EXPLORING EDUCATORS' COMMITMENT TO RACIAL EQUITY IN SCHOOL

DISCIPLINE PRACTICE: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF CRITICAL INCIDENTS

by

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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Title: Exploring Educators' Commitment to Racial Equity in School Discipline Practice:
   A Qualitative Study of Critical Incidents

African American, Latinx, and Native American students continue to be
disciplined in U.S. schools at rates 2 to 3 times higher than White students. In response,
schools are seeking out approaches to reduce racial disciplinary disparities. Yet, it is not
clear what influences educators' active commitment to address racial equity in school
discipline practice.

This study used the Critical Incident Technique to explore the phenomenon of
commitment to racial equity. In-depth interviews were conducted with 15 educators who
self-reported that they were initially non-committal or reluctant to address racial equity
but became more committed over time. The interviews produced 210 critical incidents
and the formation of 20 categories to describe what helped and hindered educators'
personal commitment and the observed commitment of others to racial equity in school
discipline practice.

Findings indicated Disaggregating School Data by Race and Ethnicity (self,
other), Learning About Racial Discrimination in Society (self), and Sharing Equity-
Focused Strategies (others) were categories reported to help educators' commitment to
racial equity. Avoiding Discussing Race (self) and Lowering Expectations and

Stereotyping (others) were found to hinder educators' commitment to racial equity.

Participants' responses also suggested active commitment to racial equity may require effort and exposure to multiple discriminatory or prejudicial events. Commitment formation was also found to be influenced by non-school experiences (i.e., events or incidents that occur outside of a school campus). Contributions of the study are discussed in relation to theory, school practices, and approaches to teacher professional development.

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Dedicated to Kim, Nuala, Seamus, and Eve Bastable

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of Purpose

Over 40 years of national, state, and school data have documented racial

inequities associated with U.S. school disciplinary practices (Children's Defense Fund,

1975; Losen et al., 2015; Wallace, Goodkind, Wallace, & Bachman, 2008). Students of

color, particularly Black, Latinx, and Native American students, continue to be

disproportionately excluded and disciplined in classrooms and schools through the use of

office discipline referrals (ODRs), suspensions, and expulsions, at rates two to three

times higher than White students (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010; U.S. Department of

Education, 2016).

Researchers and school personnel are testing and implementing approaches to

reduce racial and ethnic gaps associated with school discipline practice (Gregory, Skiba,

& Mediratta, 2017; Skiba, Arredondo, & Rausch, 2014). For example, the use of pre-

service professional development (PD) has been shown to reduce teachers' negative

beliefs or biases toward students of color (Kunesh & Noltemeyer, 2015). School-wide

frameworks like Restorative Practices (RP) and School-wide Positive Behavioral

Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS; Horner et al., 2009) have been moderately

associated with reductions in racial disparities in school discipline (Barclay, 2017;

Gregory, Clawson, Davis, & Gerewitz, 2016; Vincent & Tobin, 2011). Coaching

provided to teachers on how to implement culturally responsive practices in classrooms

has also been shown to reduce ODRs issued to Black students (Bradshaw, Pas, Debnam,

Bottiani, & Rosenberg, 2018). Evidence suggests that racial disparities in school

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discipline may be narrowed through focused and sustained efforts (Skiba, Arredondo, et al., 2014).

Research also suggests school practices introduced to reduce racial inequity may be under-utilized, unacceptable to school staff, or implemented at low fidelity (Axelrod, Moyer, & Berry, 1990; McIntosh, Eliason, Horner, & May, 2014; Noell & Gansle, 2009). In response, researchers have explored how to enhance the commitment of educators to improve and sustain school implementation efforts (Feuerborn, Tyre, & King, 2015; Lohrmann, Martin, & Patil, 2013). Not surprisingly, school personnel have been found to play a critical role in how existing resources and supports are mobilized and distributed in schools (Fantuzzo & Atkins, 1992; Townsend, 2000).

Few studies have used qualitative methods to examine educators' perceptions of school disciplinary practice (Ferguson, 2001; Gregory & Mosely, 2004; Hambacher, 2017). Qualitative approaches can help advance current understanding of the processes and rationale underlying educators' use of school discipline. For example, Hambacher (2017) conducted interviews with two fifth-grade teachers to examine why educators refused to rely on punitive discipline with students of color in their classrooms. Similarly, Gregory and Mosely (2004) used qualitative interviews ($n = 14$) to examine teachers' implicit theories about the causes of student discipline problems. Findings from this study indicated only two of the teachers interviewed mentioned race or culture as accounting for the discipline gap identified across racial and ethnic groups (Gregory & Mosely, 2004).

The proposed study used a qualitative method called the Critical Incident Technique (CIT; Flanagan, 1954). CIT was leveraged to gather and analyze data

collected from in-depth interviews with 15 educators. The study aimed to explore helping and hindering incidents that have affected educators' active commitment to racial equity in school discipline practice. Objectives of the study included informing use of current disciplinary practices and contributing to theory by: (a) describing contextual factors (e.g., school policies, norms) and (b) understanding the personal experiences that have influenced educators' active commitment to racial equity. The study also sought to identify replicable strategies or training approaches that could be used to enhance educators' commitment to racial equity.

Evidence of Racial Disproportionality in School Discipline

The Children's Defense Fund (1975) brought racial disproportionality in school discipline to national attention, reporting that Black students were disproportionately disciplined by educators in schools when compared to their average enrollment rates. Today, students of color, particularly Black, Latinx, and Native American students, continue to receive more ODRs, suspensions, and expulsions than their peers in schools (Skiba et al., 2008; U.S. Department of Education, 2016; Vincent, Cartledge, May, & Tobin, 2009). The suspension rate has doubled over the past few decades for all students, but the suspension rate for Black students (16% suspended) has increased fourfold compared to the rate (4%) for White students (Losen et al., 2015).

Researchers have identified patterns of disproportionality by disaggregating disciplinary actions assigned by educators to students (e.g., ODRs, suspensions, expulsions) by race, ethnic group, gender, type of ODR assigned (objective versus subjective), student disability status, and school level. Results of these analyses have shown that Black, high school students experiencing disabilities are suspended at the

highest rates (33.8%) in schools (Losen et al., 2015). Overall, students of color receive more minor ODRs for subjective behaviors, such as language use or defiance, compared to other students (Forsyth, Biggar, Forsyth, & Howat, 2015; Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002; Smolkowski, Girvan, McIntosh, Nese, & Horner, 2016). Other studies show racial discipline disparities increase for specific racial or ethnic groups as they advance in schools. For example, Latinx and Black students are more affected by disciplinary disproportionality in secondary schools than in elementary schools (Skiba et al., 2011).

Researchers have also examined how racial disproportionality affects students' perceptions of fairness in schools. Bottiani and colleagues (2017) examined whether racial disproportionality (measured by calculating the relative risk of White students as compared to Black students receiving a suspension) affected Black students' perceptions of equity and discipline. Schools with a higher level of racial disciplinary disproportionality were found to be negatively associated with Black students' perceptions of fairness. Black high school students interviewed as part of another study described the racial inequities witnessed in school discipline as "very apparent" and "unjust" (Ruck & Wortley, 2002).

Definition of Racial Disproportionality in School Discipline

In general, disproportionate representation, or disproportionality, refers to the over-or under-representation of a given population group. In schools, disproportionality can be defined by socioeconomic status, national origin, English proficiency, gender, and sexual orientation for a specific population category (Yell, Shriner, & Katsiyannis, 2006).

For this study, *racial disproportionality in school discipline* was defined as the overrepresentation of students of color assigned disciplinary actions (i.e., ODRs, suspensions, expulsions) in schools. The terms "disciplinary inequity" or "disciplinary disparity" were used interchangeably to describe racial disproportionality in school discipline.

Measuring Racial Disproportionality in School Discipline

Racial disproportionality in school discipline has remained difficult to evaluate, as school districts and states use different metrics to calculate and classify student disciplinary actions and incidents. School personnel use a variety of operational definitions for what constitutes a major versus a minor disciplinary incident and may also assign different consequences to students based upon a district's disciplinary code or due to administrator discretion (Skiba, Peterson, & Williams, 1997).

There remains no agreed-upon threshold for what constitutes disproportionality in school discipline. Metrics have been developed to help schools determine to what extent racial or ethnic groups are over- or under-represented in disciplinary data. Two metrics used in schools are composition and risk ratios. Composition metrics show the total number of disciplinary actions (e.g., suspensions) assigned to a specific group (e.g., Native American students). Risk ratios show the likelihood of a Native American student receiving a disciplinary action compared to a White, Black, or Latinx student in a school (Boneshefski & Runge, 2014).

State departments of education and school districts are now expected to report on levels of disciplinary disproportionality. The 2015 reauthorization of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and recent guidance from the U.S. Department of Education (2014)

have offered more explicit direction to schools on how to document and assess racial disparities in school disciplinary data. In sum, the definition and measurement of discipline disproportionality continues to develop in research and practice.

Effects of Exclusionary Discipline

The use of exclusionary school disciplinary practices, like suspensions and expulsions, has been associated with short and long-term negative consequences for all students. Removing students from a classroom or school for any reason can interfere with learning, particularly for students already experiencing academic or behavioral difficulties (Mendez & Knoff, 2003). On average, students suspended or expelled for unwanted behaviors are more likely to experience lower academic achievement (Davis & Jordan, 1994), future disciplinary action (Arcia, 2006; Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Okonofua & Eberhardt, 2015), and future juvenile justice involvement (Fabelo et al., 2011). The use of school suspensions was also consistently found to be a moderate to strong predictor of school dropout (Skiba & Peterson, 2000). Balfanz and colleagues (2015) reported the associated odds of dropping out of high school doubled with a student's first suspension.

School academic outcomes are also shown to be negatively related to staff use of suspensions and ODRs. Noltemeyer and colleagues (2015), in a meta-analysis of 34 studies, found a significant negative association between school suspensions and academic achievement. Related studies have shown the costs of excluding students outweigh any shorter-term benefits for students or schools (Losen, Sun, & Keith, 2017; Morrison et al., 2001; Skiba & Peterson, 1999; Wallace et al., 2008).

Variability in Use of School Discipline Practices in Schools

The use of disciplinary practices by schools has been shown to fluctuate across

U.S. states and districts (Losen et al., 2015; Wallace et al., 2008). Studies conducted across different geographic regions, locales, and student populations have revealed a variety of factors can influence educators' use of discipline (e.g., school a student attends, district discipline policies, student's race or ethnic background; Losen et al., 2015; Skiba, Chung, et al., 2014; Vincent, Sprague, & Tobin, 2012). Variability in school use of suspensions and expulsions has fueled efforts to explore the local or contextual factors influencing educators in schools, such as school leadership (Skiba, Chung, et al., 2014), school climate (Hemphill, Plenty, Herrenkohl, Toumbourou, & Catalano, 2014), and the effects of legal mandates (i.e., Zero Tolerance Policy; Skiba & Peterson, 1999).

In one analysis, Losen and colleagues (2015) categorized higher and lower suspending school districts across the U.S. Higher suspending school districts were reported to suspend 25% or more of one racial or ethnic group based on enrollment, whereas lower suspending districts were reported to suspend 10% or less based on student enrollment by race or ethnicity. Results revealed there were approximately twice as many lower-suspending elementary schools in the U.S. Overall, use of discipline has been shown to vary across U.S. classrooms and schools suggesting local practices and policies may be influential (Gregory & Thompson, 2010; Noltemeyer & Mcloughlin, 2010).

Approaches to Enhance Racial Equity in School Disciplinary Practice

Researchers have discussed or evaluated a few approaches hypothesized to improve racial equity in school discipline practice. These approaches include sustained implementation of programs or interventions (Fixsen, Naoom, Blase, Friedman, & Wallace, 2005; Osher, Kidron, Decaidia, Kedziora, & Wessberg, 2016), use of tiered

interventions of support (Horner et al., 2009), engagement of school stakeholders (Gregory & Mosely, 2004; Jolivette, Boden, Sprague, Parks Ennis, & Kimball, 2015), culturally responsive instruction or practices (Delpit, 2014; Pas, Larson, Reinke, Herman, & Bradshaw, 2016), Restorative Practices (Gregory et al., 2016) and use of data to monitor fidelity of implementation (McIntosh, Ellwood, McCall, & Girvan, 2017). Scholars have also recommended making cultural adaptations to school practices may increase the likelihood that school interventions will benefit students from diverse backgrounds (Castro, Barrera, & Holleran Steiker, 2010; Gregory et al., 2017).

School-wide approaches shown to reduce staff use of ODRs or suspensions are being examined to understand to what extent these practices also reduce racial discipline gaps. For example, the PBIS framework has been moderately associated with narrowing racial discipline disparities, but it is not clear which components of the PBIS framework are associated with reducing disproportionality (McIntosh, Gion, & Bastable, 2018).

