit racial and socioeconomic bias shapes teachers’ expectations is critically important to better understand the academic experiences of students of color who attend predominately-White suburban schools. Within this context, it is also important to explore the role that race plays in students’ self-perceptions of their academic identity, the perceptions of their peers, and in how these perceptions impact students’ sense of belonging.

**Race and Students’ Academic Self-Identity**

The extent to which students of color feel a sense of belonging in their predominately-White suburban schools is affected by (a) their perceptions of themselves as students including their academic capabilities, and (b) how other students see them as students; all of which are impacted by race and socioeconomic status; although not exclusively, or predictably. University of Michigan Professor Carla O’Connor rejected cultural ecology models that attribute racial achievement gaps to cultural disidentification, or the rejection of education and schooling as not being consistent with one’s own culture (O’Connor, 2001). Although O’Connor agreed that race, gender, and socioeconomic class influence the development of social identity, O’Connor
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Posited that social identity, within the same race, gender, and/or socioeconomic class, is also influenced by time and place in different ways (O'Connor, 2001). This aligns with education psychologist Peter Murrell Jr. (2007), who wrote that social identity is determined and defined through ongoing interactions within an individual's social sphere, including school (p. 91). Similarly, Lee (1999) found that students' academic identities changed over time and may be influenced negatively by interactions with teachers that students interpret as conveying uncaring attitudes or low expectations for academic performance (Lee, 1999). Nevertheless, as indicated in the following, students' perceptions of their academic capabilities, or academic self-identities, are also partially shaped by internalized racial and economic stereotypes.

Steele's (1997) study on how racial and gender stereotypes shape individuals' intellectual identity and performance reported that even academically capable students could be negatively impacted by "stereotype threat" (p. 613). The threat is based on students' (and others') concern that their actions, or the judgements of others, would negatively stereotype them within an existing racial or gender stereotype such as being unintellectual, lazy, or not good in mathematics. In addition, the author contended that long exposure to negative racial or gender stereotypes can lead to the internalization of the stereotypes in ways that shape an individuals' personality (p. 617). A 2012 study of native Hawaiian students' experiences supports Steele's thoughts on stereotype threats. In this study, native Hawaiian students shared their understandings about negative stereotypes attributed to native Hawaiians, and some indicated that they worried about making impressions consistent with these stereotypes and thus, sullying the reputation of native Hawaiians in the presence of White American students (Borrero et al., 2012, p. 18). These students discussed feelings of isolation, being unwelcomed, being discriminated against, and in some cases, living up to the negative stereotypes that were placed
on them (pp. 18–19). Fergus’ (2004) study examined the ways that external interpretations of students’ racial identities, based on their skin color, influenced students’ perceptions about their academic orientation. Fergus found that at times, students modified their identities based on categories that were externally placed on them (pp. 132–133). Fergus also found that in some cases, instead of living up to negative stereotypes, students responded to perceived discrimination by setting out to disprove stereotypes (p. 136). A 2015 study on how race, class, and gender impact the identity development of Black middle school girls attending a predominately-White school found that the students in the study who were placed in the upper academic tracks had a heightened sense of marginalization and need for peer and teacher support in comparison to students in the lower academic tracks (Russell, 2015, pp. 19–20). The study found that students occasionally “acted White” as a way to fit in with their white peers, and that the students did not feel as though they could choose their friends, but instead, had to be chosen as they were “left overs” (p. 20). Eaton’s (2001) study revealed that students of color in advanced courses felt isolated and “burdened by expectation” (p. 71). Being accepted by and fitting in with peer groups can serve as a support mechanism for students of color attending predominately-White suburban schools. Studies indicate that students’ perceptions of race play a key role in their willingness to engage socially with students from different racial backgrounds.

**Race and Social Acceptance**

A 1997 study of the interactional behaviors of seventh-grade students of color in a predominately-White setting found that despite multiple attempts by students of color to integrate with their White classmates, White students made no attempts to invite the students of color into their social setting (Page, 1997, p. 13).
There are studies that suggest that the degree of racial acceptance and social distance between students varies by age and grade level. Morgan (2006), for example, examined Black and White students’ willingness to participate in social relationships with students of another race. Students were asked to respond to statements about their willingness to interact with a person of a different race in the following ways: as a friend in school, as a friend outside of school, attend a party in their home, go with on a regular date, go with on a prom date, accept as a stepparent, or to marry (p. 18). Students’ responses could range from 1) Always, 2) Most of the time, 3) Sometimes, 4) Rarely, and 5) Never. The study found similar, relatively positive responses for Black and White students in grades 4–6, with no significant differences on any of the questions (p. 19). In addition, none of the mean scores for students’ responses to any of the statements reached as high as “sometimes,” there were no answers of “rarely” or “never,” and many responded to the questions with “always,” “most of the time,” or “sometimes” (p. 19). There were significant differences between the responses of Black and White students in grades 7–9, consistent with Page’s (1997) findings. In grades 7–9, White students reported higher mean scores, more on the negative side, than Black students in response to statements related to accepting people of different races in the context of inviting them to a party in their home, going on a date, going to the prom, marrying them, and accepting them as a stepparent. White students also reported negative mean averages of 3.5, close to “never” in response to statements related to going on a regular date, going to the prom, and accepting as a stepparent, with no difference between White males and females, suggesting a reluctance to accept Black students in social relationships outside of school (Morgan, 2006, pp. 19–20). Black students in the same grade span reported lower mean averages than White students on each of the seven questions, and only scored above 3 (“sometimes”) in response to the statement related to marrying someone of a
different race (p. 21). For students in grades 10–12, Black students reported higher mean scores than Black students in grades 4–6 or 7–9 (p. 23). Black students reported a higher mean score than White students in response to the statement related to having someone of a different race as a friend in school. White students reported mean scores more on the negative side than Black students on questions related to having someone of a different race: as a friend, outside of school, inviting to a party in their home, going on a regular date, going to the prom, accepting as a step parent, and marrying, and reported mean scores above 3.5 (closer to “never”) on questions related to: inviting to a party in their home, going on a regular date, going to the prom, accepting as a step parent, and marrying. Examples of the challenge students of color face in gaining social acceptance in predominately-White schools were provided in Wells’ & Crain’s (1997) study where former students shared that they struggled to fit in and be themselves and provided examples of racially motivated incidents that resulted in much harsher punishment for the students of color (pp. 201, 228). Former METCO students in Eaton’s 2001 study also discussed the challenges they encountered when trying to gain social acceptance from their White peers, which included White classmates refusing to sit next to them in class and overt racial incidents such as being called “nigger,” and having racial epithets written on their lockers and notebooks (Eaton, 2001, pp. 57–60).

This review of literature on the experiences of students of color in predominately-White schools and the factors that negatively impact the educational experiences of students of color provides insights into some of the external barriers facing students of color and some of the internal struggles that students of color endure when attending predominately-White schools.

Teacher implicit bias is one of the factors identified in the literature as having the potential to negatively impact students of color based on teachers’ propensity to view students of
color more negatively than White students, and have lower expectations for students of color, resulting in students of color being treated unfairly (Boser et al., 2014; Gershenson et al., 2015; Gilliam et al., 2016; Lee, 1999; McGrady et al., 2013, Staats et al., 2015). The literature also highlights former students’ reflections of feeling pressured to perform well because of the racial stereotypes held by others about their academic abilities, which sometimes resulted in self-doubt (Borrero et al., 2012; Eaton, 2001; Fergus, 2004; Russell, 2015; Steele, 1997). An additional challenge identified in the literature that students of color faced is gaining social acceptance from their White peers in predominately-White schools, which ranged in severity from intentional ostracism to outward racial antagonism (Eaton, 2001; Morgan, 2006; Page, 1997; Wells & Crain, 1997).

Leadership Dispositions and Practices and School Conditions that Help Students of Color in Predominately-White Schools

Studies on the school experiences of students of color who have attended predominately-White schools through desegregation programs or because they lived in suburban communities, reveal that students of color experienced challenges in their schooling that led to heightened feelings of alienation and discrimination, which prevented many students in the desegregation programs from realizing a sense of belonging in their suburban schools. Studies examining school desegregation programs and leadership in diverse schools have also identified key conditions that schools can create and practices that schools can use to help to repudiate the legacy of segregation, address occurrences of discrimination, and reduce feelings of isolation that often adversely affect the educational experiences of students of color that attend predominately-White schools. According to these studies, district and school leaders can play a critical role in guiding schools if schools are to make organizational adaptations and implement strategies that
help them create and maintain conditions that encourage positive intergroup relations and foster a sense of belonging for students of color in predominately-White schools.

**Culturally Proficient Leadership Dispositions**

Sociologist Joe Feagin (2013) characterized the White Racial Frame (WRF) as “an overarching white worldview that encompasses a broad and persisting set of racial stereotypes, prejudices, ideologies, images, interpretations and narratives, emotions, and reactions to language accents, as well as racialized inclinations to discriminate” (p. 3). In addition to the impact on an individuals’ worldview, Feagin explained that the reinforcement of the WRF over hundreds of years in the United States has deeply imbedded its racial understandings in societal organizations and institutions (p. 141). Feagin also asserted that in addition to White Americans, the WRF often becomes the dominant frame for non-Whites who seek to conform to White norms and perspectives (p. 3). For this study, this point is of particular importance within the context of school leadership, including school leaders who are responsible for supporting students of color in predominately-White schools, especially as it relates to idea imbedded within the WRF that the US is a colorblind or post-racial society (p. 9).

Critical Race Theory (CRT) can serve as a counter frame to the WRF. CRT was initially conceptualized as a critique of racism in the law and society (Lynne & Parker, 2006, p. 259) and has since expanded into many fields of study. One of the foundational beliefs of early CRT scholars include the belief that racism is a normal fact of life in our society and is so ingrained in our political and legal structures that it is almost unrecognizable (pp. 259–260). This belief, in stark contrast to the “post-racial” colorblind ideology that characterizes the WRF, is an important understanding for school leaders, including school leaders responsible for supporting students of color in predominately-White schools, as it can be the impetus for intentional planning and
deliberate actions that foster positive learning experiences for students of color in predominately-
White schools.

Lindsey, Robins, and Terrell (1999) characterized leaders who are capable of fostering positive learning environments in racially diverse schools as being culturally proficient (pp. 38–43). Lindsey et al. adapted the theories outlined in Cross, Bazron, Dennis, and Isaacs’ (1989) study on culturally competent systems of care, which presented ideas for improving service delivery for children of color in mental health care systems, for use in schools (Cross et al., 1989). Cross et al. described culturally competent agencies as follows: being accepting of and respecting differences, continually self-assessing regarding culture, paying careful attention to the dynamics of difference, continually expanding cultural knowledge, and adapting their service models to better meet the needs of minority populations (p. 17). They further asserted that culturally competent agencies make efforts to hire minority and unbiased employees, seek consultation and advice from minority communities, and describe cultural proficiency as being at the most positive end of the cultural competence scale (p. 17). Using the theories of cultural competence, Lindsey et al. (1999) concluded that culturally proficient schools are continually reimagined in order to optimally facilitate effective cross-cultural interactions and that culturally proficient leaders guide this iterative process by modeling essential behaviors, and leading processes that encourage the essential behaviors across the school, including: valuing diversity through written policy and in practice; assessing their individual culture and the culture of the school to understand the impact they have on others; managing the dynamics of difference by developing culturally proficient strategies to understand and manage conflicts; institutionalizing cultural knowledge by ensuring that students learn about the cultural practices of different racial groups and how stereotypes are developed and maintained in society to help students and staff
develop skills for eliminating racial and other biases in social interactions, curriculum
development, and school programming; and adapting to diversity by recognizing and leading
ongoing processes for change based on evolving differences in faculty, staff, students, and
community (pp. 30–43).

Magno and Schiff (2010) offered an example of culturally proficient leadership through a
case study that detailed one school leader’s response to the integration of immigrant students into
his school community. The case study was taken from a qualitative study of 14 school leaders
across nine school districts that found that the vast majority of school leaders preferred having
immigrant students assimilate into the existing student body as opposed to appreciating and
valuing the diversity they bring to the school (p. 87). The leader who served as the lone
exception chose to make institutional adaptations in conjunction with the adaptations required by
the new immigrant students (p. 87). The institutional adaptations that the school leader made
included: the creation of a diversity office that was used as a safe space for immigrant students to
congregate and talk to each other; assigning a ‘buddy’ to new students; making arrangements for
immigrant students to receive tutoring from native speakers if needed; voluntarily attending
professional development on English language learning to help him better talk with teachers on
how to support immigrant students; becoming actively involved in the enrollment process to help
determine the best placement for students and ensure that immigrant students have access to all
elective classes; working with classroom teachers to reward points to native students who use
information they learn from immigrant students for class projects as a way of encouraging
positive intergroup interactions; instituting a process that allows immigrant students to drop a
mainstream class after a trial period without penalty if they find that they are not linguistically or
academically prepared; and making intentional efforts to get to know the names, interests, strengths, and areas for growth of all immigrants students (p. 88).

**Fostering Positive Intergroup Relations**

In his 1954 study on the causes and disposition of prejudice, Psychologist Gordon Allport reasoned that racial prejudice can be diminished, and positive intergroup relations improved when people of different racial groups interact based on equal-status in pursuit of common goals (Allport, 1954). A 1999 study of 21 elementary, middle and high schools offered key insights for school leaders on ways to foster positive intergroup relations to help schools prevent and work through the challenges and tensions that often arise in diverse school settings (Henze et al., 1999, p. 4). The Leading for Diversity Research Project identified proactive strategies and approaches that school leaders have used to promote positive intergroup relations amongst students of different racial groups based on data that was gathered over a three-year period (p. 4). Tatum (1999) offered a synthesis of the study’s findings by highlighting three essential principles that school leaders should leverage in their efforts to foster positive intergroup relations and create equitable multiethnic learning communities: affirming students’ identities; building community; and cultivating student leadership (p. 550). In a subsequent book on the study, Henze et al. (2002) added a fourth principle for improving intergroup relations between students of different racial groups. The authors additionally emphasized the need for school leaders to create conditions that help them to understand and address the root causes of racial conflict on an ongoing basis (pp. 36–37).

**School Adaptations and Community Building**

The school adaptations and proactive steps outlined in the above-mentioned case study (Magno & Shiff, 2010) illustrate practices that helped the school to build community, affirm
students’ identities, and foster a sense of belonging for their newly arrived immigrant students. Tatum (1999) defined building community as the processes that create a sense of belonging for individuals to the larger school community (p. 551). Henze et al. (2002) added that the community building process is guided by the school community’s shared vision and values, while also acknowledging individual differences (pp. 36–37). In order for a school community to be authentically guided by a shared vision, and governed by shared values that recognize, respect, appreciate, and celebrate individual and group differences, schools have to be willing to make ongoing adaptations to school conditions to effectively rebuild community whilst undergoing changes to the racial and ethnic makeup of their student bodies. Nieto (1999) asserted that for schools to truly create multicultural learning communities, they should undergo institutional transformation to accommodate students of color instead of the typical push for students to assimilate into existing school structures (pp. 72–73).

The Southern Poverty Law Center in collaboration with the Civil Rights Project (formerly at Harvard University at the time of the study and currently at UCLA) and multiple researchers and authors analyzed five decades of school desegregation experiences in an effort to discover the factors that foster successful schooling experiences in integrated settings (Frankenberg & Orfield, 2007, p. 11). Their findings can help guide educational leaders in improving the educational experience of students of color in predominately-White suburban schools. Amongst the findings and recommendations, Hawley (2007) identified school conditions that are important for fostering student learning in racially diverse schools that, in part, include the following: policies and processes for fairly arbitrating school rules, students’ perceived inequity and discrimination, and interpersonal conflicts; teaching practices and curricula that promote constructive interactions among students of different races; a diverse staff;
schoolwide activities that explore similarities and differences within and across racial groups (pp. 49–50).

Holland’s (2012) study on the social integration of students of color in a predominately-White school found that students’ perceptions on racial affability were directly related to the opportunities made available for them to participate in intergroup interactions and the circumstances that surrounded these interactions (p. 114). Male students had more opportunities to participate in interactions under the equal status conditions such as sports and other extracurricular activities, which led to male students having more positive perceptions and a stronger sense of belonging (pp. 114–115). Other studies have also detailed the ways that extracurricular activities help to build community and improve intergroup relations. Moody’s (2001) study on school characteristics that facilitate substantive school integration as indicated by interracial friendships found that the organizational structures in schools affect intergroup interactions and that the strongest organizational effect on racial intergroup interactions were found in extracurricular activities that brought students together from different racial groups for cooperative interactions (p. 709). For schools to truly leverage extracurricular activities as a mechanism for facilitating positive intergroup relations, building community, and creating a sense of belonging, William Hawley underscored the importance of structuring extracurricular activities such that they foster collaboration, participation, and teamwork across racial groups (Hawley, 2007, pp. 45–46).

**Culturally Responsive Teaching in Diverse Classrooms**

In addition to extracurricular activities, studies also suggest that positive intergroup relations can be fostered during classroom learning under the right conditions. Moody’s (2001) study on the school characteristics that foster positive intergroup relations across racial groups
found that school organizational effects were evident dependent on the structure of academic tracking in schools because tracking often separates students (typically by race) and creates status differentials that run counter to Allport’s (1954) contact theory that is dependent on equal status interactions (Moody, 2011, pp. 709–710). To foster positive intergroup relations through classroom learning, schools first must ensure that diversity exists in academic classroom settings and additionally must ensure that classroom teachers have the knowledge and ability to create classroom cultures that foster positive learning experiences in diverse classrooms.

Gay (2002) asserted that specific knowledge about cultural diversity is essential to meeting the educational needs of racially and ethnically diverse students and that part of this knowledge includes understanding the cultural characteristics and contributions of different racial and ethnic groups (p. 207). Gay described this “culturally responsive teaching” as teaching that uses the cultural perspectives, experiences, and characteristics of racially and ethnically diverse students as mediums for teaching them more effectively (p. 106). This is consistent with Nieto’s (2004) description of culturally responsive teaching, which includes teaching methods that compel inclusion and authenticity (p. 353). Ladson-Billings (1995) described culturally responsive teaching as opposition or critical pedagogy that is committed to collective empowerment, developing cultural competence, and developing a critical consciousness that students can use to challenge the current social order (p. 160).

Monica Brown (2007) outlined specific examples of actions that teachers can take to increase their culturally responsive teaching skills in relation to Gay’s (2002) aspects of culturally responsive teaching including: developing a culturally diverse knowledge base by looking at one’s own attitudes, learning about the cultural characteristics and contributions of different racial and ethnic groups; designing culturally relevant curricula by being conscious of
and using the power of curricula to help transmit important information and values about racial and cultural diversity and making changes as necessary to improve the quality of curricula, demonstrating cultural caring and building a learning community by using students’ cultures and experiences as scaffolds to expand their understanding of content, building communities among learners in which the well-being of the group is prioritized over individuals; building effective cross-cultural communications by learning how to interpret students’ cultural codes to teach them more effectively; and delivering culturally responsive instruction by learning how to match teaching practices to the learning styles of students from racially and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Brown, 2007, p. 58).

Kimberly Quick (2019) of the Century Foundation provides examples of instructional strategies that foster positive intergroup relations while also incorporating elements of culturally responsive teaching including: employing project-based and experiential learning to help students from different racial groups gain knowledge and skills by working collaboratively together to investigate and solve problems; regularly assigning projects that require small groups of students to explore issues of race and identity with one another; and purposefully pairing students in de-tracked classrooms to foster academically beneficial interactions between students across ability levels, which have the potential to bring students from different racial backgrounds into conversation with one another (p. 6). Additional instructional approaches that studies have identified to help foster positive intergroup relations include complex instruction, reciprocal teaching, peer tutoring, and differentiated instruction (Hawley, 2007, p. 46). As previously mentioned, the curriculum that guides students’ learning is also an important factor that supports intergroup relations within the context of classroom learning. Some of the themes identified by Hawley across the studies on multicultural curriculum include fair and truthful representation of
the perspectives of different races and the roles they have played in this and other societies, honest accounts of the history of discrimination that different racial and ethnic groups have faced, and confirmation of the standard expectations for acceptance and tolerance (p. 46). Curriculum that teaches students to value different identities and learn about the history of different racial and ethnic groups also helps to affirm students’ identities, which studies have identified as an effective strategy for supporting students of color in integrated school settings.

**Affirming Students’ Identities and Learning from Students’ Perceptions**

Tatum (1999) asserted that students should see images that reflect themselves inside the curriculum, and in the faces of other students and staff members to ensure that “Every student should be able to see important parts of himself or herself reflected in some way” (p. 551). Henze et al. (2002) identified affirming students’ identity as one of four principles for improving interethnic relations and maintained that affirming students’ identities happens in part by creating conditions that help students and staff better understand and appreciate their different group and individual identities through approaches such as ethnic holiday celebrations and courses and curricula that provide opportunities for students to learn the history, struggles, and contributions of different ethnic groups (p. 36).

Gandara (2008) endorsed affirming students’ identity through periodic “cocooning” of students in same-race groupings to discuss their situations in a safe space with mentors who belong to the same racial groups (pp. 44–49). Based on evidence gathered from a program designed for Latinx students in California, Gandara contended that “cocooning” can provide students with the needed safety to address issues that impact their education that students would most likely never divulge (p. 47). Gandara asserted that students need to develop resilient identities as members of a racial-ethnic group that is often marginalized or maligned in the
dominant society in order to interact with people from different racial-ethnic groups and succeed academically, and “cocooning” helps students to do this (p. 48). Gandara emphasized that the opportunity for safe identity exploration is especially important during early to mid-adolescence (p. 48).

An example of Gandara’s “cocooning” is illustrated in Irizarry’s (2015) two-year research collaborative for Latinx high school students, which was used to analyze their schooling experiences and develop recommendations for educators (Irizarry, 2015). Among the recommendations gathered from the students in Irizarry’s Project FUERTE include countering educators’ deficit perspectives of Latinx students, which sometimes manifests in hostile opposition of students’ maintaining proficiency in their native languages; broadening their concept of culture beyond race and ethnicity to include hybrid identities; and closing the gaps in opportunities that Latinx students have compared to White students as demonstrated by the school’s tracking system, which disproportionately placed Latinx students in the lowest level courses (pp. 67–69). The research collaborative provided a safe space for students to share their perceptions about their schooling experiences and affirm their identity with a mentor of the same ethnicity. Akin to the students in the Puente program described by Gandara (2008), students may never have had an opportunity to discuss the issues impacting their education absent their experience in the FUERTE program.

Valenzuela (2008) emphasized the importance of using strategies for uncovering internalized oppression as an important tool for guiding students of color in the exploration and affirmation of their identities (pp. 50–55). Valenzuela maintained that educators first need to educate themselves about internalized racism, and then provide students of color with opportunities to discuss and write about their experiences of being disparaged or disparaging
others as racial minorities is a racist society (p. 53). Providing students with safe spaces to share their perceptions about their schooling experiences is a foundational element in the act of “cocooning” and in uncovering internalized oppression. Intentional efforts to understand the perceptions of students of color in predominately-White schools also can help leaders in understanding the root causes of racial conflict, as recommended by Henze et al. (2002), and cultivate student leadership, as recommended by Tatum (1999) and Henze et al. (2002).

**Student Perspectives**

Frameworks used in Australia, Canada, and England for listening to and learning from students suggest that intentional efforts to learn from the perceptions of students of color in predominately-White schools can help school staff build positive relationships with students, provide educators with insight into how best to facilitate students’ learning, and help educators understand how to counter the discrimination and exclusion students face in their schooling experiences (Cook-Sather, 2009, pp. 238–240). Cook-Sather (2009) asserted that students have unique perspectives about things inside and out of classrooms and on the subtle undercurrents between their schools and their communities that impact what happens in schools, and that disregarding these perspectives will leave educators with only a partial picture of life in classrooms and schools and how they can be improved (p. 3).

The Rennie Center’s (2019) report on the conditions of education in Massachusetts declared that students voice has the potential to be a significant lever in guiding meaningful change within the education system as students’ perspectives can provide important insight into the strengths and challenges of an initiative or system (p. 4). The Rennie Center also contended that when schools invite students to express their needs and they are attentive to what students say, they are more able to foster positive learning cultures that are culturally responsive and offer
opportunities for authentic engagement with peers and adults (p. 4). These benefits can and should be realized for schools and systems that want to improve the schooling experiences of students of color in predominately-White schools. This is reinforced by Phelan et al.’s (1992) contention that the most important attribute of school climate for students is the level of apprehension or comfort that underlies peer interactions, including if students feel kindness and a general acceptance between students of different backgrounds.

**Conclusion**

Research confirms that the act of increasing the number of students of color in predominately-White suburban schools by itself will not provide students of color with positive learning experiences. This study seeks to expand upon the existing knowledge base of effective practices and school conditions that help schools advance learning, build community, foster positive intergroup relations, and foster a sense of belonging for students of color in integrated learning environments.

This review of literature on leadership practices and school conditions that support students of color in predominately-White schools emphasizes the importance of intentional efforts that foster positive intergroup racial relations to help reduce racial prejudice and help foster a sense of belonging for students of color (Allport, 1954; Henze et al., 1999; Henze et al., 2002; Holland, 2012; Moody, 2001; Quick, 2019; Tatum, 1999). The literature also identifies the vital role that leaders play in establishing conditions that support students of color based on culturally proficient leadership beliefs and practices that model and encourage behaviors that value diversity, reduce bias, and adapt to change (Cross et al., 1989; Lindsey et al., 1999; Magno & Schiff, 2010). The literature recommends that schools embrace changes in the racial composition of their student bodies by reimagining and rebuilding their school communities in
such a way that their diversity is celebrated, instead of the more common expectation that students of color should assimilate into their predominately-White schools (Hawley, 2007; Henze et al., 2002; Holland, 2012; Lindsey et al., 1999; Magno & Schiff, 2010; Moody, 2001; Nieto, 1999; Tatum, 1999).

The literature also identifies how students of color benefit when they are exposed to culturally proficient teaching that leverages the cultural perspectives and experiences of different racial and ethnic groups and uses curriculum that values diversity, while also affirming students’ identities by helping them to understand and appreciate their group and individual differences, and by providing safe spaces for students of color to discuss situations with other students of the same race (Moody, 2001, Gay, 2002, Brown, 2007, Quick, 2019, Hawley, 2007). Lastly, the literature outlines how intentional efforts to seek out and learn from the perspectives of students of color can help staff build positive relationships with students and provide educators with ideas on how best to facilitate students’ learning and counter the discrimination and exclusion students face in their schooling experiences (Cook-Sather, 2009, Rennie Center, 2019, Phelan et al., 1992).
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

Introduction

This chapter presents the design of the study, including a rationale for the research methods, and an explanation of the role of the researcher. Additionally, this chapter explains the processes used for participant recruitment and instrumentation development and the methods used for data collection and data analysis.

The purpose of this study is to understand the efforts that principals in predominately-White schools that participate in Project Hope, a state desegregation program, and the staff at the Educational Support Organization (ESO) that work with these schools make to: understand the perspectives and perceptions of students of color; respond to the negative perceptions of student of color; implement practices to facilitate improvements in learning for racially and ethnically diverse learners; and to understand the perceptions of the principals and ESO staff on: the barriers that prevent them from implementing practices that facilitate improvements in learning for racially and ethnically diverse learners; and what guidance and support they feel they need to better implement practices that facilitate improvements in learning for racially and ethnically diverse learners. School leadership plays a crucial role in stewarding the publicly avowed and unwritten values, expectations, norms, and traditions that shape a school’s culture and resulting actions. Elbot and Fulton (2008) identified leadership as one of the eight gateways to shaping a school’s culture in addition to: teaching, learning, and assessment practices; the relationships between students and teachers; problem solving processes within schools; practices for establishing and/or communicating expectations, trust, and accountability; processes for engaging student voice; the physical school environment; and markers, rituals, and transitions (pp. 73–105). One leadership approach for creating school cultures that effectively attend to
diverse student populations is cultural proficiency, which Lindsey and his co-authors (1999) explained as the furthest point on a continuum of leadership that involves leadership practices and essential behaviors for leading schools in processes of self-assessment and reenvisioning, in order to optimally facilitate effective cross-cultural interactions, and encouraging the essential behaviors across the school (pp. 30–43). These theoretical frameworks, and the possible ways that they interrelate with the persistent sway of the White Racial Frame (WRF) underlie my thinking about where to go in this research.

**Research Methods Rationale**

Creswell (2013) explained that among the reasons that qualitative research is used is when a complex detailed understanding of an issue is needed that can only be recognized by talking directly with individuals in a way that permits them to tell their stories unfettered by what researchers expect to find (pp. 47–48). Aligned to this, this study is designed as a qualitative inquiry into the leadership practices employed to facilitate improvements in learning for students of color attending predominately-White schools. The study employed a phenomenological approach focused on the lived experiences of principals and ESO staff to help us understand the essence of the phenomenon of these individuals who are facilitating the education experiences of students of color in predominately-White schools. Using this approach is consistent with Creswell’s description of using a phenomenological approach for problems that are best understood through the examination of the common or shared experiences of several individuals in relation to a phenomenon. This study is designed based on the importance of understanding the shared experiences of principals and ESO staff who help to shape the educational environment for students of color in predominately-White schools, to provide a better understanding on current practices and challenges, and to help inform policies and practices
designed to support leaders in educating students of color attending predominately-White schools (p. 81).

**Role of the Researcher**

Creswell (2014) stressed that qualitative research is interpretative and as such, emphasizes the critical need for researchers to explicitly identify their biases, values, and personal background as they will inevitably influence the interpretations the researcher forms during a study (Creswell, 2014, p. 187). I was a school-based administrator for eight years. I was an assistant principal for two of those years and a middle school principal for six years. All of my school-based administrative and teaching experiences were in schools that were over 80% Black and Latinx. I spent seven and one-half years as a central office administrator, which included the supervision and evaluation of principals. As a central office administrator, I was aware of the role the state’s desegregation program played in the regional educational landscape, and on a few occasions, I interacted with families who left suburban schools that participated in the state’s desegregation program to return to the school district where I worked. More often, I interacted with families that expressed an interest to have their children leave the district where I worked for an opportunity to be educated in another district, including the districts with the predominately-White schools that participate in the state’s desegregation program. These interactions made me aware of some of the negative perceptions held by families of color based on their experiences in the desegregation program. These interactions also made me aware that many families were dissatisfied with their children’s educational experiences in their home district and many families were not as informed as they would like to be about the desegregation program’s application and selection process. These professional experiences have the potential to influence my thoughts about desegregation programs as they illustrate variability in the
experiences that students and parents have, and that these experiences are often perceived in very
different ways.

But there is something else in my background that influences how I am inclined to think
about this study. I was enrolled for two years as a high school student, where I was one of a
small group of students of color in a predominately-White high school, after leaving a more
racially and ethnically diverse high school. This personal educational experience influences my
perceptions as I still hold memories of feeling alienated and believing that my closest friends and
I experienced interactions with adults that demonstrated that some staff had lower expectations
for us than they did for our White peers in the school that I attended. I also hold on to the belief
that I experienced short-term and long-term academic and social benefits as a result of my
educational experiences in the predominately-White school. My professional experiences and
personal memories both produce a complex view of the research topic. While the familiarity of
the topic based on these experiences pose a potential problem, it also allows me to enter into this
study more inclined to think about the topic in complex ways, and with an ability to find nuanced
meanings.

Selection of Participants

Schools participating in the state’s desegregation program are suburban schools that
voluntarily enroll students of color who live in an urban center. According to the State
Department of Education (2014), one hundred and twenty-eight of the 129 Project Hope schools
are comprised of a predominately-White (between 62.4% - 94.7%) student population. There are
three ESOs that are legislatively mandated to manage the statewide Project Hope program in
their respective geographical regions of the state (Court Decision, 1999).
Participants in this study are individuals from two different fields that help comprise the educational landscape within which the program operates; the principals of schools that participate in the Project Hope program who are responsible for monitoring student progress and leading instructional improvement efforts; and the ESO staff members who provide a variety of supports and/or technical assistance to students, parents, teachers, principals, and district leaders in the Hope program. The inclusion of these different roles helps to ensure that a variety of different vantage points, across multiple settings, inform a broader range of perspectives from some of the professionals charged with facilitating improvements in learning for the students of color in the Hope program about the ways they find out about and respond to their perceptions; the professional practices they implement to facilitate improvements in learning for them; what they see as the barriers that hinder their efforts to facilitate improvements in learning; and what they see as the needs they have to better facilitate improvements in learning for the students of color in the Hope program. Principal participants provide perspectives based on their experiences working directly with students, teachers, and families within a specific school context, while ESO staff members provide perspectives based on their experiences working with a combination of students, families, teachers, principals, and district leaders across multiple schools in multiple districts. This attempt to show different perspectives on the research topic, through different roles and different ways of interacting with the topic, is consistent with one of Creswell’s reasons for using purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2013, p. 100).

Based on purposeful criterion sampling, the study sought the participation of up to 10 principals in predominately-White schools that participate in the state’s Hope Program and up to 10 staff members at the Regional Educational Service Center (ESO) that work with the schools. The study sought to include principals who work in a secondary school, based on the belief that
students’ developmental ability and willingness to express themselves to participants would more likely be evident in grades 6–12. The study also sought to include principals with a minimum of three years’ experience as a principal in a predominately-White school that participates in the state’s desegregation program. This preference was based on the desire to include principal participants who have had enough multiple years of experience working in predominately-White schools that could inform their thoughts, beliefs, and ideas. Consistent with the preferences for principal participants, the study sought to include ESO staff members that work with Project Hope schools at the secondary level based on the belief that students’ ability and willingness to discuss their perspectives with participants is more developed in grades 6–12. The study also sought ESO staff members that have a minimum of three years working with predominately-White schools in the Project Hope program. This was based on the desire to include ESO staff members who have had multiple years of experience to inform their thoughts, beliefs, and ideas.

Principal participants were recruited in several ways. First, participants were solicited through 51 email invitations sent to middle school and high school principals on the State Department of Education’s list of Project Hope schools that met the criteria of being predominately-White, and ESO staff members. Second, an email (and phone call) requesting assistance with recruiting principal participants was sent to five colleagues who have each worked in multiple school districts in as principals and central office administrators. Third, a request for assistance in recruiting principal participants, along with the recruitment flyer, was shared through social media with professional organizations that have ongoing interactions with school leaders including: the State Association of Schools, the State Association of Public School Superintendents, the State Center for School Turnaround, and with a professor in the
educational leadership program at the State University. Fourth, a follow up email invitation was resent to all middle school and high school principals on the State Department of Education’s list of Project Hope schools that met the criteria of being predominately-White and ESO staff members who hadn’t responded to the original email invitation. Copies of all recruitment announcements and materials for participants may be found in Appendix A. Finally, some participants were recruited through unsolicited snowball sampling, as a result of participants encouraging their colleagues to participate. At no point did I request participants to contact their colleagues, and in each case, participants had already received an invitation through the previously described recruitment activities. As the recruitment process was completed, I had five eligible principal participants and four eligible ESO staff participants. This satisfied my expectation for the number of participants that I wanted to have in the sample. Details about principal participants appear in Table 1, and details about ESO participants appear in Table 2.