Sandomierski (2011) reported only small differences in discipline rates disaggregated by racial groups between higher and lower implementing schools using PBIS in Florida public schools. Results from this study were less interpretable due to missing data and a small sample size. However, other studies conducted on schools implementing PBIS have reported small but statistically significant results associated with reducing or eliminating racial disproportionality associated with use of school discipline practice (Vincent et al., 2012).

Schools implementing PBIS have been shown to under-utilize tools designed to monitor levels of racial disproportionality (McIntosh, Eliason, et al., 2014; Vincent et al., 2009). Vincent and Tobin (2011) raised concerns that schools adopting PBIS may not

recruit sufficient input from students or families from diverse backgrounds to inform how behavioral supports are introduced into a school. Researchers have also called for more rigorous methodological approaches to evaluate the use of culturally responsive practices and their effects on diverse student populations (Bottiani, Larson, Debnam, Bischoff, & Bradshaw, 2015; Bradshaw et al., 2018; Green & Stormont, 2017; Utley, Kozleski, Smith, & Draper, 2002).

Recent interventions developed to enhance racial equity in discipline practice have introduced strategies and frameworks to guide practices used by teachers in classrooms. Bradshaw and colleagues (2009) developed a professional development and coaching framework that included five components of culturally competent and responsive practice (e.g., Reflective Thinking, Sensitivity to Students' Culture). Similarly, Restorative Practice (RP) models integrate school-wide, classroom, and individual components (Gregory et al., 2016; Reimer, 2017; Vincent, Inglish, Girvan, Sprague, & McCabe, 2016). Sprague and Tobin (2017) developed a tool to help schools evaluate the fidelity of RP practices used in schools implementing PBIS. Yet, promising practices developed to narrow racial disparities in school discipline will likely require wider investments from educators to improve on current outcomes (Gregory et al., 2017; Osher et al., 2016, p. 20).

Practice guides for educators have been developed to describe promising strategies used to enhance racial equity in schools (Department of Education, 2014). McIntosh and colleagues (2014) developed a 5-point approach to reduce disproportionality in schools that included: (a) Effective Instruction; (b) Implementation of Positive Behavior Supports and Interventions; (c) Use and Disaggregation of

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Discipline Data; (d) Development of Policies with Accountability for Disciplinary Equity, and (e) Teaching Neutralizing Routines. Similarly, Gregory et al. (2017) proposed ten principles (e.g., The Inclusion of Parent or Student Voice in Solving Conflicts, Academic Rigor, and Supportive Relationships) described as "mechanisms of action" (p. 271).

Definition of Active Commitment to Racial Equity in School Discipline

A hypothesis underlying this study is that educators' willingness or commitment to improve racial equity in school discipline is not well understood. It is not clear how educators become more committed to prioritizing or engaging in activities to enhance racial equity. Therefore, it is worthwhile to explore the perspectives of educators to identify which experiences or strategies may be influential to commitment formation.

Active commitment to racial equity in school discipline was operationalized as: (a) taking clear steps to increase visibility or focus of racial equity in school disciplinary practice (e.g., stating racial equity as a top priority in a school or district, or among colleagues), (b) dedicating resources, such as time, money, or personal social capital toward equity work or actively applying strategies to enhance racial equity in school disciplinary outcomes, and (c) training, coaching, leading, or talking to other educators with the intent to motivate them to improve racial equity in school disciplinary outcomes.

Additionally, active commitment to racial equity in school discipline could include the following: an educator recruiting colleagues to join a school equity team, a teacher dedicating time to interpret and report disciplinary data by race or ethnicity, or a school counselor leading a staff training on how to engage parents from different racial or ethnic backgrounds.

Need for Qualitative Studies on Educator Commitment to Racial Equity

Qualitative methods allow researchers to more fully understand the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of participants experiencing psychological phenomena not always accessible using quantitative approaches (Flanagan, 1954; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Meadows et al. (2003) described qualitative methods applied in studies as capable of "expanding the researcher's repertoire of tools to investigate important questions…[It provides the] ability to take into account information about people's perspectives and experiences, focus on depth and richness of data, interest in process and context" (p. 983). Bradshaw and colleagues (2018) advocated for use of qualitative methods to help develop "context-valid, locally responsive observational measures" to enable researchers to more effectively and accurately document the effects of cultural responsive practices used in school settings (p. 14).

Approaches examining school discipline practice have drawn on school-level or district-level discipline referrals, suspension, and expulsion data to detect and interpret the quantitative effects of racial disproportionality in school discipline (Anyon et al., 2014; Skiba et al., 2011). Although quantitative analyses have offered broad evidence for patterns of racial disparities in schools, such analyses can be less useful for describing or exploring how specific contextual factors influence the decisions or behaviors of educators in schools.

A qualitative approach may also serve to triangulate evidence derived from studies that have used empirical methods to understand the relative contributions of variables that may contribute to racial disproportionality (Hemphill et al., 2014; Noltemeyer et al., 2015). For example, it is unclear to what extent having explicit

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discussions with educators about racial inequities associated with school discipline practice may contribute to a shift in their actions to address racial disproportionality. A qualitative approach can offer insights into educators' commitment toward racial equity to understand which contextual variables (e.g., school norms, leadership, training) influence their commitment.

Critical Incident Technique

In this study, a qualitative approach called Critical Incident Technique (CIT; Flanagan, 1954) was selected to examine the experiences of teachers, instructional coaches, administrators, or technical assistance providers working with schools. CIT has proven to be especially useful for interpreting how incidents or experiences described by practitioners inform knowledge of current practices or policies (Butterfield, Borgen, Amundson, & Maglio, 2005; Flanagan, 1954).

CIT incorporates individual interviews, participant observations, and inductive data analysis to examine differences, turning points, or critical incidents (CIs) reported by individuals related to a phenomenon of interest (Butterfield et al., 2005). The CIT method has proven to be a practical step-by-step approach to collecting and analyzing information on human activities and their significance to the people involved (Anderson & Wilson, 1997).

Origins and critical features of CIT. CIT is a qualitative method that has been used over the past 70 years across many disciplines, including the fields of counseling, nursing, psychology, education, and business, to gain insights into psychological processes or phenomena. Flanagan (1954) first defined CIT as consisting of "a set of procedures for collecting direct observations of human behavior to synthesize and

facilitate their use in solving problems and helping to develop broader psychological principles" (p. 1). Since the 1950s, CIT has been used to explore psychological phenomena from the formation of therapeutic alliance in the field of counseling, to understanding customer perspectives in marketing, to how passengers have perceived how airline employees managed crises during flights (Bedi, Davis, & Williams, 2005; Edvardsson, 1992; Gremler, 2004).

CIT was first used during World War II to explore specific reasons for why pilots failed to learn to fly. Miller (1974) and colleagues interviewed 1,000 pilot candidates rejected from flight training schools to identify specific observable behaviors or replicable incidents (note: unobservable variables, such as temperament or poor judgement, were not included). Miller's use of CIT provided the basis for later research programs focused on how to select and train pilots.

CIT has been described as integrating both qualitative and quantitative aspects for analyzing participant data (Creswell, 1998). The method relies primarily on subjective, perceptual, or retrospective data collected from participants, but includes quantitative procedures to establish the credibility of findings reported. Prior CIT studies have included reliability and validity checks along with statistical methods (e.g., standard deviation testing, reliability coefficients) more common in quantitative analyses (Maxwell, 1992). Andersson and Nilsson (1964) provided empirical support validating the method's capacity to reliably generate comprehensive descriptions for a variety of psychological processes.

Creswell (1998) identified five features of CIT that help distinguish this approach from other qualitative methods: (a) focus on critical events, incidents, or factors that help

promote or impede effective performance of some activity, event, or process; (b) a method that originated within industrial and organizational psychology; (c) data is collected primarily through interviews, either in person or via telephone; (d) data analysis is determined by the frame of reference (e.g., educators' commitment to racial equity), forming categories that emerge from the data, and determining the specificity or generality of these categories; and the categories are operationally defined and labeled with self-descriptive titles.

CIT in studies in education. CIT has also been used in educational studies to elicit critical self-reflection from educators on their perspectives related to specific processes or problems of practice. The method was used to examine incidents and events that influenced administrators' decisions to adopt a new school practice (McIntosh, Kelm, & Canizal Delabra, 2016). CIT also helped inform recommendations or examine areas for improvement in educational organizations or incidents that affected the development of school leaders (Carr, Gilbride, & James, 2017; Hashweh, 1987).

Shapira-Lishchinsky (2011) used CIT to identify and analyze critical incidents (CIs) collected from teacher interviews that focused on how educators responded to ethical dilemmas in their practice (e.g., tension between caring for others versus maintaining formality; adhering to school rules versus upholding educational standards). Teachers were asked to provide stories describing difficult ethical situations they had encountered in schools. From 50 incidents collected, the researcher formed five categories. Examples of the categories included: Distributive Justice versus School Standards (13 CIs) and Confidentiality versus School Rules (nine CIs). Next, each category was operationally defined based on the incidents reported. In the findings,

teachers' quotations were used to illustrate how CIs fit into five distinct categories. The

following quotation was reported by a secondary school educator and fit into a category

titled Distributive Justice versus School Standards.

> Iris deserved to be sent abroad as part of a school delegation. However, I was put
> under a lot of pressure to exclude her because the municipality was only willing to
> pay for residents (Iris was not a resident). Iris' family was too poor to pay for the
> trip

Findings from this study identified a need for explicit ethical guidelines to better

support and train teachers. Participants' responses highlighted a need to provide training

to teachers focused on what to do when facing challenging or ambiguous situations in

their schools (Shapira-Lishchinsky, 2011).

Purpose of the Proposed Study

The purpose of this study was to examine helping and hindering CIs that

educators (e.g., teachers, administrators, coaches, technical assistance providers) reported

as having influenced their own commitment or the observed commitment of others to

address racial equity in school discipline practice. The study aimed to contribute to

current knowledge by exploring a phenomenon that is currently not well understood,

namely what motivated educators to act more equitably toward students of color. As

schools become increasingly racially diverse, a better understanding of the types of

events and observable experiences that enable or impede a commitment to racial equity is

needed. CIT was selected as a method to examine educators' commitment since it allows

for in-depth interviews to help formulate theory and identify commonality across

participants' experiences. The interview approach used for CIT studies allows a

researcher to gain insights into practices or phenomena that can corroborate theories

generated from other studies or fields of research. The phenomenon of commitment to racial equity is a complex and multi-layered process that is well suited for CIT.

Research Questions

The study examined the following six research questions:

Research Question 1: What critical incidents (CIs) have helped educators' active commitment to racial equity in school discipline?

Research Question 2: What CIs have been observed to help the active commitment of others to racial equity in school discipline?

Research Question 3: What CIs have hindered educators' active commitment to racial equity in school discipline?

Research Question 4: What CIs have been observed to hinder the active commitment of others to racial equity in school discipline?

Research Question 5: What wishlist items might have made it easier for educators to commit to racial equity in school discipline from the outset (i.e. sooner)?

Research Question 6: What wishlist items might have made it easier for others to commit to racial equity in school discipline from the outset (i.e., sooner)?

CHAPTER II

METHODS

Setting and Participants

The study included a convenience sample of 15 educators (seven school administrators, three teachers, two Technical Assistance Providers, one Speech and Language Pathologist, one professor of Special Education, and one Executive Director). Participants identified as White ($n = 13$), African American ($n = 1$), multiracial ($n = 1$), and one was a member of a recognized Native American tribe; 10 participants (66%) were female. Educators worked in or with schools or districts located in 10 U.S. states representing the West (10 participants; 67%), Midwest (four participants; 27%), and South (one participant; 6%) regions. Participants reported working in the field of education for an average of 14.3 years (from 4 to 27 years). Eleven participants (73%) described their roles as directly or indirectly disciplining students in schools or overseeing discipline policy.

To be included in the study, all participants needed to be able to recall a time when they were non-committal or ambivalent toward addressing racial equity in school discipline practice. To ensure all participants shared the same frame of reference (Flanagan, 1954), I provided participants with an operational definition of *active commitment to racial equity in school discipline* and I asked participants to confirm that they understood the definition prior to the start of the study. All participants were able to describe a time they were non-committal or ambivalent toward addressing racial equity in school discipline practice.

The operational definition of active commitment to racial equity used for this study was defined as follows: (a) taking clear steps to increase visibility or focus of racial equity in school disciplinary practice (e.g., stating racial equity as a top priority for your

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school, district, or among your colleagues); (b) dedicating resources at your disposal (e.g., time, money, contacts) toward racial equity work, or actively applying strategies to enhance racial equity in school disciplinary outcomes; (c) training, coaching, leading, or talking to other educators with the intent to motivate them to improve racial equity in school disciplinary outcomes. This definition was shared with all participants as part of the interview protocol (Appendix A).

Sample Adequacy

Flanagan (1954) stated participant interviews should continue until exhaustiveness or redundancy occurs in data collection. Exhaustiveness was defined as the point at which participants mention no new CI items, or no new categories emerge or are needed to describe incidents (Butterfield et al., 2005; Flanagan, 1954). Table 8 was used to track the dates of the interviews, when CIs were extracted, and when new categories emerged across participants interviewed.

CIT studies typically extract in the range of 30 to 300 CIs before reaching a point at which new categories are not needed; varying on the complexity of the phenomenon of interest (Flanagan, 1954; Urquhart et al., 2003). Collecting 100 CIs has been considered adequate when the features of an activity are straightforward (Radford, 1996).

To ensure fidelity to the CIT interview process, prior to collecting data my academic advisor and dissertation committee members reviewed the interview protocol and recruitment materials. My academic advisor has expertise in the CIT methodology (e.g., Andreou, McIntosh, Ross, & Kahn, 2015; McIntosh et al., 2016), and the dissertation committee members all had specialized knowledge of the content area, as recommended by Bedi and colleagues (2005). I submitted all study documents and

received approval from the University of Oregon's Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. Finally, I reviewed all study documents to ensure consistency and clarity of terminology or definitions included in recruitment materials, the interview protocol, and the definition of active commitment to racial equity used for the study.

Interview Measure

I adapted the interview protocol and format used for this study (Appendix A) from Bedi and colleagues (2009). I used the protocol to guide a semi-structured interview to help elicit experiences from participants that described specific, observable, and replicable incidents to address six research questions. During interviews, I asked participants to provide more detailed descriptions of their experiences that "helped promote or detract from effective performance of an activity, or the experience of a specific situation or event" (Butterfield et al., 2005, p. 483). Specifically, I asked interviewees to recall critical incidents and wishlist items.

The term Critical Incident (CI) was defined as "any reported occurrence that could be translated into specific, observable, and behavioral terms" (Bedi, Davis, & Williams, 2005, p. 314). Wishlist items are people, supports, information, or programs that were not present at the time of the participant's experience, but that educators believed, in retrospect, would have been helpful to them or other practitioners (Bedi et al., 2005).

The interview protocol also included a series of follow up questions to allow me to gather additional details surrounding the CIs described by participants (e.g., "What happened following the incident that changed your opinions or actions toward current disciplinary practice?"). The protocol begins with an operational definition of what

constitutes *active commitment to racial equity in school discipline* to describe the

phenomenon of interest. I also provided participants with three concrete examples of

what active commitment signifies (e.g., dedicating resources at your disposal [e.g., time,

money, contacts, influence] toward racial equity work, or actively applying strategies to

enhance racial equity in school disciplinary outcomes).

Motivation to Respond Without Prejudice Questionnaire

All participants completed a 10-item questionnaire called the Motivation to

Respond Without Prejudice Scale (Appendix C; Plant & Devine, 1998). I emailed the

questionnaire to participants prior to conducting 1:1 interviews. The Motivation to

Respond Without Prejudice Scale is a validated measure (Cronbach's alpha = .76 -.85 for

internal and external motivation to respond to prejudice; Plant & Devine, 1998) used to

assess the extent to which individuals report avoiding exhibiting bias based on

egalitarianism or social desirability concerns. Items 1 through 5 of the measure assess

external motivations (e.g., "Because of today's PC [politically correct] standards, I try to

appear non-prejudiced toward Black people") and items 6 through 10 measure external

motivations (e.g., "I am personally motivated by my beliefs to be non-prejudiced toward

Black people").

By using a self-report measure to examine participants' attitudes or beliefs

toward racial prejudice, I considered the need to minimize the effect of social desirability

or response bias (Crosby, Bromley, & Saxe, 1980). Plant and Devine (1998), the

developers of the questionnaire, ran correlational analyses examining a sample of

respondents' completed questionnaires with three validated measures of social

desirability. Internal and external scores recorded on the questionnaire were not found to

be statistically significantly related to the scores on social desirability measures. This analysis suggested social desirability had been demonstrated as a less significant threat affecting participants' responses.

A limitation of the questionnaire is its singular focus on assessing participants' perceived biases toward Black people (e.g., perceptions of black stereotypes, negative reactions toward Black people). After considering these limitations, I decided to use the questionnaire in the study as a proxy measure to assess participants' current commitment to racial equity.

Procedure

Recruitment. I recruited participants primarily by two methods: (a) personal invitation, and (b) through educational conferences or workshops. For the first method, my academic advisor and I sent emails and used social media platforms (e.g., Twitter, LinkedIn) to recruit potential participants. We also sent out a recruitment letter (Appendix B) outlining the purpose of the study, eligibility requirements, required time for participation, benefits and risks of participating, and information about compensation provided for agreeing to be part of the study (a $50 gift certificate). For the second method, we recruited participants in-person through regional or national educational conferences.

The final pool of 15 educators represented a convenience sample. However, the recruitment strategy aimed to represent a broad cross section of educators (e.g., teachers, school behavior coaches, technical assistance providers, administrators) involved directly or indirectly in supporting students or school personnel in K-12 schools from different geographic locations (i.e.; qualified observers; Flanagan, 1954).

Assessing participants' shift in commitment to equity. For participants to be eligible for the study, two methods were used to assess prior and current levels of commitment to racial equity. To assess prior commitment, eligible participants needed to identify themselves as having been previously ambivalent or non-committal to racial equity and be able to describe a time when they were ambivalent (e.g., earlier in their teaching careers). Across a pool of thirty educators who responded to requests to join the study, 11 (36%) self-identified as always committed or never ambivalent about addressing racial equity (i.e., ineligible) and four (13%) provided other reasons for not participating (e.g., lack of time).

To quantify current commitment, I asked participants to complete a 10-item questionnaire called the Motivation to Respond Without Prejudice Scale (Appendix C; Plant & Devine, 1998). Participants reported lower to moderate scores ($M = 4.2$ on a scale of 1 to 7) for external motivation and higher scores ($M = 6.6$) for internal motivation. Plant and Devine described internal motivation to respond to prejudice as arising from individual's personally important beliefs, whereas external motivation derives from an individual's desire to avoid negative reactions from others. For this study, commitment was indicated by higher scores reported by participants for internal motivation as conceptualized and assessed by Plant and Devine's questionnaire.

Interview protocol. Interviews lasted 70 to 122 minutes and were recorded and transcribed with the written consent of the participants to facilitate a thorough and reliable discourse analysis (Flanagan, 1954). I emailed the interview protocol to participants in advance to allow time to reflect upon the questions and reduce possible presentation or response bias. I also adhered to a protocol established by Butterfield et al.

(2005) to have an expert (i.e., my academic advisor) in the field listen to every fourth interview to verify that the interview protocol was followed and to check that all essential information was provided to participants.

As recommended in Butterfield et al. (2009), I sought to establish rapport by using basic empathy and active listening with participants to collect richer data about their experiences. Follow up questions and additional probing were also used to elicit data not likely obtained through other methods (Butterfield, Borgen, Maglio, & Amundson, 2009). I included a list of possible follow-up questions in the interview protocol for this purpose.

Transcription and extraction. I coded all interview transcripts following the Enhanced Critical Incident Technique (ECIT) method described by Butterfield et al. (2009). I incorporated three ECIT elements into the study: (a) I added contextual questions at the beginning of the interview process, (b) wishlist items, and (c) nine credibility checks.

Next, I started the coding process by extracting helping CIs from the first transcript. I added all helping CIs electronically to an MS Excel document. For each new CI identified, I tracked each participant's number in a spreadsheet to ensure data could be linked to the participants' original interview transcript.

I reviewed the first transcript and highlighted all helping CIs. Table 8 was used to document emerging categories. Next, I reviewed and extracted CIs and wishlist items from the second transcript. Again, I placed CIs and wishlist items into categories formed, or I added new categories if required. I repeated this process by analyzing transcripts in

batches of three. As new categories emerged, I merged, dropped, or modified existing categories as described in prior CIT studies (Butterfield et al., 2009).

Amundson (1984) recommended 25% as a minimum participation rate needed to form a viable category (i.e., at least four or more of the 15 participants needed to report related CIs to form a category). The threshold participant rate used for this study was four participants (25%). If the threshold participant rate of 25% was not met for a proposed category, I considered combining smaller categories with categories formed (Butterfield et al., 2009). For example, I combined the categories Near Peers Ignoring Racial Issues and Asking Students to Represent their Race into a larger category titled Avoiding Discussing Race, which I viewed as representative of the smaller categories.

Trustworthiness of Data and Interpretations

I completed nine credibility checks, described as part of the Enhanced Critical Incident Technique (ECIT; Butterfield, Borgen, Maglio, & Amundson, 2009). I added the ECIT credibility checks to increase the trustworthiness of the data and analysis process.

1. Recording and transcribing interviews. All interviews were digitally recorded to allow for verbatim transcription of participants' words, utterances, and complete descriptions of CIs (Maxwell, 1992). A professional transcriptionist was used to ensure interviews were carefully documented.

2. Independent review of the interview procedure. My academic advisor reviewed every fourth interview recording to ensure the interview protocol was followed and feedback was provided when appropriate. Examples of my advisor's feedback included the following: asking participants to follow up on which aspects of their

experiences were most influential and asking questions to tease out differences between emerging categories.

      3. Independent review of CI extraction. I recruited and trained an independent reviewer to extract a portion of CIs from the interview transcripts. I randomly selected four transcripts (25%) to be coded, a minimum percentage established by prior studies evaluating the reliability and validity of CIT (Andersson & Nilsson, 1964). The intercoder agreement from the first review was 81%. After further discussion, I reconciled disagreements with the reviewer. The reviewer agreed on not coding multiple CIs embedded in participants' responses for each question. For example, the reviewer agreed CIs (not initially coded) represented multiple separate events or experiences. The independent reviewer extracted one CI I did not identify that was added to an existing category. After reconciling all coding differences, agreement was raised to 100%. Andersson and Nilsson (1964) reported intercoder agreement of 80% to be strong.

      4. Documenting category formation. During data collection, I reviewed and logged all CIs until a point of exhaustiveness was achieved (Butterfield et al., 2009). A table was used to track categories and the dates on which each category was established (Appendix G). As per guidelines for Enhanced CIT, exhaustiveness was reached after the 10th transcript (Participant 4) was reviewed. All CIs extracted from the final 10% of transcriptions fit into existing categories.

      5. Calculating category participation rate. I reported and calculated participation rates for each category aggregated across all participants. Tables 2 to 7 report the participation rates for each category.

6. Independent review of category formation. I chose at random 25% (53 CIs) and sent them to an independent reviewer along with the category headings and operational definitions. I compared the results reported by the independent reviewer to my results. I used Andersson and Nilsson's (1964) recommended criterion of 80% agreement or higher. The intercoder agreement was initially 75%, below what is considered adequate. After further discussion with the reviewer, operational definitions were reviewed and clarified.

Based on the results of the initial independent review, I took the following steps to reconcile intercoder agreement: (a) I added two examples into the category descriptions; *qualitative review of school data (e.g., case studies)* was added to Disaggregating School Data by Race and Ethnicity and *student focus groups* was added to Providing a Voice to Students and Families, (b) I removed two CIs after agreeing with the reviewer's feedback that the CI's could not be conceptually differentiated in meaning based on the existing category definitions, (c) I asked the review to re-code 25% of CIs randomly selected. After the second review, intercoder agreement was raised to 88%. Following discussion of disagreements and review of category definitions, intercoder agreement was raised to 100%.

7. Participant review (i.e., member check) of category definitions. I emailed all participants follow-up questions after I had completed all interviews, defined operational definitions, and allowed for the independent extraction of CIs. The second round of participant interviews allowed for comments, feedback, and confirmation on the category titles and definitions (e.g., Are the helping/hindering categories correct? Is there anything missing?). I also asked the participants to review the categories into which CIs

and wishlist items were placed and asked participants to what extent the categories fit with the experiences they shared. All 15 participants (100%) responded by email and reported the categories were appropriate and fit with their reported experiences. One participant pointed out that the category definition for Implementing PBIS as a Foundation for Equity did not fit with his initial experiences working in a school district.

> The one that did not match my experience was the using Positive Behavioral Support and Interventions (PBIS) as a foundation [for equity]. At least not at first. Our district, when I was in a district, had not recognized the need for systemic implementation. We eventually began to use PBIS as a foundation, but it was after several years of trying to do equity and diversity work in silos (Participant 5)

Based on this participant's comments, I added language to the category definition describing a need to adapt PBIS systems [after implemented in a school] to be more culturally responsive to support students from different racial groups and cultural backgrounds.

8. Expert review of category definitions. I recruited two experts from the field of education, scholars versed in the study's content area who were aware of current practices used to address racial equity in school discipline. I asked the experts to review the final category definitions and to respond to a set of questions about whether they found the categories appropriate, surprising, or useful (Flanagan, 1954). The experts were asked the following questions: *(a) Do you find the categories to be useful? (b) Are you surprised by any of the categories? (c) Do you think there is anything missing based on your experience?* The two experts found all the categories to be useful. One of the experts found it surprising that the category Avoiding Discussing Race did not also emerge as a category hindering the observed commitment of other educators to address racial equity (only emerged as a personal hindrance).