**Table 1**

*Principal Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name (pseudonyms)</th>
<th>Years of experience as a principal</th>
<th>Years of experience as a principal in the state’s desegregation program</th>
<th>Years of experience at current school in the state’s desegregation program</th>
<th>Grade level of current school</th>
<th>Number of students</th>
<th>Demographics of current school (% Black/Latinx, % White)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jane Simmons</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6–8</td>
<td>388</td>
<td>30%/63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darlene Brown</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6–8</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>10%/84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Stanfield</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9–12</td>
<td>1,463</td>
<td>22%/64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jason O’Connor</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6–8</td>
<td>422</td>
<td>22.6%/60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joshua Morgan</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9–12</td>
<td>1,038</td>
<td>10%/74%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2

**ESO Participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name (pseudonyms)</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Years of experience with ESO</th>
<th>Years in current role with ESO</th>
<th>Grade level of schools supported</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michelle Rivers</td>
<td>High School Support Specialist</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9–12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cynthia Mathers</td>
<td>Elementary Support Specialist</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Pre-k–5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lydia Corinth</td>
<td>Diversity &amp; Inclusion Specialist</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Pre-k–12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shannon Pierce</td>
<td>Outreach &amp; Enrollment Specialist</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Pre-k–12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data Collection**

Interviews are frequently used as a data collection strategy in phenomenological research as interviews involve acquiring data from the individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell, 2013). Interviews with principals and ESO staff were the primary data collection method as they provided the opportunity to engage with and obtain the perceptions of participants who have all worked with students of color in the Project Hope program, their parents, and the teachers and other staff that work directly with the students.

**Instrumentation**

Creswell (2013) explained that data collection within a phenomenological study involves acquiring data through in-depth interviews of between five to 25 individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon (p. 81). The protocols included questions designed to elicit information about the current practices that principals and ESO staff utilize to help them understand the perceptions of students of color, respond to the negative perceptions of students of color, implement practices that facilitate improvements in learning for racially and ethnically diverse learners, and their perceptions on the things that would help them implement practices to
facilitate improvements in learning for the students of color in the Project Hope program. For the purpose of this study, I used a semi-structured interview format guided by an instrument designed specifically for this research.

The interview protocol began with an introduction of the researcher, an explanation of the purpose of the study, and the perceived benefits of the study. The next step in the protocol was an explanation of participants rights followed by time for participants to review and ask questions about the informed consent form. Participants were then asked to sign the participant’s informed consent document. The protocol then guides the researcher to remind participants that the interview will be recorded. Once participants acknowledge their understanding that the interview will be recorded, the protocol calls for the recording to begin and the first questions to be asked. The first section of questions in the protocol is designed to gather background information about the participants. This is done by asking participants to share their name, role and how long they have been in their current role. Consistent with phenomenological research procedures, the formal interview questions began with two broad general questions about participants’ experiences with the students of color in the Project Hope program (Moustakis, 1994, as cited in Creswell, 2013). These open-ended questions, preceded by factual questions related to their current professional context, were designed, in alignment with recommendations for conducting semi-structured interviews, to provide an opportunity for participants to recount their experiences while attempting to keep their responses directly connected to the research topic (Galleta, 2012, p. 47). As seen in the interview protocol, which appears in Appendix F, the interview questions that followed were organized based on the type of data the questions sought to extract from participants in relation to the guiding research questions for this study. The first group of questions were targeted to elicit information about the practices that participants
employ to support students of color and included questions intended to explore participants’ perceptions on the impact of these practices. An example of this can be found in the question, “what are some ways that your school supports racially and ethnically diverse learners?”, which was followed by the question, “how have these practices impacted the educational experiences for the students of color that attend your school?” (see Appendix F). The second group of questions were designed to extract information about how participants become informed about the perceptions of students of color and information on the ways that participants respond to students’ negative perceptions. Questions were also included to uncover participants’ views on the effectiveness of their responses. An example of this can be found in the question, “what are some of the ways that you have found out about how the students of color in your school feel about their school experience?”, and the follow up questions, “how have you or the school responded to these negative perceptions?”, and “how impactful do you believe the response was?” (see Appendix F). The next set of questions were written to allow participants to discuss the factors that impede their ability to support students of color and included probing questions designed to help participants to consider a variety of possible factors. An example of this can be found in the question, “what gets in the way of you (your school) providing support for your racially and ethnically diverse learners?” (see Appendix F). The final set of questions were designed to uncover participants’ ideas on what would help them and other leaders in the state’s desegregation program provide better educational experiences for student of color. An example of this can be found in the question, “what would help you to better support the racially and ethnically diverse leaners at your school?” (see Appendix F).

The interview protocol was field tested with two former principals who were not participants in this study. The former principals were colleagues of the researcher that worked as
district-level administrators. One of the former principals had been a principal at a predominantly-White school in the Project Hope program, which provided an additional degree of authenticity to the piloting process. The process of piloting the interview protocol with two former principals helped me predict a more accurate time frame (from 90 to 120 minutes to 60 to 90 minutes) for interviews, which informed changes to the information shared in recruitment documents and communications. The interview protocol and the revisions suggested by the piloting process were then discussed further with members of the Doctoral Committee. The feedback from the Doctoral Committee resulted in improvements in: the order in which questions were asked to help promote a more positive, constructive tone throughout the interview process; and clarity in the wording of questions to help improve the likelihood that the questions asked would solicit data relevant to the research questions. The feedback from the researcher’s Doctoral Committee also helped in the development of potential follow-up questions. Consistent with recommendations for conducting semi-structured interviews, the process of developing follow-up questions helped me anticipate the possible directions participants would go in response to the questions they were asked (Galleta, 2012, p. 76).

**Procedures**

**Locations**

The interviews were held at a variety of locations at the discretion of participants. The locations for interviews selected by participants included: coffee shops, community college libraries, the schools and/or offices where participants worked, and participants’ homes. My intentions for providing participants with multiple options for interview locations was to help participants feel safe, and comfortable speaking openly and honestly about their experiences. Interviews lasted between 35 and 72 minutes and provided an opportunity for participants to ask
questions or provide additional information at the end of the interview. Interviews were audio recorded to allow for verbatim transcriptions and thorough, accurate analysis. After each interview, I provided participants with an opportunity to reflect on the experience. This allowed me to ask participants how they felt about the structure and content of the interview in relation to their prior understand, and if they felt that their responses met their satisfaction. I also offered each participant an opportunity to listen to the recording of their interview and/or read their interview transcript before the recording and transcript is destroyed. This helped to build trust between the participant and myself.

**Informed Consent**

At the beginning of the interview session, I introduced myself, stated the purpose of the study and described the anticipated benefits, I then allowed participants to ask any questions they may have about the purpose of the study. I provided participants with the Informed Consent Form shown in Appendix E. I explained the purpose of the Informed Consent Form, read it aloud in its entirety, and elaborated on key pieces of information within the Informed Consent Form including: participants’ right to withdraw from the study at any time, participants’ right to refuse to answer any question, the efforts to ensure participants remain anonymous, and that the interview would be recorded. I allowed each participant to read the Participant Consent Form and asked if they had any questions prior to signing it. I reiterated the efforts that would be made to ensure participant anonymity, informed them that the interview would be recorded, and reminded them that they have the right to stop the interview at any time and remove themselves from the study. The interview process began only after I received confirmation from the participant. After participants signed their Informed Consent Form, I reminded them that I would be recording the interview and that it would be transcribed at a later date.
Data Management and Data Security

All data collected from interviews is stored in a password-protected digital folder. This information will be kept stored in this location for five years. All data will be destroyed after that time.

Data Analysis

Phases of Analysis

According to Maxwell (2013), the processes of reading, listening, and thinking about interview transcripts, in addition to writing notes and memos about what is heard or seen in the data, and developing provisional ideas about categories and relationships and creating matrices and other displays that are applied to data are all important forms of data analysis (p. 105). The data analysis processes for this study were in alignment with these strategies. Interviews with principals and ESO staff were recorded, and then transcribed using an online transcription service. During the process of each interview, notes were taken in an attempt to identify what was being heard in the data during the process of data collection. This served as the initial phase of data analysis where preliminary analysis happened during the process of data collection. This approach is consistent with Coffey and Atkinson’s (1996) guidance that data analysis should begin soon after the data are collected (p. 2). The next phase of data analysis involved listening to the interview recordings while reading the interview transcripts to ensure accuracy. This process allowed me to review each interview transcript for accuracy while simultaneously taking handwritten notes to build upon the preliminary analysis that occurred during my initial data collection. Changes made during this process included the addition and/or revision of words that ranged from minor changes to changes where a few additional words made a significant impact.
on the context or interpretation of the data. As such, listening to the audio recordings of the interviews provided another opportunity for me to become more familiar with the data.

The third phase of data analysis involved re-reading each individual participant’s interview transcript to identifying the relevant data for each interview question as illustrated in Appendix G. This process allowed the data to be organized in such a way to more accurately illustrate the grouping of data as some data spoke to multiple questions, while other data failed to address any of the questions. This phase of data analysis also included the beginning of identifying preliminary codes in my handwritten notes as seen in Appendix H.

The fourth phase of data analysis included a process of analysis consistent with the process of local integration as described by Weiss (1995). Weiss described local integration as a process to organizing and integrating our observations and understandings (p. 158). For this study, this involved reading and re-reading each of the previously described individual interview question and answer tables to review the data that had previously been identified as being relevant to the interview questions, sorting and combining the data according to the guiding research questions of the study, and identifying the codes/themes across participants. During this phase of data analysis, the relationships across the data offered by participants were identified to confirm and/or create codes/themes based on the broad categories of response-type for each research question. The preliminary codes that were identified during earlier phases of data analysis were integrated with the newly created codes resulting from the fourth phase process.

The fifth phase of data analysis continued the process of local integration that began in the fourth phase of data analysis and involved re-reading the interview coding document described in phase four, analyzing the data within and across participant-type, and identifying the
similarities and differences in the types of responses offered by principals and ESO staff as shown in Appendix I and Appendix J. This phase of the analysis process also included the creation of electronic files similar to the excerpt files described by Weiss (1995, pp. 157–158) as a strategy for local integration. These electronic files were organized by guiding research question and coding group. The files included the codes and/or groups of codes that were identified in the previous phases of data analysis, along with all of the relevant data for the codes. These electronic files, along with the interview coding document and my handwritten notes were used to analyze, validate, contextualize and/or revise codes/themes, and was later utilized when explaining the findings of the study.

The sixth phase of data analysis involved looking at the data holistically in an attempt to create coherence. Weiss’ explained that during this phase of data analysis, researchers likely have an initial framework based on the outline of their interview guide (Weiss, 1995, p. 160). Consistent with this, during the sixth phase of data analysis, with multiple revisions based on ongoing reflection and feedback from my Doctoral advisor, I utilized the study’s guiding research questions as the frame for creating coherence across the final themes and/or groups of themes and their relevant data. This is illustrated in Appendix K. This analysis was written as the findings that answer each of the guiding research questions.

The last phase of my data analysis was the creation of critical race counterstories, which draw from and are grounded in the findings and themes from this study. Tara Yosso (2006) described the use of critical race counterstories as a technique for describing the experiences and viewpoints or racially and socially marginalized people (p. 10). Delgado and Stefancic (2012) described the use of counterstories as a way to challenge, dislodge, or ridicule the narratives put forth by those in power that work to reinforce existing beliefs about racial and religious
stereotypes (p. 46). In describing the use of critical race counterstories within the context of research, Yosso (2016) stated:

Recognizing these stories and knowledge as valid and valuable data, counterstorytellers challenge majoritarian stories that omit and distort the histories and realities of oppressed communities. Drawing also on academic research, social science and humanities literature, and judicial records, counterstories question racially stereotypical portrayals implicit in majoritarian stories. (p. 10)

Consistent with Yosso’s (2006) definition, the counterstories created for this study are composite counterstories that draw on multiple forms of data to recount the experiences of people of color (p. 10). The counterstories I share here reflect my deep commitment to amplify the voices of my participants and honor the research traditions, such as Critical Race Theory and Latino/a Critical Race Theory, that have sought to make meaning of and ameliorate the experiences and outcomes for people of color. To create the counterstories for this study, I started with the findings from the study, which were derived from recorded interviews and interview transcripts that were critically analyzed using structural coding. This study’s use of structural coding is consistent with Saldaña’s (2009) assertion that structural coding is particularly appropriate for studies that employ multiple participants, use a semi-structured data-gathering protocol, and for exploratory investigations to gather major categories or themes (pp. 66–67). The findings from the study served as the foremost source of data for the counterstories. Yosso (2006) identified empirical research data as one of the consistent sources of data for composite counterstories, which may include survey findings and/or focus group interviews (p. 11). The secondary data source for the counterstories came from existing social science and other literature on the topic, including information included in the literature review section of this
study. Scholars as well as practitioners often reference a theory-practice/practice-theory gap. By weaving relevant literature into the counterstories, I aim to bridge the gap, highlighting how literature is inextricably linked to—and can help us better understand—the daily experiences of people of color. What the participants in this study experience and endure is not new, although I hope this study provides new insights and important nuance. Locating the experiences of students of color in the research literature provides valuable context for readers and seeks to “connect the dots.” The third source of data for the counterstories came from a variety of student data across multiple secondary schools that participate in the Project Hope program. Student performance data was used to help illustrate the disparities experienced by students of color, consistent with interview data provided by participants. The fourth source of data for the counterstories came from my personal and professional experiences. As an African-American man, father, educator, and researcher, I bring emic perspectives to this work that are underrepresented in the research literature. My experiences serve as important methodological capital (Gallagher, 2000) in interpreting meaning from participants’ stories (Gallagher, 2000, p. 72). These data were used to create composite characters and social situations that speak to the research findings while challenging the racism and the majoritarian narrative. Each of these steps are consistent with Yosso’s (2006) description for creating critical race counterstories (pp. 10–12). The phases of data analysis are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3

Data Analysis Phases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analysis Phase</th>
<th>Description &amp; Citation/s</th>
<th>Evidence/Artifacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First</td>
<td>Notes were taken during the interview process in an attempt to identify what was being heard in the data during the process of data collection. This initial phase of data analysis is consistent with Coffey and Atkinson’s (1996) guidance that data analysis should begin soon after the data are collected (p. 2).</td>
<td>Handwritten notes on interview protocols and notebooks.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Second | listened to the interview recordings while reading the interview transcripts to ensure accuracy. During this process I reviewed each interview transcript for accuracy while simultaneously taking handwritten notes to build upon the preliminary analysis that occurred during my initial data collection and became more familiar with the data.

Third | Re-read each individual participants’ interview transcript and identified the relevant data for each interview question, including identifying data that some spoke to multiple questions, and data that didn’t not address any of the questions. This process also included the beginning of identifying preliminary codes in my handwritten notes as seen in Appendix H.

Four | Re-read each individual participant table, identified data relevant for each research question, and organized the data across all participants into one table. This process included sorting and combining the data according to the guiding research questions of the study, confirming and integrating preliminary codes, and identifying new codes/themes across participants. This phase of my data analysis is consistent with the process of local integration as described by Weiss (1995), in that it was a process that organized and integrating my observations and understandings (p. 158).

Fifth | Continued local integration process by re-reading the interview coding document created in phase four, analyzing the data within and across participant-type, and identifying the similarities and differences in the types of responses offered by principals and ESO staff as shown in Appendix I and Appendix J. During this process I also created individual electronic files for each research question that included the codes/themes alongside the corresponding data, the tally of responses from my handwritten notes. These files were used to analyze, validate, contextualize and/or revise codes/themes, and was later utilized when explaining the findings of the study. This process is consistent with the excerpt files described by Weiss (1995, pp. 157–158) as a strategy for local integration.

Sixth | Utilized the study’s guiding research questions as the frame for creating coherence across the final themes and/or groups of themes and their relevant data. This process included a continuous cycle of reviewing the data, drafting finding statements, discussing findings with my Doctoral advisor, reviewing the data again, and revising my finding statements. The process of creating coherence based on the guiding research questions is consistent with Weiss’ explanation that during this phase of data analysis, researchers likely have an initial framework based on the outline of their interview guide (Weiss, 1995, p. 160).

Seventh | Created critical race counterstories using research findings, social science and other literature on the experiences of students of color in predominately-White schools, student performance data from predominately-White schools that participate in the Project Hope program, and from my personal experiences as an African American man, educator, and researcher.
Trustworthiness of the Analysis

My awareness that my experiences influence my thinking on the research topic compelled me to understand how, and limit the extent to which my own values, expectations, and experiences may influence the conduct of this study during data collection, data analysis, and when reporting on the findings of this study. One of the ways I sought to accomplish this during the data gathering portion of this study, in alignment with recommendations for addressing ethical issues in qualitative research, was by discussing the purpose of the study and how the data would be used with each participant (Creswell, 2013, p. 58). I attempted to emphasize the purpose of the study and the ways the data would be used as a strategy, consistent with one purpose for conducting qualitative research, to embolden individuals to share their personal stories and experiences, while also attempting to minimize the potential for the power relationships that can occur between researchers and participants during a study (Creswell, 2013, p. 48). I also made concerted efforts to avoid asking leading questions, and to withhold my personal impressions despite the nature of participants’ responses (Creswell, 2013, p. 58). In addition, in an effort to build trust and reduce threats to validity, I utilized a variety of recommended strategies during the data analysis and reporting portions of this study as another way to minimize researcher bias, reduce validity threats, and increase the credibility of my conclusions (Maxwell, 2013, p. 125). What follows is an explanation of how I utilized these strategies.

Researcher bias can influence the selection of data and threaten the validity of the conclusions identified in qualitative research (Miles & Huberman, 1994, as cited in Maxwell, 2013, p. 124). To avoid this, I made efforts to identify findings within a particular context or contexts. As a result, I was forced to continually re-read interview transcripts and re-listen to
interview recordings in order to revisit the context of the data that was provided, and in many cases, it changed my understanding of where the data fit in, changed the rankings of sub findings, and in some cases, removed sub findings altogether. It also led to changes to the overarching language of findings.

Conducting intensive interviews can help researchers collect “rich” data that provides illuminating details and a vivid picture of the phenomenon being studied, because the verbatim interviews and transcripts provide detailed and varied data (Becker, 1970, as cited in Maxwell, 2013, p. 126). Another of Maxwell’s (2013) recommendations to test for validity in a qualitative study is searching for discrepant evidence and negative cases, as it compels the researcher to consider if it is more credible to maintain or revise a conclusion (p. 127). This happened multiple times during the data analysis and reporting portions this study, including as described above in relation to the selection of data, and when individual participants provided discrepant evidence regarding their answer to a particular question within their response to a different question. In such cases, I identified the discrepancy within the relevant portion of the study.

Summary

This chapter presented the design, methods, and procedures of this qualitative research study. It provided the rationale for a phenomenological approach to this study and described the role of the researcher within the study. This chapter also explained the processes used to recruit and select participants, develop instrumentation, and collect data. Finally, this chapter detailed how the procedures used for data analysis were consistent with phenomenological research. These data analysis processes facilitated the interpretations necessary for the researcher to answer the research questions that guided the study. These findings are reported in Chapter 4.
CHAPTER FOUR: PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

This study concerns principals in predominately-White suburban schools that participate in a state desegregation program (Project Hope) and staff members from Educational Support Organizations (ESO) that support participating schools. In particular, the purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the efforts these principals and ESO staff make to understand the perceptions of students of color; the ways they address the negative perceptions held by students of color; the practices they implement to support racially and ethnically diverse learners; the barriers that prevent them from implementing practices that support racially and ethnically diverse learners; and what guidance and support they feel they need to better implement practices that support racially and ethnically diverse learners.

Four research questions guided this study:

1. What do principals in predominately-White schools and ESO staff members report as the ways they become informed about the perceptions and experiences of students of color and the ways they respond to what they have learned?

2. What do principals in predominately-White schools and ESO staff members report as the practices they implement to support racially and ethnically diverse learners?

3. What do principals in predominately-White schools and ESO staff members report as factors that prevent them from implementing practices that support racially and ethnically diverse learners?

4. What do principals in predominately-White schools and ESO staff members perceive they need in order to effectively implement practices that support racially and ethnically diverse learners?
The design of this study was informed by a phenomenological research method. Five principals in predominately-White suburban schools that participate in the Project Hope program designed to educate students of color, and four ESO staff members that work with the students, families and staff that participate in Project Hope were interviewed between July and September 2018 to provide data for this study.

This study collected and analyzed principal and ESO staff member accounts of what they reported about their experiences relevant to this inquiry. This chapter presents the analysis of data obtained from the interviews of these nine individuals and the findings resulting from this analysis. This chapter is organized to show the analysis of data and the findings related to each research question. The findings will be presented in the order of the four research questions; each finding will be followed by an explanation of the analysis including prominent themes and incorporating data to support the finding.

**Analysis Relevant to Research Question 1**

Question 1: What do principals in predominately-White schools and ESO staff members report as the ways they become informed about the perceptions and experiences of students of color and the ways they respond to what they have learned? The data pertinent to research question 1 provided three key findings.

**Finding #1 Research Question #1**

*Participants enact proactive strategies that are both impromptu and pre-planned to help them become informed about the perceptions and experiences of students of color.*

The analysis of data in relation to participants’ reports on the ways they become informed about the perceptions of students of color included actions that were interpreted as being proactive, based on the understanding that the actions were intentionally done in anticipation of
becoming informed about the perceptions of students of color. Participants described proactive strategies that included their availability for impromptu informal conversations with individual and/or groups of students, pre-planned academic planning conversations, pre-planned student discussion panels, and pre-planned consultant-led youth development activities. In addition to these themes, the analysis of data also revealed a distinction between the types of proactive strategies described by principals and the strategies described by ESO staff. Principal participants’ descriptions of the proactive actions they make to become informed about the perceptions of students of color, with one exception, were within the context of pre-existing school structures, and/or used for all students, while the proactive strategies described by ESO participants were described as being pre-planned explicitly for students of color. The following is an analysis and discussion of each of these themes that together provide the basis for Finding 1 presented above.

**Becoming Informed Through the Intentional Use of Impromptu Principal-Student Conversations**

Engaging students in informal impromptu conversations is a common practice for principals in urban, suburban, and rural settings across grade levels. Consistent with this reality, each principal participant described having unplanned informal conversations with students, and most explained how these conversations, at times, result in them becoming informed about the perceptions of students of color. An important point of distinction between the impromptu informal conversations described by principals is whether or not the individuals (a) intentionally (or proactively) initiated the informal conversations with students of color for the specific purpose of gaining an understanding about their perceptions, or (b) did individuals obliquely
become aware of perceptions (reactively) of students of color because students of color sought them out to discuss something that they were concerned about.

Middle school principal Jason O’Conner was the only principal participant who described making efforts to engage students in unplanned conversations whenever opportunities arise during his day-to-day travels in the hallways, classrooms, and cafeterias in his school for the express purpose of understanding how students of color perceive their school experience. This routine, he explained, stems from his commitment to be highly visible to his students and routinely engaging in informal conversations with them helps him to build relationships and establish trust with his students, which enables him to become informed about the perceptions student of color have about their school experiences. Mr. O’Conner asserted that it is important for him to hear directly from his students and described his efforts to use impromptu informal conversations to provide positive reinforcements to students as an initial strategy to help him build relationships with students:

Always direct contact, that's how you develop relationships, that's how you get kids to start ... and I always leave every conversation with ... if depending on behavior you're better than either you think or they are or whatever the message needs to be, but sometime positive about who they are as people, and to believe in themselves, and to push themselves. And so, once you do that you start having those relationships. (J. O’Conner, July 26, 2018)

Mr. O’Conner described how his ongoing use of these impromptu conversations with students help him get to know students better over time, how his years of experience informed his thoughts, and bolstered his belief that this strategy is particularly important and impactful for students of color:
All right. When I see them I know [the student’s] names. I have a nickname for every student, which they love because they feel singled out. Like, oh he knows me as ... So I'll go out and I'll nickname them all, high five them, give them dap, whatever, but that's specific, that's purposeful on my part. Do all principals do that? Probably not. But I do that because I know that it works for kids. I know that works for students of color. It's been what I've been doing for the last 11 years as principal, but my last 17 years as an administrator. (J. O’Conner, July 26, 2018)

Mr. O’Conner went on to describe how his impromptu conversations with students of color, informed by details he learns from teachers about their academic progress, demonstrate to students that he is familiar with and personally invested in them, and thereby build and maintain relationships. He emphasized that all of these efforts make it possible for him to remain directly informed from students of color about their perceptions about their school experiences:

I make sure I get to know kids and in a way you end up mentoring in a sense. You end up mentoring kids. In a very basic way, but you're checking in. You're checking, how are your grades? Or if a teacher, which will happen. I go to all my team meetings and my team teachers will say, "Hey ..." typically to the group, "So and so did great on a test." And I'll make a mental note. When I see them in the cafeteria, "Hey I hear you're doing great in such and such…. But that's how I get my feedback. That’s how I get my information because you again, if they don't talk to me directly, I don't know it directly.

(J. O’Conner, July 26, 2018)

Mr. O’Conner emphasized his intention to assure students of color of his availability and interest in knowing about their perceptions through his efforts to be highly visible and remain in close proximity to his students, in part through impromptu informal conversations:
I'm one of those people I'm always out here, I'm walking in the hallways high fiving… So, we'll talk with kids all the time. Mine is much more informal…And so, I literally will call students down and say, "Tell me how things are going. What are your experiences like? You feel like anybody's treating you differently than anybody else? ...So they're very aware. So they will come see me, and in addition to I will call them down and ask them questions. (J. O’Conner, July 26, 2018)

**Becoming Informed Through Routine Pre-planned Academic Guidance and Check-in**

**Conversations with Students**

Multiple principal and ESO participants described how the ESO, over time, has attempted to systematize their process for engaging in ongoing conversations with students of color in predominately-White suburban schools in an effort to (a) help students understand and plan for their academic requirements; (b) monitor students’ academic progress; and (c) check-in with students on their overall well-being. Participants described how the ESO assigns specific staff members to provide a variety of supports, including facilitating these regularly scheduled conversations with students across multiple schools at particular grade-levels.

ESO staff member Michelle Rivers described the reoccurring academic planning sessions she has with students at the high school level as an opportunity to hear from students of color about their perceptions related to their school experiences. Ms. Rivers explained how she meets with students of color to check in with them about their academic progress, and to provide academic planning support and guidance, sessions sometimes conducted in collaboration with school counselors. She explained that although these planning meetings are not specifically designed for the purpose of better understanding the perceptions of the students of color about every aspect of their school experiences, the meetings help to accomplish this as it is facilitated
in a way that allows students to bring up topics about their school experiences that extend beyond their academic progress. “Most of my contact has been strictly with high school kids. I meet with them, I talk to them, and we talk about credits and stuff like that.” Ms. Rivers, however, hastened to add that the students are “always quick to say, ‘The school's racist.’” (M. Rivers, July 19, 2018). Ms. Rivers further explained that when this happens, she believes it is important to engage in a discussion to better understand the experiences that precipitated such remarks. She continued, “So, when they're quick to say they're racist, and there's racism, I go, ‘Let's talk about this and how you perceive the racism’” (July 19, 2018).

These academic planning and student check-in conversations were also discussed by Middle school principal Jason O’Conner who described how ESO staff who is assigned to work with middle school students has worked with the students of color in his school:

[ESO staff] used to come in at least once a month, at least once a month to meet with the kids directly. One on one. How are you doing? What's going on with this grade here? So he would call me let me know he was coming in. I would forward it to my secretary, my secretaries would pull up all report cards, all discipline data, all attendance data. (July 26, 2018)

Similarly, Principal Joshua Morgan described collaborations with the ESO to facilitate these conversations within the context of his experiences prior to his current principal position: “And oftentimes the [ESO] people would come out, so they'd come out and I'd be a part of that conversation a little bit, check in with them” (J. Morgan, August 17, 2018).

**Becoming Informed Through the Use of Pre-planned Student Panel Discussions**

One principal participant described the intentional use of a student panel discussion as a way for his staff to learn from students about how they perceive their school experiences. High
school principal Charles Stanfield described how his school recently took the proactive step of adding a student panel discussion into one of the staff professional development sessions as a way of giving students an opportunity to share their perceptions with teachers about how they experience school as members of a minority group. Mr. Stanfield acknowledged that this was the first time his students and staff have participated in this experience but was optimistic on the likelihood that it would happen again. Mr. Stanfield explained that although the student panel was not designed specifically for students of color, it did provide an opportunity for their perceptions to be heard:

We did this year that we were very proud of was we had the students come and do a panel. And so we had our ELL students, we had our students of color and then we had our LGBT community. (C. Stanfield, July 25, 2018)

Mr. Stanfield expressed his appreciation for students’ willingness to be open and honest with the teaching staff during the panel discussion:

And so, they did three different panels and we broke our groups into thirds. It was probably about 30, 40 teachers and we went to classrooms and we let them tell the teachers "This is what it's like to be minority X. This is what it meant to be in LGBT, this is what it meant to be a student of color, this is what we do. Here's what you guys when you do it like, piss me off. Here's what you do that like, I know maybe you don't mean to but I do find it offensive." And they did really a great job. (C. Stanfield, July 25, 2018)

Mr. Stanfield had reason to be optimistic about the impact the panel discussion experience had on the students who participated, based on the importance students place on the act of adults listening to their opinions:
They loved it. And I think that's huge. We want them to say, "We do care about you. We do want you to give us your opinion and give us your voice." And they also get it. That's one part I love about the students for the most part. They'll say over and over is like, "Just show us you're trying. Just show us you're trying." (July 25, 2018)

Mr. Stanfield recalled what teachers had to say about the panel discussions, and the importance of teachers hearing directly from students about their perceptions:

I mean, some of the teachers were talking about this is some of the best PD that they got…Because they're hearing it from their kids and for their kids to have this courage to be like, "Don't" Or, "It means a lot to me when you come up to me and say, 'Hey you can take an AP class.' Why aren't you. Why aren't you challenging me." Like, "I took an AP class because one of you guys did that for me and said I could do that." (July 25, 2018)

**Becoming Informed Through Pre-planned Consultant-led Youth Development Activities**

Two participants described purposefully partnering with nonprofit consultant groups that have expertise in facilitating youth development activities that provide students with opportunities to share their perceptions about their school experiences, among other things. One such example was ESO staff member Michelle Rivers’ explanation of her organization’s annual youth development seminar. As the individual personally responsible for organizing the event, she worked over the course of three years with different consultant groups to discover a format she and her colleagues believed accomplished the desired learning outcome. Ms. Rivers described how their most recent youth development seminar included a consultant-facilitated student dialogue session that helped her and her organization gain a better understand about students’ perceptions:
They had the flip boards, sticky boards all over the ... and they had certain questions. And one was, what have you heard your teachers say? What is the teacher's perception? So, some kid wrote that we're stupid. That we're on welfare. That I need financial assistance. That I don't have a father and mother living at home. That my mom doesn't work. Or what was it ... my mom's not smart enough. That I'm not going to college. And you know, some of the things. (July 19, 2018)

Ms. Rivers attributed the success of this and other activities during the youth development event to students’ willingness to engage and the content of some of the conversations that took place:

They shared their experiences, some of them were like shocked, they're like, "You go through that?" And some were like, "We don't go through that." And they start talking about the experiences within their schools and their districts, and how the teachers treat the students of one high school versus the other, and it was just nice to hear them talk. (July 19, 2018)

Principal Darlene Brown also described partnering with a nonprofit organization to provide youth development and prejudice reduction trainings for students as a way of developing a group of student leaders that work with other students across the school to learn about students’ perceptions about their school experiences and to make their school more accepting and inclusive. The intended purpose was for the student leadership group to be trained by the consultant group so that the student leaders could facilitate conversations between groups of students to help them become more aware of their biases in an effort to help reduce the detrimental consequences of racial and other stereotypes. Although this strategy was intended for the benefit of all students, Ms. Brown’s description of this strategy was the only proactive
strategy offered by a principal participant for understanding the perceptions of students of color that was preplanned, and not operationalized within a pre-existing school structure or practice. Ms. Brown described the strategy and also shared her belief that her school has not made the most of the work with the partnership, or the student leadership group:

Um, we have a program called Bridges which is a student organized program run by the [nonprofit consultant group]…it’s about, um, being open and accepting and they were trained by people from that staff- That come in, um, so we have core group of kids trained in being open and accepting of every difference- That we might face. Um, we don’t leverage that group as much. (D. Brown, July 23, 2018)

The actions described by participants as being intentionally done, or proactively in anticipation of becoming informed about the perceptions of students of color can be categorized as being preplanned or unplanned. The proactive actions described by principal participants included unplanned conversations with students, while the preplanned actions included student panel discussions and consultant-led youth development trainings. In every case, the proactive actions described by principals were operationalized within pre-existing structures and/or were designed and implemented for all students, including students of color. The proactive actions described by ESO staff members included preplanned academic planning and student check-in conversations, and consultant-led youth development trainings. In every case, the proactive strategies described by ESO staff members were preplanned and were designed specifically for students of color.

**Finding #2 Research Question #1**

*Participants become aware of the perceptions of students of color subsequent to students’ involvement in incidents of conflict.*
The analysis of data in relation to participants’ reports on the ways they become informed about the perceptions of students of color interpreted a majority of the actions identified by participants as being reactive in nature, based on the understanding that the actions resulted from, or served in the process of responding to problematic situations that were brought to their attention, as opposed to an action that was done to elicit the perceptions of students of color. Participants described a variety of reactive ways that they become informed about students’ perceptions, that in most cases were brought to their attention after an incident had occurred. The reactive ways that participants are made aware about the perceptions of students of color included the following: information that is brought directly to them as part of a parent and/or student complaint; information that is brought to their attention from a partner organization (in this analysis only instances of school-to-ESO); and information that is brought to their attention from the news media. The following is an analysis and discussion of each of these themes that together provide the basis for Finding 2 presented above.

**Becoming Aware Through Parent and/or Student Complaints**

Each of the principal and ESO staff participants described parent complaints as being one of the more typical ways that they become aware about the perceptions of students of color. Participants discussed a variety of circumstances that have prompted parents of color to advocate for their children, in response to difficulties their children experienced. Middle school principal Jason O’Connor described having conversations with parents that usually focused on particular incidents involving their children, which parents have learned about indirectly from their children, and results in parents questioning whether the treatment was based on their children’s race or in some cases, their religion: “‘Is that teacher treating my child any different because they are ... black, Latino, Muslim?’ Any of those actually, I've had all those calls” (July 26, 2018).
Principal O’Connor also reported that although he engages in conversations with parents of color, he believes that many of the parents of students of color feel like outsiders, and do not feel comfortable contacting the school, which doesn’t allow for him to get the most accurate information about the perceptions their children share with them. He said, “Whereas again, I sometimes feel that our [students of color] feel like outside, not students the parents. Feel like outsiders. And then they don't feel as comfortable contacting people” (July 26, 2018).

Principal Jane Simmons offered a contrasting perspective based on her belief that, because of her perceived relationship with students and parents, parents are willing to reach out to her with their concerns. Ms. Simmons deduced that when she doesn’t hear negative concerns, that none exist:

Kids feel comfortable telling me things, um, and parents have reached out, too… um, I don't know how, that I can answer that. Other that I haven't heard negative things. So, I figure if people were upset, I'd definitely hear about that. (J. Simmons, July 5, 2018)

The three other principal participants also indicated that they become aware of students’ perceptions most often by hearing directly from students and/or parents in response to particular incidents. Like Mr. O’Conner and Ms. Simmons, Mr. Stanfield, Mr. Morgan, and Ms. Brown surmised that the condition of their relationships with students and parents, or in some cases, the developmental level of students, affects the probability of students and parents being willing to bring their concerns or opinions to their attention. This sentiment is captured by principals Darlene Brown and Charles Stanfield. Ms. Brown maintained that her relationships with students has helped foster trust between her and her students, which results in their willingness to seek her out when they have concerns:
So, kids can come to me with issues, they trust me, they talk to me…and then kids, um, have come to me and said in a very, um, sensitive way, um ... My most meaningful conversation was two eighth grade boys, one White, one Black and they wanted to talk to me about feeling that the Black boy was targeted.  (July 23, 2018)

High school principal Charles Stanfield shared his belief that his students are willing to bring things to his attention because of their age, or developmental level:

But yeah the kids will, one of the nice things about the teenagers is very rarely are they shy to like, "Mr. Stanfield what's the deal with this? Because that's pretty f'ed up." And I'll be like, "Okay, let's talk about it." (July 25, 2018)

Congruent with principal participants, each ESO staff member shared that they often become aware of students’ and/or parents’ perceptions when parents contact them, or they hear from students about a particular incident that has occurred. Shannon Pierce encapsulates this in her description of how she and others in her organization hear from parents about the issues their children are facing:

Sometimes it might be a parent going to advocate on behalf of their child because they’ve come home and shared some feelings. Or the parent calling us and as they share with us...So usually it's through us or the parent or the student themselves. (S. Pierce, September 26, 2018)

ESO staff Lydia Corinth explained that parents often submit their complaints by reaching out to the ESO staff member that assigned to support students and families at their child’s grade-level:

Often, parents do call. So we have a liaison so we have somebody who does all the high schools, somebody who does all the middle schools and then all the elementary schools.
And the parent will sometimes call their liaison and say, "Hey, listen, this just happened."

(L. Corinth, August 16, 2018)

**Becoming Aware Through Information Shared by a Partner Organization**

One of the intended purposes for ESOs is to support the state’s efforts to reduce racial, ethnic, and economic isolation in education. As such, there is an implicit expectation of collaboration and communication between ESOs and the districts and schools that participate in Project Hope. Although each participant acknowledged that the actualization of this varies widely across schools and districts for a variety of reasons, the collaboration and communication that does occur provides opportunities for participants to become aware about the perceptions of students of color. Although Principal and ESO participants discussed interactions and collaboration across roles, only ESO participants discussed these interactions within the context of becoming informed about the perceptions of students of color. More specifically, while principal participants did not discuss becoming informed about the perceptions of students of color from their ESO colleagues, ESO staff members named principals and district leaders as frequent sources of information about the perceptions and experiences of students of color in Project Hope, often in the context of hearing about incidents that have occurred; and also recalled instances when they provided principals with information about the perceptions of students of color based on conversations they have with students after an incident has occurred.

ESO staff Michelle Rivers gave this example:

So there was an incident, we came in, the kids pretty much said, "We don't trust the principal. The principal's not for us. He's just a racist, and he didn't do anything." . . . We sat down with the principal. I said, "Here's what they're saying. "And the principal was like, his mouth just fell, he's like, "How can they say that about me?" (July 19, 2018)
ESO staff Lydia Corinth reported that there has been an increase in the communication between some of the predominately-White suburban schools that participate in Project Hope and their organization, which she understood, corresponded to an increase in the number of racial incidents happening at their schools. Ms. Corinth added that this resulted in an increased demand for her support from schools based on her professional expertise around issues of race in education. She explained as follows:

And also, with increasing frequency, leadership in the district will call and say, "Here's what just happened." I couldn't get in. And then Donald Trump was elected president, and my phone started ringing off the hook… And school districts just started calling and saying "We need your help. We need you to come." (August 16, 2018)

Here is how Ms. Corinth characterized racial incidents that prompted principals to reach out to her and/or her organization for help in resolving an issue:

[White students] were singing out the N-word and then were approached by some kids of color that said, "I'm offended. Stop." And a whole ... Well, I mean, it wasn't even like it broke out into a ruckus, it was just cell phones came out and the room got really quiet 'cause the word was spreading via the technology what was just happening. And then they called and said, "Can you work with us?" (August 16, 2018)

ESO staff Shannon Pierce regretted that it takes a disruptive and controversial incident for some leaders to communicate and make attempts to collaborate with their ESO colleagues:

sometimes it takes things happening for them to lend that ear. So one district had some racial things happen... They started being blatant about stuff...And that made an uproar in the district...He started opening up his ears, having meetings here. You shouldn't have to take something like that happening to do that. (September 26, 2018)
ESO staff Cynthia Mathers shared a similar opinion that school leaders often only communicate and/or seek to collaborate with her organization when a problem arises: “But a lot of times, when someone's having a problem, in the district they'll go ‘hey, call [the ESO].’ That's what they use, they say call [the ESO] because they'll take care of that” (C. Mathers, August 2, 2018).

**Becoming Aware Through Information Obtained from the News Media**

ESO staff members shared that in addition to receiving information from school principals directly, they sometimes become aware of what is on students’ and/or parents’ minds when a story about a school-based incident is aired on a local media outlet. According to ESO staff, these occurrences are far less frequent, yet became one of the reasons that prompted their organization to take a closer look at their capacity to establish trusting relationships with parents, since parents did not attempt to involve the ESO in most of the cases that involved the media.

This is best captured by ESO staff Lydia Corinth: “Unfortunately, sometimes it's because we are watching it on TV 'cause a parent called a TV station or the newspaper and said, ‘This is going on and I've had it’” (August 16, 2018). Ms. Corinth described how instances of her organization finding out from the media about negative experiences that some students of color have faced in their predominately-White suburban schools have resulted in staff members becoming frustrated because parents chose not to involve the ESO prior to going to the media, and staffing additions intended to help parents feel comfortable bringing their concerns to the ESO before going to the media:

And we try to talk to parents to say, "Can you please call us first? Like you shouldn't be at that stage without us knowing." Another department position they created was a family engagement person to try to develop the relationship, so the parents do come to us.
and establish trust with us so that we're not finding out when it's on Channel 3. (August 16, 2018)

ESO staff Michelle Rivers described a specific racial incident that her organization became aware of after it escalated to the point of garnering media attention, because the parent chose to go to the media after concluding that multiple school staff failed to address the issue:

The students went up and complained. [The student] called their parents… and what escalated [the situation] was that prior to that Friday, like the Monday, that [other] student also called the girl in the class ... the N word. And the teacher heard it and did not address it. So, she of course was vocal, went to the principal, principal didn't take action. So that Friday, the social worker was like, "How can you not see that that's offensive? He needs to go home.” ...And so at the end, the mom came and got her, picked her up from there, she went to the news, put it on the news, and then that's how it transpires. That's how we got in. (July 19, 2018)

The majority of actions identified by participants as to how they are made aware about the perceptions of students of color were characterized as being reactive, based on idea that the actions were not planned, created, or controlled by participants or their organizations. Most of these actions were the result of individuals or organizations bringing information to the attention of participants in response to specific situations. These actions include verbal and written complaints from students and/or parents to principals and ESO staff, requests for support from principals to ESO staff, and hearing and/or viewing parent and/or student complaints on the local news.

Finding #3 Research Question #1
When principals become aware that students of color have negative perceptions of their school experiences, they respond, depending on circumstances, as intervening supervisors, institutional functionaries, or interpersonal facilitators.

In addition to being asked how they become informed about the perceptions of students of color, participants were asked to identify the ways they respond when they become aware that students of color have negative perceptions about their school experiences. The analysis of data in relation to participants reports on the ways they respond to students’ negative perceptions revealed that in 16 of the 17 accounts discussed by participants, principals and ESO staff members described responding to complaints/concerns that were characterized by parents and/or students as unfair treatment based on race. The analysis of data also revealed that the actions described by participants regarding how they respond to these perceptions can be characterized as (a) responding as intervening supervisors in response to things that are within participants’ immediate spheres of influence, such as directly confronting staff members who have exhibited discriminatory behaviors towards students of color; (b) responding as institutional functionaries in response to systematic issues that participants deem as either being outside of their immediate spheres of influence because of a lack of authority, or when participants are required to use existing organizational procedures that are designed to transmit concerns up the organizational hierarchy; and (c) responding as interpersonal facilitators in response to complaints and concerns from parents and students that participants believe warrant mediation and/or other conflict resolution strategies.

**Responding as Intervening Supervisors**

Because school principals’ responsibilities include staff supervision and evaluation, principal participants more readily viewed teachers and other school-based staff members as
being within their immediate sphere of influence. Accordingly, they reported instances when they directly confronted staff members who were believed to have behaved inappropriately in response to negative perceptions brought to their attention by students of color or their parents.

Principals described the importance of having direct conversations with individual teachers and staff who they believe have acted prejudicially with a student of color. In such instances, they explained, it was necessary for them to communicate and reinforce their expectations, and to demonstrate to students and parents of color that they are being heard and that their thoughts and opinions are valued. Multiple principals described situations when a student and/or parent complaint warranted the need to confront a teacher about behaviors that exhibited unequal treatment of students of color.

Middle school principal Jason O’Conner stressed the importance of addressing concerns brought forward by students of color as a necessary step in reinforcing the expectations for adult behaviors:

So, you have to have those conversations. We're here first and foremost for who, right? The little people. And if you're not having those conversations then you're doing a great disservice to children…. What you hear in edu-speak is courageous conversation. I don't think they're courageous, I think they're necessary. (July 26, 2018)

Mr. O’Conner described having conversations with teachers about how subtle language usage can be interpreted as being offensive to students of color. Mr. O’Conner explained this within the context of reinforcing cultural competence:

So we've been digging into that. So, I've had some conversations. I have very direct conversations and I feel comfortable doing so. I've done a lot of this work with cultural competence …And so, I have conversations with teachers and just say, "Hey, be careful
of the language you use. Those kids, what's that mean? What does that mean?” You have
to be very clear. (July 26, 2018)

According to Mr. O’Conner, prompt attention is critical for both the offending teacher and the
student. When a student of color made him aware that she was treated unfairly by a teacher, Mr.
O’Conner “spoke to the teacher about that, and now that student feels like she has a voice” (July
26, 2018).

Principal Jane Simmons described responding to a parent whose child had complained
about a teacher who used inappropriate language when referring to multiple students of color:

Um, I mean, I will say that this year, I did, um, address a staff member for using
culturally insensitive phrases. So, when that mom was upset about what was said, she
called me right away and she was like, "I know you would not tolerate this in your
building." And I'm like, "Absolutely not." (July 5, 2018)

Principal Darlene Brown learned from her school’s hallway cameras that teachers were
more frequent and severe in calling out the behaviors of students of color while ignoring similar
behaviors of White students:

…when they missed those other behaviors, but I have the luxury of hallway cameras. So I
can have conversations with teachers and say, "So what was your, what was the behavior
of concern for that kid?" And then "Did you see these other greater behaviors of
concern?" (July 23, 2018)

When discussing their responses to the negative perceptions of students of color,
principal participants described accounts of acting within their supervisory function to confront
staff members who have acted in discriminatory manner towards students of color.


**Responding as Institutional Functionaries**

Four participants reported that when they became aware of negative perceptions and concerns brought forward by students of color and/or their parents they were inclined to bring the concerns to the attention of district-level leaders. Turning to district leaders was necessary, they explained, for one of two reasons: (a) in the principal role, they lack the authority to influence systemic changes that might address the concerns; or (b) in the case of ESO staff, the nature of the concern requires that they utilize the existing communication processes and hierarchy within their organization, which is eventually transmitted to district leaders, who have the authority to intervene in situations involving school-based staff and systemic issues that are outside of the ESO staff’s immediate sphere of influence.

Principals reported that many students of color who participate in Project Hope have diminished experiences in predominantly-White schools because inadequate transportation services delay their arrival or complicate their full participation in all school-related events. One principal participant described addressing the negative perceptions and/or concerns of students and parents of color caused by these transportation-related challenges by communicating with leaders at the district level, convinced that district leaders possess the locus of control to correct these failures.

Principal Jane Simmons recalled communicating directly to the Superintendent because of repeated complaints from parents and students at her school as a result of the routine late arrival of school busses, which resulted in students of color missing the school’s breakfast period, and/or being late for their first period class. Ms. Simmons maintained that the repeat occurrence of the complaint, the impact that the situation was having on students, and her failed attempts at resolving the issue led her to conclude that it could only be resolved at the district
Ms. Simmons described her interactions with students and parents in response to their frustrations, her attempts to resolve the issue, her conception about the limits of her influence, and her attempts to enlist parents into the process of calling the bus company as a way of conveying the urgency of the matter:

Like, why isn't the bus, and they're looking at me like, "Miss, why doesn't the bus pick us up the same time as last year?" I'm like, "I don't know honey…I'll call again. Have your parents call, too, but like they're not my employees. So, I'm like, "I don't know. Why, why aren't they?" (July 5, 2018)

Ms. Simmons recounted her decision to contact the district superintendent to help resolve the issue:

But, it was literally the week before Thanksgiving when that got straightened out. It's like the amount of, like, you want to talk about they're standing out big time, "Oh, you're all late, again, every day." You know, um, by the time they were getting into class, it's like 8:25, 8:28. So I wound up sending email after email getting the superintendent involved, and the next thing you know, it's like, … this is ridiculous. (July 5, 2018)

ESO staff described their role in supporting Project Hope as being brokers of support, and as such, not having the authority to intervene directly when students and/or parents share negative perceptions, which often happen when a complaint is communicated. ESO staff member Cynthia Mathers reported that parents and school-based staff are often unclear about the role of ESO staff members. Ms. Mathers described how this confusion sometimes results in unrealistic expectations from parents and school-based staff about how ESO staff members should be expected to respond to requests and complaints.
Ms. Mathers recounted how school staff sometimes help reinforce these misconceptions when directing staff and/or families to contact the ESO: “Because they'll take care of that….That, again is a problem because it's not like that. we're a facilitator, we're a middleman, a bridge” (August 2, 2018). Ms. Mathers reported that these misconceptions have impacted her relationships with parents who have lodged complaints with her and expected that she would intervene directly:

And I've had people who have had an like actual fight. Not physical, but arguments with principals because she's like ‘She thought that I was just not doing what I was supposed to….‘That's not actually what I do.’ And now, three years into this particular mom...person, we are much better off. Once they understand. And it's that. That perception. (August 2, 2018)

Ms. Mathers narrated her personal reflections and those of other ESO staff members on their perceived inability to directly affect some of the situations that they encounter: “At [the ESO] there's a perception too like ‘What are we? Who are we.' I, as a person employed by [the ESO], sometimes feel like ‘Who am I working for? Am I making this problem worse or better?'” (August 2, 2018).

As previously discussed, there is an implicit expectation of collaboration and communication between ESOs and the districts and schools that participate in Project Hope. Multiple ESO staff detailed how their organization attempts to systematize communication with district leaders, and how this systematic approach to communication fosters their ability to ensure that the negative perceptions and experiences of students and families of color are shared with district leaders on a routine basis as a standard operational procedure.
ESO staff Cynthia Mathers described her organization’s communication with district leaders within the context of the different levels of communication that occur in their work with predominately-White suburban schools: “Then there's another layer…the director of the entire [desegregation division of the ESO], she communicates with superintendents and a relationship with them about the work. What she expects and what they expect, they have that…” (August 2, 2018). Similarly, ESO staff member Michelle Rivers also described how her organization seeks the involvement of superintendents as a part of an ongoing communication process between her organization and the districts they work with. Ms. Rivers reported that the information gathered from students by individuals within her organization, including negative perceptions, is shared with the administrator that oversees the ESO’s desegregation support program, and then with district Superintendents:

When we do finish ... anything we do with kids, we write our notes, and we send it to our director. Our director, when she meets with a superintendent, that's when she shares, this is what's been said in your district, or this is what students are saying in general, and what are you going to plan to do on this? (July 19, 2018)

ESO staff Shannon Pierce echoed a similar process when describing what happens to the information that is gathered from students by individual ESO staff members during their conversations with students of color: “Sometimes we meet with them in groups, individually. As we're in ... communicating and interacting with the students, then whatever information they shared with us, we pass it on to the districts” (September 26, 2018). ESO staff members consistently described responding to the negative perceptions of student of color and/or their parents by utilizing their organization’s internal communication processes that are designed to transmit information up the ESO hierarchy, and then shared with district leaders. In this role of
institutional functionary, ESO staff concede that school-based staff are outside of their immediate sphere of influence, while district leaders can more readily influence the appropriate adjudication.

**Responding as Interpersonal Facilitators**

As already shown in this analysis, the principal and ESO participants in this study often became aware of the perceptions of students of color within the context of those students having conflicts with adults or other students. Participants explained how these conflicts were brought to their attention and how most of the conflicts were perceived by students of color and/or their parents as being rooted in racial biases. In response to some of these conflicts, participants described actions that involved acting as or arranging for interpersonal facilitators to help resolve these conflicts by (a) coordinating mediation between the parties that are involved in the conflict; (b) encouraging students who bring forth complaints to advocate for themselves with the staff members they believe treated them unfairly; and (c) engaging in dialogue with students and parents to clarify what participants perceived as the students’ and/or parents’ misconceptions about the racial motivations believed to have underpinned an interaction.

**Coordinating Mediation.** One of the ways mentioned by principals and ESO staff as to how they respond to negative perceptions, particularly resulting from specific race-related conflicts between individuals or groups, is by helping to coordinate mediation conversations in an attempt to resolve the issue, and/or prevent similar issues from reoccurring. Participants described making attempts to facilitate mediation conversations in ad hoc Restorative Justice peace circles, as well as in existing school-based structures such as school advisory programs.

Principal Darlene Brown described responding to the negative perceptions caused by an incident that involved students using racist and homophobic slurs on a school field trip, but using
the school’s advisory period to bring students together for mediation: “First day back we all got into our advisory groups and had an honest open discussion about how hurtful that word was and how we were gonna respond with love because that's the only way you respond to hate” (July 23, 2018).

ESO staff member Michelle Rivers explained that school principals occasionally ask her organization to help them mediate conflicts between students of color and their White suburban peers through the use of peace circles. Ms. Rivers also admitted that the mediation attempts are sometimes in vain because of the unwillingness of some of the participants to cooperate:

So, he started to ask us to do peace circles with them, and it's time to rectify that situation- Some students participated, but [some] parents were like, "No. I don't want them pulled out of class." Suburban parents didn't even join the circle. They didn't come at all. (July 19, 2018)

ESO staff Cynthia Mathers also described using peace circles as a way of mediating conflicts involving students of color:

For immediate issues, we do have some coverage. I think we do these circle…with a goal. We really try to talk to the people involved and assist with [peace circles] which is wonderful if you know how to do it. (August 2, 2018)

Ms. Mathers also described how the unwillingness of some suburban parents to have their children participate in previous mediation sessions have negatively influenced the perceptions of students and parents of color, resulting in a lack of confidence and at times an unwillingness to participate in the mediation process:

Another incident happened this year, and the senior was her sister, like they're not fixing it. And they're like, "What's the point in having a peace circle when the offenders do not
come to the circle?" He goes, "Nothing's going to be fixed. I'm tired of this." (August 2, 2018)

**Encouraging Student Self-advocacy.** Three participants recounted experiences that involved them responding to negative perceptions of students of color by encouraging students to advocate for themselves. Three participants recounted experiences of guiding students of color to advocate for themselves by responding directly to staff members that were the subjects of students’ complaints. Participants described encouraging students to communicate directly with these staff members to voice their concerns within the context of complaints that students characterized as being motivated by racial bias.

High school principal Charles Stanfield reported that during the debriefing process he conducts with students who have brought forth complaints about a staff member, he seeks to find out if students have first addressed their concern with the staff member, and if not, he often encourages students to bring the concern directly to the staff member in question. He said, “And so, and then a lot of times honestly I'll just say, ‘Have you talked to the teacher about it? Because you gotta talk to them’” (July 25, 2018).

Two ESO participants also reported that one of the ways that they respond to students’ negative perceptions is by encouraging students to advocate for themselves. In these instances, their goal was to help students to understand the different ways that they can address their concerns, and how to do so in constructive and productive ways. ESO Staff member Michelle Rivers, for example, described responding to complaints about staff members by high school students of color by encouraging students to bring the complaint to their principal, based on Ms. Rivers’ assertion that the complaint merited a school-based response:
But then they're like, "But this teacher ..." And there's some teachers that do say something and you know, and then I guide them and say, "Okay, so what did you do? Did you tell your principal? Did you do this? Did you do ..." And she goes, I said, "Well maybe you want to approach it in an email to talk." I said, "But don't go there with the negative. Don't be offensive." I said, "You're not going to get much." (July 19, 2018)

Similarly, ESO staff member Shannon Pierce recounted an occasion when she encouraged students of color to advocate for themselves after hearing their complaint. In the example shared by Ms. Pierce, the students complained that their school’s lack of a plan to celebrate Black History Month demonstrated the school’s disvalue or indifference for the history and culture of students of color. Upon hearing this, partly based on her opinion that the principal would be responsive to students’ concerns and open to their ideas, Ms. Pierce encouraged students to advocate for themselves by taking steps to initiate constructive dialogue with their principal:

I said, "I know the principal very well." I said, "There is nothing that principal wouldn't do if you all take the initiative and meet with her." I said, "Make an appointment. You two ..." those two that were very ... One very vocal and one very organized, I said, "You all contact the principal. Plan a meeting and see what happens. Just share what you want to do. I want you all now to make a list of everything you think you want to happen for that activity. What are some things you can do?" They came up with a list. (September 26, 2018)

**Conversations to Clarifying Students’ Misconceptions.** The most common response by participants as to the way they address the negative perceptions of students of color was having conversations with students and/or parents to clarify details and discover any misconceptions on the part of students and/or parents about the interaction or incident, which in
every example offered, was to help students and/or parents to understand that their race was not a factor. Four of the five principal participants and two of the four ESO staff participants described instances of misperception by students and/or parents, which, in some cases, they explained as interpretations being made by parents and/or students without having all of the information needed to form a complete understanding of the situation. In other examples, participants described complaints from students and/or parents about teachers who they believe have treated the student unfairly because of the student’s race, but the student and/or parent was unaware that the teacher’s approach, although inappropriate, is the same with all students. High school principal Charles Stanfield recounted such an example: "Because what happened to you wasn’t because of your race, it's just 'cause the teacher’s kind of a jerk and they do that to everybody" (July 25, 2018).

Other examples include complaints from students and/or parents who believe the student was disciplined unfairly by a teacher or school administrator because of the student’s race, but the student and/or parent is unaware that other students that are White were disciplined similarly within the same incident, or from a different incident because of the same type of behavior. Principal Joshua Morgan characterized this type of incident:

Sometimes there were accusations of racism about faculty or administrators, "You're only disciplining my kid because he's a HOPE kid," that kinda thing. Or, "You're not holding the white kids to the same standard as my kid." There were frustrations I think with fitting into the community and being accepted. I think that we would always try to do our best to show that we were in fact considering everything, but part of the frustration there is, of course, FERPA, which is not actually allowing me to tell you what I've done.

(August 17, 2018)
The other type of interaction discussed by participants as leading to perceived student and/or parent misconceptions was described as students being held to high academic and/or behavioral expectations similar to all students, and in some cases, in ways they may not be used to. ESO staff member Michelle Rivers described how she responded to a student complaint of unfair treatment based on race, that she maintained was more accurately understood as a student unaccustomed to being held to high academic expectations:

Well, the teacher expects you to do this work. She's there to teach you to do this work. So you need to not feel like she's singling you out, because is she calling on you and saying pay attention, it's because she believes you can do the work. (July 19, 2018)

Principals Jane Simmons and Jason O’Conner described conversations with students who made complaints about being treated unfairly because of their race, that both asserted were more accurately described as being based on the teacher having different behavioral expectations. Ms. Simmons explained that her school has certain behavior expectations that some students of color are not used to because of their prior school experiences, which is partly why there are misconceptions. She said, “You are going to swear, you're going to get addressed. No matter, you know, what you're wearing or what you look like” (July 5, 2018).

Mr. O’Conner described having similar types of interactions, where students’ perceptions were incongruent with his assessment of staff members’ intent:

Are you breaking a rule? Yes. Then why is it racial? So, if you're not a person of color telling them to change their behavior then it's racial. As opposed to you need to change your behaviors because that's the expectation we have this school. (July 26, 2018)

Participants who shared that they address the negative perceptions of students of color by having conversations with students and/or parents to clarify misconceptions also described the
importance of valuing the opinion of students and/or parents during these conversations by listening and asking probing questions to help students and/or parents to arrive at a new way of viewing the interaction on their own, instead of taking a confrontational approach. This was best captured by high school principal Charles Stanfield who recounted an instance of discussing a teacher’s practice of marking students tardy to class:

So, you try to be kind of maybe careful. Once again, I try to ask more questions. And hopefully it comes, I don't want to be like, so we never want to be like, the teachers not racist. I'll be like, "Huh no white kids ever get marked tardy? It's only the black kids?" And then, they'll be like, "Well, no sometimes." And but like is it what do you think?"

And I'm like, they're like, so like, "How late do they usually start marking tardies?" And they'll be like, "Well, if you're not in your seat by chime." And I was like, "Really for everybody?" …So, just try to kind of steer more there. (July 25, 2018)

This section presented the findings on the ways principals and ESO staff report they become informed about and respond to perceptions of students of color. Multiple principal participants in this study shared that they sometimes respond to the negative perceptions of students of color and/or their parents as intervening supervisors by engaging in disciplinary conversations with staff members who have behaved inappropriately, based on their positional authority. Participants in this study also reported that they sometimes respond to the negative perceptions of students of color and/or their parents as institutional functionaries when participants’ lack the authority to impact the necessary change, and/or in the case of ESO staff members, when participants believe that they are required to follow existing operating procedures that transmit concerns up organizational chains of command. Finally, participants reported that they sometimes respond to the negative perceptions of students of color and/or their
families as interpersonal facilitators, by facilitating or coordinating mediation dialogue, encouraging student self-advocacy, and/or clarifying the misconceptions students and/or parents have about the racial motivations they believe played a role in a given situation.

The following section reports on the practices principals and ESO staff say they implement to support the students of color in predominately-White schools.

**Analysis Relevant to Research Question 2**

Question 2: What do principals in predominately-White schools and ESO staff members report as the practices they implement to support students of color? The data pertinent to research question 2 provided three key findings.

**Finding #4 Research Question #2**

*Participants initiate or assist implementation of programs and practices that are intentionally devised to provide direct support to students of color and/or their families.*

The analysis of data in relation to participants’ reports on the practices they implement to support students of color in Project Hope included initiatives and practices that were interpreted as having been intentionally designed to directly benefit students of color and/or their families. This contrasts with other initiatives and practices described as having been designed to benefit all students, and/or to indirectly support students of color. These initiatives and practices provided access to academic support services designed to help students stay on par with and/or catch up to their grade-level peers; and specific staffing allocations and student learning opportunities to support students’ social emotional learning, enhance family engagement, and foster youth development. The following is an analysis and discussion of each of these themes that together provide the basis for Finding 4 presented above.
Access to Supplementary Academic Support Services

When describing the practices that they provide to support student of color, participants in this study named supplemental transportation services to students of color to help them access the standard afterschool academic supports that are designed to benefit all students. In addition, participants described a variety of academic programs made available specifically to students of color as a way of supplementing the learning experiences they engage in during the regular school-day.

Principal Darlene Brown described how her school provides supplemental transportation services for students of color as a means of facilitating access to the school-wide afterschool academic support program that wouldn’t otherwise be accessible for many students in Project Hope because of the long distances between the school and their homes, and the inability of many families to provide students with afterschool transportation:

Access to programs after school is a big thing. Um, we have a bus, uh, that leaves here at 4:30. School's out at 2:30- But we have, um, a late bus at 4:30 that'll run kids who live in [the urban district]. So they can stay to our after-school program. (July 23, 2018)

Ms. Brown described the impact the extra bus for students of color has made when she reported on the participation rates of students of color in the after school academic support program:

And they do and they have almost, I think it's 100% participation. And we'll give them a snack too, a substantial snack because it's a long day without- An extra meal. So, we feed them, we transport them to give them access. (July 23, 2018)

ESO participant Michelle Rivers reported on a longstanding afterschool academic support program her organization offers to middle school and high school students in Project Hope. Ms.
Rivers also detailed how her organization recently expanded their after-school supports to include opportunities for high school students to participate in credit recovery:

So, we started to ... this year was the first time we saw a high number of high school [students] come for homework help... and we're telling them, "If the kids come here, during the school year, they don't pay for the credit recovery." If they're repeating freshman, they fail the class at a certain grade level, then we can say to them, "Why don't you come after school, do this. And that way you don't have to repeat it in school. You can take another class." (July 19, 2018)

Ms. Rivers described the impact the additional academic supports have had when recounting the reactions of some of the high school teachers she works with in the predominately-White suburban schools:

And they saw some of these students move up in grades, and we were very happy, because we're like ... and we're telling them, "If the kids come here, during the school year, they don't pay for the credit recovery. (July 19, 2018)

**Increased Efforts to Support Social Emotional learning, Enhance Family Engagement, and Foster Youth Development**

According to participants in this study, their practices to support student of color included (a) intentional staffing allocations to help support the social and emotional learning of students of color and enhance schools’ engagement efforts with their families; and (b) specific student learning opportunities to provide students of color with youth development and relationship building opportunities. Three principal participants and three ESO staff participants described efforts to provide direct supports to students and/or families in one or more of these areas.
Two of the five principal participants have given a critical role to a dedicated staff member who works to support the social and emotional learning of students of color and improve engagement with the families of students in Project Hope. This was captured by middle school principal Darlene Brown who reported that her school created and utilizes a school social worker position specifically to support students of color in Project Hope:

We do have a social worker that, um, is specific to the [students of color] in the [desegregation] program. He connects with their families; he goes to their homes. We've had meetings in [their home district], … for parents who have trouble getting here after work in time for our open-house...” (July 23, 2018)

Middle school principal Jason O’Conner discussed one staffing decision that was made at his school, which allocated a full-time staffing position to work directly with the families of the students of color that participate in Project Hope. Mr. O’Conner recounted hiring one of the parents of a student in Project Hope to fill the position and detailed the ways his school approaches working with their families of color:

Yeah, so here we have a person who happens to be one of my parents actually. Who is dedicated to looking at ways of including our [families of color], our [desegregation] programs in all of the work that we're doing. …. And so, we do a combination of how can we at the school-level incorporate our families further. (July 26, 2018)

When describing the practices their organization implements to support the students of color in Project Hope, ESO staff members discussed a variety of specific positions within their organization that are designed to provide social emotional and other supports to students and/or families, in addition to youth development opportunities that foster peer dialogue and social emotional learning.
Two ESO staff members described school and classroom-based support staff that provide social emotional supports to pre-kindergarten students in Project Hope. The participants explained the importance of these positions based on the demand from the predominately-White suburban schools for additional support in dealing with the behaviors of the students in the pre-kindergarten program. ESO staff member Lydia Corinth recalled the reasoning behind the creation of one of these positions:

And now, positions have been created to deal more proactively. So there's a behavioral health specialist, it's now involved. And usually works with the younger kids but is available to all eight regions. Well, the other person's position was created, the behavior health specialist, because there were so many [students of color] that were in suburban schools acting out and we kept getting calls. (August 16, 2018)

ESO staff members also described grade-level-specific staff who are assigned to support students at particular grade levels across multiple schools, in multiple ways. The job description for these positions show that they are designed to serve as liaisons between families and schools, make home visits, identify community-based resources for families, and facilitate ongoing conversations with students (source). ESO staff member Shannon Pierce described the work of these individuals based on her 14 years of working in the organization:

So, our [support] specialist, … they're assigned either certain districts or grade levels. And then their role and responsibility is to go out to visit the schools on a monthly basis, checking on the students, how they're doing. Sometimes we meet with them in groups, individually. (September 26, 2018)
Principals Jason O’Conner and Joshua Morgan both described their experiences working with individual ESO staff members in the positions described by Ms. Pierce. Mr. O’Conner described some of these interactions based on his five-year tenure at his current school:

But since I’ve been here [the ESO staff] used to come in at least once a month, at least once a month to meet with the kids directly. One on one. How are you doing? What's going on with this grade here? (July 26, 2018)

In addition to the allocation of specific staff positions to support students and families, ESO staff also offered their organization’s annual youth development seminar as one of the practices they implement to support the students of color in Project Hope. According to the ESO’s description, the annual youth development seminar is designed to bring students together to discuss their school experiences and how their experiences connect to identity and differences (source). The seminar is designed to help students practice empathy and incorporates team-building activities, peer dialogue about racism and other forms of discrimination, and guides students to create action plans to bring about change in their communities (source). ESO staff member Michelle Rivers described the student learning experiences and recalled how the annual youth development seminar changed over time:

We have a Youth Empowerment Summit. They started with four days, and it was two days college tours, and two days workshop. And we used [a non-profit consultant group] …he did a great two-day workshop, the first one we were awesome…[the] third year we did it again for a full week……They shared their experiences... and they start talking about the experiences within their schools and their districts, and how the teachers treat the students of one high school versus the other, and it was just nice to hear them talk. (July 19, 2018)
Ms. Rivers recounted the impact the learning experiences had on the students of color based on her observations of students’ levels of engagement:

But the kids really engaged with them. And that was the first year that we did it, and our high school seniors that were graduating, they were like, "Why couldn't you do this while I was a freshman? They shared their experiences, some of them were like shocked, they're like, "You go through that?" And some were like, "We don't go through that"

(July 19, 2018)

Principal Darlene Brown also described partnering with an organization to provide youth development opportunities for students of color, but also acknowledged that the partnership is underutilized:

We have a program called Bridges which is a student organized program run by the NCCJ. National Council ... I can't remember. But it's about, um, being open and accepting and they were trained by people from that staff- That come in, um, so we have core group of kids trained in being open and accepting of every difference- That we might face. Um, we don't leverage that group as much. (July 23, 2018)

Finding 4 explained the direct support to students of color and/or their families intentionally devised by study participants. These supports included supplemental academic programming such as afterschool tutoring and high school credit recovery to help students of color stay on pace or catch up to their suburban peers, and supplementary busing for students of color to help them access the academic supports that are offered to all students. Participants also described allocating staff positions to work directly with students of color to guide their social emotional learning and provide academic guidance; allocating staff positions to work directly with families of color to help improve school-to-family engagement; and coordinating learning
experiences for students of color that help them to build peer relationships, discuss their school experiences and strategize about how to make their school experiences better.

**Finding #5 Research Question #2**

*Principals seek opportunities within existing structures to focus specific attention on students of color, but they report that leveraging these processes does not result in adjustments or programmatic changes that increase support for students of color who have difficulties.*

The analysis also revealed practices that were interpreted as intentional attempts to utilize existing school structures to focus specific attention to students of color who participate in Project Hope. Among the existing structures that participants reported that they attempted to use for the benefit of students of color were school-based data-teaming processes that are used to review academic and behavioral data in order to identify and respond to the specific needs of students who are falling behind; and advisory programs that are utilized to help students with social emotional learning and relationship building. The following presents the analysis and resulting themes that together provide the basis for Finding 5 presented above.

**Utilize Data-team Processes to Focus on the Academic, Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Progress of Students of Color**

Creating school-based structures to help teachers and administrators analyze student data is a common improvement planning practice that is utilized in many schools. Three principal participants described steering the focus of their data reviewing processes to ensure that students of color would receive the benefit of this type of systematic review. The data review processes discussed by participants were structured to help teachers identify patterns and trends in their data, in order to plan strategies and actions to address the identified areas of concern. Principals explained how their data review processes were intended to help teachers and leaders identify
students that are having academic and/or behavioral challenges; identify the reasons for the challenges; and plan actions to help these students overcome the challenges. Principals detailed their efforts to use these data inquiry processes to focus attention on students of color and described the particular challenges that arise when they place an emphasis on students of color.