One expert asked whether any of the helping categories included purposeful intent to experience different cultures (e.g., shopping in the community in which the students live, attending a place of worship in the students' community, asking students to teach them something in their native language). The expert agreed the wishlist item category Experiencing Racially Diverse Students and Communities encompassed a related set of experiences. The category Experiencing Racially Diverse Students and Communities describes participants' desire to be exposed to racially diverse schools and communities (e.g., work in more diverse school environments sooner in their educational career). Overall, the two experts recommended no changes to the category titles or operational definitions.

9. Evaluating categories for theoretical agreement. For the final credibility check, I reviewed the categories within the context of current literature to evaluate "Theoretical Agreement" (Butterfield et al., 2009). I examined theoretical agreement by reviewing whether the final categories were consistent with prior theory or related studies.

Positionality

Conducting qualitative research requires considering how a researcher's own worldview or position influences a specific research task (i.e., positionality; Sanghera & Thapar-Björkert, 2008). The topic of this study emerged from my interest and experiences supporting educators in schools as a PBIS coach and school social worker. My background related to the topic of racial equity influenced the research process. My pre-existing knowledge and experiences related to the topic may be viewed as an asset (Bell, 1987). For example, I asked follow-up questions, based on my own school experiences, that helped me to explore nuances in participants' responses. Yet, my familiarity with the subject matter could also have contributed to a loss of objectivity

(DeLyser, 2001). In spite of conducting nine credibility checks (Butterfield et al., 2009) to reduce subjectivity, it was important for me to consider the implications of my position as a researcher using a qualitative approach to explore this topic.

CHAPTER III

FINDINGS

Categories Formed

I initially extracted a total of 302 CIs from 15 interview transcripts. I sorted the initial pool of critical incidents (CIs) identified into 61 categories. After further inspection, I found 20 categories to be conceptually identical in meaning and 19 categories to overlap in meaning with other categories. I used an iterative process that included multiple revisions to operational definitions and titles (i.e., adding, dropping, modifying categories titles and definitions to fit CIs into categories). The final count included 20 categories encompassing 210 CIs. Final categories were endorsed by at least four more of the 15 participants (27%), indicating they were valid categories (Andersson & Nilsson, 1964).

Tables 1 to 6 display the final categories sorted by helping (self, others), hindering (self, others), and wishlist items (self, others). Each table includes the total number of CIs, number of participants endorsing each category, and the representation rate (percentage of participants that endorsed categories/total number of participants). There were seven categories that emerged in two areas. The tables are ordered hierarchically from largest to smallest by participant representation rate (range 27% to 67%).

Table 1

Helping Critical Incident Categories (Self)

Category	# CIs	# Participants	% Participation
1. Disaggregating School Data by Race/Ethnicity [HO]	12	10	67%
2. Learning About Racial Discrimination in Society	12	8	53%

Category	# CIs	# Participants	% Participation
3. Witnessing Racial Prejudice in Schools	11	7	47%
4. Discussing Race and Discipline with Peers [WLS]	7	6	40%
5. Acknowledging Racial Biases [WLS]	5	5	33%
6. Examining White Privilege and Identity	6	4	27%
7. Implementing PBIS as a Foundation for Equity	5	4	27%
8. Learning from Trusted Peer(s)	5	4	27%

Note. Categories emerged across two areas; HS = Helping Self, HO = Helping Others, HIS = Hindering Self, HIO = Hindering Others, WLS = Wishlist Items (Self), WLO = Wishlist Items (Others)

Table 2

Helping Critical Incident Categories (Others)

Category	# CIs	# Participants	% Participation
1. Sharing Equity Focused School Practices	12	7	47%
2. Disaggregating School Data by Race/Ethnicity [HS]	7	7	47%
3. Providing a Voice to Students and Families	5	5	33%
4. Normalizing Discomfort in Addressing Race [WLS]	5	4	27%
5. Getting Cited for Disproportionality	5	4	27%
6. Confronting Prejudicial Beliefs	4	4	27%

Note. Categories emerged across two or more areas; HS = Helping Self, HO = Helping Others, HIS = Hindering Self, HIO = Hindering Others, WLS = Wishlist Items (Self), WLO = Wishlist Items (Others)

Table 3

Hindering Incident Categories (Self)

Category	# CIs	# Participants	% Participation
1. Avoiding Discussing Race	14	10	67%
2. Experiencing Lack of Conviction from Leaders & Peers [HIO]	10	7	47%
3. Imposing Cultural Norms	10	6	40%
4. Lowering Expectations and Stereotyping [HIO]	7	4	27%
5. Adhering to School Discipline Policies	5	4	27%

Note. Category emerged across two or more areas; HS = Helping Self, HO = Helping Others, HIS = Hindering Self, HIO = Hindering Others, WLS = Wishlist Items (Self), WLO = Wishlist Items (Others)

Table 4

Hindering Incident Categories (Others)

Category	# CIs	# Participants	% Participation
1. Lowering Expectations & Stereotyping [HIS]	12	7	47%
2. Experiencing Lack of Conviction from Leaders & Peers [HIS]	8	6	40%

Note. Category emerged across two or more areas; HS = Helping Self, HO = Helping Others, HIS = Hindering Self, HIO = Hindering Others, WLS = Wishlist Items (Self), WLO = Wishlist Items (Others)

Table 5

Wishlist Items Categories (Self)

Category	# CIs	# Participants	% Participation
1. Training on Culturally Responsive Practices [WLO]	6	5	33%
2. Experiencing Racially Diverse Students and Communities	7	5	33%
3. Normalizing Discomfort in Addressing Race [HO]	5	4	27%
4. Acknowledging Racial Biases [HS]	4	4	27%
5. Discussing Race and Discipline with Peers [HS]	4	4	27%

Note. Category emerged across two or more areas; HS = Helping Self, HO = Helping Others, HIS = Hindering Self, HIO = Hindering Others, WLS = Wishlist Items (Self), WLO = Wishlist Items (Others)

Table 6

Wishlist Items Categories (Others)

Category	# CIs	# Participants	% Participation
1. Accessing Equity Mentors & Exemplars	6	6	40%
2. Experiencing Conviction from Leaders and Peers	6	4	27%
3. Training on Culturally Responsive Practices [WLS]	5	4	27%

Note. Categories emerged across two or more areas; HS = Helping Self, HO = Helping Others, HIS = Hindering Self, HIO = Hindering Others, WLS = Wishlist Items (Self), WLO = Wishlist Items (Others)

Research Question 1: What Critical Incidents (CIs) Have Helped Educators' Active Commitment to Racial Equity in School Discipline?

Participants reported a total of 63 helping CIs, forming eight categories viewed as influencing their personal commitment to racial equity in school discipline practice. The categories are Disaggregating School Data by Race and Ethnicity, Sharing Equity Focused School Practices, Providing a Voice to Students and Families, Normalizing Discomfort in Addressing Race, Getting Cited for Disproportionality, and Confronting Prejudicial Beliefs. Findings are reported by percent of total participants who endorsed CIs belonging to each category (i.e. categories most to least endorsed by participants).

1. Disaggregating school data by race and ethnicity. This category was the largest endorsed helping category with 10 participants (67%) reporting it was helpful to their personal commitment (note: this category also emerged as influencing others' commitment). CIs within this category refer to viewing, analyzing, or sharing (e.g., with school staff, parents) disaggregated school data by racial/ethnic groups (e.g., African American, Latinx students). The following quotation was representative of the category.

> I received all the disciplinary records and what I saw reflected in those disciplinary records was a lot of power struggles with certain adults um, usually an assistant principal or a principal…I also noticed too was that the students coming through my program were typically young men of color. However, the sentences for the white students had been um, less extreme than they were for the students of color. So, I started to see that pattern of disproportionality in the school's discipline system (Participant 11).

As illustrated in this CI, the use of disaggregated data helped participants see disproportionate patterns that evoked reflection or actions focused on enhancing racial equity in schools. Educators characterized the practice of reviewing disaggregated student data as "hard to argue with" (Participant 9), "very impactful" (Participant 15) and

"utterly shocking" (Participant 11). In the following quotation, Participant 14 recalled

having an intense reaction when comparing similar disciplinary incidents reported for

students of color and White students.

> I'm often looking at disciplinary records. And I get really mad and I talk with
> myself a lot about it…I'm reading side by side a disciplinary incident that was
> very similar between two students and one of them is White and one of them is
> Black or Hispanic and the same incident was treated with a completely different
> consequence.

Reviewing disaggregated data also challenged educators' pre-conceived notions

about race, equity, and disciplinary practice. Participant 3 described how she used

discipline data to shift a conversation among staff about race and Special Education

referrals.

> So, in our district we would routinely see a lot of students transferring to us and
> from us to these other areas. So, the initial reaction that we had was that we were
> getting cited for disproportionality for move-ins, for kids that had already been
> identified by their districts and we just got caught with kind of a "hot potato"
> because the data showed high numbers. So, one of the things that we did was
> challenge that assumption and we went back and reviewed every single student of
> color IEP to determine who made that initial placing decision. And we [the
> district IEP team] did all of them [placements] with the exception of two students.
> So that kind of created cognitive dissonance within all of us as we were kind of
> talking about how we were going to fix things.

According to this incident, reported by Participant 3, conducting a file review

uncovered a pattern of disproportionately referring students of color for Special

Education services. This category also refers to educators learning about school discipline

disparities in other schools or nationwide, presenting data to school stakeholders for

feedback, and attending conference presentations focused on racial equity.

2. Learning about racial discrimination in society. This category was endorsed

by eight participants (53%) as personally helpful. CIs in this category refer to hearing,

reading, and learning of stories that provide insights into racially discriminatory

behaviors, laws, or societal norms outside of school settings. For example, this category includes reading articles (e.g., news reports, journal articles) or learning of historical accounts describing experiences with racial discrimination as illustrated by the following quotation.

> I went home and looked it up and read about the Mary Turner story, and it's in the town where my college was located in Valdosta, GA. And they had taken and lynched this [African American] man and they took his wife and took her down to the river and, anyway they brutally murdered her and her unborn child. And that story just, the emotion that it made me feel, that this could happen so close to where I was raised and where my family was and just the hatred that you could infer from reading the historical accounts of it, it just opened my eyes to a whole new level of bleakness and generational racism (Participant 7).

The CI above refers to learning about racism from a historical account of a racially motivated crime that occurred in a place familiar to the participant. This category also refers to learning about racial discrimination from listening to personal stories. Participant 10 recalled listening to an African American co-worker describe his experiences of getting stopped regularly by police for no apparent reason (i.e., racially profiled).

CIs in this category also include learning more about systemic causes for what perpetuates racial disparities in society. In the following quotation, Participant 2 describes how understanding discriminatory housing policies changed her views on why poverty is disproportionately experienced by persons of color.

> I didn't quite realize, you know, why there are so many people in color in poverty, that it's not—I wasn't like, oh they're lazy but I just didn't know. Like, oh no, it's because they never were property owners and when they—like, right, and then it just snowballs in the wrong direction. So, the access to housing, etc., and how that all began. Like, where the root was at… (Participant 2).

CIs in this category also refer to participants' experiences outside of K-12 schools (e.g., listening to musicians sharing stories of feeling excluded in schools, reading news

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articles recounting a discriminatory event). Participants described political events and

policies that affected foreign-born students' legal rights and raised their concerns about

the welfare of other student groups following the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

> Well, I mean, just the 2016 elections and just seeing some of the different events and decisions that have been made um, on our President, like the Muslim ban and just restricting rights especially of students who are transgender and rescinding their rights to around using bathrooms of their choice. These kinds of things have also made my commitment much stronger knowing that pretty much most minorities at this point are not—they're not safe (Participant 10).

3. Witnessing racial prejudice in schools. This category was endorsed by seven

participants (47%) as personally helpful. The category refers to observing language,

racial epithets, stereotypical portrayals as intentionally (i.e., overtly racist) or

unintentionally (i.e., implicitly) racially prejudiced toward persons of color (regardless of

interviewee's color) in school settings. Events included observing students, teachers, or

administrators using derogatory terms (e.g., using racial slurs, referring to "those kids")

and witnessing White students receiving preferential treatment (e.g., less severe

consequences than students of color for the same infraction). The following quotation is

typical of CIs belonging to this category:

> …the sort of stuff I've seen that, you know, a White student and a Hispanic student would have literally the exact same behavior and the White student would get one day out of school suspension and the Hispanic student would get five. That's when it really started to become clear to me that there was an element of judgement based on a student's color (Participant 14).

In response to witnessing prejudicial events in schools, participants were

motivated to take actions to prevent future discriminatory actions from occurring. For

example, in the following quotation, Participant 12 acknowledged a need to make

changes to school practices after witnessing the actions of a new administrator in her

building.

Unfortunately, some of the other ways that I've been helped in my journey have been negative. Um so I've like, for example, last year we had an interim principal while we were hiring a new principal and I watched as she disciplined the wrong Black male student. And this student was very, very visibly upset and kept saying that's not my name, that's not who I am, I don't know what you're talking about. And this interim principal just wouldn't let it go. "I know it was you, it was you." And it comes out that it wasn't this young man and so being racially profiled as a young Black student it was just incredibly frustrating to see. And yeah, I took it upon myself to talk to that student and help that student understand…So it was obviously very frustrating in the moment and so it made me consider okay, myself as an educator, what can I do to assist students in the future so that way it doesn't come to that?

4. Discussing race and discipline with peers. This category was endorsed by six participants (40%) as personally helpful. The category was also endorsed as a personal wishlist item. CIs belonging to this category refer to peers (e.g., colleagues, acquaintances) formally or informally sharing ideas, receiving support, and learning through discussions, as opposed to obtaining specific strategies. Activities viewed as beneficial to personal commitment included joining a community of practice (e.g., as part of a fellowship cohort) and networking with peers informally (e.g., in the school staff room). The following quotation highlights the benefits of finding "like-minded" peers to debrief their experiences with race and discipline in schools.

> So, I have this group of people who I can speak this common language with, or I can say hey, I feel like, you know, I had this weird thing happen with…a mother of color. Can you help me like, you know, walk through this, give me feedback, etc. So, I guess that's what I would say is that having like, a group of people to rely on (Participant 2).

CIs belonging to this category also refer to networking with peers in structured settings outside of schools, through courses, workshops, or conferences. In the following quotation, Participant 14 described the benefits of having discussions with peers in schools who described a different disciplinary approach from her own. This experience

was viewed as increasing the participant's commitment to racial equity by helping her to explain why she endorsed restorative practices over other disciplinary approaches.

> I think just having the opportunities to engage with people over the years have each been separate incidents but have confirmed my commitment to increasing racial equity because every time I talk with somebody about why they believe in traditional punitive discipline um, it usually solidifies for me the power of restorative practices…so, I think just all those incidents over the years of going to professional developments and learning more from discussions with people have just increased my commitment (Participant 14).

5. Acknowledging racial biases. This category was endorsed by four participants (27%) as personally helpful. The category was also endorsed as a personal wishlist item. CIs in the category refer to gaining an understanding of how racial biases (e.g., implicit or explicit bias) can shape perceptions of unwanted student behaviors and responses to unwanted behaviors. Activities in this category include reflecting on how implicit biases help explain why students of color are disproportionality disciplined (when educators are not acting explicitly racist toward them) and becoming aware of how racial stereotypes are perpetuated in the media. A quotation from Participant 5 describes a section of a PD training cited as influencing his personal commitment.

> The district brought Beyond Diversity trainers into our district…that was the first place where I started seeing some of those biases in the media…like, really seeing it rather than just not noticing. And that played a pretty big role in the shift toward thinking about racial equity (Participant 5).

In this quotation, Participant 5 described why learning about racial biases portrayed in the media helped to shift his awareness from "noticing" to "seeing" biases within in his school and community. He explained that "seeing" racial biases in commercials or movie clips helped him also detect biases in his school. Participant 5 shared the following example when asked to describe an influential part of the training he attended.

The one that sticks with me is a Volkswagen ad. They had a black car and a white car and I don't even remember it specifically, like, I couldn't tell you what the words said on the screen, but I just remembered that really stuck with me because here's this like, message that black is the evil one and white is the good one and you know, like the white knights' kind of mentality.

6. Examining white privilege and identity. This category was endorsed by four participants (27%) as personally helpful. The category refers to having experiences that raised awareness of White privilege and White identity. Activities included training experiences that increased participants' awareness of privilege and power conferred to White people in relation to other racial groups. This category also includes participants learning more about the concepts of internalized oppression (i.e., marginalized groups holding an oppressive view toward their own group). The following quotation was representative of CIs belonging to this category. Participant 2 described what White privilege meant to her.

I'm White but recognizing that that comes with something. Right? Like, that comes with [White] privilege. That comes with being able to walk in the world a very certain way. Yes, I'm a woman so that has other things that come along with it, but I walk around in white skin with a voice that sounds White, you know, with this certain level of safety that comes with being White. I don't have to think about the police, you know?

This quotation describes an experience of acknowledging White privilege and gaining an awareness of the benefits or status conferred to White people. Activities in this category helping personal commitment included participants writing or sharing cultural autobiographies. One participant reflected on the impact of being asked to share stories of her upbringing with an African American acquaintance that prompted self-reflection on her experiences growing up as a White person.

I realized that I had a story that was totally eye opening, the fact that somebody would even be interested in what it's like to grow up in small town Wisconsin with farmers on one side of the town and hippies on the other side of the town …I

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mean, I had never considered how that impacted me as an adult, so it was really interesting, really eye opening (Participant 3).

CIs belonging to this category also refer to participants learning how institutional racism has resulted in White people receiving preferential access to community resources based on skin color. This experience was illustrated by Participant 5 who related his experiences working on a Native American reservation.

> And doing general Social Work I was able to sort of indirectly experience racism the way that a reservation family might in interacting with the neighboring communities. I would identify myself as being from the Family Resource Center on the reservation and I would have calls, you know, that would drop, or people would hang up. However, when I went there in person and they would be able to see me as a White person, responses/reactions changed. So, at the time I kind of thought it was interesting. I was able to kind of see, alright, so my race plays a difference, but I didn't understand the structural pieces. I didn't understand the institutional racism that was in play until much later.

Participant 5 described becoming more aware of the benefits and status conferred to White people through his experiences living on the Reservation. Although, he reported not understanding (until later) what systemic or structural factors contributed to him receiving preferential treatment as a White person.

7. Implementing PBIS as a foundation for equity. This category was endorsed by four participants (27%) as personally helpful. It refers to school or district implementation of Positive Behavioral Supports and Interventions (PBIS). Activities include receiving training on PBIS and implementing components of PBIS in schools (e.g., teaching behavioral expectations, data-based decision making). The category also refers to modifying PBIS to use it as a framework to enhance equity or guide data review for decision making.

A core element of PBIS is teaching behavioral expectations to students to help them understand what behaviors are expected in different areas of schools (e.g., cafeteria,

classroom, playground). Participants described leverage implementation of PBIS to have

discussions on topics related to equity: how acknowledgements were delivered to

students, how referrals were assigned to students by race, or how students viewed their

school's culture. The following CI is representative of the category.

> We had PBIS going officially, however, it helped cement it on the part of the
> teachers, their actual behaviors. It helped them create more of a commitment…I
> was very much a systems person, but I wasn't as good at having conversations
> with other people about race…It actually helped me. It kind of propelled me, I
> would say into having difficult conversations with people when I was seeing
> something, and also having difficult conversations with people about myself, you
> know, my own behaviors (Participant 11).

The following quotation is illustrative of CIs belonging to this category which

describe adapting current PBIS practices and systems to improve racial equity in schools:

"We started thinking about how to modify PBIS so that it systemically would be more

impactful and more responsive to all students, rather than just the students that looked

like the teachers" (Participant 5).

8. Learning from a trusted leader. This category refers to learning from a

trusted or knowledgeable leader (e.g., school district leader, pastor, principal, researcher,

trainer). The compelling aspect of the CIs in this category was not so much the content of

the message, but rather, participants' respect for the messenger and the way information

was shared on topics related to racial equity. Participants shared about making

connections with respected individuals knowledgeable about enhancing equity. In the

follow quotation, Participant 14 recalled the influence of working with her district's legal

counsel who was described as an advocate for equity in the district.

> I think that it's powerful for me because he [district legal counsel] is an advocate
> for students and families and I find that really admirable. And I think sometimes
> when people in any bureaucracy get farther and farther up the chain into positions
> of leadership that sometimes they become more removed and disengaged from

what's going on, on the ground and with students and families. And so it's not that I feel like I have an advantage, um, having a relationship with him or being like-minded, just more in appreciation that our district who views his number one role is to advocate for students and families (Participant 14).

Participants also reported encountering leaders outside of schools through community events or religious services that influenced their personal commitment. For example, Participant 2 recalled the following CI that occurred during a church service.

Our pastor in a predominantly White community, predominantly White church, I mean, I'm in rural Iowa so there aren't a lot of Black people, and he tackled the topic of racism just so eloquently and beautifully.

CIs in this category describe leaders as possessing personal qualities that made the information they shared on equity, race, or discipline persuasive and trustworthy to participants. Phrases used to describe leaders in this category included, "open-mindedness" (Participant 14), "so clear"" (Participant 15), "eloquent" (Participant 1), "highly respected" (Participant 1), and "very interesting" (Participant 7).

Research Question 2: What CIs Have Been Observed to Help the Active Commitment of Others to Racial Equity in School Discipline?

Participants reported a total of 38 helping CIs forming six categories observed as helping the commitment of others. Disaggregating School Data by Race and Ethnicity was endorsed as both personally influential and influential to the observed commitment of others. The other categories are Sharing Equity-Focused School Practices, Providing a Voice to Students and Families, Normalizing Discomfort in Addressing Race, Getting Cited for Disproportionality, and Confronting Prejudicial Beliefs.

1. Sharing equity-focused school practices. This category was observed by seven participants (47%) as helpful to others. This category refers to formally or informally sharing ideas, observing, or discussing strategies with other educators in

schools. Activities cited as helpful to others included conducting classroom walkthroughs to observe teacher instructional practices and student-teacher interactions, as illustrated in the following CI.

> These walkthroughs are about like, how are kids being seen and how are kids showing up, and how are you showing up for kids? And so, really specific feedback to people. Like hey, when you said this I noticed these three kids, you know, oh my God, they shut down or, you know, these kids really perked up when you brought out that Native American, you know, piece of art (Participant 2).

The quotation above refers to helping educators to notice when kids "perk up" or "shut down" as a method of assessing instruction delivered to students in classrooms. Participant 11, a principal, also cited the benefits of using a classroom observation tool she developed with her staff: "The teachers were going through and ticking off which of the culturally responsive classroom components they saw and having discussions about them."

The category also included inviting guest speakers to a staff meeting and attending conferences focused on supporting racially diverse students in schools. Participants also cited the benefits of sharing culturally responsive classroom activities with peers to help increase others' commitment to racial equity. Participant 12 described an activity she shared with other educators in her school.

> My students did an African American superheroes project last year…so we had a list of 40 different influential African Americans. They drew names out of a hat and they had to do a five-paragraph research project, but a lot of students were bringing in posters and trifolds and had, you know, pictures that they were gonna hang up on the wall, and so showing them…they got really engaged and they were finding out all this new information.

Participants described using a "hands-off" approach to sharing equity-focused strategies. For example, participants reported, "you don't teach them the equity work,

they [educators] do it themselves, and that's the strangeness about this…it's nothing you can force on them" (Participant 13); "There were [culturally responsive] features that I would call out during my own observations, you know, and say hey, I saw you did a great job" (Participant 11); "They get hooked [restorative practices] and they go back and they start using it in their classrooms, and they start to help each other do it" (Participant 14).

2. Disaggregating school data by race/ethnicity. This category was observed by seven participants (47%) as helpful to shift others' commitment. This category was also endorsed as personally helpful. CIs belonging to this category refer to using data to prepare or justify to others a need to consider new disciplinary approaches (e.g., restorative practices). Disaggregated data was also used strategically to challenge others to examine their personal or organizational values. The following CI is representative of this category:

> I think if you can create a little bit of dissonance that they [educators] can experience, but that has actions to take, it helps. So, an example, we ask people to state their school's mission and vision, draw it out on paper, right. That we want 100% of our students to be ready for post-school greatness, blah, blah, blah, but then to kind of draw that out and then look at their data and draw on what that mission actually looks like in their school, what do they see in the patterns, who is achieving post-school greatness, who's left out of the picture? (Participant 3)

Activities also include having staff examine data to raise their awareness of how equitably students were disciplined in schools. Participant 9, a school administrator, recalled using disaggregated data to have her staff explore a "double-standard" she noticed from reviewing student disciplinary incidents.

> When they [school staff] dug in and really reviewed the types of behaviors that were eliciting that they would look at a first offense White student drug possession, alternative suspension. First offense African American student drug possession, expulsion. And so, there was a very differing set of rules for one racial group than the other. And so, it put everyone on alert to really check into the practices that have kind of been ignored up until that point.

Participant 7 discussed a need to find a balance when sharing disaggregated data by race or ethnicity with other educators. In the following quotation, Participant 7 observed discomfort from others when he explored data at the classroom level, which could indicate biased responding by individual teachers. Although the CI was described as helpful, the participant expressed doubts about the benefits of sharing data with his staff.