Principal Joshua Morgan recounted how his former school routinely reviewed grade reports to identify which students were having academic challenges, and that during this process, he made intentional efforts to focus in on their students of color and students with disabilities:

And we also had an SRBI process that we ran, especially for Hope kids. So every week we'd run the…list for the entire school, but then we'd always circle back to special ed and Hope. And I said, "Okay, tell me about the Hope kids," And he'd say, "Well, out of the 20 kids, these 16 are all getting As and Bs, no issues, but we've got these other four that we've got some concerns about." And so then we would figure out what interventions we need to put into place or supports and that kinda thing. (August 17, 2018)

Principal Jason O’Connor described his school’s efforts to review data but he added that the conversations sometimes failed to identify follow-up actions that the school can make to better support students of color because the team would become fixated on possible external causes that are outside of the school’s control:

So, we look at all that data, but I receive comments or I've had people say, "Well, the parents don't come in, and the parents don't do this, and the parents don't do that." And all I can say to that is, "That might be true, but while they're here we have high expectations for these kids." And then the teachers, how they've been socialized, what messages they’ve been given, and do they truly believe, which I do that all kids can learn and all kids can learn at high levels. That's were a lot of the disconnect comes from.
People talk it but not everyone is really walking it. (July 26, 2018)

Similarly, principal Darlene Brown described the efforts made at her school to use data reviewing processes to identify and problem solve around students of color who are encountering academic and/or behavioral challenges. Principal Brown also shared that she faced a similar challenge of moving her data-teaming conversations past the point of hypothesizing on the possible causes of the challenges that students have encountered, to action planning on what the school can do differently to support students:

And we track data. We look at how our data demonstrates that we have inequities and how, like we have fewer boys of color but they're our highest kids showing up in the office….and people [are] not ready to even look at the data clearly and honestly. But blaming the data, the data can't be true. That's not true- Something's wrong, the group is too small- So that can't count. So not really owning the problem. (July 23, 2018)

Principal Brown reflected on recent academic data from her school that illustrated their ability to successfully employ the data analysis process to make thoughtful adjustments that help suburban students who have difficulties, but remained baffled that participating teachers do not see the possibilities for doing the same for students of color:

I was just looking at the data, the students that showed the greatest growth, um, and they all look the same. And they're all White girls with long, brown hair… So we do really well with a certain audience. How do I get people to see, you can do even better with a diverse audience? (July 23, 2018)

**Employ School Advisory Programs to Help Students of Color Build Relationships and Support Their Social Emotional Learning**

Many secondary schools utilize advisory programs during their school day to allow
teachers and other staff to meet with small groups of students for the purpose of providing students with academic guidance and building relationships and social skills. Principal participants explained that their advisory programs were also designed to help students explore a variety of topics, some that are predetermined, and others that are based on the perceived needs of the school community at a given time. Two principal participants described how their schools’ advisory programs become occasions for supporting students of color at particular times.

Middle school principal Jane Simmons explained how her school uses their weekly advisory program to support the social and emotional learning of students, and how advisory conversations address topics such as racial understanding in ways that appear to benefit the relationship students of color have with the wider school population:

One of the things we have, um, through our advisory program, which is weekly- Is, um, just those conversation around social emotional learning competencies, which come, talk about understanding differences. Which bridge out into not only just learning differences or racial differences or cultural, but, like, belief- Differences. (July 5, 2018)

Middle school principal Darlene Brown described how her school’s advisory program provides students with opportunities to get to know one another which is particularly helpful for student of color, and discuss a variety of topics, including addressing racial incidents that have occurred at school that were particularly hurtful and unsettling for students of color:

First day back we all got into our advisory groups and had an honest open discussion about how hurtful that word was and how we were gonna respond with love because that's the only way you respond to hate. So we did that. ... Um, I was shocked that I was dealing with that last year…So we use it that way. Um, but we spend a lot of time just
getting to know each other and building trust so that we can have those serious conversations. (July 23, 2018)

Nevertheless, Ms. Brown has also discovered that those apparent improvements are difficult to maintain. She acknowledged that her initial optimism had recently faded because of a racial incident that caused division within the school community:

I'm not quite sure. I'm not quite sure. We have some things rolling out, um, that I think are moving us in one direction but then this incident happens in the Spring- It takes us way back. Um, so it makes me examine like how effective our, what our practice is- Um, not as effective as I hope. (July 23, 2018)

When discussing the practices they implement to support the students of color who participate in Project Hope, multiple principal participants explained how they attempt to use existing programs and initiatives to focus attention and support on students of color. These programs and initiatives include school-based data monitoring and analysis processes, which are intended to help schools identify, on a regular basis, the students who are having academic and/or behavioral challenges and plan interventions to remediate the academic and/or social skill’s gap. Principals also reported how they use their schools’ advisory programs to provide academic guidance, social emotional learning support, and at times to discuss sensitive topics that are particularly relevant and impactful for students of color. One important note of comparison based on the practices shared by principals that were initially designed to support all students, is that the role of ESO participants exists specifically to support the students and families of color who participate in Project Hope, so it is expected that none of their programs and initiatives are designed for the general benefit of all students who attend predominately-White suburban schools.
Finding #6 Research Question #2

Participants arrange professional development that is intentionally designed to build teachers’ capacity to effectively support students of color.

The analysis of data in relation to participants’ reports on the practices they implement to support students of revealed their interest in arranging opportunities to help teachers become better at educating students of color. In their accounts, there are several examples of their coordination and/or facilitation of professional development sessions that were designed to help teachers learn new information and new teaching strategies especially applicable to their efforts in educating students of color. The following is an analysis of this theme that provides the basis for Finding 6 presented above.

Two principal participants and two ESO staff participants described teacher trainings that explored cultural competence and implicit bias as a way of helping teachers become more aware of how they may unintentionally marginalize or discriminate against their students of color. This was illustrated by principal Charles Stanfield when he recounted how his teachers explored cultural competency during one professional development session:

Same thing with the cultural competence. We did a walkabout where teachers went to other teacher's classroom to look and say, "Hey, look through the lens of a student. Look through the lenses. There's something here that." And once you have them look, "Look at the people if you have posters, look at the posters, look at the people. Who are those people? Are there any students of color? Are there any minorities? Are there any ... look at, go pull out five of your last worksheets. Are all your names John, Suzy, Elizabeth, and Mary? If you do any word problems in math got any ethnic names in there?" So, we're
constantly kind of challenging the staff to look through, try to look through a different lens. (July 25, 2018)

ESO staff participants recounted how their organization added new staff members to increase their capacity to provide a variety of staff training modules designed to help district and school-based staff learn how to better serve the students of color in Project Hope. ESO staff maintained that the organization’s growth was necessary because of the increasing numbers of students of color in Project Hope, and the resulting increase in demand for professional development from predominately-White schools.

ESO staff members described providing trainings to school staff on how to become a more welcoming school for parents and students in every area of the school, including the front office, and trainings that deal specifically with issues of race. In some cases, the specific training modules, and the ESO staff that facilitate the trainings, were added as a result of ongoing complaints from parents and students and increasing demand for staff trainings from schools and districts. Michelle Rivers captured this when explaining why her role was created:

And I was hired to work with the staff of the schools to provide professional development related to racism and how it shows up within education and what to do about it. And that was ... My position didn’t exist before. My position was created because one of the common things heard from students is, "They don’t get treated the same as the white kids, or that teacher is just racist," or whatever. So, when you hear that over and over and over, you can’t just ignore it. (July 19, 2018)

Participants reported, however, that the trainings had varying levels of impact, in part because of the differing degrees to which training participants were open to learning about the different concepts, ideas, and strategies, within and across schools. High school principal
Charles Stanfield maintained that the reactions to the trainings from some of his staff highlighted the rationale as to why the trainings are necessary. “You get all sorts of reactions. You still get a few who are like, ‘Oh it's the local communities’ fault.’ It's like okay this is why we're doing this training because you still need it” (July 25, 2018). ESO Staff member Lydia Corinth recounted some of the interactions she’s experienced with teachers during and after leading professional development sessions, that range from expressions of gratitude to expressions of outrage:

They'll approach me at the end and say, "This was wonderful. We need more of this."

That being said, I also have the groups that ... You're just people [in] the room and there are some people that are leaning back and arms are crossed. And all the way to the other extreme which is people raising their ... I remember one time I was in a school and a woman raised her hand and said, "I resent it. You're calling me racist." I had not used that word mind you, I was talking about inclusive bias and she just went on. And it was like a wave effect. Everybody ... So there were like 40 people or so in the room, all the people started, "That's right, I feel that way too. You're calling me racist. (August 16, 2018)

Middle school principal Jason O’Conner described some of the professional development he helped to coordinate for his teachers to help them improve their capacity to teach students of color, and explained why he thought he needed to have an outside consultant facilitate the learning sessions for his staff so that his staff wouldn’t view the training as being something coming from his own personal agenda, which he surmised helped his staff to be more open-minded to the learning:

She comes in and gives professional development. Now…I can't do it, it's too personal.

It's not for me but they see it as. This is Jason's agenda. This is not a Jason agenda this is what is best for kids. So I bring in somebody who's not me and I can then reinforce what
she says and does. … My teachers ...can be a tough group….And that's what I love to see because she really gets them. She tells people, "Don't worry so much about making mistakes or about hurting somebody's feelings. Be honest and real first and then work towards how you don't do these things. And so, she will anonymously let people write down on cards things that are real for them, their fears, their concerns, all those things with no judgment, and that's how we start off the meeting, no judgment zone. And so what I've been finding is that people are more and more able to be aware of themselves and have those conversations, and not feel so scared, not so intimidated. And to be honest with you, not just students of color but anybody who's sexual orientation is in question or changing, because we have that here. (July 26, 2018)

Multiple participants described making efforts to help coordinate professional development opportunities or efforts to provide direct facilitation of professional development sessions to help teachers become better at educating students of color. Their rationales ranged from making teachers more aware of their implicit biases and students’ perceptions; to developing teachers’ cultural competence in an effort to improve their ability to understand, appreciate, and communicate and interact effectively across racial and cultural groups.

Participants also acknowledged that despite their efforts, they have struggled to maintain the relational trust that is needed to realize the intended benefits from the professional development opportunities.

This section presented the findings on what principals and ESO staff report on the practices they implement to support racially and ethnically diverse learners. The following section reports on what principals and ESO staff say as the factors that prevent them from implementing practices that support students of color.
Analysis Relevant to Research Question 3

Question 3: What do principals in predominately-White schools and ESO staff members report as factors that prevent them from implementing practices to support racially and ethnically diverse learners? The data pertinent to research question 3 provided two findings.

**Finding #7 Research Question 3**

*Participants report that unanticipated challenges rising from the design of Project Hope and maladaptation to Project Hope at the school level disadvantage students of color and impede them from being engaged members of their school communities.*

The analysis of data in relation to participants’ reports on the factors that hinder their ability to implement practices to support students of color include anecdotes, descriptions, and other information that was interpreted as being related to challenges that students of color encounter because of systemic design flaws within the design of Project Hope, and schools’ maladaptation to Project Hope that impede the inclusion of students of color into the school community. Multiple participants in this study, including three principal participants and one ESO participant, related challenges that were precipitated by Project Hope’s transportation system that negatively impacted the school experiences of students of color. Participants reported that transportation-related hardships borne out of the design of the program put students of color at an unfair disadvantage because of the timing and length of students’ daily bus ride to school and contributed to the othering of students of color because of the ways it inadvertently caused students of color to stand out from their suburban peers, which in some cases was compounded by schools’ maladaptation. The following is an analysis and discussion of each of these themes that together provide the basis for Finding 7 presented above.
**Putting Students of Color at a Disadvantage**

Participants reported that students face challenges as a result of having relatively long bus rides because of the distance students have to travel to get to their predominantly-White suburban school. One such challenge is the need to wake up much earlier than other students because their busses have to pick them up very early in the morning in order to complete the bus route on time for the start of the school day. Participants contrasted that experience with the convenient commute of suburban students, who are often driven directly from home to school by their parents. These dissimilar routines ultimately contribute to an unfair disadvantage for students of color at the start of their school day. This reality was richly detailed by ESO staff member Cynthia Mathers: “They're getting up at least an hour to an hour and a half earlier. Some of them do not have any breakfast in their bodies, and then they go to school… and that's how they're starting their day” (August 2, 2018). Ms. Mathers hypothesized that the busses carrying Project Hope students probably arrived late to school at times given the number of students that have to be picked up each morning. Her hypothesis was supported by at least two of the principal participants. High school principal Charles Stanfield recounted that until recently, the students in Project Hope at his school had to take public transportation to school because there weren’t enough students to justify a designated school bus. As a result, he explained that, because of public transportation routes and schedules, students either had to take a bus very early in the morning that would get students to school 45 minutes early, or they had to take the next bus, which got them to school late:

So they each had to take a route and they had to leave, I don't know, by like six o'clock and many of them were here by 6:45 because if they weren't on that bus the next bus doesn't come 'til like 7:30. It was too tight. And so then they were here so early and then I
think one time the town, the bus runs changed and so now the bus was getting here at like two o'clock but we get out at 2:15 and so what are we supposed to do? (July 25, 2018)

Unequal access to afterschool academic supports and extracurricular activities is another disadvantage that students of color in Project Hope face, depending on the willingness of schools and/or districts to provide supplemental transportation to compensate for the exclusion of late busses in the design of Project Hope. Middle school principal Darlene Brown described how her school provides supplemental transportation support for students of color to provide them with access to the school-wide afterschool academic supports. Principal Brown recounted that her school began providing additional transportation support for students in Project Hope to enable them to attend the afterschool academic supports that in most cases, wouldn’t be accessible to them because of the long distances between the school and their homes, and to compensate for the inability of many families to provide students with the needed transportation:

Access to programs after school is a big thing. Um, we have a bus, uh, that leaves here at 4:30. School's out at 2:30- But we have, um, a late bus at 4:30 that'll run kids who live in [the urban district]. So they can stay to our after-school program. (July 23, 2018)

**Contributing to the Othering of Students of Color**

Kumashiro (2000) used the term “other” in reference to students from groups who have been “traditionally marginalized in society, i.e., that are other than the norm” such as students with limited English proficiency, students of color, and students who do not fit into traditional gender norms of masculinity or femininity (p. 26). Kumashiro used the term “othering” to describe the marginalization that these students endure as a result of the structures, systems, processes, and social interactions that normalize and privilege certain groups (pp. 35–36). Participants in this study reported that some of the unintended consequences from the design of
the Hope program’s transportation system, including late arrivals for students of color, and schools’ maladaptations to the program, cause students of color to stand out from their suburban peers, which helps to magnify racial, and economic differences, and contributes to the othering of students of color. Principal Jane Simmons described how one particular bus that transported students of color to her school arrived late to school every day of the prior school year. Ms. Simmons recounted how this consistent late arrival contributed to the othering of the students in Project Hope because students stood out since their late arrival to school meant an even later arrival to class because students are required to eat breakfast before going to their first class each day:

You know, um, by the time they were getting into class, it's like 8:25, 8:28…Like, why isn't the bus, and they're looking at me like, "Miss, why doesn't the bus pick us up the same time as last year?" I'm like, "I don't know honey," …It's like the amount of, like, you want to talk about they're standing out big time, "Oh, you're all late, again, every day." (July 5, 2018)

Principal Charles Stanfield maintained that bussing helped to magnify socio-economic differences at his school, because many suburban students drive to school or get a ride from their parents, while also highlighting racial differences because of shortsighted decision at his school to have separate entrances for students who take the bus, who are mostly students of color, and students who don’t take the bus to school, who are mostly White. Mr. Stanfield reflected on the impact of this maladaptation:

Our buses come in the circle around back and then they come back in the back...And there was always this component of here's our more affluent and our…white kids who are coming through the front doors of [the school] and predominantly the students who are
on the buses tend to be more students of color or lower socio-economic status. And we're always like…why don't you just come in in the back. We'll just bring the buses out back. Let's do it by the cafeteria. (July 25, 2018)

Principal Darlene Brown detailed an additional way that the design of the transportation system causes students of color to stand out from their suburban peers because of the inability of students of color to access transportation during inclement weather. Ms. Brown explained how the transportation for students of color is impacted when their home district, which is responsible for the transportation for students in Project Hope, decides to cancel schools, but their predominately-White suburban districts remain open:

The other thing that, little thing but it does get in the way, um, because transportation is in [their city], if their [home school district] has a snow day, and we're open, kids have to get their own transportation here. Because they'll shut city buses down for [their home district] schools and then the schools that our buses say we can't go there because it's not safe for buses. So our kids get, I think we had five days this year- Where we were open and they weren't here. (July 23, 2018)

Multiple participants described challenges that students of color face that stem from flaws in the design of Project Hope. Participants reported that some of the program’s systems impede students of color from engaging as full members of their school communities. Participants detailed how Project Hope’s transportation system forces students to get up much earlier than their suburban peers, sometimes at the expense of breakfast; causes students to arrive late to school; and provides students of color with unequal access to afterschool activities, each of which puts students of color at a disadvantage. Participants also provided examples of how some of the unintended consequences of the transportation system such as consistent late arrivals to
schools, a lack of access during inclement weather, and school maladaptations to Project Hope help to contribute to the othering of students of color in the ways that it makes them stand out from their suburban peers.

**Finding #8 Research Question 3**

*Participants report that stakeholder attitudes and discontinuities with students’ prior educational experiences negatively impact their ability to effectively support students of color.*

According to participants, particular attitudes and beliefs held by some students of color, their parents, as well as some of the staff and residents in predominately-White suburban districts hinder their ability to implement practices that support students of color and strengthen Project Hope. They maintain, for example, that students of color and their parents sometimes hold low academic or behavioral expectations. Participants also reported that discontinuities from the previous educational experiences of some students of color makes it more difficult to effectively support their learning. The additional stakeholder dispositions that participants asserted impede their ability to implement practices to support students of color included the following: indifference towards Project Hope from district leaders; prejudice and contempt towards students of color and Project Hope from suburban residents; and racial bias and low academic expectations from teachers in predominately-White suburban schools. The following is an analysis and discussion of each of these themes that together provide the basis for Finding 8 presented above.

**Low Academic and Behavior Expectations of Parents and Students**

Three principal participants and two ESO staff participants reported that they have encountered what they regard as low academic and behavioral expectations of some students of color and their parents, and that these low expectations negatively impact their ability to
effectively support students of color. Participants described their impressions on how parents’ prior experiences with school influence what they think is possible for their own children. Participants maintained that some parents have low expectations based on their own personal educational and life experiences, and that these parents are less likely to take an active role in their child’s education, including actively encouraging their children to prioritize their education and providing ongoing guidance and support. High school principal Charles Stanfield described this within the context of how parents’ past schooling experiences impact students’ post-secondary aspirations and expectations:

But at the same time it's gotta be the parents who don't, once again I'm doing a broad stroke here, but who don't say, "Hey I didn't go to college it's perfectly fine you don't need to go to college. (July 25, 2018).

Middle school principal Jason O’Conner maintained that some parents of students of color have lower expectations for their children because of their personal experiences and views about the role that systematic racism plays in their lives and the lives of their children:

Many…parents are strictly stuck on the man is out to get us, that systemic racism does exist, it's real educational, all systemic pieces that is real. But if you see that there are people being successful the question is, how are they getting there and how can I get a piece of that? Not, well they're somehow different and I can't get there. So that piece at home of what messages are you giving your kids that's another variable. (July 26, 2018).

Some ESO participants asserted that low expectations from some of the parents of students of color are sometimes demonstrated by their levels of engagement in the programs that are designed to help them support their children in their education. ESO staff described how some parents of color decline to take advantage of information sessions, and other resources
designed to help them understand how best to support their child, and to effectively navigate through the systems and processes they will encounter in Project Hope. ESO staff member Cynthia Mathers described some of the extreme consequences that occur when parents of pre-kindergarten students in Project Hope have had limited engagement in the programs that are designed to help them support their children’s learning:

They don't even know that school is five days a week. They think it's not important. The kid comes once a week. They think that's okay. So, their mindset of what's important and what is structure and what is a routine, and getting the children up early in the morning, going to bed on time, eating the proper meal, not just sitting in front of the TV. All those structures are news to families. (August 2, 2018)

ESO staff member Shannon Pierce maintained that some parents choose to have their children attend predominately-White suburban schools without understanding how to provide them with appropriate at-home support:

If you're not up, supporting your child in [their home district], there's no way you can support them five towns over. You've got to be realistic. And this is not a babysitting program. Just because they're away longer in the day, or they're safer, but then you don't do anything and don't have input. It doesn't work that way. You've got to be a part of the team and do what you need to do to support the education in this school. (September 26, 2018)

Participants also reported that some students of color begin their educational experiences in Project Hope with internalized low academic expectations for themselves. Principal Jason O’Conner detailed how the prior educational experiences of some students of color helped to reinforce low academic and behavioral expectations over time.
If a student has had years and years of low expectation ... that's where mindset comes in, low expectation through elementary no fault of anybody's and regardless of what school they went or what district they come to us from, if there's low expectations they're going to get here you think they're going to have a high expectation? So, it's trying to reverse that. So, you have the individual, that individual piece of how successful can I be? So, the individual expectation is another deep-rooted issue. Now, that can come from a myriad of places. (July 26, 2018)

**Discontinuities in Academic and Behavioral Preparedness**

Three principal participants reported that academic and behavioral discontinuities that some students experienced between their previous schools and their suburban schools make it more difficult to support students of color. Principals explained how some students of color in Project Hope enroll in their predominately-White suburban schools below grade-level academically, which makes it more challenging to help them stay on par with their suburban peers, and in some cases, they struggle behaviorally because they come to their new suburban schools after years of experiencing different behavioral expectations in school. Principal Charles Stanfield maintained that the academic gaps that some students of color have when they enroll in his high school are more problematic than some of the other challenges they may encounter:

If you come in high school at a seventh-grade reading level or sixth grade reading level. Not to say you can't but now that hurdle just got higher. That hurdle just got higher. And so no it's not even about trying to get rid of unconscious bias it's just deficit it's a skill deficit that's there. (July 25, 2018)

Principal Jane Simmons described some of the behavioral challenges that some students of color face when they enroll in her middle school, that she surmised to be the result of students
having become accustom to different behavioral expectations at their previous schools:

So, I think, when kids come in midway through middle school ...And now you're acting like this? Like, this is not what we do here. Like...so, um, that piece of if kids have been allowed to act a certain way, and then all of a sudden, the rules are changed- And they didn't really want the rules to change. Um, I think, sometimes their actions, reactions, overactions. (July 5, 2018)

Participants in this study reported that the attitudes and beliefs held by some students of color and/or their parents and the academic and behavioral preparedness of some students of color negatively impact their capacity to effectively support students of color in their predominately-White suburban school. Participants expressed that some parents have low academic and behavioral expectations for their children, and some students have low academic expectations for themselves because of their prior educational experiences. Participants also related how discontinuities in students’ previous schooling experiences result in academic and behavioral challenges for some students of color that make it more difficult to support their learning when they enroll in their predominately-White suburban schools.

**Indifference of District Leaders**

One principal participant and four ESO staff participants reported that the attitudes and beliefs of district leaders in some predominately-White suburban districts hinder their ability to implement practices to support students of color. Participants described how the attitudes and beliefs of district leaders impede the implementation of practices that support students of color in the following ways: unwillingness of district leaders to prioritize the resources to implement practices that support students of color; unwillingness of districts leaders to communicate or
collaborate with the ESO or others in support of students of color; and district leaders that communicate an explicit desire to avoid implementing practices to support students of color.

ESO participants detailed how district leaders impact their ability to collaborate with schools and districts in an effort to help them better support students of color. ESO staff recounted experiences of district leaders expressing interest in having their staff participate in trainings that are designed to help them support racially diverse students, but ultimately demonstrating an unwillingness to prioritize the time and/or finances that are required to ensure that it happens. This was best captured by ESO staff member Lydia Corinth: “Well, I was trying to get it done before and they were like, ‘Oh, that sounds so good Lydia. We just don't have the money.’ But you also you got to put your money where your priorities are” (August 16, 2018).

ESO staff also recounted their longstanding relationships with some districts that have never shown an interest in collaborating with their organization, despite their willingness to take advantage of the financial benefits of bringing students of color into their districts through Project Hope. ESO staff Shannon Pierce, after more than a decade of working with predominately-White suburban districts, observed:

You know, there's a district that's in my head right now, that's been in it for as long as I've been working for the program... To this day, that superintendent, I have never had a conversation with him. He has never come to our office. (September 26, 2018)

High School principal Joshua Morgan reflected on some recent interactions he had experienced in his new district that left him feeling confused and surprised because of the directives he received from district leaders that he could not implement specific practices to support students of color.
I was told not to do it. The leadership said that singling out these kids in this way was not appropriate. And giving them support like that wasn't ... ... I don't really understand that...they were afraid of being accused of being something different for them that they weren't doing for everybody else. It was just a different mindset. An assistant principal went down one time and rode the bus into [their home district] just to kind of get a feel for where everybody was going and she got criticized. So, she was like, "Alright, I'm never doing that again. (August 17, 2018)

**Prejudice and Contempt from Suburban Residents**

Two principal participants and three ESO participants reported that the attitudes and beliefs of some parents in suburban communities inhibit their efforts to support the students of color in Project Hope in the following ways: suburban parents making disparaging remarks about students of color who enter their schools and stirring political opposition to Project Hope; and suburban parents negatively impact their own children’s opinions about students of color, which leads to incidents in school that are difficult to mediate because of the attitudes and beliefs of suburban parents.

One principal participant recounted a situation that involved multiple parents writing and signing letters addressed to the local school board that expressed their opinions about the negative impact that students of color are having on their school, while one ESO staff member detailed an experience of parents calling the ESO and going to school board meetings to voice their opposition to having their school districts participate in Project Hope. ESO staff member Shannon Pierce related one such occurrence:

There was a district, …came on board, maybe eight years ago, and from what we were told, those residents fought hard against it. And I was told that one of my good friends
that I went to high school with ..., who is now a … resident, was the number one champion for them not [participating in Project Hope]. (September 26, 2018)

Participants also recounted school-based racial incidents that were perpetrated by students from the suburban town, that were left unresolved, and in some cases, resulted in repeat occurrences because some suburban parents were unwilling to participate in any form of mediation. ESO staff member Michelle Rivers recounted one of these occurrences:

so, he started to ask us to do peace circles with them, and it's time to rectify that situation-

Some students participated, but parents were like, "No. I don't want them pulled out of class." Suburban parents didn't even join the circle. They didn't come at all. (July 19, 2018)

**Teacher Biases and Low Expectations**

The prevalence in participants’ reports on how the attitudes and beliefs of district leaders and suburban town residents create barriers to implementing practices that support racially and ethnically diverse students was eclipsed only by the prevalence in their reports that the beliefs and attitudes of some teachers in suburban schools create obstacles to implementing practices to support students of color. Five principal participants and four ESO staff participants identified teachers’ attitudes and beliefs as a factor that impedes their ability to implement strategies that support students of color.

Principal participants described how teachers’ attitudes and beliefs hinder their ability to support students of color by recounting experiences that illustrate teachers’ implicit biases and disbelief in the ability of students of color to achieve at high levels, which participants maintain also hinders their ability to have the same sense of ownership and commitment for educating the students of color as they do for the suburban students who live in their communities. Multiple
principals detailed conversations with teachers about student performance data, which devolve into teachers assigning blame to students, parents and others as opposed to believing that there are things that they can and should do differently to help students learn. Principal Jason O’Connor recounted one such experience:

Typically, my experience has been here in other roles as administrator is mindset. Mindset first and foremost because for whatever reason people I think struggle with looking at all kids equally…So we look at all that data, but I receive comments or I've had people say, "Well, the parents don't come in, and the parents don't do this, and the parents don't do that." (July 26, 2018)

Principals also described the types of conversations they have had with teachers that illustrate teachers’ lack of investment in students of color based on how they label students of color, compared to how they label their suburban students. This was best encapsulated by principal Darlene Brown:

This is that implicit bias conversation. And I've had that conversation, so teachers will say, before I got here teachers said, "Well the [urban district] kids, the [urban district]." I'm like, "No, no, no. They're our kids." They've been our kids since Kindergarten, this is their school. They live in [the urban district]. (July 23, 2018)

Consistent with the reports of principal participants, each ESO staff participant identified teachers’ attitudes and beliefs as a factor that at times, hinder the implementation of practices that support students of color as a result of teachers’ resistance to improving their teaching practices and teachers’ implicit biases that manifests in their lack of investment in the academic success of students of color.
ESO staff members described the challenges they encounter when they engage with teachers who are resistant to change despite their schools’ everchanging racial and economic demographics. ESO staff member Lydia Corinth captured this when recounting some of the resistance she faced from teachers when facilitating training sessions:

I also have the groups that ...you're just people on the room and there are some people that are leaning back and arms are crossed. And all the way to the other extreme which is people raising their ... I remember one time I was in a school and a woman raised her hand and said, "I resent it. You're calling me racist." And it was like a wave effect.

Everybody ... So, there were like 40 people or so in the room, all the people started, "That's right, I feel that way too. You're calling me racist." There's a lot of districts that have teachers that have been there since they were 21…and they're set in their ways…the world has changed and they haven't. (August 16, 2018)

ESO staff member Michelle Rivers voiced a similar concern about the unwillingness of some teachers in predominately-White suburban schools to change their teaching practices: “Now we're starting to see younger principals, and they have these teachers that don't want to change. There is resistance from your old-school teachers. They're like, "We didn't go for that. I'm here to teach the kids" (July 19, 2018).

Akin to principal participants, ESO staff members described the types of conversations they have with teachers that illustrate teachers’ lack of ownership for their students of color. Some of the ESO staff members expressed that teachers who have a sense of ownership for their students are more likely to build positive relationships with students and families and are more willing to collaborate and learn with others to help their students. This was best captured by ESO staff member Cynthia Mathers:
When the language is “our”, I know we're going to do okay, but if it's... This is what I get sometimes and it's... “Your kids, your kids acting up, your kid…” Oh my gosh, it's terrible. “Are you going to come in and see your kid?” They don't see it as their problem, they say it is our problem. And that is the thing…It's like how much are you in? If you're all in, because I think the only way that this work gets done is if you're all in…we both have work on both sides and it's an equal work. They're not my kids, they're not their kids, they're our students. (August 2, 2018)

Participants in this study reported that their ability to effectively support students of color is hindered by the attitudes and beliefs of some district leaders, some town residents, and some of the teachers in their predominately-White suburban districts, towns, and schools. Participants described how the indifference of some district leaders for Project Hope results in the devaluing of collaboration and trainings that are intended to help facilitate improved learning experiences for support students of color, and in some cases, leads to the deliberate prevention of implementing strategies to support students of color. Participants recounted experiences that illustrate how prejudice and contempt from some of the residents in their suburban communities, including parents in the suburban schools, lead to lobbying efforts to prevent students of color from attending schools in their communities, and negatively impacted the attitudes and beliefs of suburban students towards students of color. Participants also detailed how the attitudes and beliefs of some teachers in predominantly-White schools hinder their ability to support students of color because of their perceived racial biases, low expectations, and lack of ownership for students of color. The following section reports on what principals and ESO staff report as the things they need in order to effectively implement practices that support racially and ethnically diverse learners.
Analysis Relevant to Research Question 4

Question 4: What do principals in predominately-White schools and ESO staff members report that they need in order to effectively implement practices to support racially and ethnically diverse learners? The data pertinent to research question 4 provided three key findings.

Finding #9 Research Question 4

Participants report a need for more conscious efforts from Project Hope to help students of color establish and reinforce social connections, that help to foster a sense of belonging in their predominately-White suburban schools.

The analysis of data in relation to participants’ reports on what they need to implement strategies to improve the educational experience of students of color identified strategies and activities that were characterized as being supportive for students of color and their families to become familiar with what to expect at their suburban schools and to make social connections before and after they begin attending a suburban school through Project Hope; and increase the likelihood that students of color will develop a sense of belonging at their suburban schools by: adding extra-curricular activities and programs that appeal to students of color and promote relation-building; offering trainings to help increase suburban parents’ and students’ acceptance of and appreciation for diversity; increasing staff diversity and providing trainings that improve teachers’ ability to interrelate with and appreciate students of color. The following is an analysis and discussion of each of these themes that together provide the basis for Finding 9 presented above.

Trainings and Programs to Help Students of Color Transition to Their Predominately-White Suburban Schools
Multiple participants described challenges that students of color and their parents face when they begin adapting to their new schooling experiences in Project Hope. One factor that encumbers students’ adjustment into their new school environments is their limited social capital valued in their new settings, including students’ uncertainty about what to expect from their new schools, and the absence of an existing social network at their new schools to provide students with guidance and support, and help foster a sense of belonging when they begin attending their new suburban schools. With this in mind, participants reported a need for additional programming and training to improve the transition experiences of students of color into their predominately-White suburban schools by helping them and their parents better understand and adjust to the educational environments at their new schools by learning about their schools’ values and expectations, and by making personal connections.

ESO staff member Shannon Pierce asserted a need for student trainings to educate and prepare students of color prior to their transition into their new schools, by helping them learn about the expectations at their schools as well as other key elements that define the culture of the schools that they will be attending:

For students, culture…Prepare them for the culture that they're going into, that you're the only one that's like. That everybody's not prejudiced... [help them] Work through all that stuff so that they're fully prepared, and not caught off guard when they get out there.

(September 26, 2018)

Principal Jane Simmons expressed how adding more formal transitional programs could help students of color make connections that would help them to have a stronger sense of belonging in their new school:
If there would be some sort of transition program, which, um, could be, you know, if they could shadow the year before. Make a connection, you know. Um, so that they can be, then, partner up with that kid. Heading into the next year...like, making them feel more connected. More welcome. Faster. Because if we're waiting until October for a kid of feel connected. It's kind of like, what just happened the last two months? (July 5, 2018).

ESO staff member Cynthia Mathers detailed how students of color would benefit from an expanded pre-kindergarten program in their suburban schools that would provide younger students of color with additional time to prepare for the start of their formal school experiences in predominately-White suburban schools:

Okay. So, one of the things that we've noted is that if you start the friends earlier, and I think we still need to work on that. It's at four right now, we're starting at four years old, for pre-K. I would rather earlier. Because I think that's an enormous advantage the younger you get them. It's like a training... it's like a preparing them for schooling, getting their head around the experience. (August 2, 2018)

*Trainings and Programs to Help the Parents of Students of Color Support Their Children While They Attend Predominately-White Suburban Schools*

In addition to identifying a need for trainings and programs to help students transition into their new schools, participants also reported a need for programs, trainings, and supports that help parents (a) understand the expectations and requirements of the new schools their children will be attending, and (b) learn some strategies for supporting their children as they transition into and attend a predominately-White suburban school. ESO staff member Cynthia Mathers rationalized providing some parents of students of color with learning opportunities that focus on parenting skills, specifically for the parents of students in the pre-kindergarten
programs: “… And their parents haven't had the education that they need to raise their children. So, one of the pieces… I want to have mom groups” (August 2, 2018).