> When I start talking about classroom-level differences, and everybody always talks about disaggregate the data, we need to drill down, we need to look at where, when, and what, and you know, from a roomful of teachers, but usually it's only good for, you know, building administrators and district personnel. When I mention classroom-level differences, usually I get an awkward look and I'm like yeah, how often do you think that a lot of our disparity do you think is a teacher problem? So, I don't know if that's helping or hindering yet, but it definitely gets educators' attention.

3. Providing a voice to students and families. This category was reported by five participants (33%) as helping the observed commitment of others. The category refers to encouraging participation and input of students and families in school disciplinary processes, practices, or decision making to influence the commitment of others. One administrator (Participant 11) described the benefits of providing a regular forum for parents to come to her school and share their experiences in the school with staff.

> Having a parent panel helped because a lot of my educators thought that they weren't doing anything that would bother a parent of color, and I did have some parents who were brave enough to come to one of my racial equity trainings and kind of just talk about some of the things they had first-hand experienced…It was difficult for the educators because they personalized it. You know what I mean? So, the initial reaction is defensiveness. It's very emotional for everybody. But, it can lead to, you know, to good work.

Activities observed as helpful to others also included introducing restorative practices into schools and using student focus groups to enhance academic instruction. Participant 8 reported, "I presented [feedback from focus groups with students of color] to all the teachers that allowed their students to participate" (Participant 8). In the quotation below, a principal related an experience of using family meetings to promote a shift in how her staff viewed disciplinary practices.

> I do think it amounts to having meetings with families. So, like, when we have a child that is struggling and having to, you know, kind of work his way through the paces of the disciplinary hierarchy within our school um, bringing that family in to talk about things and to see like, their perspective of it. I do think causes a shift in thinking a lot of times (Participant 4).

4. Normalizing discomfort in addressing race. This category was observed by four participants (27%) as helpful to others. This category was also endorsed as a personal wishlist item. The category refers to reinforcing in others that discussing race is uncomfortable and will require courage and a willingness to be vulnerable with others. This category includes providing opportunities to help others acknowledge and manage negative feelings (e.g., guilt, shame, privilege) that can arise when addressing race. In the following quotations, participants described different tactics to help prepare others to address race in school settings.

> I think having people be able to model how to have those conversations is useful. I think helping people understand their own identity has been useful because I think when we talk about diversity and racial equity it's kind of like we've been conditioned to think about race and culture as something that other people have, but as a white person I have it too and it impacts how I operate (Participant 3).

> …what I see really helping is the ability to build up peoples' empathy and kind of play on their empathy and try to get them to make connections to what it could feel like to be a student [of color] who is either being discriminated against or just doesn't fit in our school (Participant 5).

Activities in this category observed as helpful to others included presenting or discussing race-related issues in a non-threatening manner (e.g., honoring divergent opinions, engaging in uncomfortable conversations). Participant 5 described the importance of sequencing training activities to ease into discussions focused on race: "we don't have to jump straight to race, we try to kind of ease in because we have quite a few days in our training" (Participant 5). Participants also recommended opening training sessions with non-race related topics (e.g., personality inventories, focus on gender disparities) before discussing race.

CIs belonging to this category also refer to purposefully taking others out of their comfort zones to help them empathize with students marginalized as a result of belonging to a specific racial group. Participant 5 reported, "If you feel yucky about something [referring to an ice-breaker activity introduced at a professional development training]…I want you to hang onto that feeling because we have kids in our school who feel that way all the time." Participant 13 reflected on a trainer who imparted the need for him to stay engaged and focused during conversations, especially when another's perspective on race or discipline may not align with his personal approach.

> What really emboldened me in this [workshop] was a trainer that once told me how he's never ever afraid to go down the path when a participant brings up race. So, what happens is that you let them share wherever they're going with it [their experience with race], and you say okay, so what I understand you're saying is this, and then when you get to a point where they say, yeah, that's what I'm saying, you say okay. I'm going to now offer my counter perspective, and they hear that out and the whole group hears it out, and you all come to a better understanding and now you're having the dialogue and now there's growth. But that couldn't happen without being not afraid to go down that path and to listen, to give air to that.

5. Getting cited for disproportionality. This category was observed by four participants (27%) as helpful to others. The category refers to a school, district, or state

receiving a citation or being identified as having a disproportionate percentage of students from a specific racial or ethnic group referred for disciplinary incidents or special education referrals. Though the category describes punitive actions, participants observed citations or mandates to address disproportionality as helping the commitment of others. The following quotation illustrates why CIs cited in this category were viewed as helping rather than hindering others' observed commitment to equity.

> They [the school district] were sued for racial disproportionality in suspensions and expulsions, and so one thing that really kind of helped get the point across and put a spotlight on an issue that was kind of being ignored was this lawsuit that was in the news and it's local and it's an ongoing theme that keeps coming up (Participant 9).

> Getting cited for disproportionality was also described as heightening

participants' awareness of a need to improve school practices. Participant 5 described the effects of his school receiving a citation for over-representation of African American students getting referred to Special Education Services: "It brings [race] to a level of consciousness. I mean, I know in my like, special ed team meetings it's something we talk about regularly" (Participant 5).

6. Confronting prejudicial beliefs. This category was observed by four participants (27%) as influencing the commitment of others. The category refers to challenging the beliefs, actions, or norms of others perceived as racial prejudiced. Activities viewed as helpful to others included publicly denouncing actions perceived as prejudiced (e.g., during a staff meeting), advocating for student needs, or intervening to address prejudice in school settings. The following CI described an event in which a participant publicly challenged a peer based on a comment she perceived as racially discriminatory.

…And so, they were talking about construction [of a new school building] and a [school staff] person raised their hand and started talking about the plasma donation center that's going up about 500-600 feet from our school grounds…and she said, well you know the kind of people that go to the plasma banks like, we don't want those kind of people in our school. And I looked at her and I was like, what do you mean by that? Teachers at our school are making those comments and I'm at the point in my career where I'm not afraid to step and say, excuse me, that's insensitive, that's incorrect. You should not be saying that about our kids… I've spoken up in staff meetings before and afterwards I've had people come up to me in the lounge or in the hallway and say, thank you for saying that. I'm really glad that someone said that. That was ridiculous (Participant 12).

Participants also reported on intervening with other educators in their schools by asking them to reflect on how their own cultural values shaped their use of discipline. In the following quotation, Participant 2 asked a peer educator to consider whether students viewed school and home expectations differently.

Like, an example would be that disrespect. Like, they're being so disrespectful, they're so loud… and then I'm saying like, hey, let's think about that a little bit, let's dig a little deeper about, you know, what is loud to you, what is appropriate to you. You know, how much have you taught that student about what it needs to sound like in class versus at recess versus at home versus on the, you know?

This category also includes making efforts to shift the perspectives of others through sharing counter-examples (i.e., alternative information that can challenge pre-existing beliefs about race). In the following quotation, Participant 5 reported on talking with a school board member about the board member's views on a recent law enacted in New York City. The participant referred to providing an alternative explanation for the negative effects of a law enacted to reduce crime.

I just had another school board member tell me that stop and frisk without cause was the best law ever because it brought down crime in New York City. And like, being able to offer an alternative to that belief, that you know, crime is cyclical and whatever. I think those things help. I don't know—I'm certain that I didn't change that man's mind, but I am hopeful that I planted a seed that maybe will make him question some of the other information that he's getting from the sources that he uses. But I think just providing an alternative story, providing the possible other side, I think is helpful" (Participant 5).

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Research Question 3: What CIs Have Hindered Educators' Active Commitment to Racial Equity in School Discipline?

Participants reported a total of 46 CIs forming five categories viewed as hindering their personal commitment to racial equity. The categories are Avoiding Discussing Race, Imposing Cultural Norms, and Adhering to School Discipline Policies, Experiencing Lack of Conviction from Leaders and Peers, and Lowering Expectations. Stereotyping, Experiencing Lack of Conviction from Leaders and Peers, and Lowering Expectations and Stereotyping also emerged as categories observed as hindering others' commitment to equity.

1. Avoiding discussing race. This was the largest category endorsed by 10 participants (67%) as personally hindering. The category refers to avoiding or being ambivalent about talking about race or race-related topics among colleagues, students, or acquaintances during personal conversations or in public forums (e.g., social media, student events). Participants described a reluctance to acknowledge racial disparities in school discipline, even if data showed clear differences in how students of color were assigned disciplinary consequences. The following CI was representative of CIs belonging to this category.

> I think a lot of people are reluctant to say or just simply won't say that there's disproportionality in school discipline when all of the facts and data point to that…Even when people are faced with facts, the numbers, the data, the anecdotes, they often still do not want to come out and say we have this problem, what are we going to do about it? (Participant 14)

The quotation above described how avoidance of race hindered participants from addressing racial disparities, even when documented in school discipline data. Participants offered different reasons for why race was not discussed more in schools: "A

lot of the staff that I've worked with in the different schools are mostly White and don't

have to deal with race a lot in the sense that they don't have to talk about it" (Participant

13). "I think it does boil down to the root cause of an inability [to] recognize and

acknowledge a problem [with race], and then uncertainty about how to address that

problem" (Participant 8).

Participants also referred to "clumsy race talk" or "spotlighting" (i.e., asking staff

or students of color to act as representative members of their racial/ethnic group) as

hindering CIs. For example, Participant 2 described asking an African American student

to act as a representative for their racial group: "I had one Black student in my class and

it was like, hey, why don't you describe your experience of being Black?" (Participant 2)

Participants also noted discussing racial topics elicited avoidant responses from

others. Participant 9 described what occurred when he raised questions about examining

the role of race and equity in discipline practice among peers in his school.

> One thing that really hindered me is when you would bring up the conversation of
> so like, we're not being super fair to our African American population, the
> argument from [school] administration at the time would be something like, well,
> it's not because they're African American, it's because they're socioeconomically
> disadvantaged. And so, it's a coincidence that they happen to also be African
> American and poor but really this thing that we're dealing with is that they're
> poor, you know.

As illustrated in the quotation above, efforts to discuss race were discounted by

school administrators who reported race was not an issue and directed staff to focus on

poverty. This CI was also representative of others in this category in which participants

struggled to convince others that race was contributing to school disciplinary disparities.

2. Experiencing lack of conviction from leaders and peers. This category was

endorsed by seven participants (47%) as personally hindering their commitment. The

category refers to experiencing reluctance or resistance from leaders and peers to address racial equity in schools and society. Activities include participants unsuccessfully requesting resources (e.g., money, planning time, books, instructional materials) and failed attempts to recruit support inside and outside of schools. The following quotation describes a CI representative of this category.

> They [district leadership] hindered my ability to address racial equity at every opportunity they could come up with. I mean, they just put roadblock after roadblock. Oh, I'm gonna stay today and tutor my kids. No, you're not, you need to leave today. It was like, why can't I stay? Because we're [administrators] gonna shut that area of the building down. I'm like, are you kidding me? It was ridiculous and difficult, and it re-established why I needed to get out of there, but they hindered my ability to find racial equity (Participant 6).

CIs in this category also illustrated a disconnect between the words and actions of leaders and their observed commitment to enhance equity. Leaders were observed verbally stating equity as a priority in their school or district, but not providing adequate resources to support staff efforts or promote equity-focused initiatives. Participant 9 described a lack of support she experienced with her school leadership team that hindered her own commitment.

> Um, okay. I think one of the biggest ones is when people, like people in leadership, people in charge of me are willing to give CR [cultural responsiveness] or equity or racial justice and they're willing to give it with lip service and they're willing to, you know, put it at the center of a graphic or talk about it as if it's a priority, but then their actions don't match.

CIs belonging to this category also refer to participants feeling unsupported or isolated in their efforts to enhance racial equity. Participant 11, a school administrator, described experiencing a lack of district support to improve racial equity: "I felt like it was kind of up to me or my team to do it. My teachers were also feeling burnt out at having to find resources to train the staff. So that was definitely difficult" (Participant 11). Participant 12 described her school as ill-equipped to support the behavior of

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students, hindering staff efforts to review data examining racial equity in school

discipline practice.

> We have about 1,000 students, kindergarten through fifth grade, and we have one
> principal and one assistant principal, one counselor and one social worker. And
> so, we get, on average I think we get like, 12 or 15 behavioral referrals a day. So,
> we have a lot of data that we can pull from to see, you know, repeated offenses.
> We have a lot of data to show for like, what students are being written up for, but
> we don't have a lot of pathways to solve those problems because we're splitting
> all of our behavior issues between two to four people.

3. Imposing cultural norms. This category was endorsed by six participants

(40%) as hindering their personal commitment to equity. The category refers to

intentionally or unintentionally imposing cultural norms (e.g., dominant, White) norms

for behavior, dress, or academic performance on students of color. In the following

quotation an administrator reflected on his approach to enforcing the school dress code,

which he later viewed as provoking unwanted student behaviors.