ESO staff member Shannon Pierce conveyed aspirations for improving an existing program offered by her organization to help students and families transition into their predominately-White schools. Ms. Pierce asserted a need for parent trainings that help parents understand how to communicate effectively with schools and the ESO to better support their children while they attend predominately-White suburban schools:

I've always said, and we've started a little bit of it this year, is that instead of just this two-hour orientation, you need some kind of transition workshop that spans over several weeks, to deal with those key topics. For the parents, it would be how to communicate effectively. (September 26, 2018)

Two principal participants reported a need for identifying and securing additional ways to help the parents of students of color make meaningful connections within the school and/or local community when their children first transition to Project Hope. Participants detailed how these connections would be able to help support the parents of students of color to maintain their engagement with the suburban school community and reinforce their ability to support their children’s learning. Principal Darlene Brown contemplated the connections between the parents of students of color and suburban parents and recounted how her school had previously attempted to effectuate these connections, while also considering the merits of reviving one of these efforts:

I don't know if the parents know the parents here. I don't think there's a parent connection. Um, we used to do something before I was here that everybody said there was a pair, like a paired parent and then they would connect with each other- And I don't
Principal Joshua Morgan maintained that schools that participate in Project Hope need dedicated human resources to ensure they have the internal staffing capacity to engage and support parents of color to become more involved with the school community. Mr. Morgan rationalized this need by comparing his prior experience of having a staff member that served as a liaison to the families of color, to his current experience of not having the necessary resources to create a similar position:

But also who's going to coordinate family engagement. So we're gonna find a way, so I'm gonna call up Mrs. Smith and say, "Mrs. Smith, open house is tonight, what time are you wanna be here?" "Oh I don't have a ride." "Good, I got an Uber, it'll be outside your door." And "Well I don't have any babysitting." "Excellent, we've got five kids right here, bring your kids, we'll take care of it… But still not the same thing as coming to the play, coming to the game, coming to the ... to, again, be part of the he community and get involved even in the principal's advisory, like the PTO kind of stuff, make those connections. (August 17, 2018)

**Increase Diverse Offerings of Extracurricular Activities**

Participants reported a need for expanded extracurricular activities to provide students of color with opportunities to participate in activities that interest them, and to help students of color to make connections with their suburban peers. Principals maintained that extracurricular activities can help students of color become more interested in their schools and feel more connected to their school communities. Principal Jane Simmons surmised that having afterschool sports could help students build relationships by bringing the students of color
together with White suburban students throughout the year: “Oh, yes. Um, I mean, the, being able to have, um, sports. That would be great. That just brings the whole school together” (July 5, 2018).

Middle school principal Darlene Brown expressed a similar desire to provide additional activities for the students of color at her school. Ms. Brown maintained that the additional activities should be identified based on the interests of the students of color:

Right. So, one of the things I'm thinking about is, um, for activities, um, you know, typical middle school activities are available. Um, they're not culturally diverse though.

So, we don't have a step team. So, I'd love to have a step team. (July 23, 2018)

Principal Joshua Morgan also expressed a desire for additional extra-curricular activities that appeal to the interests of students of color, while contemplating the wide range of interest that would need to be taken under consideration:

There might be some real advantages in terms of connecting with kids and then feeling safe at school and feeling like you're a part of the school. It can happen through sports and other activities but what if you're not an athlete? What if you're not in a play? Or those kinds of things. (August 17, 2018)

Diversity Trainings for Suburban Parents and Students

Participants in this study reported a need for trainings that target suburban parents and students to help them become more aware of their racial biases and the impact that racial biases have on students of colors, and to help suburban students be more willing to have productive interactions and relationships with students of color. Although participants maintained that diversity trainings can help suburban parents in similar ways, participants described the primary
purpose for diversity trainings for suburban parents to help parents provide appropriate guidance to their children in their interactions with students of color.

According to middle school principal Jane Simmons, student and parent trainings could help to mitigate the racial animus that continues in her school and in the local community. Ms. Simmons recounted her disappointment and surprise when racial incidents occurred at her school and drew parallels to racial incidents that occurred in the town where the school is located:

Um, would love to do… sensitivity training for staff and kids…and families. There's just some real like it, it's really quite something…. racism, anti-Semitism. It's crazy. Yeah. I mean, I don't know if you remember a couple years ago, the, um, first selectmen…, there was a KKK rally in town. And he was quoted as saying, "It's just kids being kids" (July 5, 2018)

ESO staff member Michelle Rivers conveyed a need for student trainings that help foster teambuilding and increase productive dialogue between students of color and their suburban peers. Ms. Rivers expressed that increasing the number of suburban student participants as an important next step in the design of the ESO’s annual student training session, to help the students in Project Hope build relationships with suburban students, and help students become more open to establishing friendships with their classmates of different racial and economic backgrounds:

It would have been awesome to have the suburban kids for four days, and go on the tours with us to the colleges... It's time to bring them back again. Talk more about school climate, I would say. Try to do something with them in both communities that it service, community service or civic…. And the goal this year was, what is an ally? What do you
consider as an ally? How do you improve your relationship in school with your friends and how do you change the climate? (July 19, 2018)

**Increasing the Number of Staff of Color**

Multiple participants reported a need for increasing the number of school-based staff of color to help them implement practices that support students of color. They surmised that students of color are more willing to engage in open and honest dialogue with teachers of color, and that students of color have better educational experiences in the schools that have a more diverse staff. Principal Jason O’Connor detailed the dearth of staff of color at his school:

> We're trying to do including as you can imagine hiring getting some people of color in the buildings so that students can see them... my staff is [overwhelmingly White], I have one person who is of Indian descent, [and] me. [the school needs] more teachers of color.

(July 26, 2018)

Mr. O’Connor also asserted that students of color respond differently to staff when they are addressed about their behaviors, depending on the staff member’s race:

> Are you breaking a rule? Yes. Then why is it racial? So, if you're not a person of color telling them to change their behavior then it's racial. As opposed to you need to change your behaviors because that's the expectation we have this school. (July 26, 2018)

Principal Darlene Brown recounted a specific anecdote to illustrate the importance of increasing the number of staff of color, based on the differences in how the students of color in her school engage with adults of color compared to how they engage with the white staff at her school:

> Staff diversity or staff of color. But we had some people come in … to talk to the kids in, because it was a face different than a White woman's face. The kid’s openness was different to report when they were more hesitant to report to me actually what was going
SUPPORTING STUDENTS OF COLOR IN PREDOMINATELY-WHITE SCHOOLS

on. They were much more open and honest with [the person of color]. Um, so, when we
need them to be part of the work that we're doing day-to-day, they show up, they're here,
they're with us, they're rolling up their sleeves, they're working with kids and families.
(July 23, 2018)

ESO staff member Michelle Rivers discussed the varying levels of staff diversity across
the predominately-White schools that participate in Project Hope, and highlighted one of the
districts that she characterized as an example to other districts in Project Hope because of their
efforts to increase staff diversity and there ongoing collaboration with the ESO:

So, you go to [that district] and you got principals, principals of color…the two middle
schools, …black principal male, female principal black. You go to the other [middle
school], the assistant principal is Latino. You go to [the high school], the assistant
principal is black, and the principal is Portuguese. So, you see them, and they're just like,
"Where else?" I said, "You're not going to see them anywhere else, but if you want a
model, go to [that district]…It so happens teaching is one of those careers where it's
usually white women… but if you want a model, go to [that district] Because there are
teachers of color, and you can see them. (July 19, 2018)

Ms. Rivers compared this district to another district that has very few staff of color and
recounted her previous guidance to the students of color to seek out the few staff that the district
does employ:

But it's like you don't want to go to [another district] where the only person of color is the
social worker and the custodian, nobody else. Like [one school] finally hired the social
worker for the high school, she's African American. And I made it my point to tell the

**Diversity Training for Staff**

Each of the five principal participants and two ESO participants identified a need for additional staff training to help them better implement practices that support racially diverse students. Principal participants expressed a need for staff trainings that would help staff: (a) develop growth mindsets, (b) become culturally competent, and (c) understand implicit bias and the ways it impacts students of color. Middle school principal Darlene Brown anticipated that learning about implicit bias would help teachers be more mindful of their interactions with students and help them look more openly at their student data:

I think they need to understand there's implicit bias. Assume that it's there. Um, and, and try to see, try to be, get some kind of communication with kids at an honest level so you can monitor if it's there. For all kids. And you need a system of communication to do that and then work to be honest and have open conversations with people and look at your data. (July 23, 2018)

Principal Jane Simmons expressed a need for diversity training to help teachers understand their cultural misconceptions. Ms. Simmons and another principal participant also stressed that such trainings should be facilitated by someone other than the principal:

Um, [I] would love to [have] sensitivity training for staff... Yeah, I mean, if there's something as far as helping me as a leader break down misconceptions, inaccurate conceptions. Um, just breaking down those, those barriers...as a leader how to make teachers care. Oh, I mean, obviously, if we could bring in an outside speaker to help like legitimize the reason that you should be, like, caring and have an open mindset. But I feel
like sometimes, staff need to hear it from a quote unquote legitimate source as opposed to just, you know, Jane having that conversation. (July 5, 2018)

According to ESO staff members, these trainings would help improve teachers’ ability to engage with students of color in the classroom, and have respectful classroom discussions about race and identity. ESO staff member Michelle Rivers captured this sentiment:

I would love to work more closely with the counselors and more closely with teachers… and kind of help them not be afraid to talk to the kids, and I do the same with the students. So, I think they're now looking for PDs on how to engage with the kids. They are looking for how to engage with kids of color. (July 19, 2018)

ESO staff Lydia Corinth surmised that race is an unspoken topic that is often on the minds of many students in predominately-White suburban schools. Because of this, Ms. Corinth expressed a desire to facilitate professional learning for teachers on how to discuss race in their classrooms:

I want to go out to districts. I would like to teach teachers how do you have that civil discourse about race in the classroom…You don't talk about it, it just stays under … It's the elephant in the room. (August 16, 2018)

When describing the things that are needed to better support students of color in predominately-White schools, participants in this study detailed initiatives and strategies that help to bridge social capital for students of color and their parents through intentional improvements to students’ transition processes to their new schools, which would help them to understand the values and expectations at their new schools, and make social connections that can help them navigate their new environments while also fostering a sense of belonging. Participants also offered strategies that strengthen students’ social capital by means of having
caring adults and friends and stronger social networks in their predominately-White suburban schools through: extracurricular activities that interest students of color and help them build relationships, trainings and other experiences to help suburban students and their parents to be more aware of their racial biases and become more accepting of students of color; and by increasing the number of staff of color and increasing diversity training opportunities for staff, which help teachers become better equipped at understanding, accepting, and supporting of students of color.

**Finding #10 Research Question 4**

*Participants recognize a need for an increased level of state oversight to compel participating suburban communities to adaptively lead the re-envisioning of their schools.*

When describing the things that are needed to better support students of color in Project Hope, participants identified measures that would advance the re-envisioning of participating schools to the extent that they are intentionally designed to support students of color. This re-envisioning would be forwarded by state policies and accountability efforts that address the inconsistencies in the levels of support that students of color are provided across participating schools, and contend with the unpredictability and variance in the levels of commitment to Project Hope across participating districts. The following is an analysis and discussion of each of these themes that together provide the basis for Finding 10 presented above.

**Minimum Standards of Support**

Participants reported a need for policies and/or other mandates from the State Department of Education to ensure that predominately-White suburban schools and districts provide supports to students of color and their families. Each of the four ESO staff members identified a need for policies that ensure a minimum standard of practices that will be used by districts and/or schools
to support students of color and their families. ESO staff members expressed the need for such policies based on: their reports of widespread inconsistencies across districts and schools in the quality and quantity of deliberate strategies used to support students of color; and their assertions that districts and/or schools should be required to provide a guaranteed level of supports to students of color and their families, in exchange for the financial benefits they receive from the State to educate the students of color that are bussed into their schools and districts. Lydia Corinth detailed how the State provides guidelines to districts and schools that participate in Project Hope, but explained that schools and districts have broad discretion on what they choose to do with the guidelines. Ms. Corinth maintained that the state should do more to review how schools are implementing these guidelines: “So, one thing they can do is really look at ... The policy on paper is one thing but what's the reality of what you're doing” (August 16, 2018). ESO staff member Michelle Rivers expressed a similar sentiment when describing how districts respond to the State’s recommendations regarding participation in professional development designed to help teachers and leaders educate racially diverse students:

I mean, we're not going to get all 29 districts on board for this training. They do have the grant, and the grant states you do have to access some of our training, participate with some of our trainings. It's not that it's mandatory, but they expect you to do it. We don't like using the word mandatory. But when we do some evening workshops, you get the same districts. (July 19, 2018)

ESO staff members Cynthia Mathers and Shannon Pierce went beyond the recommendation of mandating staff trainings and urged requirements that mandate schools agree to and meet certain conditions as part of the criteria for participating in the program to educate students of color. Some of the conditions identified include (a) ongoing teacher and
administrator participation in training sessions designed to help them support racially diverse students; (b) schools and/or districts hiring staff members to serve as liaisons between students and parents, and schools and the ESO; and (c) schools and/or districts ensuring adequate interpretation support for families who do not speak English. Cynthia Mathers captured many of these ideas when discussing the things she maintained should be mandated for all of the predominately-White schools that participate in Project Hope:

And then there's no mandate for those people that are taking the kids to have any kind of trainings? I would like that all mandated. Why not? What? Education is great for everybody. And it has to do with money….So if it was part of the package, like if it was a package, and if in that package you got all those things, have the racial diversity training, for your staff, for your principals, that there was a system in place to manage every issue that could come up, if there was a plan in place, just like there's a plan in place a safety plan in school…And people too. And the resources like the districts where they have something called a liaison…It's hard and in all that hardness there does need to be somebody who does that extra stuff. Like they have time to call parents, have time to assist with things that go wrong, facilitate meetings. I do think that having something on this side and having something on that side that's make a difference. (August 2, 2018)

*State Requirements for Explicit Commitments From District Leaders and Clearer State Expectations for District Leaders*

Participants reported a need for sustained vision, direction, and support from district-level leaders. Principal participants expressed this need within the context of needing reliability and predictability in regard to the approval, direction, and guidance from district leaders that allow schools to maintain a path towards improvement that prioritizes cultural competency and/or other
strategies that support students of color, even if changes occur at the district level. Principal participants who identified the need for sustained district-level support shared similar experiences of having had clear guidance and direction at the district level at some point, followed by uncertainty, or changes in direction because of leadership changes at the district level. This concern was best captured by middle school principal Jason O’Connor:

> And so, we have the resources, we have the individuals it’s just a matter of keeping it continuous. Sustained leadership at the central office. The superintendent has been very pivotal in keeping cultural competency as a big rock, but that could change. At the district level everyone knows cultural competence is a critical part of our work, everyone knows it. (July 26, 2018)

Mr. O’Connor also related the importance of having district-level support for ongoing collaboration and learning about cultural competence across schools in the district:

> Because I think we as principals we report back to central office and we'll say, "Yeah that was a little too loose. And this school is doing this, and this school is doing that. I want to do some of that but I didn't know ..." So we're working together to collaborate to try to do some of the same things. (July 26, 2018)

ESO respondents reported the need for support from district leaders based on experiences that suggest that district leaders who demonstrate a commitment to improving the learning experiences of students of color are more likely to collaborate with ESOs and others, and also have a positive influence on the school-based leaders and teachers that work directly with the students of color. ESO staff member Lydia Corinth expressed this as she explained why a district’s tenure in Project Hope has less bearing on a district’s collaborative relationship with the ESO than the commitment of a district’s current leader:
I don't see a correlation between longevity and acceptance and working better together. But I have seen when leadership in a district leads that there's a marked difference in our relationship and their request for our professional development. So it's more who's leading than how long you've been around…And then there's other districts that are further out and I attributed to the leadership in that district, the administrative leadership, the district leadership that recognize, "We need to do a better job," that they are doing better. (August 16, 2018)

ESO staff member Shannon Pierce also maintained that district leaders have the ability to impact staff participation in professional development that helps them better support students of color: “I've found that districts, they're better in regard to immersing their staff…when it comes from the leadership. When the superintendent is passionate about it” (September 26, 2018). Ms. Pierce went on further to recount how one district leader demonstrated a commitment to the students in Project Hope despite opposition from the local community:

that superintendent met with us a regular basis. Brought her teachers. We met with them on a regular basis. Step by step. That principal, that superintendent, was so hands on, and in spite of the opposition from the residents, they started a … program. Still in the program to this day. I don't hear any major things about the kids, students…any race stuff. (September 26, 2018)

Participants in this study identified a need for state mandates, policies, and enforcement efforts to ensure that predominately-White schools and districts provide standard levels of supports for students of color and their families. Participants also identified a need for long-term district commitments that ensure continuity and sustainability in the direction and support
provided by districts that helps schools continue implementing strategies that are designed to support students of color, despite changes in district leadership.

**Conclusion**

This study yielded information that helps us understand how principals in predominately-White suburban schools that participate in a state desegregation program and Educational Support Organization staff that work with these schools to support students of color: become aware of the perceptions of students of color; address the negative perceptions of student of color; implement practices to support students of color; and yielded information that helps us understand what these principals and Educational Support Organization staff identify as: the barriers that prevent them from implementing practices that support students of color; and the things they report they need to better support the students of color in Project Hope. The findings identified in Table 4 were drawn from the accounts of five principals of predominately-White schools that participate in the Project Hope desegregation program for students of color, and four staff members from a Educational Support Organization that provides support to students of color, their families, and district and school staff in the participating schools that the students of color attend.

**Table 4**

*Findings*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Findings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question 1</td>
<td>1. Participants enact proactive strategies that are both impromptu and pre-planned to help them become informed about the perceptions and experiences of students of color.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Participants become aware of the perceptions of students of color subsequent to students’ involvement in incidents of conflict.</td>
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<td>3. When principals become aware that students of color have negative perceptions of their school experiences, they respond, depending on</td>
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<tr>
<td>Question 2</td>
<td>What do principals in predominately-White schools and ESO staff members report as the practices they implement to support racially and ethnically diverse learners?</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Participants initiate or assist implementation of programs and practices that are intentionally devised to provide direct support to students of color and/or their families.</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Principals seek opportunities within existing structures to focus specific attention on students of color, but they report that leveraging these processes does not result in adjustments or programmatic changes that increase support for students of color who have difficulties.</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>Participants arrange professional development that is intentionally designed to build teachers’ capacity to effectively support students of color.</td>
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<th>Question 3</th>
<th>What do principals in predominately-White schools and ESO staff members report as factors that prevent them from implementing practices that support racially and ethnically diverse learners?</th>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>Participants report that unanticipated challenges rising from the design of Project Hope and maladaptation to Project Hope at the school level disadvantage students of color and impede them from being engaged members of their school communities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Participants report that stakeholder attitudes and discontinuities with students’ prior educational experiences negatively impact their ability to effectively support students of color.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Question 4</th>
<th>What do principals in predominately-White schools and ESO staff members perceive they need in order to effectively implement practices that support racially and ethnically diverse learner?</th>
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<td>9.</td>
<td>Participants report a need for more conscious efforts from Project Hope to help students of color establish and reinforce social connections, that help to foster a sense of belonging in their predominately-White suburban schools.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Participants recognize a need for an increased level of state oversight to compel participating suburban communities to adaptively lead the re-envisioning of their schools.</td>
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Participants’ reports of becoming informed about the perceptions of student of color illustrated that participants enact proactive strategies that are both impromptu and pre-planned to help them become informed about the perceptions and experiences of students of color. Participants’ responses highlighted the predominant utilization of reactive ways of finding out about the perceptions of students of color, most often as a result of student and/or parent complaints. Participants reports as to the way they address the negative perceptions of students of color illustrated that depending on circumstances, participants respond as intervening.
supervisors, institutional functionaries, or interpersonal facilitators. Participants’ responses underscored a prevalence of negative perceptions related to perceived racial bias, and reports of principal participants responding within their supervisory capacity by directly confronting staff who have acted in a discriminatory manner with students of color, and ESO staff members and one principal detailed instances of responding to concerns as institutional functionaries based on their transmission of concerns to district leaders when situations were deemed to be out of their locus of control. Participants also provided multiple anecdotes that demonstrate responding as interpersonal facilitators, where participants made attempts to help resolve conflicts in a variety of ways. As interpersonal facilitators, a majority of participants reported that they attempt to clarify students’ and/or parents’ misconceptions about racially biased treatment.

Participants reported implementing practices to support racially diverse students that are intentionally devised to provide direct support to students of color and their families that include supplemental academic support services, youth development opportunities, and staffing to support students’ social emotional learning. Participants’ reports also illustrated that principals seek opportunities within existing structures to focus specific attention on students of color, but they report that leveraging these processes does not result in adjustments or programmatic changes that increase support for students of color who have difficulties. Principal participants shared that they make deliberate attempts to leverage existing school structures such as data teaming and advisory programs to focus attention on supporting students of color. Additionally, participants’ reports illustrated that participants arrange professional development that is intentionally designed to build teachers’ capacity to effectively support students of color. Both principals and ESO staff reported providing or arranging for professional development to help teachers become better at teaching students of color.
Reports on the factors participants identify as hindering them from implementing practices to support students of color highlighted participants’ reports that unanticipated challenges rising from the design of Project Hope and maladaptation to Project Hope at the school level disadvantage students of color and impede them from being engaged members of their school communities. Participants’ responses highlight common trends across participant type that include systemic challenges that are caused by the design of Project Hope that put students of color at a disadvantage and make students of color stand out from their suburban peers, which contributes to the othering of students of color. Participant’s also report that stakeholder attitudes and discontinuities with students’ prior educational experiences negatively impact their ability to effectively support students of color. Principal and ESO staff participants also detailed instances that illustrate stakeholder dispositions including low academic expectations of some students and parents in Project Hope, the indifference of some district leaders, the negative racial biases of some suburban residents, and the low academic expectations from some teachers in addition to the inadequate academic and behavioral preparedness of some students hinder their ability to effectively support the students of color in Project Hope.

Participants report a need for more conscious efforts from Project Hope to help students of color establish and reinforce social connections, that help to foster a sense of belonging in their predominately-White suburban schools. Participants’ reports illustrate a consistent desire across respondent type for more conscious efforts to help students of color bridge social capital before and while attending suburban schools that participate in Project Hope as it relates to learning about the values and expectations of their new schools, and establishing and fostering social connections with suburban peers and teachers to help students of color develop and maintain a sense of belonging at their predominately-White suburban schools. The initiatives
described by participants included: transition programs and trainings for students and parents in Project Hope; extracurricular activities that interest students of color; diversity trainings for suburban students and parents; increasing the number of staff of color at participating schools; and increasing the opportunities for diversity trainings for suburban teachers. Lastly, participants recognize a need for an increased level of state oversight to compel participating suburban communities to adaptively lead the re-envisioning of their schools. Participants asserted a need for increased state direction and oversight in ways that compel the suburban communities that participate in Project Hope to guarantee long-term district commitments to Project Hope and re-envision their schools such that they maintain minimum standards of support for students of color and their families.

This chapter reported the study findings to address the four questions that guided this research about how school leaders experience the phenomenon and presented the study findings. Given the role that race plays in how the phenomenon of this study is experienced, an additional step is needed before discussing these findings. There is benefit in viewing this same phenomenon from the lens of Critical Race Theory (CRT). In the next chapter, I present CRT counterstories based on the experiences and perspectives of people of color, which will help to inform the discussion of the implications for action and future research that will appear in the final chapter.
CHAPTER FIVE: CRITICAL RACE COUNTERSTORIES

The Function of Counterstories

The findings of this study were derived from data provided by principal and ESO staff participants who are responsible for supporting students of color in predominately-White schools. One of the five principals in this study was a person of color, and the four ESO staff were people of color. The presentation of how the school leaders experienced the phenomenon reveals how they make sense of their efforts on behalf of students of color in predominantly white schools, but that analysis is insufficient for considering theoretical, policy, or practical implications unless it is accompanied by acknowledgment and anticipation of simultaneous counter narratives held by educators, students and families of color.

Sociologist Joe Feagin (2010) described how historical research reveals that a White-centered perspective permeates the worldview of White people in the United States and elsewhere (p. 10). Feagin contended that this worldview, and a lack of acknowledgement and understanding of the worldview, inhibits genuine analysis and understanding around issues of race (pp. 5–8). Feagin conceptualized the White-centered perspective across five dimensions in his White Racial Frame (WRF), that consists of (a) beliefs about racial stereotypes, (b) racial analysis and narratives, (c) racial imagery and language, (d) racial emotions, and (e) a propensity to discriminate (pp. 9–10). This framing has bolstered a positive sentiment for whites and a strong negative sentiment for nonwhites (p. 10). Feagin explained that the WRF makes it extremely difficult for White people to relate to non-Whites who have faced persistent social injustice (p. 204). Toure and Dorsey (2018) used the WRF to analyze the practices of urban school leaders and found that even some beliefs and practices of non-White school leaders align with the WRF (pp. 20–24). In addition to understanding the WRF and its implications, Feagin
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(2010) emphasized the importance of anti-racist counter-frames that critique White oppression, counter anti-Black framing, and assert the humanity and rights of all people (p. 204). To this end, I present two Critical Race Theory (CRT) counterstories, to serve as counter narratives to the majoritarian perspective of the phenomenon presented in Chapter 4.

CRT began as a critique of racism in the law and society (Lynne & Parker, 2006, p. 259). The foundational beliefs of early CRT scholars included the belief that racism is a normal fact of life in our society and is so ingrained in our political and legal structures that it is almost unrecognizable (Lynne & Parker, 2006, pp. 259–260). CRT also challenges the idea of a normative standard based on the experience of White European Americans by grounding its conceptual framework in the experiences of people of color, using literary narratives and storytelling to challenge the existing social construction of race. In doing so, it attacks liberalism and the belief in that the law is sufficient means for creating an equitable just society (Lynne & Parker, 2006, p. 260). Taylor (1998) described how CRT scholars use the experiences of people who are negatively affected by racism in stories to help challenge the shared stereotypes and beliefs that inform the dominant mindset of society, while helping to create a shared understanding of the current reality, and illustrating what a better reality should be (p. 122). It is in this vein that the following counterstories are presented.

The counterstories for this study were created as composite counterstories that depict situations that illustrate some of the key findings from this study, while centering the voices and experiences of people of color. The counterstories are written based on occurrences similar to those described by the participants of this study, however, they are told with the sensibilities of the students, families, and staff of color that experience these interactions. The counterstories reflect a dual commitment to recognize the voices of my participants and honor the research
traditions, such as CRT and Latino/a CRT, that have sought to make meaning of and improve the experiences and outcomes for people of color. The counterstories are written chronologically as a continuation from one counterstory to the next, such that the storyline and characters presented run across and draw connections from the other counterstories.

The counterstories that follow are consistent with Yosso’s (2006) definition of composite counterstories, as they draw on multiple forms of data to help narrate the experiences of people of color in relation to the phenomenon being studied (p. 10). To create the counterstories for this study, I started with the findings from the study, which were derived from recorded interviews and interview transcripts that were critically analyzed using structural coding. The findings from the study served as the foremost source of data for the counterstories and participants’ experiences helped shaped the composite characters and interactions within the counterstories. Yosso (2006) identified empirical research data as one of the consistent sources of data for composite counterstories, which may include survey findings and/or focus group interviews (p. 11).

The secondary data source for the counterstories came from existing social science and other literature on the topic, including information explained in Chapter 2 of this study that describe the experiences and perspectives of students of color in predominately-White schools. Scholars as well as practitioners often reference a theory-practice/practice-theory gap. By weaving relevant literature into the counterstories, I aim to bridge the gap, highlighting how theoretical accounts and explanations are inextricably linked to—and can help us better understand—the daily experiences of people of color. The third source of data for the counterstories came from student data from secondary schools that participate in the Project Hope program. The data were taken from state generated school reports that identify chronic
absentee rates by race, suspension rates by race, graduation rates by race, rates of participation in AP and IB courses by race, and SAT performance by race. The fourth source of data for the counterstories came from my personal and professional experiences as an African-American man, educator, and researcher. I bring emic perspectives to this work that are underrepresented in the research literature, including having been a student of color in a predominately-White high school, a parent of children of color who attended predominately-White schools, and as a public school administrator, I have had a variety of interactions with students and families prior to and after their experiences in predominantly-White schools. Each of these steps is consistent with Yosso’s description for creating critical race counterstories (Yosso, 2016, pp. 10–12).

**Counterstory 1 – Ms. Johnson’s Thursday Check-in at West Urbanville High**

The first counterstory is written from the perspective of Ms. Johnson, a woman of color who is an ESO staff member and the story is her account of her interactions with students, school staff members, and school principals on a particular day. This composite counterstory centers the voices and experiences of students and families of color while narrating data from the findings from research question #1 including, (a) the ways that ESO staff and principals become informed about the perceptions and experiences of students of color, which include: pre-planned academic guidance and check-in conversations, the intentional use of impromptu principal-student conversations, pre-planned consultant-led youth development activities, parent and student complaints, information shared by partner organizations, and information obtained from news media; (b) the types of negative perceptions that students of color share about their school experience including their perceptions that they are treated unfairly based on race; and (c) the ways that principals and ESO staff respond to the negative perceptions identified by students of color, including: responding as interpersonal facilitators, and responding as intervening
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Eagerly Awaited Conversation with Hope Students

As the Secondary Support Specialist, I was excited to finally meet with the entire group of students that attended West Urbanville High School through the Project Hope program. I was excited because most of my time was usually spent with the seniors, and the last all-student meeting had to be rescheduled due to a snowstorm. This meant that I had not interacted directly with most of the students since the first all-student meeting three months ago in September. I have spent most of my time this school year providing guidance to 12th grade students in the Project Hope program to ensure that they remain on track for graduation, and on track for attending college in the fall. As a result, I’ve relied on the school counselors to provide me with updates on the progress of students in grades 9–12. This meeting would give me an opportunity to interact with them directly. There were 41 students from Project Hope at West Urbanville High School, a large comprehensive suburban high school located in picturesque town of 63,000 inhabitants: thirteen students in the 9th grade, 11 in the 10th grade, eight students in the 11th grade, and 9 students in the 12th grade. After stating my business via the security intercom at the front door and being buzzed in, I signed in at the main office and headed towards the cafeteria.

My meetings with the students in the Project Hope program at West Urbanville High School were typically held on Thursdays in the cafeteria and were scheduled at the mid-point of
the last period of the day. This was done to ensure that meetings could take place with enough time for students to ride the late bus home, which arrived an hour after dismissal. However, it also meant that I was the only thing that stood between them and freedom from a long school day that likely started more than 8 hours ago with a long bus ride from their inner-city homes to suburban WU.

As I walked towards the cafeteria, Principal Callahan saw me and called out, “Hey, we’re still on to talk after you finish up, right?” I confirmed with him that I would meet him in his office immediately after I finished meeting with the students, which was our usual routine for debriefing the things that come up in my whole-group conversations with students, and for him to share updates with me. He seemed more eager than usual to talk with me, which I attributed to the reduced number of visits I have been able to make as a result of the increasing number of schools that I had been working with. I used to meet with the entire group of students at least once per month, but at this point, it was closer to every other month, and in the case of West Urbanville high school, I hadn’t had a meeting with the entire group of students in Project Hope since September. The demands of my office work, the expansion of the program to new schools without additional staff to provide support all contributed to diminished time with WU students.

Ms. Malone, the school counselor, exited the cafeteria as I walked in. She told me that she was there to remind Sarah, a Project Hope student from Urbanville, that she needed to finish one of her scholarship applications. Ms. Malone and I talked fairly frequently about the 12th grade students in the program, and she and I had developed a strong professional relationship since she began working at West Urbanville high school three and one-half years ago. She was one of the few people of color who worked at the school, and the students in the program spoke
highly of her. She sometimes stayed for my whole-group meetings but was unable to on this day because she was scheduled to do a presentation at the middle school.

The cafeteria smelled of spoiled milk and wet mops as one of the custodians moved a group of trash barrels into a corner and some of the cafeteria workers organized lunch trays and silverware. “Hello everyone,” I said loudly. I was greeted with a choral response of “Hi Ms. Johnson.” One of the 10th grade students immediately asked, “Where have you been?” I reminded the group that the November meeting didn’t happen because of the snowstorm and promised that I would try to make up for the lost time in the new year. I glanced at the sign-in sheet and saw that 33 of the 41 students were in attendance. I knew that four students would be unable to attend because both the girls’ and boys’ basketball teams were travelling to away games, but I was curious about the other four students that weren’t in attendance. “Before we get started, does anyone know where Javier, Amira, Jose, and Fred are?” Sarah, an 11th grade student shouted, “Fred and Jose got suspended.” “These teachers are racist,” another student called out before I was able to respond. “I know,” another student stated. “Ok, ok” I responded, hoping to prevent the conversation from going too far in a negative direction. “We can talk about why you feel that way in a moment,” I assured the group, wanting to keep the conversation focused enough to allow us to discuss each item on the agenda. Joshua, a 9th grade student shared that Javier had been sick the last two days, and Milly, a 10th grade student informed me that Amira had missed the bus this morning. Given the distance students have to travel, missing the bus means they miss the entire day of school. “Ms. Johnson, the bus comes too early,” Milly declared. “I have to get up at 4:30 in the morning just to be ready on time for the bus,” she added. I let Milly and the group know that the challenges that she and other students face in
getting to school each day is something that I have shared with my director and that it is something that is being discussed with the superintendent as well.

The first part of our meeting typically focused on academic matters and since the second trimester had just begun two weeks before the meeting, I thought it was important for students to take some time to reflect on their grades from the last trimester, set goals for the current trimester, and identify things that they would do to make sure they accomplished their goals. We took 45 minutes for this activity and students really seemed to take the goal setting and planning seriously. Students identified which classes they needed to do better in, the skills they needed to improve, and the help they would need in order to make the improvements. I made sure to remind them about the free afterschool tutoring provided by our ESO that 5 of the students at West Urbanville high school where currently participating in. As I looked out on their faces, I saw a range of emotions—expressions simply interpreted as inquisitive looks, but appearances I recognized as fear about their uncertain futures. I had seen these expressions many times before.

The second half of our meetings was usually dedicated for less formal “check-in” time that gave students an opportunity to share how their school experiences were going in a more general sense. Before I opened the check-in portion of the conversation, I made sure to keep my word and revisit the comments that students made at the very start of the meeting: “Before we start the check-in, I want to go back to the comments from earlier.” I asked, “Why do you think some of your teachers are racist?” “Because they are,” David responded. I told David that he needed to provide evidence to support his opinion. David had details.

“Miss, Jose and Fred got suspended because the teacher is racist.” David, like Fred and Jose, was in the 11th grade. David, a young Black man who traveled daily to WU from Urbanville, explained that on Tuesday, two White students had been talking to each other at the
beginning of chemistry class and one of the students used the word “spic” during their conversation. Jose and Fred confronted the student about using the racial slur and an argument ensued. David tried to diffuse the situation because he was worried that Jose and Fred might get in trouble. By the time the teacher intervened, Jose was noticeably angry and told the White student that he would “punch you in your fucking face.” The teacher reprimanded Jose and sent Jose out of the class to the main office. After Jose left the class, the teacher asked the class to sit down and began teaching the chemistry lesson. As the teacher began speaking, multiple students continued to talk about the incident that had just occurred. Annoyed by the prior situation, and the continuing exchanges among other students about the incident, Fred adamantly and loudly asked, “Can you please shut up?” In response, the teacher reprimanded Fred for disrupting the class and directed him to also go to the main office. As Fred left the class, boiling over with hurt and frustration, he shouted in exasperation, “What the fuck?”

Hearing David’s version of the story made me wonder if the incident David described was the reason that Mr. Callahan was so eager to talk to me when I first arrived. I tried to reassure the group that I was sorry to hear about what happened to Jose and Fred, and that I would make sure to ask about it when I meet with Mr. Callahan later. I then asked the group to explain why the incident makes them believe that the teacher is racist.

I listened as students reasoned that the students who Jose and Fred argued with were wrong for using racist language, and that the teacher should have intervened sooner, and that the teacher should have sent the White students out of class instead of Jose. Students also argued that the teacher should have quieted the class instead of sending Fred out of class. I asked questions to help the students to see things from the teacher’s perspective including: “Is it possible that the teacher might have sent the other student out if Jose hadn’t threatened to hit
him?”, “Do you understand why the teacher had to send Jose out of class once he told the other student that he was going to punch him?”, “Do you think the teacher would have sent the White student out of class if he threatened to punch Jose?” I also tried to stress the importance of self-advocacy by asking students to identify different ways that Jose and Fred could have responded to the situation. We discussed how Jose and Fred, or any student in the Project Hope program, should bring their concerns to their parents, Ms. Malone, and/or to Mr. Callahan. I also recommended that students work together to write emails to their teachers or other school staff to express their concerns in a constructive way. I truly believe that students need to learn how to address their concerns in organized and productive ways in preparation for college and employment, but in that moment, I knew that I needed to try to de-escalate the rising tension by helping students process their emotions. I didn’t want any more students to get into trouble. I wanted to reassure them that I would help to get their concerns addressed, but, based on my past experiences in these types of situations, I knew better than to make a potentially false promise.