> Yes. I've always hindered myself by escalating situations with specifically
> African-American males, especially as they started to get a little older and more
> defiant and proud of what they wore and the way they talked. And it really started
> to bother me. And instead of deescalating or giving them an out, you know, I was
> starting to get angry with them and with the situation. I could feel it. And I
> remember feeling that I would ratchet up the pressure on them, you know, if I
> would say hey, come on, pull your pants up. And they would just smirch and just
> move their pants. They wouldn't pull it up any and I would follow them down the
> hall and be like, oh boy, you know you look ridiculous. Just escalating situations
> that overpower and kept the lightbulb on me (Participant 8).

This category also includes witnessing the effects of gentrification (e.g., increased

rent, displacing families of color) in communities previously populated by persons of

color, as a hindrance to enhancing equity. Participant 10 reflected on her decision to

move into a gentrifying neighborhood: "I guess in some ways I feel like I'm perpetuating

that problem of pushing people out further, who can't afford to live in these places and

that doesn't feel very good." Participant 6 described the response of educators to a shift in the racial composition of her school community.

> The community changed radically, the demographic. It went from all White to almost 100% African American with a few Hispanics. Um, and I think that that demographic changed, but the teachers didn't change and they're so 'old school' with some 'old school' ideas and 'old school' mentalities and they haven't grown with the changes that have occurred.

CIs in this category include observing other teachers making cultural assumptions about students' reactions to receiving disciplinary consequences. In the following CI, Participant 9 described how students of color were assigned more severe consequences based on their responses to getting disciplined (rather than consequences assigned due to a behavioral infraction).

> When a student got into a fight or a student was under the influence a lot of the decision making was about what would be done based on the student's reaction to the remediation. And that really digs into um, kind of cultural response to authority, to ah, conflict, to stress are different. And so, if you're expecting someone to respond in the way that you wanted them to respond and they're not then you might see that as a sign of defiance. So we had some kids um, that were minority students that probably at the time had a harsher punishment and if you would ask anybody at the time they would go, oh well, they didn't see very remorseful or well, they should have stopped going on and on and arguing about it once it happened, you know. So, it's those types of things.

4. Lowering expectations or stereotyping. This category was endorsed by four participants (27%) as hindering their commitment. The category refers to expecting or investing less in supporting students of color based on assumptions about their motivations or potential to learn. Participants referred to making assumptions about the abilities of students of color, as illustrated by the following quotation:

> My second year teaching I had a Hispanic student who would like, shut down, right? And I sort of attributed it to like, oh he, you know, his home life is hard or this or, you know, this or that or oh, you know, it's not important to his parents, which is totally fine. You know, education isn't valued super highly in his home. (Participant 2)

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Activities viewed as personally hindering included lowering behavioral and academic standards for students of color (e.g., offering less feedback on assignments). Participant 7 recalled his experience: "I was starting to lose some of these kids [African American students] that I'd known for years at this point and that hindered, I'm sure, overall equity for them in their school experience because they weren't getting all the feedback they needed." Hindering CIs also included steering students away from Advanced Placement (AP) classes, excusing sub-par behaviors, and making negative assumptions about students' intelligence, attitudes, or background based on their race or ethnic group.

This category also includes expressing views or making assumptions about a student's family values, motivations, and socio-economic status. One participant described content from a "cultural responsiveness" training delivered to staff by leaders in his school that made him uncomfortable. Participant 7 described the content of training as excusing lower standards for African American students.

> …the guidance counselor and assistant principal they would come together with the facts and figures about our community…I think the main part was they were trying to use it as back door way for us to turn the other eye…to cut African American students more slack. They [counselor/admin] said they come from a very poor background…I remember being defensive, but I really can't remember exactly why. I just remember it (Participant 7).

5. Adhering to school discipline policies. This category was endorsed by four participants (27%) as personally hindering. The category refers to educators having to follow school discipline policies that mandate how discipline should be exercised in a school or district. Examples in this category include assigning suspensions, expulsions, and other disciplinary actions that exclude students of color from school or school

activities (e.g., recess). Activities include carrying out school policies stated in a disciplinary handbook and implementing disciplinary codes with language adapted from legal or criminal systems (e.g., assault) to inform disciplinary decisions. Participant 2, an administrator, described an experience representative of CIs in this category.

> I have definitely suspended more Black students than White, or actually than any other race…it's been an internal battle, I don't even know if I can really answer except for I know that's hindering. And I also don't know, you know, if a Black student punches, it doesn't matter, any color student, you know, in the face like, they have to go home, and something is happening. There's more levels of that. There's more incidents of that among our Black and Brown students so why? So, I know I'm perpetuating it [racial inequity], I just don't know how to stop…I don't have like, a resolution to it (Participant 2).

In the quotation above, Participant 2 reported following school disciplinary policies that contributed to more African American students than White students getting excluded from her school. Participants also expressed frustration with not having more of a role in disciplinary decision making: "The students are getting red-carded which is our version of an office discipline referral, and I wish I had more say in the [disciplinary] process, so that way I could help more students" (Participant 12). In the following quotation, Participant 9 described the challenge of reviewing disciplinary files with limited information provided on a student's prior disciplinary history.

> We're given kids and so we usually have a one or two-line referral that says ed code 48-900 A1 assaults, or whatever. We don't know it what's truly what happened. We don't know if the student was triggered. We don't have any um, antecedent to the behavior. All we know is what the staff is claiming happened. (Participant 9)

Participants referred to having limited access to information in student disciplinary files. Participant 11 referred to other features of school discipline systems as a hindrance based on punitive models used outside of schools: "Our school handbook here in the district had the same language as the judicial system" (Participant 11).

Research Question 4: What CIs Have Been Observed to Hinder the Active Commitment of Others to Racial Equity in School Discipline?

Participants reported a total of 20 CIs forming two categories observed as hindering others' commitment to racial equity. The two categories which emerged were Lowering Expectations and Stereotyping and Experiencing Lack of Conviction from Leaders and Peers. Both categories also emerged as personally hindering to active commitment.

1. Lowering expectations and stereotyping. This category was endorsed by seven participants (47%) as hindering the observed commitment of others. In this category, participants observed peers in schools perpetuating stereotypes about students and not viewing them as individuals. In the following quotation, Participant 10 described what she witnessed among colleagues in her school:

> I think some teachers don't care and they don't see it as a problem at all…
> Something that I see from some colleagues is just this, I'm trying to think how to
> explain this. Um, almost like writing kids off because of who they are and just
> like, it's almost like the stereotypical perspective of a kid…and not even like,
> giving them a chance to like, to get to know the kid or get to know them
> individually, but almost like lumping them all together.

Participants described how others associated racial group membership with specific types of unwanted behaviors (e.g., "disruptive behaviors"). Participant 9, a school administrator, described how an isolated disciplinary incident with one student of color was generalized to encompass all students belonging to the same racial group.

> I have many instances of people [educators] saying like, oh man, it's always the
> Black kids that are fighting, um, when in actuality the two people that fought
> happen to be "gang-related" and it's a "gang-related" issue they will generalize to
> the race of the people involved.

In addition to observing colleagues, parents of color shared concerns with participants that they did not feel educators valued the abilities of their children based on their race. In the following CI, parents and staff voiced concerns about a new school re-districting policy proposed to move students into a different school. The following quotation captures how stereotyping and lower expectations were observed as hindering others' commitment to equity.

> At that parent meeting there were lots of conversation from the staff that attended the meeting as well, because it wasn't just for parents, it was for like, the community as a whole, um, and their worry was that the kids at their school were not gonna be treated well by staff at other schools. They're always gonna be referred to as the "Brown kids", and Brown because that's the name of the school—The "Brown kids". And those "Brown kids," they're no good at this, and those "Brown kids" they're no good at this because they have this stereotype within the district as being a building that deals with intense levels of disciplinary problems, intense like, severely poor academics. Like, they've been an "F" graded school for several years, and it just sort of has a stigma attached to it.

2. Experiencing lack of conviction from leaders and peers. This category was observed by six participants (40%) as hindering others' commitment. This category was also endorsed as a personal hindrance. Participants observed a lack of support and reluctance on the part of school leaders and peers that hindered efforts to enhance others' commitment. Participant 14 reported, "I don't believe we have any specific language that says equity in our district mission and vision." Participants also experienced ambivalence on the part of administrators as stifling efforts to advance racial equity, as cited by Participant 11.

> Inconsistent district commitment I feel um, hindered other folks from, you know, not having those materials, because what I found for my own equity team is they no longer wanted to plan training anymore because they didn't have any materials and they were tired of having to basically create a two-hour lesson plan each month.

Research Question 5: What Wishlist Items Made It Easier for Educators to Commit to Racial Equity in School Discipline From the Outset (i.e., Sooner)?

Participants reported a total of 26 CIs formed five categories. Wishlist items were experiences or information participants wanted to have sooner to enhance their own personal commitment. The wishlist items are Training on Culturally Responsive Practices, Experiencing Racially Diverse Students and Communities, Acknowledging Racial Biases, Discussing Race and Discipline with Peers, and Normalizing Discomfort Addressing Race.

1. Training on culturally responsive practices. This category was endorsed by five participants (33%) as a personal wishlist item. The category refers to educators' desire to learn about activities, resources, or strategies to support use of culturally responsive practices to adapt to the diverse learning needs of students. Wishlist items include accessing resources (e.g., books, videos, tools, lesson plans) to integrate students' cultural backgrounds into classroom lessons and curriculum (e.g., making modifications).

Participants wished for training programs to help them integrate culturally responsive practices into their daily work with students. Participant 10 reported, "It would have been nice in pre-service training as a teacher…to have some kind of class on working with diverse learners." Participant 7 wished for more background on theory and research exploring race: "I had never been forced to think about all of these [cultural] theories and differences, what is Deficit Theory? I didn't know. It would have been a lot easier for me if I would have." Participant 14 noted a need for educator training programs to go beyond only providing basic courses on classroom management: "I would say that the farthest we got is to learn about classroom management, and most of that is just about

how to keep the kids under control not how to address discipline problems" (Participant 14).

In the following quotation, Participant 11 cited the benefits of getting background information on the cultures and life experiences of students and families attending her school from other countries.

> If I had known, you know, what our Cambodian families have done to get away, you know, from Cambodia and the killing fields and you know, what our Latino families were feeling from, you know, from Central America and South America, and Mexico, and um, just more of that human, you know, that social justice piece. Like, what are people's real experiences?

2. Experiencing racially diverse students and communities. This category was endorsed by four participants (27%) as a personal wishlist item. The category refers to seeking out experiences interacting, living, or working with more racially diverse people or in more racial diverse educational settings. Participants reported a desire to have had more experience growing up or working in more diverse communities.

In the following wishlist item, Participant 4 referred to a job interview to work in a new school. When asked to describe her prior work experiences with diverse populations, she recalled providing the following response on working in with racial diverse students and families.

> In that interview process, one of the questions I was asked was what kind of experience do you have working with diverse populations in schools? Well, none, because I've only worked in little teeny tiny private schools…I was going to say in the private schools that I was in it was more like the token child that represented the diversity. I'm like, okay…I didn't have the prior experience.

Personal wishlist items also included wanting to hear different perspectives or counter narratives (e.g., stories challenging racial stereotypes). Participant 3 commented,

"If we had more alternative viewpoints available that would have helped, I think, with the speed of my change in thinking [on racial equity]."

The following is representative of CIs in this category and illustrated the value participants placed on forming interracial connections with others to gain insights into the experiences of persons of color living in their schools and communities.

> I've got three African American women who in all separate times during the course of my careers with them have talked about having to have "The Talk" with their black boys about what to do when the police stop you. When you start seeing a repeated experience, when you start seeing, you know, these stories told separately that are repeated, that are the same stories it kind of gives you a sense of scale. That gives you an idea that systemically something is wrong, that systemically we need to be doing something different. When you have an example it gives you information, but it doesn't give you the same sense of urgency that multiples do. Does that make sense?" (Participant 3)

3. Normalizing discomfort in addressing race. This category was endorsed by four participants (27%) as a personal wishlist item. Participant 13 shared a wishlist item representative of CIs belonging to this category. In the following quotation, she described a desire to be able to equip staff with more skills and confidence to confront their fears around addressing race.

> I wish we were equipped enough that we could start, you know, we were fluent enough in these skills and the language of race, in race discussions that we as a staff could develop a curriculum or something to talk to kids about it and how they can work through their issues or be able to talk about their frustrations about race and be able to advocate for themselves, and how to you know. And, I think they would develop into adults that could tackle those problems much better.

4. Acknowledging racial biases. This category was endorsed by four participants (27%) as a personal wishlist item. Participants reported wanting more training to understand micro-aggressions, implicit, explicit, and institutional biases. For example, participants shared reflections taking the Implicit Association Test (IAT; Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998). The IAT was designed to measure associations individuals

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perceive between different racial categories and objects with negative or positive

connotations (e.g., matching the words "Black" or "White" with words like "Pleasant" or

"Unpleasant"). In the following quotation, Participant 14 reflected on how taking the

IAT and learning about implicit bias increased her commitment by challenging

assumptions about how she perceived race.