Based on the discussion, it appeared that students understood and agreed that these alternative responses would have helped Jose and Fred avoid getting in trouble, but it was also apparent that students didn’t believe that these efforts would help prevent the incidents from happening again. I had the same doubts, but I couldn’t give students any hints about my true feelings. I thanked students for their honesty and made sure that they wrote down my email address and phone number. I asked them to please share my contact information with their parents and ask their parents to contact me if they have questions and concerns. I reminded the group that I would be back next month to meet with the whole group, and that I’d be back in a few weeks to meet with the 12th grade students. Precisely at 3:35 an announcement was made over the intercom: “All students taking a late bus, please report to the bus ramp. All students
taking the late bus, please report to the bus ramp.” I said goodbye to the group and wished a happy holiday break to the students that I wouldn’t see before the new year. Overwhelmed with dread and frustrated with my inability to alleviate Jose’s problem and, more importantly, make WUHS a place where Jose and kids like him were treated fairly and given the benefit of the doubt, I waited in the cafeteria until all of the students had departed before I left to go to Mr. Callahan’s office.

Sharing Perspectives and Problem-solving with the Principal

Mr. Callahan’s office was located in the back of the main office at the school. When I arrived in the front office, I greeted the front office clerk who appeared not to recognize me and aloofly asked, “How can I help you?” I told her that I had a 3:45 meeting with Mr. Callahan. She asked me my name, which surprised me given the number of times I had been at the school and interacted with her over the past three years, and the fact that I had greeted her less than two hours ago when I arrived at the school. I found myself whispering under my breath—How many Black women do you encounter that you cannot remember me? She walked back to Mr. Callahan’s office and they both came back out together into the main office area. Mr. Callahan called out “Come on back” as he motioned towards with his hand.

I walked back into his office and sat in the chair that was placed directly in front of his desk. After brief pleasantries, Mr. Callahan asked if he could share a few things with me before we debriefed the meeting that I just had with students. He explained that he wanted my help and immediately began telling me about a conversation he had earlier that day with an angry parent. The parent he was referring to was Jose’s father. Mr. Callahan was unusually loud and animated as he described the conversation. He explained that Jose’s father was very upset after finding out from his wife that Jose had been suspended from school a few days earlier for making a threat to
another student. Jose’s father accused him and the teachers at the school of being racist. In the conversation, Jose’s father alleged that Jose and other students in the Project Hope program had been called racist names by West Urbanville high school students multiple times in the past and the school hadn’t intervened. Jose’s father expressed that he was frustrated that Jose’s chemistry teacher and the school didn’t do anything to the White students who Jose argued with, and that Jose wouldn’t have threatened the student if something had been done sooner. Jose’s father also declared that he had no doubt that the school wouldn’t have suspended a White student for doing the same thing that Jose did. He also accused the school of intentionally holding the suspension hearing at a time that the school knew he wouldn’t be available, and not providing interpretation support for his wife during the meeting. Jose’s father ended the conversation by letting Mr. Callahan know that he planned to share his frustrations and the details of Jose’s negative experiences to the local media. As soon as I heard that Jose’s father alleged that the school didn’t provide an interpreter for his wife, I was convinced that his complaint was legitimate, because I had heard this complaint multiple times in prior school years. It was also glaring that Mr. Callahan never countered the complaint as he shared the details. I didn’t acknowledge this to Mr. Callahan at the time because I didn’t think it would be helpful.

I asked Mr. Callahan about the claims made by Jose’s father, especially the claim that there had been other incidents involving racist comments directed at Jose and other students in Project Hope. “Yes, but this was the first time that I heard about it,” he replied. “These are high school kids and they aren’t shy. They stop me when they see me in the hallway or cafeteria to tell me when they are having problems, and I take the time to make sure we talk about it.” He went on to describe a specific example of two students coming to him in the cafeteria to complain about a teacher who reprimanded a student from Project Hope in front of other students
and in the process, the teacher loudly declared, “This isn’t Urbanville.” He explained that he followed up after the conversation with students by talking with other students, and the teacher, which resulted in him reprimanding the teacher for her behavior. In a frustrated tone, with his hands pointed outward at me he exclaimed, “I don’t know why they wouldn’t have told me about those students calling them that.” Entering my mind was my own disappointment that none of the students or parents had reached out to me to tell me about these incidents. But unlike Mr. Callahan, I wasn’t in the school every day. I just couldn’t understand why Mr. Callahan and some of the other principals I work with are caught off guard so often by these situations. Admittedly, I was also disappointed because this was probably going to result in yet another parent taking their concerns to the media without first bringing their concerns to the ESO. Instead of sharing these thoughts, I reminded him that the student panel discussion in the summer really got students to open up about their experiences, and that we should consider providing more of these opportunities for students.

Mr. Callahan added that after he got off the phone with Jose’s father, he went and talked with other students from Project Hope who confirmed that there had been prior incidents of students making racist comments to Jose and others. He explained that he was concerned that the racist comments and the parent’s threat to go to the media could make matters worse. I agreed with his concern. Mr. Callahan went on to explain that he wanted the ESO’s help administering student peace circles as a way of facilitating conversations between students about the inappropriate racist comments that had been used towards students in the Project Hope program and the impact that the comments have on students of color. He also asked if we could help plan and facilitate professional development for teachers to help them know how to recognize and intervene when racial issues arise. We talked about when he hoped to schedule the peace circles
for students and the professional development for teachers. Mr. Callahan explained that he wanted to schedule the peace circles during the school’s advisory period, which the school repurposed on occasion to discuss timely topics that affected the school community. I committed to helping facilitate the peace circles and to reaching out to my colleagues for additional assistance as well. I then called Vivian Dones, one of my colleagues who specializes in professional development and put her on speakerphone so that Mr. Callahan and I could talk with her together. After talking with Vivian for about 20 minutes, Mr. Callahan agreed with Vivian’s idea of scheduling multiple professional development sessions to address the situation and promised to email Vivian later that evening to provide available dates for the professional development sessions. While I appreciated Vivian’s suggestion, my optimism was tempered by the fact that traditional professional development sessions I have experienced, where some presenter delivers “diversity” content and facilitates “diversity” activities with teachers, does little to change the curriculum and even less to improve the climate and culture of schools. From my perspective, that work had to be led by school leaders and their staff, but I kept that thought to myself.

For the remainder of the meeting, I attempted to brief Mr. Callahan on the academic planning session that I had with students, but he kept returning to the incident with Fred. Mr. Callahan explained that Fred was very angry by the time he arrived at the office and was unwilling to comply with requests to refrain from using profanity. “I couldn’t get him to calm down. He just wouldn’t listen.” Mr. Callahan explained that he sent Fred home for the day and asked his parents to come in yesterday for a suspension hearing. His parents did not show up for the suspension hearing, and the school was in the process of trying to reschedule the hearing. I committed to calling Fred and Jose’s parents later that evening, and if possible, going to their
homes to talk. It would later find out that Fred’s parents were considering taking him out of the Project Hope program at Fred’s request.

I described the academic planning session to Mr. Callahan, and we brainstormed ways that the school could use the plans students created to get their buy-in to participate in different academic supports. I stressed the need for the school to follow up with five specific students who had failed one or more classes in the first trimester. Mr. Callahan explained that he had been attempting to use the school’s data team meetings to help focus teachers’ attention on the progress of some students in the Hope program, but he has struggled to get some of his teachers to accept the school’s responsibility in making sure that students make academic progress: “We look at a lot of data, but teachers blame the students, the parents, and even question the data itself. They don’t like to talk about what they can do different or how they can do better at teaching kids.” Mr. Callahan also stressed that students can also take better advantage of the after school help that teachers provide since his school added a late bus for students in the Project Hope program. He emphasized how his school added Ms. Malone’s counseling position to support the students in the Project Hope program during the current senior’s freshman year, and that he would make sure to include her in the efforts to support the five students I mentioned.

As I began packing up to leave the meeting, I told Mr. Callahan that I wanted to make sure that we revisit some of the things that came up in today’s meeting when we begin planning for next year. He agreed with me and I was determined to hold him to this commitment. This wouldn’t be the first time that we plan together to prevent and address these and other situations, but I felt particularly compelled by the combination of interactions and conversations from the day to make sure that the next time, our planning actually results in real change for students.

**Counterstory 2 – Ms. Malone Looking Back on the Year**
The second counterstory is written from the perspective of Ms. Malone, a woman of color, and a school counselor who works in a predominately-White school and functions as a liaison between the students of color in the Hope program, their families, and the school staff. The counterstory details Ms. Malone’s interactions with the school principal, school staff members, and ESO staff members during an end-of-year planning meeting. This composite counterstory centers the experiences of students, staff, and families of color while narrating data from the findings related to research question #2, which identifies the practices that principals and ESO staff implement to support students of color, including: access to supplementary academic support, increased social emotional learning support, utilizing data-team processes, and arranging and/or facilitating professional development; research question #3, which identifies the factors principals and ESO staff say prevent them from supporting students of color, including: unanticipated program design challenges that put students of color at a disadvantage, low academic and behavior expectations from parents and students, discontinuities in academic and behavioral preparedness, indifference of district leaders, and teacher biases and low expectations; and research question #4, which identifies the things that principals and ESO staff report they need to better support students of color, including: trainings and programs to help students of color and their families transition to their suburban schools, diversity trainings for suburban parents and students, diversity training for staff, increasing the number of staff of color, and clearer state expectations and requirements for explicit commitments from district leaders. Similar to the first counterstory, this counterstory highlights specific data from the findings within the context of the story, such as the data analysis process that the school team uses to better support students of color, and the dialogue within the counterstory, such as the principal’s
reflection on the team’s inability to effectively use the data team process in the past to support students of color.

**Same Place, Different Realities: Same Data, Different Perspectives**

This would be my fourth time attending one of the Project Hope end-of-year meetings. The end-of-year meeting is an annual meeting that brings school-based teams together with ESO staff members to debrief the school year and begin planning for the upcoming school year. Admittedly, I wasn’t enthusiastic about attending this year’s meeting. My colleagues from WUH usually seemed to enjoy these gatherings, while I found the meetings to be more style than substance, because they rarely challenged existing practices or pushed them to consider the need for substantive change. I was also somewhat distracted because the timing of the meeting was less than ideal. This year’s meeting was held on the last Monday in May, during finals, state testing, and graduation season. The meeting was held at the area ESO office and was attended by the entire local ESO staff and school-based staff that represented about twelve schools across nine districts.

I arrived at the meeting about half-way through the social hour portion, which gave me 30 minutes to grab a bite to eat and socialize with some of my colleagues. I noticed many of the WUH teachers standing with a group of teachers from other districts, and our principal, Mr. Callahan, talking with a small group of principals. I was one of the few school-based staff of color at the event and as in prior years, I sought out and socialized with some of my colleagues of color. Tammy Garcia and I talked briefly about how the school year had gone at our schools. Tammy told me that she was asked to respond to a much higher volume of racial incidents than she’d ever had in previous school years. She also shared that despite the increasing demand for her to intervene to help reduce race-related tensions that impacted Hope students at her school,
her position was in danger of being eliminated because of budget cuts. This didn’t make sense to either of us. I did not know how to respond to this news. I told her that I thought it would be a big mistake if her position was cut. I also knew that these types of decisions happened far too often. Many districts and schools viewed our positions as being on the fringes, that is, non-essential to the central concerns of the school community. The perception that we have a peripheral function alongside our colleagues is not unlike the marginal space many of the students who rely on us most occupy in the minds of the overall school community. I asked her to call me after the event to talk more, when there weren’t so many people around. I was genuinely interested in finding out how I could support her in her current position, or in finding a new position. As the social hour portion of the meeting came to a close, people began taking their seats at round tables that included table tents with school and district names. There was also a head table positioned at the front of the room with a projector screen directly behind the table.

Most school teams consisted of the principal and three-to-four other staff, which sometimes included assistant principals and other staff members in a variety of roles such as teachers, counselors and parent facilitators. Usually, as was the case for my school, teams included the staff members that served as their school’s Project Hope liaison, if they had such a role. Our team included our principal Mr. Callahan, one assistant principals, four grade-level teacher leaders, one for each grade, and me. I have been a school counselor and Project Hope liaison at West Urbanville high school (WUH) for the last four school years and have enjoyed working to support the students and families from Urbanville. The ESO staff spread out throughout the room, with one to two sitting at each table. Estelle Johnson and Vivian Dones started the meeting at our table. Estelle and I have worked closely since I began working at
WUH. I have been told that she was instrumental in convincing Mr. Callahan to add my position at the school.

As I sat at our table, I could see Estelle scanning the room. As she began facing back towards our table, I heard her say, “I really hoped that we’d have more people here.” “It looks like the same group that always comes,” Ms. Dones responded. This was the first time I heard Estelle and Vivian express opinions about the lack of engagement by some districts, but I was familiar with the sentiment because I’ve have heard Mr. Callahan talk about it on a few occasions. During the prior end-of-year meeting, Mr. Callahan wondered aloud at our table as to why some districts and schools rarely, if ever attend meetings with the ESO, even schools that have more Project Hope students than our school.

The formal portion of the meeting began with opening greetings offered by Samantha Jourdan the director of the ESO’s Hope division, and Thomas Baker, the director of the State’s desegregation programs office. Ms. Jourdan congratulated the group for another successful school year and reviewed the meeting agenda, which included: celebrations of success, reflections on the current school year, and improvement planning.

Celebrations and Omissions

During the celebration portion of the meeting, Samantha Jourdan, the director of the ESO’s Project Hope division reminded participants about the purpose and history of the program. She spoke proudly about the steady increase in the number of students from Urbanville that attend suburban schools as a result of the program while projecting the numbers on a screen in the front of the room. Ms. Jourdan then shared a visual presentation of the students in the current graduating class grouped by high school, followed by a listing of the different colleges that graduates had been accepted into. The presentation listed the names of our nine graduating
seniors, and many people at our table cheered and clapped loudly as the students’ pictures came across the screen. I started working at WUH during the freshman year of our graduating seniors. So, while I was happy for our graduating seniors, I was intimately aware, and especially mindful at that moment about the three students who weren’t included in the presentation. Two students from the original cohort left the program, including Fred who transferred back to his home district earlier this school year, and one student had been retained and still attended WUH. Ms. Jourdan concluded her congratulations and appreciations for our efforts to support the students in the Project Hope program and introduced Thomas Baker, the director of the desegregation programs division at the state department of education. Mr. Baker congratulated and thanked the attendees on behalf of the commissioner of education, reiterated the importance of the program, and explained the purpose and process for the improvement planning portion of the meeting. Almost all of the attendees had participated in Project Hope improvement planning sessions in prior years, so I assumed that his detailed explanation was for the benefit of the new people, except there weren’t any new people in attendance.

During the data review portion of the meeting, school-based teams spent time reviewing and discussing data for their students in the Project Hope program. We looked at student attendance data, discipline data, grade reports, and SAT reports. The ESO staff spent time working across school teams. Estelle Johnson spent more than half of this time working with our team.

**Belonging and Presence, Disassociation, and Absence**

I was familiar with the attendance patterns of many Hope students even before looking at the attendance data. I am one of the few people who calls parents to inquire about why students from the program are absent on any consistent basis. This is especially true for juniors and
seniors. Unsurprisingly, our attendance data revealed that students in the Project Hope program, on average, were absent and tardy more often than their suburban peers. During our review of attendance data, we discussed some of the students that stood out as outliers because their absentee rates were much higher than their peers in the Project Hope program, and the student body in general. Each of these students was considered chronically absent after having missed 10% or more of the total number of school days. Approximately seven percent of White students at our school were chronically absent, compared to 8.6% of Black students and 14% of Latinx students. These attendance disparities also included, to a lesser extent, the Black and Latinx students who live in West Urbanville, many of whom I had gotten to know because they often sought me out for guidance, because I was one of the few staff members of color.

We were all quick to agree that one of the causes that led to lower attendance rates for students in the Project Hope program was the transportation system. Students in the Project Hope program sometimes arrived late to school because of the time required for busses to travel every morning. Students also missed the bus from time to time because of the early departure times that are required to get students to school on time. In some cases, students who miss their bus are not able to get to school on that day because they do not have alternate transportation. Also, although rare, there are days that Urbanville cancels school because of weather conditions on days that our schools remain open. Because Urbanville school buses provide transportation for Project Hope students, when that happens, the students in the Project Hope program do not have a bus to take them to school, which means they are either late or absent. This happens at least once every school year and happens multiple times during some school years. Unfortunately, we have discussed the impact of the transportation system on student attendance at our planning sessions every year since I’ve been at the school, without identifying viable
solutions. After discussing the transportation challenges that students’ face, I shared my opinion that we should also consider whether students’ feelings of belonging factored into their attendance rates. Mr. Callahan asked me to elaborate on my thinking. I responded that “Each of us is familiar with studies that show students’ feelings on belonging impact their motivation and social and emotional outlook, which all play a role in students’ feelings about coming to school each day. With this in mind, and the fact that Hope students are coming from another community into West Urbanville, we should consider if Hope students’ feelings of belonging play a role in their attendance.” Mr. Callahan responded affirmingly, “That’s a good point,” then hastened to add, “Well, my perception is that they feel like they’re part of our school.” A few of the teachers in our group nodded in agreement and the 12th grade teacher leader, Ms. Sanders, confidently added, “I absolutely agree. I think they feel like West Urbanville students.” I was a little surprised by the certainty in Mr. Callahan’s response given some of the situations that he and I have dealt with, especially more recently. I wondered if the teachers may have responded differently if Mr. Callahan waited to respond, or if he had responded in a different way. Hoping to redirect my colleagues, I spoke up again. “Well, I’m not. I don’t think...” but hesitated after uttering a few words. “Please, go ahead,” Mr. Callahan interjected in an attempt to get me to share my thoughts. I was nervous because I knew that my opinion would be unpopular, but I also had good reason to believe that my opinion was the most informed amongst the members of the team. Mr. Callahan’s urging made me the focal point of the conversation. I nervously continued, “I’m not so sure that I agree.” I explained that in many of the conversations that I have had with Hope students, students have shared that they feel like teachers and/or students do not want them at West Urbanville. Ms. Sanders responded loudly, almost before I finished speaking, “I have had many conversations with Hope students, and they’ve shared that they love
going to school at West Urbanville.” In what seemed like an effort to moderate these opposing remarks, Estelle Johnson, the ESO’s secondary resource staff, suggested that students’ opinions may differ across grade levels, and since Ms. Sanders works almost exclusively with seniors, their opinions are based on having been at the school for longer than other students. Ms. Johnson also shared that the ESO has heard varying opinions about school belonging from students during their summer student workshops. Ms. Sanders responded, “Some students feel like they belong, and others don’t, but we don’t have concrete evidence to say confidently that, overall, Project Hope students feel a sense of belonging.” But this was exactly the point, I thought to myself. I know that some Hope students feel a stronger sense of belonging because of their involvement in sports and other activities, while others feel completely different. Mr. Callahan recommended that we table the conversation and during the planning portion we think about how we can get specific data next school year about students’ feelings about school belonging. I was quiet in my frustration, which was bordering on anger at that point. It was clear to me that instead of planning on how we can help students feel a stronger sense of belonging at our school, Mr. Callahan was saying that we were going to plan on finding out how students feel about school belonging. Shouldn’t we already know?

Another possible root cause that we began discussing related to student attendance, was the impact of suspensions. This led us into the next part of our data review, and it was especially relevant for the students in the Project Hope program that were chronically absent.

The Blame Game: Behavior Expectations, Conflicts, and Unfair Treatment

I was less familiar with the suspension history of Hope students than their attendance patterns. In part, because I was not in the communication loop for suspensions, and often found out about suspensions when I reached out to parents about students’ attendance, or from other
students. Like the attendance data, our discipline data showed that students in the Project Hope program received discipline referrals more often than their suburban peers and were suspended at higher rates. This was consistent with the racial disparities in suspension rates across our school, even for students of color who were not in the Hope program. Approximately 4.7% of White students at our school received at least one in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension or expulsion, compared to 10.5% of Black students, and 16.6% of Latinx students. The data also showed higher referral and suspension rates for students in the 9th grade, compared to grades 10–12. Our conversation about the root causes for the suspension disparities was far more contentious than the root cause discussion we had about our attendance data. Ms. Alexander, the 9th grade teacher leader, was steadfast as she expressed her belief that 9th grade students come to Urbanville high school after having experienced very different behavioral expectations, which results in higher referrals and suspensions, particularly in the 9th grade. “They have been allowed to act a certain way sometimes for years, and then they get here, and the expectations are very different.” There wasn’t much disagreement about the different expectations that students encounter when they come to our school, and the 9th grade discipline referrals are consistently higher than the other grade levels. Despite this, I thought to myself about the other factors that I know come into play for 9th graders including being misunderstood by teachers and being treated unfairly. I felt embarrassed by my silence, and I was glad that Ms. Johnson had already left our table to sit with another school so that she didn’t witness my silence.

Ms. Miller, the 10th grade teacher leader, expressed her opinion that some students in the Hope program misbehaved more often because of their parents’ expectations. “Shanice’s mother told me that if someone is talking bad about Shanice, she doesn’t expect Shanice to keep quiet and let it happen, and if someone hits her, she expects Shanice to hit them back.” I felt
personally insulted by the comment and there was no chance that I was going to remain silent. I replied by asking, “So, parents expecting their children to defend themselves is why they get referred and suspended more often?” Ms. Miller immediately attempted to clarify herself: “That’s not what I mean. I think that sometimes Shanice, and some other students don’t try to resolve conflicts because they know that their parents are going to defend them no matter what.” I continued to ask questions that I hoped would push Ms. Miller and the group to think beyond their initial ideas: “So, is the root cause the parents’ expectations or the conflicts that the students are having?” After some additional back and forth, Mr. Callahan recommended that we consider both ideas separately.

We agreed after talking through multiple incidents from the school year that a more accurate root cause was that some of the parents of students in the Hope program lack information that can help them guide their children academically and socially at our school, including who they can reach out to when an issue arises. Vivian Dones joined our group, and talking through the incidents with her guidance helped us reach an agreement that suburban students’ racial prejudices have led to racial conflicts between students that have led to disciplinary consequences for some students in the Hope program, including the incident involving Fred and Jose. Moreover, some students refused to participate in mediation or engage in conversations to help resolve the conflicts because of their parents’ racial prejudices. Another factor that we discussed during this part of the conversation was the fact that for some reason, none of the students in the Hope program that were aware of the situation felt that they could get assistance from one of their teachers or other staff members. This point would come up again later. Vivian Dones left our table and joined another school team after this part of our conversation.
The final portion of our review of discipline data had us focus on student referral data by teacher. Mr. Callahan had the data reports altered to omit teachers’ names, at the request of the teachers’ union. Nevertheless, looking at the referral data by teacher made it apparent that some of the students in the Hope program were being referred more often by specific teachers, which led to a conversation about teachers’ failure to build positive relationships with students from the Hope program and whether the failure was due to inability or unwillingness. Mr. Callahan provided an anecdote to support his agreement with this idea. He told the team that he had observed teachers singling out students from the Hope program for behaviors that were also exhibited by White students in the same moment without redirection. I felt relieved when Mr. Callahan shared his story. Without it, and his clear agreement, I was convinced that I would need to debate with the team for there to be any chance that we’d consider teachers’ relationships with Hope students as a root cause of some of the discipline data.

Unprepared and Uninformed? Preparing and Informing?

The academic data review portion of the meetings always felt like an incomplete exercise because we never got the state testing results back in time for these meetings. We also never have AP test results since they weren’t release until the summer. We did have grade reports and SAT reports, which gave us helpful information, if we chose to treat it as such. The grade reports that we reviewed showed that students in the Project Hope program, on average, received lower grades, and failed more classes. This was especially pronounced for 9th grade students in the Project Hope program. The SAT data for students in the Project Hope program showed troubling disparities that were consistent with our school-wide racial disparities on the SAT. Almost 79% of our White students met the SAT benchmark, compared to 36.4% of Black students and 43.6% of Latinx students.
Our conversation about the root causes of the academic disparities had a similar tone to our discussion about the root causes of our discipline data. Three of the teacher leaders spoke ardently about the academic disparities that exist before they have an opportunity to begin teaching students from the Hope program. In defense of the grade distribution data for 9th grade students, Ms. Sanders, the 12th grade teacher leader declared, “If they come to high school at a 6th grade reading level, we can’t expect them to score the same as other students.” I sat quietly through most of the conversation about students’ academic abilities when they arrive at West Urbanville high school, with the exception of a few comments towards the end of the conversations, when I asked, “Where is the data on students’ academic performance when they come to us? We are looking at their data after they have been with us, but I do not see any data to validate your opinions.” Nobody responded to my question. I didn’t disagree with the assertion that some students come to WUH performing lower than their peers, but I also know that some students come to WUH performing at the same level as their suburban peers. I wanted to impress upon the team that we should be making sure that students who come to us on grade level are not falling behind, and the students who have been in the district for multiple years are making progress. Mr. Callahan recommended that we revisit this point when we can look at the data in more detail. Eventually, we reached consensus that one root cause of the 9th grade data is that many of our 9th grade students in the Hope program struggle with the new academic demands they encounter when they first attend.

I found myself being particularly agitated during the conversation about the next proposed root cause for students’ academic struggles. Some of the teacher leaders suggested that the parents of students in the Hope program are less involved than other parents, which results in students not getting the most out of their school experience. While commenting on how some of
the students in the Hope program fail to take advantage of some of the afterschool academic programs, the 11th grade teacher leader Ms. Grant stated, “I think sometimes the parental support is not as strong.” Mr. Callahan attempted to probe Ms. Grant’s statement by asking her to elaborate. Her response, “Some of the families have transportation, but decide not to pick their children up, so they have to leave on the bus.” I struggled to temper the anger that I felt when I heard this disparaging comment. “That is a ridiculous statement. Our afterschool programs happen during the workday. You wouldn’t be able to pick your child up at that time, so why would you expect other working parents to be able to?” I know that at least two of the teachers on our team have school-aged children. I looked directly at them as I made my statement. Ms. Grant responded, “But they also choose not to come to the family events that happen after the workday?” I responded by asking, “How is that a root cause of students’ academic performance?”

Unfortunately, our data review meetings during the school year also tend to get bogged down in trying to determine root causes, because of the tendency the team has of getting sidetracked with blaming students and parents when we attempt to problem solve ways to support students from the Hope program. After intense deliberations, the conversation shifted away from parents not caring enough to parents not being informed enough about our academic program to help them support their children when they enroll at our school. At this point in the meeting, each group was directed to begin the improvement planning portion of the program. Upon hearing the announcement, Vivian Dones and Estelle Johnson returned to our table.

Planning as by the Book, or Planning to Envision and Mobilize Actions for Improvement?

We spent most of the improvement planning portion brainstorming ideas, a few of which would make it into our improvement plan, and discussing things we wished for, but didn’t have
the resources for, or much control over. In response to the academic data, we brainstormed ideas for helping students in the Hope program transition more successfully into the 9th grade academically and socially. We also brainstormed ideas for providing the parents of incoming 9th grade students with information to help them support their children as they transition into 9th grade. Many of us thought that a summer bridge program would be ideal for our incoming 9th grade students, but it didn’t seem feasible given the costs for staffing and transportation. This was extremely frustrating to me given our conversations about 9th grade students’ grades, attendance, and academic performance. I believed, and most of us agreed that this would help our incoming 9th grade students to learn about the school, including expectations, and establish relationships before the school year starts.

To address our earlier acknowledgement that some parents of students in the Hope program lack information about our academic program and information about who they should contact at the school for different types of assistance, Vivian and Estelle asked our team questions about our parent information sessions and other family programs to help us think about how we could expand them to target the parents of incoming 9th grade students from the Hope program. I advocated, with support from Vivian and Estelle, for adding parent information sessions in Urbanville. The teacher leaders were less enthusiastic about this idea. After a few minutes of me trying to explain why I thought it was a good idea, Mr. Callahan recommended that we revisit the idea at a later date. I was dismayed by the fact that our teachers baulked at the idea of going to Urbanville to talk with our families. I was more disappointed that Mr. Callahan remained quiet during their resistance. I felt that his silence was communicating tacit agreement with the teachers’ reluctance to meet with our students in their home communities. The facial
expression and shoulder shrug that Estelle Johnson made when I made eye contact with her let
to know that she understood my frustration.

Vivian Dones and Estelle Johnson helped our team plan on ways to reduce the racial
animosity that the students in the Hope program face by leading a discussion on different
trainings that they could provide, or help coordinate, that would help mitigate the racial animus
of some suburban students and families. During this part of the conversation, we revisited some
of the incidents that we discussed earlier, including the incident involving Jose and Fred. It was
at this point that Estelle Johnson reminded us that none of the students sought out any staff
members to help them when they were subjected to racist name-calling by suburban students.
Estelle suggested that we consider adding a goal and action steps to help the school hire more
staff of color, based on the belief that students would feel more comfortable going to a person of
color when these types of situations occur, and because I was one of the two staff members of
color, I am often extended to the point that students do not always have access to me at a
moment’s notice. “I know that I’ve been told by multiple teachers that our students are more
open with Ms. Malone and me,” Estelle stated. Although I agreed with the idea and had talked
with Estelle about it in the past, I was glad that Estelle was the one to bring it up to the team.
Ms. Sanders, the 12th grade teacher leader declared, “I am not against the idea of hiring more
teachers of color, but I don’t think a teacher has to be a minority to build a good relationship with
students of color.” I responded, “Nobody is saying that white teachers can’t build good
relationships with students of color. We’re saying that it is easier for some students of color to
build trusting relationships with staff of color.” Mr. Callahan agreed that we should have a goal
to hire more staff of color. He was well aware that our student population was a little more than
60% white, while our teaching staff was approximately 91% white. Mr. Callahan made a point
to stress that the goal of hiring more staff of color needed to be a long-term goal, because we weren’t anticipating many vacancies in the coming school year.

In response to the teacher referral data, Estelle and Vivian also helped us think about different professional development sessions for teachers to help them build better relationships with the students from the Hope program. We would be able to cover the cost for most of the professional development from the state grant we received as part of the Project Hope program. We agreed that we might have to hold off on some of the trainings if the costs exceeded the grant. Despite this possibility, Vivian Dones seemed pleased by the team’s commitment to include the professional development sessions and offered a point of comparison that some of us were familiar with, “Many schools don’t invest any of their grant funds in professional development.” I had heard this before and asked, “Why does the state let them get away with this?” Estelle Johnson responded, “Look around the room. There are a bunch of districts and schools that have never attended these meetings. Most of them don’t have someone like you to be a liaison between the school and the parents and students in the program.” In one of the rare moments of agreement between Ms. Miller and me during this meeting, Ms. Miller professed, “The state should do something about that. All of the schools should at least have a liaison.” Vivian Dones responded, “They should have a lot more than that.”.

By the time we finished discussing the things we thought the state should do, and the things we wished the state would do to help our school and other schools support the students in the Hope program, the meeting was just about over. Although we had identified some actions to help us make improvements that would help the students in the Hope program, our improvement planning was incomplete. This was indicative of our past efforts to identify improvements to support students in the Hope program. I left feeling conflicted. I was somewhat hopeful because
we finally had concrete plans on partnering with Estelle and Vivian next school year, but I also knew that most of the ideas we discussed that would address the biggest challenges that Hope students face at WUH would remain as ideas, yet again.

This chapter presented CRT counterstories that narrate aspects of the phenomenon based on the perspective and experiences of people of color. The counterstories make evident: the types of interactions that students of color experience in PWS, the ways their experiences shape their conceptions related to the beliefs held by their suburban peers, teachers, and leaders about the standing that students of color have in the school community, and the limited awareness that leaders sometimes have about the experiences and perceptions of students of color; the uncertainty and apprehension that principals sometimes feel when engaging in conversations with staff about racial bias, and racism; and the tension that sometimes exists between staff of color and White staff in PWS, especially in discussions about the school’s role in supporting students of color and their families. The next chapter discusses the significance of the study findings, with consideration for how the phenomenon is experienced by people of color, and implications for further research.
CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This final chapter summarizes the findings from this study; discusses connections between the findings, the literature reviewed, and the Critical Race counterstories; and discusses implications for future scholarship and practice.

Overview of Study

This study concerns principals in predominately-White suburban schools (PWS) that participate in a state desegregation program (Project Hope) and staff members from Educational Support Organizations (ESO) that support students of color, their parents, and the staff in these schools. More specifically, this study was designed to gain an understanding of the efforts these principals and ESO staff make to understand the perceptions of students of color; the ways they address the negative perceptions held by students of color; the practices they implement to support students of color; the barriers that prevent them from implementing practices that support students of color; and the guidance and support they feel they need to better implement practices that support students of color in PWS. The design of this study was informed by a phenomenological research method. Five principals in predominately-White suburban schools that participate in the Project Hope program designed to educate students of color, and four ESO staff members that work with the students, families and staff that participate in Project Hope were interviewed between July and September 2018 to provide data for this study. This study collected and analyzed principal and ESO staff member accounts of what they reported about their experiences relevant to this inquiry and identified 10 findings. The composite counterstories for this study were created as composite counterstories to depict situations that illustrate some of the key findings from this study, thereby centering the voices and experiences of people of color. The counterstories are written based on occurrences similar to those
described by the participants of this study, however, they are told with the sensibilities of the students, families, and staff of color that experience these interactions.

The following section will reexamine the findings and discuss them with the benefit of the relevant scholarship presented in Chapter 2, in addition to the Critical Race counterstories that are presented in Chapter 5.

Discussion of Findings

Findings 1–3 and Their Connections to Literature and Counterstories

Findings 1–3 encapsulate how participants become informed about the perceptions of student of color and the ways they respond to the negative perceptions held by students of color about their school experiences. The findings show that participants enact proactive strategies that are both impromptu and pre-planned, but often find out about the perceptions and experiences of students of color only while in the midst of reacting to student and/or parent complaints about perceived racial bias. The analysis also showed that when participants become aware of the negative perceptions of students of color, their responses vary depending on circumstances. In some instances, they might be intervening supervisors confronting staff members suspected of unfairly addressing or treating a student. At other times they may operate as institutional functionaries by relaying information to others with higher authority to address the matter at hand. For some circumstances, they respond as interpersonal facilitators by arranging mediations, encouraging student self-advocacy, and making efforts to clarify misconceptions about racial biases.

The frequency by which participants reported negative perceptions held by students of color related to perceived racial bias is consistent with the literature reviewed for this study as many students of color whose voices are reported in empirical studies in the literature reviewed
shared that they often felt misunderstood and believed that they were treated unfairly compared to their White peers (Eaton, 2001; Wells & Crain, 1997).

Contrasting participants’ reliance on reactive ways to find out about the perspectives of students of color, the literature reviewed for this study submits that the implementation of proactive strategies to learn about the perceptions of students of color can help school staff build positive relationships with students, provide educators with insight into how best to facilitate students’ learning, allow students to help schools foster positive learning cultures within schools, and help educators understand how to counter the discrimination and exclusion students face in their schooling experiences (Cook-Sather, 2009, pp. 238–240; Rennie Center, 2019, p. 4). The literature reviewed also contends that student voice, and the active pursuit by educators to listen for the student perspective, has the potential to greatly inform meaningful change within the education system as students’ perspectives can provide important insight into the strengths and challenges of an initiative or system, and advises further that disregarding these perspectives will leave educators with only a partial picture of life in classrooms and schools and how they can be improved (Cook-Sather, 2009, p. 3; Rennie Center, 2019, p. 4).

The counterstories in Chapter 5 illustrate this paradigm in the ways they portray the realities that students of color experience, compared to what staff members understand about students’ experiences without making intentional efforts to listen closely to students’ perspectives. The first counterstory, which provides an enhanced depiction of the classroom interactions that led to Jose and Fred being suspended from school, illustrates how inattentive school staff can be to the negative interactions Hope students experience. Similarly, the second counterstory brings to life the team’s inability to see a connection between students’ sense of belonging and student attendance; and their incuriosity about how negative peer interactions and
the unfair treatment by some teachers have an impact on student behavioral data. The counterstory makes vivid the earlier analysis showing the team’s insufficient awareness of student perspectives and the team’s unreadiness to plan meaningful improvements for students of color. The relevant scholarship and the counterstories reinforce Findings 1–3 about the problems that arise when educators are unfamiliar with student perspectives and hold incomplete pictures of students’ classroom and school experiences. More specifically, Findings 1–3 alongside the scholarship and the counterstories show how unfamiliarity with students’ perceptions and incomplete pictures contribute to the continuation of racial injustice in schools.

Findings 4–6 and Their Connections to Literature and Counterstories

Findings 4–6 delineate the practices that participants implement to support students of color. The findings indicate that principals and ESO staff enact practices that are devised to provide direct support to students of color and their families, including supplemental academic support services, youth development opportunities, and staffing to support students’ social emotional learning, arrange for and/or facilitate professional development that is intentionally designed to build teachers’ capacity to effectively support students of color, and that principals seek opportunities within existing school structures, such as data teaming and advisory programs, to focus specific attention on students of color, while acknowledging that leveraging these processes does not result in adjustments or programmatic changes that increase support for students of color who have difficulties.

Consistent with Finding 4 regarding participants’ reports of making intentional efforts to provide social emotional learning supports, enhancing family engagement, and fostering youth development opportunities for students of color, and Finding 5 regarding participants’ utilization of their advisory programs to help students of color to build relationships with their peers, the
literature reviewed for this study underscores the importance of providing community building opportunities such as schoolwide activities that explore similarities and differences within and across racial groups, and intentional efforts to foster positive equal-status intergroup relations in pursuit of common goals through activities such as extracurricular clubs that bring students together from different racial groups for cooperative interactions as a way of effectively supporting students of color in PWS (Allport, 1954; Henze et al., 2002; Holland, 2012; Moody, 2001; Tatum, 1999).

Consistent with Finding 6 about participants’ reports of arranging for and/or facilitating professional development designed to build teachers’ capacity to effectively support students of color, the literature reviewed for this study contends that teachers’ knowledge about cultural diversity is essential to meeting the educational needs of racially and ethnically diverse students and that part of this knowledge includes developing a culturally diverse knowledge base by looking at one’s own attitudes, understanding the cultural characteristics and contributions of different racial and ethnic groups, designing culturally relevant curricula by being conscious of and using the power of curricula to help transmit important information and values about racial and cultural diversity; building communities among learners in which the well-being of the group is prioritized over individuals; building effective cross-cultural communications by learning how to interpret students’ cultural codes to teach them more effectively; and delivering culturally responsive instruction by learning how to match teaching practices to the learning styles of students from racially and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Brown, 2007; Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Nieto, 2004). Providing teachers with professional development opportunities to build their capacity to effectively support students of color is portrayed in the counterstories provided in Chapter 5. It is depicted in the first counterstory by Mr. Callahan’s
agreement with Estelle Johnson and Vivian Dones to allow the ESO to arrange multiple professional development opportunities for teachers in response to the unfair treatment and racial incidents experienced by students of color. This approach is described in the first counterstory when Mr. Callahan requests support from the ESO in facilitating professional development in response to the racial incident, and in the second counterstory during the improvement planning section when the team identifies professional development as a strategy to help teachers learn how to build positive relationships with students of color in response to teacher referral data. A caution about professional development is also provided by Estelle Johnson in the first counterstory related to the ineffectiveness of ad hoc trainings provided by outside consultants that fail to impact meaningful change in schools because the professional development isn’t led by school leaders and their leadership teams. Estelle Johnson’s conviction that school leaders play a fundamental role in leading school-wide change and learning related to creating inclusive school communities is supported by Theoharis and Haddix’s (2013) study of six White urban principals. The study found that the six principals were successful in raising student achievement, increasing access to core learning opportunities for marginalized communities, improving curriculum and teaching practices, and creating a climate where students, staff, and families had a strong sense of belonging because the principals: saw issues of race as a core part of their work to create more equitable and just schools, did individual intellectual and emotional work about issues of race, discussed issues of race with their staffs, learned about issues of race with their staff, and used race related data to inform their leadership practices (pp. 1–18).

Contrasting with Finding 5 regarding principals’ reports on the utilization of existing school structures to focus attention on students of color but failing to affect meaningful programmatic changes, the literature reviewed for this study argues that culturally proficient
leaders, and schools that effectively support students of color: make deliberate school adaptations that affirm students’ identities such as ensuring cultural representation within school curricula, increasing staff diversity, and establishing safe spaces and periodic opportunities for students of color to discuss their situations in same-race groupings with one another and with mentors who belong to the same racial groups (Gandara, 2008; Hawley, 2007; Irizarry, 2015; Lindsey et al., 1999; Magno & Schiff, 2010; Nieto, 1999). The data analysis and improvement planning sections of the second counterstory depict the school team’s engagement in the analysis, discussion, and debate about the systemic and school-based challenges faced by students of color, and some possible solutions to help improve students’ school experiences. Although the team discusses meaningful adaptations such as summer transition programs, parent sessions for HOPE families in their home communities, increasing staff diversity, stronger state oversight, without a well-grounded plan or concrete action steps, they fail to operationalize them for a variety of reasons. This is consistent with participants reports.

**Findings 7–10 and Their Connections to Literature and Counterstories**

Findings 7–10 describe the factors that hinder participants from effectively supporting students of color and the things participants identify that will help them better support students of color. Participants assert that stakeholder attitudes have a negative impact on their ability to effectively support students of color. Participants described dispositions that include the negative racial biases of some suburban residents, racial bias and low academic expectations from some suburban teachers, and the indifference of some district leaders. To counter these ways of thinking, participants expressed a need for diversity trainings for suburban parents, students, and teachers, clearer state expectations, and requirements for explicit commitments
from district leaders, as well as state-determined and enforced minimum standards of support for students of color who attend PWS through the Hope program.

The accounts from participants in which they attribute negative school experiences of students of color to patterns of racial biases and low expectations by teachers in their suburban schools are consistent with the literature reviewed for this study, which elucidates teacher implicit bias as having the potential to negatively impact students of color based on teachers’ propensity to view students of color more negatively than White students, and have lower expectations for students of color, resulting in students of color being treated unfairly (Boser et al., 2014; Gershenson et al., 2015; Gilliam et al., 2016; Lee, 1999; McGrady et al., 2013; Staats et al., 2015). Studies by Eaton (2001) and Wells and Crain (1997) revealed that former students of color who attended PWS often felt misunderstood and treated unfairly compared to their White peers and described experiences that illustrated how adults in their schools had lower expectations for them compared to their White peers, including incidents of inflated grades on classroom assignments and a prevalence of limited guidance and encouragement for the college aspirations of students of color.

The counterstories presented in Chapter 5 render a more plain-spoken glimpse of students’ experiences with biased treatment, as depicted in the events involving Jose and Fred in the first counterstory, including Mr. Callahan’s decision to discipline the teacher, and Mr. Callahan’s chagrin in the second counterstory about witnessing a teacher punish a student of color while ignoring a White student who was demonstrating the same behaviors. These occurrences accentuate how consequential these occurrences are.

When participants maintain that diversity training for teachers may help them recognize their biases and improve their capacity to build positive relationships with students of color, and
that the professional development is most impactful when school leaders are the driving force behind the trainings, their claims align with arguments well established in educational research. The literature asserts teachers’ knowledge about cultural diversity is essential to meeting the educational needs of racially and ethnically diverse students and that part of this knowledge includes developing a culturally diverse knowledge base by looking at one’s own attitudes, understanding the cultural characteristics and contributions of different racial and ethnic groups (Brown, 2007; Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Nieto, 2004). Using teacher professional development in this way is depicted in the first counterstory by Mr. Callahan’s willingness to allow the ESO to provide teachers with multiple professional development opportunities in response to the racial incidents faced by Hope students. This interaction also highlights the ways that principals can help or hinder the utility of such trainings. Utilizing professional development is also portrayed in the second counterstory during the improvement planning section when the team identifies professional development as a strategy to help teachers learn how to build positive relationships with students of color in response to teacher referral data.

Participants’ contentions that they needed clearer state expectations, requirements for explicit commitments from district leaders, and state-determined and enforced minimum standards of support for students of color who attend PWS through the Hope program are congruent with the writings of scholars who recommend that schools should reimagine and rebuild their school communities by making intentional adaptations that help them to embrace and celebrate diversity and proactively support students of color, such as making deliberate efforts to foster positive intergroup relations; building teachers’ capacity to practice culturally proficient teaching; creating programs and other learning opportunities that affirm students identify; increasing the number of staff of color; and implementing a systematic approach to
learn from students’ perspectives; as opposed to the more common approach of expecting students of color to assimilate into the existing culture at PWS (Hawley, 2007; Henze et al., 2002; Holland, 2012; Lindsey et al., 1999; Magno & Schiff, 2010; Moody, 2001; Nieto, 1999; Tatum, 1999). The school adaptations recommended by these scholars to help schools build communities that embrace and celebrate diversity and proactively support students of color are in alignment with participants’ contention that the development of new programs to help students of color build relationships with their suburban peers and help foster a sense of belonging for students of color in their new schools, such as trainings and summer programs designed to help student of color transition into their predominately-White suburban schools, and trainings and programs to help their parents better support them while attending suburban schools, would help leaders better support students of color in the state desegregation program (SDP).

Participants’ reports that students of color in the SDP are forced to experience different daily routines and conditions that separate them from their suburban peers and present challenges that counteract the development of a sense of belonging in their PWS is supported by related studies. Principals and ESO staff described how among other things, unanticipated consequences related to the design of the SDP, such as transportation scheduling that frequently cause students of color to arrive late to school, and sometimes prevent students of color from participating in after school activities, and some school maladaptations such as assigning separate school entrances for students in the SDP, reinforce the propensity that students of color feel like outsiders in their PWS. Studies by Eaton (2001) and Wells and Crain (1997) revealed that students of color in PWS often feel as though they are caught between two worlds: one that included their family, neighborhood friends, family, and their culture, and the other being the norms, expectations and culture at their predominately-White school. Studies also suggested that
students of color struggle to gain social acceptance from their White peers in PWS, which ranged in severity from intentional ostracism to outward racial antagonism (Eaton, 2001; Morgan, 2006; Page, 1997; Wells & Crain, 1997).

The challenge that students of color face in gaining social acceptance from their White peers in PWS is depicted in the first counterstory through the experiences of Jose and Fred comprised of the racial taunting they experienced leading up to and including the classroom interactions that resulted in their suspensions from school. The need for programming and other supports to help students of color establish social connections is depicted in the second counterstory during the improvement planning portion when the team discusses the need to reduce the racial animosity that students face, the desire for improving the transition programming, increasing the number of staff of color, and trainings for teachers. The second counterstory also conveys the impact that activities that foster intergroup relations, such as sports have on students of color in PWS through Ms. Malone’s reflections during the data analysis portion of the end-of-year meeting when she silently expressed the conviction that students of color in the Hope program who are able to participate in sports and other activities have a stronger sense of belonging compared to other students in the program who do not participate in the activities.

The discussion of the study’s findings in relation to the literature reviewed on the research topic and the narratives depicted in the Critical Race counterstories highlight the pervasive need for improved school-based practices and a need for further studies to help schools provide better learning experiences for students of color in PWS, including students who participate in desegregation programs. The following section will discuss the implications for future scholarship and the implications for practice.
Implications for Scholarship

At What Cost?

The literature on the experiences of students of color that attend PWS discussed benefits for students that include, positive peer pressure to attend college, being better prepared for and feeling more comfortable in predominately-White spaces as adults (Eaton, 2001; Wells & Crain, 1997), higher high school graduation rates, and higher rates of college attendance (Angrist & Lang, 2004; Mickelson, 2002; Wells & Crain 1997). The literature also identified the challenges that students face when attending PWS including, feelings of being misunderstood and marginalized, feelings of alienation, experiences of being treated unfairly and being held to lower expectations, and feelings of being caught in between two worlds (Eaton, 2001; Wells & Crain, 1997). The challenges described in the literature are consistent with the findings of this study, which suggest that a variety of factors affect the capacity of some leaders in PWS to plan for and employ approaches that effectively support students of color who attend PWS schools, resulting in students of color feeling mistreated and unsupported. The data from this study that support this assertion include participant reports outlined in Finding 2, which describes participants’ frequent reliance on reactive approaches to become informed about how students of color perceive their school experiences, in most cases, in response to incidents or conflicts that involved students of color. Additionally, participant reports in Finding 3 regarding how participants respond to the negative perceptions of students of color, illustrate multiple occurrences of complaints from students of color and/or their parents about unfair treatment based on race. Although participants often disagreed with the racial characterization provided by students of color and their parents, as indicated by multiple participant reports that they respond by trying to persuade students and parents that race did not play a role in the situation, the
frequency with which these reports are mentioned by participants suggest that students of color feel mistreated based on their race. Finding 3 also shows that multiple participants reported that they respond to students’ complaints about prejudicial treatment by encouraging students of color to advocate for themselves, by themselves, to the teacher or staff member that was reported to have treated them unfairly. The combination of multiple participants reports of responding to complaints of racially biased treatment by trying to convince students of color and their parent to see that race was not a factor in the incident, and multiple participants’ reports that they encourage students of color to advocate for themselves in response to complaints about racially biased treatment, suggest that some leaders have insufficient awareness and understanding about the impact of racism on students of color and how to recognize and respond to racial bias and racism.

As described above, most of the benefits described in the literature that are experienced by students of color that attend PWS are related to students’ academic achievement in relation to students of color that do not attend PWS, and students’ perceptions on their ability to navigate in predominately-White spaces. Each of these benefits are extremely important. The challenges described in the literature that students of color face when attending predominantly-White schools, which is consistent with the findings in this study described above, focus on the experiences that students encounter while attending school, but rarely, with a few exceptions, provide information about the longer-term negative impact of these experiences beyond students’ high school and college experiences. Although improved academic outcomes and an improved ability to navigate within White spaces are important considerations, especially in the context of school and employment experiences, it is also important that at the conclusion of their
experiences in PWS, students of color have a healthy perception of themselves, buttressed by an awareness of and positive regard for their racial identity.

Eaton’s (2001) study on the experiences of students of color who attended PWS through the Massachusetts-based Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity (METCO) program surveyed the perspectives of former participants in the program about the impact of their school experiences on their racial identity development (pp. 170–196). Included in the reports about the 65 participants were the following themes: (a) their experiences in the METCO program made the processes of racial identity development more confusing; (b) their experiences made the desire for immersion into their culture and into same-race groupings more intense because of a desire to get away from predominately-White settings; (c) for some, the experiences helped them form their own understanding about their racial identity without the stereotypes imposed by others; and (d) for others, their experiences in PWS damaged their self-esteem and caused longstanding resentment (pp. 172–187). For some in this latter group of former participants in the METCO program, the experiences in PWS caused them to internalize negative beliefs, fostered feelings of shame about their communities, and even distance themselves from their families and culture (pp. 183–185). A relevant anecdote of the interplay between race and identity for students of color in PWS from this study was provided by ESO staff Shannon Pierce when describing a conversation she had with the mother of a student of color who attended a predominately-White elementary school in the SDP:

But the student came home and said she didn't like being black. She wanted to be white. And the mother was extremely upset and said, "I always pour positive aspirations on my daughter. Tell her that she's beautiful..." So she was very disturbed that her daughter was
coming home saying that she was, in essence, didn't like being black. (S. Pierce, August, 2018)

In order to understand the extent to which adults who attended PWS have healthy perceptions of themselves, including a positive regard for their racial identity, which would allow for a more complete cost-benefit analysis of desegregation programs such as Project Hope, More in-depth longitudinal studies that include multiple participants across different programs and communities should be conducted on how the experiences of students of color that attend PWS impact their self-perceptions including their perceptions about their racial identity.

**Personal Experiences with Racial Identity Development**

Considering the ways that attending PWS may impact the racial identity development of students of color, and effect their longer-term self-perceptions as discussed in the implications for scholarship above brings to mind my own experiences as a student of color in a PWS. As a student of color attending a predominately-White high school, I experienced the challenges and benefits often described in the literature on this topic. I believe that I experienced short-term and long-term academic and social benefits as a result of my educational experiences in my predominately-White high school, including feeling more comfortable and having an understanding about how to navigate in White spaces. I also remember feeling alienated, being called racial epitaphs, and believing that my closest friends and I experienced interactions with adults that conveyed messages that led us to believe that some staff had lower expectations for us than they did for our White peers; including my personal experience of never having a conversation with a school counselor about attending college, and knowing that most of my White peers had engaged in many conversations, even students who performed at the same level and lower levels than my friends and me. Psychologist and educator Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum
(2017) maintained that a positive sense of one’s cultural identity helps mitigate the alienation and despair endured by people of color in the face of racism (p. 149). This was true for me in my experiences. I benefitted from strong, consistent familial support related to my racial and academic identity development. Different members of my family took intentional steps to affirm my racial identity by teaching me history that my schools didn’t teach, providing me with examples of important Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other people of color, holding me to higher academic expectations than my schools, and providing me with the necessary support and guidance to pursue a post-secondary education. This did not insulate me from dealing with racism, but it absolutely helped me to deal with it. Many students of color in PWS have varying levels of support outside of school for a variety of reasons, which presents specific challenges related to their racial identity development.

Dr. Jean Phinney (1990) outlined three developmental stages in her model of adolescent ethnic identify development: unexamined ethnic identity, when there is a lack of interest or concern with race or ethnicity; ethnic identity search, when individuals seek to make meaning of race or ethnicity for themselves; and achieved racial identity, when individuals have developed a clear confident sense of their own race or ethnicity (p. 503). Tatum (2017) asserted that to arrive at the third stage of achieving racial identify, individuals need to contend with negative stereotypes and resist internalizing negative self-perceptions (pp. 165–166). This can be especially challenging for students of color who attend predominantly-White Schools, given the cultural conflicts that inevitably arise, and the limited number of identity-affirming opportunities provided by schools for students of color.

According to Phinney (1990), students’ cultural attitudes, values, and behaviors change in four possible ways based on the strengthening and/or weakening of their identification with the
majority group and the strengthening and/or weakening of their identification with their own racial or ethnic group: assimilation, withdrawal, biculturalism, and marginalization (pp. 501–502). Tatum (2017) provided examples of this acculturation process with stories about Latinx students responding to the negative stereotypes held by White students, by avoiding being heard speaking in Spanish in order to be seen as more “American” and avoid being seen as one of the “bilingual” students who were perceived by White students as outsiders and unsmart (pp. 139–141). This is an example of what Phinney (1990) described as assimilation, when individuals attempt to strengthen their identification with the majority group and weaken their identification with their own racial or ethnic group (p. 502). Based on the findings of this study, and the literature reviewed, it is commonplace for school leaders and teachers to expect students of color to assimilate into the majority culture, to the detriment of their own racial and ethnic identity development. Irizarry’s (2011) study on the experiences of Latinx high school students exemplified this tendency and illustrated some of the negative ways that this expectation impacts students of color (pp. 4–6). Multiple students in Irizarry’s study described being discouraged from speaking Spanish, being yelled at, and even being immediately sent to the principal’s office for speaking Spanish without provocation (pp. 4–6). Irizarry described the pressure that students felt to assimilate as being omnipresent in students’ lives and explained that the combination of this pressure to conform and the internalization of the racial hierarchy led some students to characterize themselves contrastingly to White students in ways that elevated White culture above their own, such as “We are not smart like the White kids” (p. 4).

The push from schools for students of color to assimilate into the majority culture in PWS ultimately attempts to ascribe White culture on students, at the expense of their own cultural and racial identity development. To better understand the effects of attending PWS on students’
sense of racial, ethnic and cultural (REC) belonging, studies should be conducted to compare the sense of REC belonging for students of color that attend PWS to the sense of REC belonging of students of color that do not attend PWS. It may also be helpful to compare the sense of REC belonging for students of color across PWS in an effort to identify school-level variables that may positively or negatively impact students’ REC belonging in PWS.

**Implications for Practice**

Based on the experiences of participants, it would appear that some state desegregation policies and programs, such as Project Hope, as well as the supporting regulations and guidelines that help administer them were written and designed, in large part, through the lens of a White Racial Frame (WRF). This realization helps us to understand the reoccurring, predictable challenges that students of color face in PWS. Feagin (2013) explained how the WRF views people of color to be of less social, economic, and political importance, and that these racial constructions are deeply entrenched in the United States’ organizations and institutions (p. 141). Feagin (2013) also asserted that it is a common conception of the WRF that bureaucratic organizations such as public schools are suitably White-controlled, White-normed, and slanted toward White interests (p. 141). As discussed previously, when students of color enroll in these White-controlled, White-normed schools, they are ascribed Whiteness by their experiences and the commonly-held belief that they must assimilate into the white dominant cultures of their schools in order to be successful. Elias and Feagin (2020) asserted that conventional assimilationist perspective has been developed through a WRF, based on a belief that a White-constructed, White-controlled society is an ideal society, while evading critical conversations about the discrimination and systemic racism that prevents people of color from equal access to the same opportunities as White people (pp. 40–41). Elias and Feagin (2020) described this
assimilation process of acculturation as a “mostly one-way process of adaptation to a society which is white-controlled and where whites have highly privileged access to resources and power, relative to most people of color” (p. 41). This is an accurate characterization of the experiences of many students of color in PWS as described in this study’s findings, and in the literature reviewed for this study.

The Permanence of Racism in Schools

Race and racism have helped to shape public schooling in the United States throughout the nation’s history. This includes periods of legalized racial segregation, followed by overt and covert resistance to legally mandated racial integration. There have been periods of meaningful integration efforts in many parts of the nation that resulted in integrated schools that produce divergent experiences for students of color, followed by re-segregation in many areas as a result of the decision by many White families to move to predominately-White communities that would allow their children to attend PWS and/or send their children to private schools that are predominately-White. The political and personal sentiments that influenced the systematic and individual responses to federal and state legal decisions related to school desegregation across the country suggest that racial biases and racism persist as important factors when considering the educational experiences of students of color. Evidence of this was found within multiple anecdotes provided by the participants of this study, and demonstrated by the fact that 16 of the 17 reported responses that participants shared related to the negative perceptions of SOC were related to complaints of racial bias.

State Policies

The principal and ESO staff participants in this study described the ways that they engage with and support the students of color who attend PWS through the state’s desegregation
program in ways that suggest that the guidance and oversight that they receive from the state focuses primarily on the logistical considerations that facilitate the processes to enable students of color to attend PWS such as the number of students from the State Desegregation Program (SDP) they will enroll, the lottery process for selecting students, the financial implications for enrolling students, and transportation; and very little guidance and oversight regarding how to support students of color who attend PWS. The findings of this study are limited to the understandings and/or descriptions provided by the participants of this study and as such, do not suggest that the state does not provide oversight and guidance on how to support the students of color in the SDP, however, the understanding of the participants in this study is consistent across each participant and across participant type, which warrants meaningful consideration. The findings present potential implications for state departments of education related to the policies, regulations, and guidelines that are created to administrate desegregation efforts, including programs that enable students of color to attend PWS, as it relates to the type of guidance that districts and schools receive related to bringing students together from different backgrounds, and creating inclusive school communities.

Participants in this study expressed a belief that an increased level of state oversight was needed in order to compel participating suburban communities to re-envision their schools in ways that support students of color. ESO participants opined that increased oversight, through improved policies and accountability processes, would address the inconsistencies in the levels of support that students of color are provided across the PWS that participate in the SDP and help to ensure a minimum standard of support for students of color. ESO staff also posited that increased state oversight could require explicit plans that mandate leaders and teachers in participating schools participate in relevant trainings to help them better support students of color
instead of viewing the trainings as optional and ensure that schools and districts hire staff to serve as liaisons between PWS, ESOs, and students and families of color. Principal participants also conveyed a desire for state oversight that require explicit commitments from districts that would help school leaders establish a sustained vision and maintain plans for supporting students of color, instead of being forced to deprioritize such efforts because of changes in district leadership that results in new district leaders that may not share the same beliefs related to supporting students of color.

These findings, and the related scholarship suggest that absent meaningful oversight and/or clear guidance on how schools can best support students of color in the SDP, school leaders in these PWS may be forced to navigate on their own within their respective district and community contexts, based on their own understandings, beliefs, and professional capacities, to lead school communities that can effectively support students of color, and ESO staff members are forced to contend with the idiosyncratic choices made by leaders across multiple districts and schools in an effort to partner with and encourage district and school leaders implement strategies that effectively support students of color in the SDP. These findings present policy-related practice implications for state boards of education and state departments of education as it relates to the extent to which state policies and guidelines go beyond logistical considerations related to desegregation efforts, including, but not limited to, whether they include measures to ensure long-term district commitments and minimum standards of support for students of color in PWS.

**Leadership Preparation and Development**

Even with clear guidance and support from state departments of education and school districts, and especially without such guidance, the findings of this study related to leaders’
experiences in supporting students of color in PWS, and their experiences with racial bias and
racism point to potential implications for school leaders in PWS, district leaders in
predominately-White school districts, and institutions of higher education with school leadership
development programs.

Each of the participants in this study recounted stories of racial incidents and complaints
of racism by students of color in the SDP. Some participants in this study described being
surprised by the nature of some of the racial incidents that occurred, and most participants were
convinced that these types of incidents had increased in recent years. These experiences are
consistent with scholars’ accounts of the experiences of students of color who attend PWS across
the county since the early days of school desegregation in the United States. Participants’
perceptions that racial incidents appear to be increasing is supported in the findings of two
studies conducted by the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC). In their 2016 study, Costello
described the increasing number of incidents that involved racial slurs, bigotry and harassment
that was reported by over half of the teacher respondents to a survey (p. 4). In a 2019 SPLC
study, questionnaire respondents reported 3,265 incidents in the fall of 2018 alone (Costello &
Dillard, 2019, p. 5). The study found that more than two-thirds of respondents witnessed an
incident categorized as being related to hate or bias, and 63% of these incidents were identified
as being race-based hate or bias (p. 5).

Despite these realities, participants in this study shared that they relied principally on
reactive ways to become aware about the perspectives of students of color, most often when a
students or parent lodges a complaint after an incident occurs. Participants also acknowledged
that the complaints only account for the incidents that students and/or parents were willing to
report, as they recognized that some incidents go unreported. Participants also revealed that in
response to some of the reported racial incidents, they encourage students to advocate for themselves, such as having a student talk directly to the teacher that the student believed treated them unfairly because of their race, and most frequently, participants shared that they responded to complaints about racism by attempting to help the students and/or parents involved to understand that racism is not actually the motivation for the behaviors that are in question. Participants’ reports on how they respond to complaints about racism are also consistent with the SPLC study, which found that most of the incidents were not addressed by school leaders, 90% of administrators failed to condemn the bias, and no one was disciplined in almost 60% of the incidents (Costello & Dillard, 2019, p. 5).

Despite many participants’ efforts to convince students of color that racism isn’t as much of a factor in their school experiences as some students and parents believe, principal participants in this study acknowledged a need for additional professional development that would help their staff: (a) employing growth mindsets as it relates to their students of color, (b) become culturally competent, and (c) understand implicit bias and the ways it impacts students of color. Principal participants did not provide rationale to explain what prevents them from facilitating and/or arranging for the additional professional development opportunities for their staff however, two principal participants did indicate that they believed that professional development related to racial bias and cultural competency needed to be provided by someone other than themselves to legitimize the purpose for the training. This may also speak to principals’ beliefs about their own understandings related to racial bias and cultural competency, and their capacity to frame the purpose for and facilitate the relevant professional development.

The findings from this study, in combination with the related scholarship on the topic allude to practice implications for consideration for school leaders in PWS, for administrators of
leadership development programs, and for district leaders in predominately-White school
districts related to the extent to which school leaders and/or leadership candidates are provided
with opportunities to build their understanding about the impact of racial biases and racism on
the educational experiences of students of color, and the practices and strategies that help prepare
for and mitigate them. PWS where there is an attempt to desegregate

Recommendations

The recommendations for practice that follow are informed by the findings of this study,
the related scholarship, and the implications discussed above. The first recommendation,
regarding building the capacity of school leaders to lead predominately-White schools (PWS)
that effectively support students of color, is most relevant for institutions of higher education,
district leaders that plan for and facilitate professional development for school leaders,
educational support organizations (ESOs) that provide professional development for school
leaders, and school leaders in PWS and/or schools where there is an increase in student diversity.
The second recommendation, concerning the development of inclusive school environments that
are designed to support students of color in PWS, is most relevant for school leaders and other
staff in PWS and ESO staff that support students of color and staff in PWS.

Develop Antiracist School Leaders

The findings in this study suggest that some leaders in PWS possess a limited awareness
about the ways that racism impacts the school experiences of students of color, and an
inadequate understanding about the approaches for building inclusive school communities that
effectively support diverse student populations. This is supported by participant reports
discussed in Finding 2, which indicate that principals and ESO staff often become aware about
how students of color discern their school experiences after hearing student complaints resulting
from their involvement in a conflict, as opposed to ongoing proactive approaches. Principals’ insufficient understanding and/or lack of confidence related to discussing race and racism is supported by participant reports discussed in Finding 3 that show that participants often respond to complaints by students of color about racially biased treatment by encouraging students to advocate for themselves directly to the subject of their complaint, and further by the reports from all participants in Finding 3 that show that participants often respond to complaints by students of color about racially biased treatment by trying to persuade the students and/or parents that race did not factor into the incident in question. The findings from this study and the relevant scholarship on the topic suggest a need for intentional efforts to build the capacity of school leaders to lead inclusive racially diverse school communities that effectively support diverse student populations.

The literature reviewed for this study details the racist backlash that followed the efforts to desegregate schools in the United States, and describes the marginalization, unfair treatment, and blatant acts of racism endured by students of color who attended PWS. Each of the participants in this study shared similar stories regarding students of color in the Hope Program. Some participants in this study described being surprised by the nature of some of the racial incidents that occurred, and most participants were convinced that these types of incidents had increased in recent years. This sentiment is supported by research conducted in two studies by the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC). In their 2016 study, Costello described the increasing number of incidents that involved racial slurs, bigotry and harassment that was reported by over half of the teacher respondents to a survey (p. 4). In a 2019 SPLC study, questionnaire respondents reported 3,265 incidents in the fall of 2018 alone (Costello & Dillard, 2019, p. 5). The study found that more than two-thirds of respondents witnessed an incident categorized as
being related to hate or bias, and 63% of these incidents were identified as being race-based hate or bias (p. 5). The study’s reports on the actions of school leaders in response to the incidents are also disturbing. The study found that most of the incidents were not addressed by school leaders, 90% of administrators failed to condemn the bias, and no one was discipline in almost 60% of the incidents (p. 5). This predominance of inaction is even more troubling we consider Brook and Watson’s (2019) assertion that both the racial act and the way that the system responds to the act combine to deal a double blow in the shaping of a culture of racism (p. 635).

If we are serious about creating school communities that are welcoming and supportive for students of color and provide holistic educational experiences that prepare White students to be well-informed, productive citizens in a diverse country and world, we must consider using CRT or other counter-frames that are rooted in anti-racism and social justice when designing school leadership development programs.

The nonprofit Leadership Learning Community (LLC) works to transform leadership as a means to create a more just and equitable society by rethinking the ways nonprofit leadership development is conceived, conducted, and evaluated (Keleher et al., 2010, p. 2). In their 2010 report, the LLC collaborated with other thought partners in leadership development and racial equity to examine how traditional thinking about leadership, with a focus on individualism, meritocracy, and equal opportunity, frequently contributes to the construction and maintenance of racist practices (Keleher et al., 2010, pp. 2–4). Some of the report’s recommendations for effectively supporting racial justice leadership include: (a) making explicit commitments to racial justice through practices such as diverse staffing, inclusive policies and sharing power in making curriculum decisions, as opposed to focusing solely on diversity or anti-discrimination; (b) being accountable for outcomes related to racial justice including accountability for improved
outcomes for different racial groups over time, the extent to which race becomes less of a predictor for how some people progress, and a community’s increasing levels of understanding of how privilege and oppression determine opportunities; (c) providing leaders with access to tools and resources that support them in making racial justice an intentional part of planning and decision-making in their leadership work including developing individual confidence and knowledge to engage in ongoing inquiry that seeks to understand: who benefits from the way things are done, what power dynamics that are at play, which facets of their organization works to create inequalities, whose voices are at the table and whose are not, and what cultural lenses are used to interpret policies, practices, and experiences; (d) incorporate racial justice training into leadership development strategies including an examination of structural racism and the development of skills and approaches for advancing organizational change and racial equity; (e) support the development of systems thinking and analysis to help identify the leverage points that can disrupt a system’s ability to maintain itself and repel attempts to make change; (f) provide conducive spaces, time, and processes for talking about race, racial/ethnic identity that provide safe environments for participants to make meaning of individual and collective experiences, and provide opportunities for participants to learn and transform their thoughts and feelings, and support healing; (g) promote inclusive models of leadership that reframes leadership as a process that allows individuals and groups to align their values and mission, build relationships, organize and take action, and learn from each other as they work to achieve their shared goals; (h) provide resources, networks, and development opportunities to groups that have been historically disadvantaged that acknowledges that people of color may require very different support structures than White people, as opposed to traditional programs that assume equal opportunity without considering what is needed to address historical disadvantage; and (i)
adequately funding leadership programs and strategies that promote racial justice (Keleher et al., 2010, pp. 7–9).

Professor Gerardo Lopez (2003) maintained that educators who are responsible for preparing school leaders have an obligation to engage in dialogue about race and racism in the United States, and a moral duty to interrogate systems, frameworks and leadership models that privilege certain groups and elevate their perspectives over others (p. 70). Lopez also contended that most educator preparation programs in the United States do very little to build future leaders’ knowledge base about racism, its impact on the lives of people of color, and the ways it traverses their school experiences (p. 70). As a result of these types of omissions in school leader preparation programs, Young and Laible (2000) argued that educational leaders and White educators lack a sufficient conception of racism in its many forms, nor do they understand the ways that they perpetuate racism in their schools, despite their good intentions (p. 375). Theoharis and Haddix’s (2013) study of six White principals who were successful in raising student achievement, increasing access to core learning opportunities for marginalized communities, improving curriculum and teaching practices, and creating a climate where students, staff, and families had a strong sense of belonging, found that each of the principals saw issues of race as a core part of their work to create more equitable and just schools, did individual intellectual and emotional work about issues of race, discussed issues of race with their staffs, learned about issues of race with their staff, and used race related data to inform their leadership practices (pp. 1–18). The study also detailed the different paths that the principals took to arrive at a point where they began to see issues of race as a core part of their work, and in each case, it was the result of their individual experiences and commitments that were informed by others, but not informed by their leadership development programs.
A foundational tenet of CRT is the belief that racism serves as the standard way of doing business in the United States and that it is a part of the everyday experience of most people of color (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 7). Acceptance of this belief requires one to abandon the “colorblind,” “post-racial” ideology of the WRF and embrace a more realistic understanding of how race and racism impacts our lives. Bell (1992) termed this realistic view on race relations as “racial realism” and insisted that it is a requirement in the struggle for justice (pp. 89–108).

To illustrate his point, Bell emphasized how equality rules benefit White people by helping them to maintain their benevolent but inaccurate self-image, benefits Black people by helping preserve their hopes for change, all while the discrimination that the rules were designed to combat continues, although sometimes in an evolved form (pp. 98–102). Utilizing CRT or another antiracist frame that employs “racial realism” to guide in the development/revisioning of leadership development programs will help prepare leaders with the capacity to establish learning environments that effectively support students of color, whether in PWS, or in schools that are comprised of a majority population of students of color.

Create Inclusive and Supportive School Environments

The participant reports discussed in Finding 9 regarding the things principals and ESO staff say they need to better support students of color reveal that participants convey a need for more conscious efforts to help students of color establish and reinforce social connections that can help to foster a sense of belonging in their predominately-White suburban schools. The degree to which students engage academically and socially in school is impacted by their feelings of belonging, their social acceptance, and social support. These factors are essential considerations for educators who are responsible for educating students of color in PWS. School leaders and teachers in PWS should implement specific practices to help establish supportive,
welcoming school environments for students of color, including intentional efforts that affirm students’ identity.

*Provide Cocooning Opportunities*

Contrary to the belief that it is antiracist to ignore students’ race, Gandara (2008) contended that it is far more beneficial to students of color, to cluster students periodically by race for social, academic, and counseling supports, especially when students stand out as visible minorities, as is the case in PWS (p. 44). Gandara reported further that when these supportive “cocooning” opportunities are guided by mentoring adults from the same racial group as students of color, they can provide safe spaces for students’ positive identity development and help mitigate the feelings of marginalization that students feel in PWS (pp. 44–45). I would add, as is discussed in the findings of this study, that they can also provide important opportunities for students of color to share their perceptions about their school experiences, which can help schools understand how to better support them, and other students.

*Explore Internalized Oppression*

Participant reports discussed in Finding 8 regarding the factors that impede their capacity to effectively support students of color indicate that some participants maintain that the low academic expectations of some students of color and their parents inhibit principal and ESO staff efforts to educate students of color in their PWS. The review of scholarship related to the topic of this study suggest that affirming the identities of students of color in PWS should include opportunities to explore internalized oppression and the ways that it may affect students’ beliefs about their academic abilities. David and Derthick (2014) described how experiencing oppression over generations can result in people from marginalized groups internalizing the messages of inferiority they receive about their group membership, which can lead to individuals
acting out these negative stereotypes and intragroup fragmentation (pp. 8–10). Valenzuela (2008) recommended that educators learn about internalized oppression and provide students with opportunities to write and talk about their experiences of being denigrated or denigrating others based on their race and/or ethnicity (p. 53). One example Valenzuela provided is a classroom discussion that involves the teacher talking with students about the media depictions of their group, and how these images can affect students’ sense of themselves and others (p. 53).

**Increase Staff Diversity**

The participant reports discussed in Finding 9 regarding what principals and ESO staff believe is needed to better support the students of color in the SDP show that participants assert that increasing the number of staff of color in PWS would help students of color to foster a stronger sense of belonging in their schools. Some participants concluded that students of color are more willing to engage in open and honest dialogue with teachers of color, and that students of color have better educational experiences in the schools that have a more diverse staff. The scholarship related to topic of this topic supports this recommendation for a variety of reasons. Tatum (1999) asserted that in addition to the need for students to see images of themselves in curriculum and programming, students also need to be able to see themselves among the faculty and staff at their schools (p. 551). This is consistent with one rationale offered by Sleeter (2007) among the multiple reasons she recommended schools to increase teacher diversity including, teachers of color offer diverse role models for students, having a diverse teacher population provides opportunities for teachers to help educate each other about the backgrounds of students that they are most familiar, and teachers of color are more likely to bring a sense of urgency and commitment to provide students of color with an academically challenging curriculum (pp. 172–173). Henze et al. (2002) identified diverse staffing as an essential approach to improving
interethnic relations in schools because diverse staffing provides diverse role models for diverse students: it demonstrates a society where everyone has access to a variety of school-based positions at every level; it helps to improve communication with students and families of color and increases their access to school; and it provides opportunities for students and staff to learn about different cultures and religions (pp. 85–86).

Engage in Conversations About Race and Racism

The analysis of data in relation to the participant reports discussed in Finding 3 regarding the ways that participants respond to the negative perceptions held by students of color about their school experiences revealed that in 16 of the 17 accounts discussed by participants, principals and ESO staff members described responding to complaints/concerns that were characterized by parents and/or students as unfair treatment based on race. A consistent theme in the literature reviewed for this study, consistent with participants’ reports in this study, is the occurrence of racial incidents, the wide variance in leaders’ understanding about the incidents, and uncertainty and disagreement in the interpretation of the underlying causes that lead up to the incidents. Guided by the CRT principle that racism is an everyday part of life, PWS, and all schools, should expect, do preemptive planning, and be prepared to address racial incidents, and engage in conversations about race and racism. Henze et al. (2002) contended that racial conflicts present opportunities for individual and organizational learning if schools take proactive and reactive steps to understand the root causes of racial conflicts such as segregation, racism, and inequality, and understand the underlying tensions or conflicts such as the exclusion of certain groups and perceptions of unfair treatment across groups, and ultimately work to address the underlying issues while continually keeping a pulse on underlying tensions and students perceptions (pp. 43–52).
The frequency and variety of racial incidents described by participants in this study and explored in the Critical Race counterstories in Chapter 5, as well as participant reports in Finding 2 that show that principals and ESO staff are often made aware of students’ negative perceptions after students’ involvement in conflicts that students believe are racially motivated, illustrate the need for teachers to be able to discuss issues related to race and racism. Blum (2007) recommended that schools design classroom discussions as a way to use racial incidents as teachable moments (pp. 236–241). Blum detailed how carefully planned and facilitated discussions can foster discussions that provide students with opportunity to think critically about the complexities involved in racial incidents across different racial groups and consider how they might take responsibility for addressing inappropriate racial situations (pp. 236–239). Engaging in conversations about race in predominately-White settings requires that efforts are made to foster a safe space for all students. Within the context of predominately-white classrooms, Perry (2007) emphasized the import that White educators reflect on how classroom interactions that feel ordinary and harmless to them may be experienced by students of color as ostracizing and exclusionary (p. 227). Perry recommended that teachers work proactively to create safe spaces where students of color are equally respected and heard, without being othered by using instructional strategies that enable all students to express their views and engage in conversations in nonthreatening ways, and engaging in discussions about race that gives equal time to the positive and negative effects of racism on White people instead of inadvertently singling students of color by focusing solely on racism’s negative impact to them (pp. 227–228).

As student demographics change across the country in suburban and rural schools, it is important that all schools, including predominately-White and all-White schools begin to see race and racism as an important factor for consideration. The findings of this study, the Critical
Race Counterstories in Chapter 5, and the review of the relevant scholarship, including the SPLC (Costello, 2016; Costello & Dillard, 2019) study illustrate the dangers of avoiding attention to this matter, which may include an increase in the number of racial incidents and the reinforcement of a culture of racism. Preparing the students in these schools with a well-informed, accurate understanding of the country and world they live in, and an understanding of the role they play in maintaining or changing it, requires these schools to make conscious efforts to abandon the status quo school canon that perpetuates the myths of a colorblind meritocratic society for one that acknowledges the ways that racism has privileged some while oppressing others, and continues to shape all of our experiences. Unfortunately, race and racism are not considered to be relevant topics in many of these schools because of the perceived lack of relevance in the experiences of the lives of the majority of students and citizens. Tieken (2007) asserted that all-White schools can find the relevance of race and racism by learning about their local history (pp. 200–203). Tieken argued that all-White schools and towns are, based on their racial composition, de facto racial phenomena resulting from a complex combination of “history, economics, choice, coercion, distrust, and prejudice” (p. 200). Tieken further contended that the racial compositions of these schools and towns did not occur naturally, but instead happened as a result of a sequence of historical occurrences and decisions that actively removed or discouraged people of color from living there, including the forced removal of indigenous people, slavery, Jim Crow laws, and racist hiring, lending, and/or transportation practices (p. 200). Tieken posited that learning about these events will help students to think more critically about racial issues and better prepare them to interact more productively with peers of color (p. 201).

Engaging students in conversations about race with students, presents risks, but there are also risks when we avoid engaging in conversations with students about race. In a 2007 study,
Hughes and her coauthors cautioned that educators should be mindful of students’ developmental levels when engaging in discussions about racism and be aware that the emotions that are stirred up will differ for White students, who may feel defensive and guilty, and students of color, who may experience feelings of anger (pp. 1689–1705). One way to balance these experiences for White students is to teach more about White allies. Tatum (2017) stated that students and adults need to be empowered with the vision that change is possible, including, in the context of White students, seeing more representations of White allies who have fought for racial justice throughout United States History (pp. 121–122). This dual representation can help mitigate White students’ feelings of defensiveness and guilt and help them to see themselves as allies for racial justice. Despite the risks that arise when discussing race and racism with students, Hughes and Bigler (2007) concluded that students benefit from learning about racism as these discussions help reduce White students’ stereotyping and prejudice towards Black students by providing them with a better understanding about racial differences in the United States, and these discussions increase a desire for racial fairness for White students and Black students (pp. 197–203).

The recommendations discussed above are based on the findings of this study, the implications of the findings, and the literature reviewed related to the experiences of students of color in PWS and the approaches that support them within this context. Although this study and the recommendations provided focus primarily on the implications for awareness and adaptations for PWS where there is increasing diversity and/or an attempt to desegregate, the recommendations are not only relevant for them. Developing leaders to lead for diversity and building school communities that affirm students’ identities and foster positive intergroup
relations are also relevant for schools comprised of a majority of students of color, and schools that have no students of color.

**Personal Reflection**

At the start of my graduate studies, I was intent on focusing my doctoral research in an area related to school turnaround as it has shaped the context of my professional career as a teacher, assistant principal, principal, and central office, and network administrator. I explored ideas related to the impact of school culture on successful school turnaround, and the ways that leadership affects successful school turnaround. My early inquiries and participation in some of the early coursework in my doctoral studies helped me to recognize that despite the breadth of studies related to the complexities of school turnaround, the outcome of school turnaround is limited in its goal of rapid short-term gains in student achievement and readiness for transformation and limited in its primary focus on urban schools. Although I continue to believe that seeking the improvement outcomes of school turnaround is worthwhile, I do not believe that such a singular goal is enough. I began to cement my thinking about the limiting factors related to exploring elements of school turnaround during the Purposes of School course, in that school turnaround as an outcome, does not adequately address my personal beliefs about the purpose of schools, and it does not address the role of the 69.6% of schools that are in suburban and rural communities, or in towns.

During the Purposes of School course, we explored the role of schools in increasing students’ participation in a democratic society, which led me to think more about the importance of student engagement and voice, which would eventually factor into my thinking about my

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3 U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics; U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau; The Broad Center; Education Week Research Center, 2018.
dissertation topic. Through the Purposes of School coursework and the writing of my Statement of Sociocultural Perspective (SSP), I learned and reflected more about the impact of racial politics and racism on schools and school leaders. In our coursework, we read about Black school principals in segregated southern schools and learned that while some White state school boards and district superintendents functioned to maintain the status quo, some Black principals, in direct opposition to this, worked to dismantle the structures that upheld and reinforced inequality (Walker & Bayas, 2003, pp. 59–72). This idea resonated with me in part because I rarely hear educational leaders describe their role in this way, despite the obvious ways that it could hold relevance for leaders and schools in a society that professes to value freedom and equality. In the Purposes of School course, we also learned that school desegregation led to the displacement of tens of thousands of Black educators and a drastic reduction in the numbers of Black principals in secondary schools. Exploring these and other unintended consequences of school desegregation influenced my decision to consider, within my SSP, the unintended consequences of the desegregation efforts within the district that I worked as a central office administrator.

The process of writing my SSP caused me to reflect on my own experiences as a Black student in a predominately-White school, the experiences of my children as Black students in predominately-White schools, and the experiences of students of color who live in urban communities and attend predominately-White schools through desegregation programs. I struggled to identify the goals of desegregation programs beyond goals related to the racial compositions of the student body at particular schools, which led me to wonder more about how educational leaders at these participating predominately-White schools see their role in supporting the students of color who attend their schools, and how does their understanding
impact the ways that they lead their schools. This prompted me to ponder the possible reform considerations that may be relevant for predominately-White suburban schools, and ultimately led me to the topic of my research.

Throughout the process of conducting my research and writing my dissertation, I have routinely reflected on the purpose of schools. During our coursework we explored multiple beliefs that have been propagated over time about the purpose of schooling in the United States including moral development, individual freedom, teaching democratic principles, producing productive citizens to maintain societal values, preparing a skilled workforce to fill the needs of a community, and others. Two common components that are shared across most of these and other beliefs about the purpose of schooling are: the learner, and the belief that the learner will be influenced, shaped, or guided through schooling experiences; and society/community, and the belief that the society/community will be impacted in some way by the learner as a result of their schooling. With this idea in mind, I have wondered about the degree to which district and school leaders recognize and acknowledge the ways they hope to influence learners, and the ways they hope that learners will impact society. I believe that these are foundational understandings for leaders when considering what students should learn and how students should experience learning.

Within the context of predominantly-White schools, the findings of my study and the scholarship related to the topic have caused me to question how state, district, and school leaders understand the purpose of schools, how they understand the goals of school desegregation, and how school desegregation fits within their understanding of the broader purpose of schools. The process of inquiry that guided this study and the scholarship related to the topic has helped to strengthen my belief that if state, district, and school leaders buy into the paradigm that positions
urban schools as “underperforming” and in need of intervention or “turnaround” in contrast to the “high performing” suburban schools that, on occasion, can serve as a refuge for students of color, the improvement needs of suburban schools will be overlooked, and these leaders will function in a similar manner as the White state school boards and superintendents in the segregated school districts in the south, which is to perpetuate the status quo, and maintain the structures that preserve inequality. Inasmuch as I believe that the goals of school turnaround fall short of a meaningful purpose for schools, I believe that school desegregation as a goal in and of itself also falls far short, and the realization that the experiences of SOC in PWS still mirrors the experiences of SOC decades ago reinforces this belief.

Advocacy for school desegregation and reducing racial isolation in schools must pursue objectives that go well beyond the surface-level racial composition of schools, and include goals related to the type of learning experiences that all students should be guaranteed, including the type of supports that students will receive to ensure that they can be engaged members of a school community where they are academically, emotionally, and physically safe. Visioning for school desegregation should also include how school desegregation will help enhance the learning experiences of White students in PWS, and how school desegregation will ultimately be used to improve the greater society. We often see language in districts’ and schools’ mission and vision statements that speaks to preparing students for college, and the world, without recognition and sometimes without an understanding about the different worlds that exists for students depending on their race, gender, and socioeconomic class. Absent meaningful consideration about how desegregation can/will be used to change PWS and society for the better, the implementation of school desegregation programs and schooling in PWS will continue to operate within and reinforce the White Racial Frame, and do a disservice to SOC. My
doctoral studies and dissertation research has helped to lead me to the realization that without clarity of purpose from leaders that include aspirations to influence learners in ways that inspire them to impact changes in society that further the cause of justice and equality, schools will continue to reinforce the status quo in schools, and in society.

**Conclusion**

Given the rapidly changing demographics that have and continue to occur across the country, including in suburban and rural schools, it is critically important that school leaders, teachers, and other school staff learn how to create school communities that effectively educate, support and create a sense of belonging for students of color and their families.

This study yielded information that helps us understand how principals in PWS that participate in a state desegregation program and ESO staff that work with these schools to support the students in the program: become aware of the perceptions of students of color; address the negative perceptions of students of color; implement practices to support students of color; and yielded information that helps us understand what these principals and ESO staff identify as: the barriers that prevent them from implementing practices that support students of color; and the things they report they need to better support the students in Project Hope.

Findings from this study suggest that leaders rely predominantly on the utilization of reactive ways for finding out about the perceptions of students of color, most often as a result of student and/or parent complaints. Participants’ responses to students’ negative perceptions underscored a prevalence of negative student perceptions related to perceived racial bias, which result in leaders responding within their supervisory capacity by directly confronting staff who have acted in a discriminatory manner with students of color, ESO staff members responding to concerns as institutional functionaries based on their transmission of concerns to district leaders.
when situations were deemed to be out of their locus of control, and most often, with principals and ESO staff members responding as interpersonal facilitators by attempting to clarify what respondents perceived to be misconceptions held by students and/or parent misconceptions about the racial connotations related to the incident.

Participants reported implementing practices to support students of color that are intentionally devised to provide direct support to these students and their families that include supplemental academic support services, youth development opportunities, and staffing to support students’ social emotional learning. Participants’ reports also illustrated that principals seek opportunities within existing structures to focus specific attention on students of color, but they report that leveraging these processes does not result in adjustments or programmatic changes that increase support for students of color who have difficulties. Both principals and ESO staff reported providing or arranging for professional development to help teachers become better at teaching students of color.

This study found that unanticipated challenges rising from the design of Project Hope and maladaptation to Project Hope at the school level disadvantaged students of color and impede them from being engaged members of their school communities and contributes to the othering of students of color; and that participants’ find additional challenges in stakeholder dispositions including low academic expectations of some students and parents in Project Hope, the indifference of some district leaders, the negative racial biases of some suburban residents, and the low academic expectations from some teachers in addition to the inadequate academic and behavioral preparedness of some students hinder their ability to effectively support the students in Project Hope.
To better support students of color, participants recognize a need for more conscious efforts to help students of color establish and reinforce social connections, that help to foster a sense of belonging in their PWS, and a need for an increased level of state oversight to compel participating suburban communities to adaptively lead the re-envisioning of their schools, and require the suburban communities that participate in Project Hope to guarantee long-term district commitments to Project Hope and maintain minimum standards of support for students of color and their families.
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Supporting Students of Color in Predominately-White Schools

This Study is Designed to Better Understand:

- How leaders become aware of the perceptions of students of color
- How leaders respond to the perceptions of students of color
- How leaders support students of color
- The barriers to supporting students of color
- The supports needed to support students of color

If you are interested or have questions, please contact:
Jonathan Swan
jswan3@lesley.edu
413-896-7061

What does Participation involve?

Participants will engage in a 90—120 minute interview with a Doctoral student at Lesley University to discuss leadership practices and perceptions related to supporting students of color attending Predominately-White schools.

Your Participation Would be Appreciated!
(4/21/2018)

Subject Line: Participants being sought for an educational leadership research study

Greetings,

My name is Jonathan Swan and I am a doctoral student at Lesley University. I am seeking participants for my research study which is designed to gain an understanding of the ways principals in predominately-White schools and Regional Educational Service Center staff members come to understand the perceptions of students of color; address the perceptions of student of color; and implement practices to support racially and ethnically diverse learners. The study also seeks to understand the barriers that prevent and supports that would help principals and RESC staff members to implement practices that support racially and ethnically diverse learners.

If you take part in this study, it would require your participation in an interview that would last between 90 – 120 minutes. Private interview locations will be identified based on the convenience of participants. To be able to take part in this study, participants must be a principal in a predominately-White school, or a RESC staff member that works with Predominately-White schools that serve students of color.

If you are interested in participating, or have questions about this study, please email me at jswan3@lesley.edu, or call me at 413-896-7061. Thank you.

Jonathan Swan
APPENDIX C: FOLLOW UP RECRUITMENT EMAIL

(7/19/2018)

Greetings,

As the school year comes to a close, I hope that you had a great school year and that you are able to find time to rest and rejuvenate.

My name is Jonathan Swan and I am a doctoral student at Lesley University. I am seeking participants for my research study which is designed to gain an understanding of the ways principals in predominately-White schools and Regional Educational Service Center staff members come to understand the perceptions of students of color; address the perceptions of student of color; and implement practices to support racially and ethnically diverse learners. The study also seeks to understand the barriers that prevent and supports that would help principals and RESC staff members to implement practices that support racially and ethnically diverse learners.

If you take part in this study, it would require your participation in an interview that would last between 60 – 90 minutes (please disregard the time given on the flyer). Private interview locations will be identified based on the convenience of participants. To be able to take part in this study, participants must be a principal in a predominately-White school, or a RESC staff member that works with Predominately-White schools that serve students of color.

If you are interested in participating, or have questions about this study, please email me at jswan3@lesley.edu, or call me at 413-896-7061. Thank you and have a great summer!

Jonathan
APPENDIX D: SOCIAL MEDIA RECRUITMENT POSTS

Twitter Posts (6/28/2018 & 8/20/2019)

6:21
Tweet

Looking for research participants. Spread the word.
@kmcbones @NewHavenSuper @CAS_ct @capssct
@sarahlouwou @CTCenterSchChng

6:21
Tweet

Replying to @SwanJonathanD @newhaven supers and 4 others
Consider it spread!
@bnice627 @GHillsGators @mathcoachrivers @DavidJHuber @sarahlouwou
@BCHSprincipal @westbriok8 @HubbellSchool @BSTEMhartford @EHHornets1

9:28 PM - 6/28/18 - Twitter for iPhone
2 Likes

7:20 PM - 8/20/19 - Twitter for iPhone
1 Like
APPENDIX E: INFORMED CONSENT

Informed Consent Form

Greetings. My name is Jonathan Swan and I am a PhD student at Lesley University. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. This form details the purpose of the study, a description of the involvement required and your rights as a participant.

The purpose of this study is: to gain an understanding of the ways principals in predominately-White schools and CREC staff members come to understand the perceptions of students of color; address the perceptions of student of color; and implement practices to support racially and ethnically diverse learners. The study also seeks to understand the barriers that prevent them from implementing practices that support racially and ethnically diverse learners; and the guidance & support they feel they need to better implement practices that support racially and ethnically diverse learners.

The benefits of the research will be: providing insights and understandings beneficial to practicing and aspiring school principals, district-level leaders, state departments of education, and state and federal policy makers by providing insights on the types and prevalence of intentional efforts to implement strategies that support students of color attending Predominantly-White schools, to improve the implementation of programs that reduce racial isolation in schools, and improve the quality of the educational experiences of students of color who attend predominately-White schools.

The methods that will be used to meet this purpose include: one-on-one interviews

Subjects Understanding

• I……………………………………… voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

• I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.

• I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview, in which case the material will be deleted.
• I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.

• I understand that participation involves participating in an interview of approximately 90 – 120 minutes.

• I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.

• I agree to my interview being audio-recorded.

• I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.

• I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous. This will be done by the de-identification of my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.

• I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in a subsequent dissertation.

• I understand that if I inform the researcher that myself or someone else is at risk of harm they may have to report this to the relevant authorities—they will discuss this with me first but may be required to report with or without my permission.

• I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained at Lesley University until the completion and approval of the resulting dissertation.

• I understand that a transcript of my interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for five years after the approval of the resulting dissertation.

• I understand that under freedom of information legislation I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.
• I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

Signature of research participant

----------------------------------------------------------
Signature of participant                                      Date

Signature of researcher

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study

----------------------------------------------------------
Signature of researcher                                      Date
APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview Protocol

Instructions

Good morning (afternoon). My name is Jonathan Swan. I am a PhD student at Lesley University. Thank you for participating. Before we begin, I want to stress to you that your participation is voluntary, and that you may withdraw from the study at any time. You may also choose not to answer questions if you wish. This interview will involve two parts. During the first part I will ask you some background information about your experience as the principal (or CREC role) of this school (with this school). The second part of the interview, and the purpose of this interview, is to get your perceptions on the ways your school (or you) supports the students of color who attend your school through the Open Choice Program. There are no right or wrong or desirable or undesirable answers. I would like you to feel comfortable with saying what you really think and how you really feel.

Tape Recorder Instructions

If it is okay with you, I will be tape-recording our conversations. The purpose of this is so that I can get all of the details but at the same time be able to carry on an attentive conversation with you. I assure you that all of your comments will remain confidential. I will be identifying trends and themes across multiple interviews without reference to individuals.

Consent Form Instructions

Before we get started, please take a few minutes to read and sign this consent form. At this time, participants will also be informed that the names of the schools, the Regional Education Service Center (CREC), and the positions of the CREC staff members will be changed to help ensure confidentiality and anonymity.
Background Information/Questions (Tape recording will begin at this time)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal</th>
<th>CREC Staff Member</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How long have you been the principal at ______ school?</td>
<td>How long have you been in your current role at CREC?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How long has your school participated in the Open Choice Program?</td>
<td>How long have you worked with the students in the Open Choice Program at ______ school?</td>
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</table>

Formal Interview (used for data-gathering)

I will begin by asking a few open-ended questions to help participants enter into the interview from a broader point of view, before answering the more targeted questions.

- From your vantage point as a (principal/CREC staff member) how do students of color perceive day-to-day life at the school?

- Please tell me what you notice about their experiences as students at this school?
**What do principals in predominately-White schools and CREC staff members report as the practices they implement to support racially and ethnically diverse learners?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What are some ways that your school supports racially and ethnically diverse learners?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How have these practices impacted the educational experiences for the students of color that attend your school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Are there any ways they do not achieve what they are intendent to accomplish?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What did you see that helped you recognize the impact of these practices?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What do principals in predominately-White schools and CREC staff members report as the ways they become informed about perceptions and experiences of students of color and the ways they respond to what they learn?

1. What are some of the ways that you have found out about how the students of color in your school feel about their school experience?

2. Are there planned ways that you utilize to find out about the perceptions of students of color? If so, what are they?

3. Are there specific events that are important

4. What have you learned as to how to become aware of the perceptions of students of color?

5. What are some of the negative perceptions that have been brought to your attention?

6. How have you or the school responded to these negative perceptions?

7. How impactful do you believe the response was?

8. What did you see that helped you recognize the impact of these practices?

9. Are you aware of gender differences in the perceptions of the students of color who attend your school?
### What do principals in predominately-White schools and CREC staff members report as factors that prevent them from implementing practices that support racially and ethnically diverse learners?

1. Are there things that you would like to do to support the students in the Open Choice program that you haven’t been able to do?

2. What gets in the way of you (your school) providing support for your racially and ethnically diverse learners?

### Possible Follow up Probing questions

3. Do you believe you could benefit from more knowledge or skills? Can you give me some examples?

4. What about your staff? Can you give me some examples?

5. Do financial resources come into play at all? Can you give me some examples?

6. What about policies? Can you give me some examples?
What do principals in predominately-White schools and CREC staff members perceive they need in order to effectively implement practices that support racially and ethnically diverse learners?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What would help you to better support the racially and ethnically diverse leaners at your school?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you give me some examples of how the things you’ve identified would help you to better support the ethnically diverse leaners at your school?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Wrap Up: I will thank the interviewee and share that we are coming to the close of the process. I will express my appreciation for their time and let them know how helpful they have been. I will let the interviewee know that I am available if they are interested in sharing any final thoughts on the interview and how they felt about the entire process. I will also ask if they have any questions of me.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
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<tr>
<td>From your vantage point as a (principal/ESO staff member) how do students of color perceive day-to-day life at the school?</td>
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<td>How have these practices impacted the educational experiences for the students of color that attend your school?</td>
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<td>What did you see that helped you recognize the impact of these practices?</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Are there planned ways that you utilize to find out about the perceptions of students of color? If so, what are they?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are there specific events that are important</td>
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<tr>
<td>What have you learned as to how to become aware of the perceptions of students of color?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What are some of the negative perceptions that have been brought to your attention?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How have you or the school responded to these negative perceptions?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>How impactful do you believe the response was?</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What did you see that helped you recognize the impact of these practices?

Are you aware of gender differences in the perceptions of the students of color who attend your school?

Are there things that you would like to do to support the students in the Project Hope program that you haven’t been able to do?

What gets in the way of you (your school) providing support for your racially and ethnically diverse learners?

Do you believe you could benefit from more knowledge or skills? Can you give me some examples?

What about your staff? Can you give me some examples?

Do financial resources come into play at all? Can you give me some examples?

What about policies? Can you give me some examples?

What would help you to better support the racially and ethnically diverse leaners at your school?

Can you give me some examples of how the things you’ve identified would help you to better support the ethnically diverse leaners at your school?

Partnership with Principals
APPENDIX H: PHASE THREE - HANDWRITTEN NOTES
## APPENDIX I: PHASE FIVE - RESEARCH QUESTIONS WITH THEMES

### What do principals in predominately-White schools and CREC staff members report as the practices they implement to support racially and ethnically diverse learners?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Systematic Academic Supports for students.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● After-school homework help &amp; tutoring program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Extra bus for afterschool programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Data informed RTI/SRBI practices</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Credit Recovery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Systematic ______ supports for students &amp; Parents (social/emotional/cultural, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Staff member assigned specifically to support “choice” students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Ongoing processes to help students build peer relationships &amp; solicit student voice from “choice” students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Systematic supports for Staff to Better Support “Choice” Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● Ongoing Professional Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Ongoing Data Review &amp; Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Staff members assigned to specifically support staff working with “Choice” Students.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adhoc Efforts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● Reactive Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Optional Professional Development Offerings (if selected by districts/schools/teachers)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### What do principals in predominately-White schools and CREC staff members report as the ways they become informed about perceptions and experiences of students of color and the ways they respond to what they learn?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reactive Ways Resulting from Information Gathered From:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● Parent Complaints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Student Complaints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Local Media Outlets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Partner organization (School-to-CREC or CREC-to-School)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Undefined, yet-to-be-developed ways</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proactive Ways Resulting From Information Gathered From:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● Structured Dialogue Sessions (with consultant or CREC liaison) (happens less frequently with CREC than in the past, and only a few initial, yet compelling, sessions with consultants)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Climate Survey (less frequent, less informational for students versions based on how administered, also for parents) and/or other data analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Informal Conversations with Students &amp; Observations in Classrooms/Hallways/Cafeterias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Staff members who are working with Open Choice students in the schools (such as CREC staff in pre-K settings or school/district funded Open Choice Liaisons)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Ways they respond

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conversations with students/parents that clarify perceived misperceptions (It’s not racist)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Or</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conversation with Students to encourage self-advocacy/action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conversations with staff member/s in question</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Secure Technical Assistance from CREC or Consultant
- Facilitate Mediation, facilitate student-to-student and/or student-to-adult conversations.
- Facilitate Professional Development
- Discuss with District/School/Organization Leadership

### What do principals in predominately-White schools and CREC staff members report as factors that prevent them from implementing practices that support racially and ethnically diverse learners?

#### District/School Leadership Mindset

#### District & School Leadership Turnover

#### Mindset of the Host Community
- Parents
- Students
- (Influences of National Climate)

#### Teacher/Staff Mindset

#### Teacher Capacity

#### Academic Preparedness of “Choice” Students

#### Mindset/lack of understanding/limited ability for involvement of “Choice” Parent

#### Logistical Challenges

### What do principals in predominately-White schools and CREC staff members perceive they need in order to effectively implement practices that support racially and ethnically diverse learners?

#### Staff & Leader Training (Including Outside Technical Assistance re: principals) on:
- Growth Mindset
- Implicit Bias
- Culturally Proficient Instruction

#### Trainings and Dialogue with Students and Families

#### Increase Staff Diversity

#### Policies, Procedures, Programs & Practices that Help:

- Improve District/School Ownership of and ability to support “Choice” Students & Families.
  - Increase State funding & mandate districts/schools prioritize funding to: ensure resources (human and otherwise) that are targeted to support “Choice” students, and additional transportation supports for afterschool programming. Accountability to ensure grant funding is used only to support “Choice” Students
  - Mandate Improvement goals that are connected to “Choice” students
  - Increased integration beyond the school day
  - Increased strategies for partnering with parents
  - Required PD for staff
  - Help create a sense of community

- Facilitate student transitions to suburban school setting & Support increased access to ______

#### Vision, Direction, Support from Stable School & District Leadership
APPENDIX J: PHASE FIVE - HANDWRITTEN NOTES

[Handwritten notes and diagrams regarding policies, programs, and strategies for supporting students of color in predominantly-white schools.]
SUPPORTING STUDENTS OF COLOR IN PREDOMINATELY-WHITE SCHOOLS

Increased staff diversity

- Principals
  - More diverse leadership team
  - More diverse teachers
- Teachers
  - More diverse teaching staff
  - More diverse professional development

**BSC**
- Students may be more likely to open up to staff of color
- Schools with monoculture (not shown) or color the best have more diverse staff
1. What do principals in predominately-White schools and ESO staff members report as the ways they become informed about the perceptions and experiences of students of color and the ways they respond to what they have learned?

2. What do principals in predominately-White schools and ESO staff members report as the practices they implement to support racially and ethnically diverse learners?

3. What do principals in predominately-White schools and ESO staff members report as factors that prevent them from implementing practices that support racially and ethnically diverse learners?

4. What do principals in predominately-White schools and ESO staff members perceive they need in order to effectively implement practices that support racially and ethnically diverse learners?

**F1.** Participants enact proactive strategies that are both impromptu and pre-planned to help them become informed about the perceptions and experiences of students of color.

- Becoming informed through the intentional use of impromptu principal-student conversations.
- Becoming informed through routine pre-planned academic guidance and check-in conversations with students.
- Becoming informed through the use of pre-planned student panel discussions.
- Becoming informed through pre-planned consultant-led youth development activities.

**F4.** Participants initiate or assist implementation of programs and practices that are intentionally devised to provide direct support to students of color and/or their families.

- Access to supplementary academic support services
- Increased efforts to support social emotional learning, enhance family engagement, and foster youth development.

**F7.** Participants report that unanticipated challenges rising from the design of Project Hope and maladaptation to Project Hope at the school level disadvantage students of color and impede them from being engaged members of their school communities.

- Putting students of color at a disadvantage.
- Contributing to the othering of students of color

**F9.** Participants report a need for more conscious efforts from Project Hope to help students of color establish and reinforce social connections, that help to foster a sense of belonging in their predominately-White suburban schools.

- Trainings and programs to help students of color transition to their predominately-White suburban schools.
- Trainings and programs to help the parents of students of color support their children while they attend predominately-White suburban schools.
- Increase diverse offerings of extracurricular activities
- Diversity trainings for suburban parents and students.
- Increasing the number of staff of color.
- Diversity training for staff.

**F2.** Participants become aware of the perceptions of students of color subsequent to students’ involvement in incidents of conflict.

- Becoming aware through parent

**F5.** Principals seek opportunities within existing structures to focus specific attention on students of color, but they report that leveraging these processes does not result in adjustments or programmatic changes that

**F8.** Participants report that stakeholder attitudes and discontinuities with students’ prior educational experiences negatively impact their ability to effectively support students
and/or student complaints.
- Becoming aware through information shared by a partner organization.
- Becoming aware through information obtained from the news media.

**F3. When principals become aware that students of color have negative perceptions of their school experiences, they respond, depending on circumstances, as intervening supervisors, institutional functionaries, or interpersonal facilitators.**

- Responding as intervening supervisors.
- Responding as institutional functionaries.
- Responding as interpersonal facilitators.

**F6. Participants arrange professional development that is intentionally designed to build teachers’ capacity to effectively support students of color.**

- Utilize data-team processes to focus on the academic, social, emotional, and behavioral progress of students of color.
- Employ school advisory programs to help students of color build relationships and support their social emotional learning

**Minimum Standards of Support.**
- Low academic and behavior expectations of parents and students.
- Discontinuities in academic and behavioral preparedness.
- Indifference of district leaders
- Prejudice and contempt from suburban residents
- Teacher biases and low expectations

**State requirements for explicit commitments from district leaders and clearer state expectations for district leaders.**