> I was not happy about some of the things that my implicit bias test [IAT] showed
> me but I think the whole point is to make sure that you are remaining aware of it
> instead of becoming complacent um, behind that I'm not racist, I manage
> restorative practices. I work super hard on it. I talk about it all the time. But then
> making sure that you're looking at yourself in the mirror um, every—often,
> frequently, regularly.

5. Discussing race and discipline with peers. This category was endorsed by

four participants (27%) as a personal wishlist item. The following quotation was

characteristic of other wishlist items in that peers wanted more discussions of race or

racial topics in school settings. The following quotation highlights the importance of

having other colleagues nearby or available to debrief positive or negative experiences

with race and discipline.

> My first three years in the classroom, you know, it was sink or swim. That's all I
> thought about was just trying to make it through the day and the year. I didn't
> have time to think about anything else except what I was doing the next day so I
> didn't really have a chance to, you know, there's was no open dialogue…I didn't
> have anybody really point out to me that maybe I was being a little bit harder on
> my African-American students …like nobody pointed out, you know…So, maybe
> that would have made it easier for me to get here sooner (Participant 7).

Research Question 6: What Wishlist Items Made It Easier for Others to Commit to

Racial Equity in School Discipline From the Outset (i.e., Sooner)?

Participants reported a total of 17 CIs contributed to form three categories.

Wishlist items for others were experiences or information participants believed could

have enhanced the commitment of others. The categories are Accessing Equity Mentors

and Exemplars, Training on Culturally Responsive Practices, and Experiencing

Conviction from Leaders and Peers.

1. Accessing equity mentors and exemplars. This category was endorsed by six

participants (40%) as a wishlist item viewed as helpful to others. Wishlist items for others

refer to providing equity mentors (expert teachers) and models (e.g., classrooms, schools)

to demonstrate how to enhance racial equity and improve cultural responsiveness in

school settings (e.g., reduced racial disproportionality in discipline outcomes). For

example, Participant 3 described what would have helped his school leadership team

address equity in school discipline sooner.

> Having readily available models or examples to kind of see prior to things getting
> significantly disproportionate would have helped. So, the, you know, example,
> this is a school that started heating up and this is what they did to address it.

Participants also wished other educators could have had more support provided

within their schools: "I'm trying to find mentors, culturally specific programming,

anything I can to try to get, you know, role models who look like my students in the

school" (Participant 11).

2. Experiencing conviction from leaders and peers. This category was endorsed

by four participants (27%) as a wishlist item for others. CIs in this category refer to

prioritizing equity focused efforts and initiatives in schools and communities. Desired

activities include leaders and peers prioritizing equity through observable actions (e.g.,

presenting data during staff meetings, seeking internal/external funding for programs),

district or state leaders enacting equity-focused policies or initiatives (e.g., use of PBIS,

enacting state legislation to mandate stakeholder involvement). Wishlist items also raised

a need for more support.

If there isn't buy-in from the community and the staff as a whole then it's hard to say like, this is our priority, and everybody be onboard with that…It's got to be something that we all think is critical, or at least someone at the top with enough power to be like, this is what we're doing (Participant 13).

Participants also wished school leaders could have aligned and prioritized equity as a goal across more district initiatives, instead of addressing equity within silos: "Our district had a lot of other initiatives going on simultaneously so um, often the time that you wanted for that or that…would get replaced by some other new initiative" (Participant 14). Participants also described the larger effects of school funding cuts on providing training and supports focused on equity.

I think some of that falls back on leadership and whether leadership is truly prioritizing this [equity] work or not. But, some of it also is the reality of our schools right now and there just, the time for professional development, the um, I guess even acceptance by society [location redacted] of the fact that teachers need professional development and deserve time to learn more to do a better job (Participant 5).

3. Training on culturally responsive practices. This category was endorsed by four participants (27%) as a wishlist item cited as helpful to others. Activities included offering to have a centralized resource available for others to access information on different teaching strategies and materials. For example, Participant 11 discussed the benefits of having an easy to use resource available for educators to help them implement culturally responsive practices in their classrooms.

It would have been great to have had more materials and resources that were actually practical, you know, that's where we always kind of bounce between what's research, what's university research and what's actual practical application …so it's a matter of trying to modify those things and make them in teacher-sized, bitesize pieces so there's actually an opportunity for application also, and follow-up coaching and things of that nature.

Wishlist items for others also included assurances that use of the culturally responsive materials shared with others would lead to improvement in racial equity. In

the following quotation, Participant 15 described this desire for evidence to support use of restorative practices.

> If I could say like, this is really the thing that I think you have to read this one thing or you have to go to this one class, and if I felt confident in the material or that resource, um, that would be my main wishlist.

Participant 1 similarly reported feeling a shift from feeling ill-equipped or ambivalent to wanting to lead trainings to help others implement culturally responsive practices: "I don't feel like I have the expertise yet to do that, but I want to, and I think that's sort of the shift for me is I didn't really care one way or the other about having that expertise, until now (Participant 1). Further along in the interview, she added, "I'm not so certain that I would know how to even train teachers in equitable practices, I guess. If that makes sense."

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

Although prior studies have examined what helps and hinders educators'

decisions to adopt or sustain school practices (Andreou et al., 2015; Feuerborn, Wallace,

& Tyre, 2013; McIntosh et al., 2016), no known study to date has explored what

influences educators' active commitment to address racial equity in schools. This study

was designed to gain an insider's perspective on the events and specific incidents that

have both helped and hindered the commitment of educators and others (e.g., peers,

acquaintances) to take observable actions to enhance equity in school disciplinary

practice.

I used a qualitative methodology called the Critical Incident Technique to capture

and analyze the perspectives of teachers, principals, or others supporting schools (e.g.,

technical assistance coordinators). The study targeted educators who reported a shift from

being non-committal or ambivalent toward racial equity to more committed. Eligible

participants needed to be able to describe a time when they were ambivalent or non-

committal toward racial equity. I conducted 15 interviews that resulted in 210 CIs and 20

categories.

Helping and Hindering Categories

There were nearly twice as many helping CIs ($n = 101$) as hindering CIs ($n = 66$)

reported by participants. This finding was consistent with prior CIT studies in which

participants also reported more helping than hindering CIs (Andreou et al., 2015;

McIntosh et al., 2016). The emergence of more helping CIs was not surprising, given that

the study included only participants who had identified as committed to racial equity. It is

likely the participants recruited for the study were more knowledgeable and capable of recalling experiences that helped their commitment to equity because the outcome for them was higher levels of commitment.

Helping categories tended to describe personal or professional experiences in learning about racial equity through talking with others, observing incidents in schools, adopting strategies, or through participation in workshops or academic courses. For example, Learning About Racial Discrimination in Society, Acknowledging Racial Biases, and Examining White Privilege include participants reflecting on encounters with persons of color or learning more about biases affecting their own or others' perceptions of race. Sharing Equity Focused School Strategies, Implementing PBIS as a Foundation for Equity, and Learning from a Trusted Peer describe experiences learning or applying skills or approaches to address racial equity in schools or communities.

Hindering categories tended to refer to normative, cultural, or organizational barriers experienced by participants. For example, Experiencing Lack of Conviction from Leaders and Peers and Adhering to School Discipline Policies refer to organizational and normative challenges hindering educators in their schools and communities (e.g., poor school climate, policies, or leadership). The categories Imposing Cultural Norms and Lowering Expectations and Stereotyping refer to participants encountering challenges related to personal norms, values, or making assumptions about others' abilities or backgrounds.

Understanding Educators' Commitment to Racial Equity

Three themes emerged across participants' responses to help understand the phenomenon of what influences educators' active commitment to racial equity:

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differentiating experiences that shape educators' personal commitment from experiences that shape the commitment of others, sharing disaggregated school data to enhance commitment, and experiencing and responding to leaders or peers ambivalent toward addressing racial equity in schools. Each theme and related categories will be discussed alongside other studies to assess "theoretical alignment" (Butterfield et al., 2009).

        Experiences influencing personal commitment to equity. Participants reported their personal commitment was frequently shaped by experiences in non-school settings (i.e., 46% of helping CIs). Non-school experiences refer to events or incidents that occurred outside of a school campus. Examples of non-school experiences include participants attending conferences or enrolling in courses focused on equity or culturally responsive practices, interacting with neighbors or colleagues at social events, and visiting or working in other cultures. The following categories refer to non-school experiences: Learning About Racial Discrimination in Society, Discussing Race and Discipline with Peers, Acknowledging Racial Biases, Examining White Privilege and Identity, and Learning from Trusted Peers.

        Participants also described personal commitment to racial equity as slow to emerge and requiring repeated exposure to related experiences (e.g., hearing similar stories from colleagues, reading multiple articles on the same topic, witnessing connected events) before they could identify racial patterns or systematic inequities. For example, Participant 5 described his experiences living on a Native American reservation where he experienced how White privilege may have shaped how he was treated as a White person. According to him, the reasons (e.g., structural racism, historical oppression) for receiving preferential treatment were not initially apparent until he reflected on his

experiences on the reservation in retrospect. Similarly, Participant 3 referred to hearing stories shared by three different African American mothers about preparing their sons for getting pulled over in a car by a police officer. For her, hearing these stories from different mothers contributed to broader insights into racial discrimination, rather than perceiving the mothers' stories as unrelated events. These findings suggested that developing personal commitment to racial equity may be increased through repeated exposure to related events which can generate insights into the scale or scope of racial inequity in schools or society.

Participants also characterized developing personal commitment to racial equity as a challenging process. The helping categories Acknowledging Racial Biases, Examining White Privilege and Identity, and Disaggregating School Data by Race and Ethnicity refer to experiences that required participants to reflect on how they could act prejudicially toward other racial groups. Participants' experiences included in these categories refer to asking difficult questions and reflecting on personal racial biases. Participant 12 reported witnessing an interim principal disciplining the wrong African American student, even after the student attempted to identify himself. For her, the experience was difficult but necessary to strengthen her active commitment to address racial equity in her school.

Lastly, the categories which describe what helped personal commitment tend to refer to self-reflection. For example, the categories Witnessing Racial Prejudice in Schools, Discussing Race and Discipline with Peers, and Learning from Trusted Peers refer to participants engaging in self-examination and independent research (e.g.,

reviewing articles, writing a racial autobiography, listening to peers, reflecting on key messages from an authority on racial equity).

Based on the findings, increasing personal commitment to racial equity may require sufficient time and opportunities for educators to reflect on personal biases and integrate prior experiences with race and culture into their work in schools. Within school contexts, it is possible educators may feel uneasy discussing race with peers (as reported in the findings; Avoiding Discussing Race). Therefore, providing coaching, facilitation, or access to trainings in school or non-school settings (e.g., conferences or workshops) may be needed to increase personal commitment. It is also possible that without strategies provided to translate personal beliefs into action, educators' personal commitment to racial equity may be difficult to harness and lead educators to feel powerless or ill-equipped to take observable action.

Experiences observed as influencing others' commitment. Two sets of experiences were observed by participants as influencing the commitment of others. The first set of experiences were described by categories reported as supporting educators by sharing concrete resources or strategies to enhance racial equity. These categories include Sharing Equity Focused School Practices, Providing a Voice to Students and Families, and Normalizing Discomfort in Addressing Race. Supportive categories include: conducting classroom walk-throughs to observe elements of culturally responsive teaching, enlisting student and parent feedback on discipline procedures (e.g., climate surveys, panels), and modeling for staff how to have conversations about racial equity with peers.

A second set of experiences emerged which refer to holding educators accountable for acting more equitably toward students or families of color. This second set of categories includes: Disaggregating School Data by Race and Ethnicity, Confronting Prejudicial Beliefs, and Getting Cited for Disproportionality. Within these categories participants describe holding others accountable for violating personal, school, or societal norms or values (e.g., confronting a peer in a staff meeting for a perceived racial slur) or holding peers accountable for not adhering to school or state rules or policies (e.g., schools getting cited for exceeding a state threshold for discipline disproportionality).

Participants' endorsement of categories emphasizing accountability was an unexpected finding, since these categories were described as eliciting frustration, discomfort, and disbelief in participants. This finding suggests producing discomfort in others may be needed under certain conditions to increase others' commitment to racial equity. It may be that educators who are ambivalent or reluctant to address equity need to be confronted privately or publicly to shift their attitudes, beliefs, or actions. One strategy to increase school-wide accountability is using an equity audit to identify and assess indicators associated with addressing racial equity (teacher quality, programs, student achievment; Skrla, Scheurich, Garcia, & Nolly, 2004). For example, an equity audit may be used to identify specific practices in a school by stakeholders (e.g., staff, administrators, parents, school board) that need attention or improvement. An equity audit could also be used to increase accountability across a school and monitor progress over time linked to specific activities or benchmarks.

Not all categories describing actions to hold others accountable were viewed by participants as helping commitment. For example, the category Adherence to School Discipline Policies was described as a personal hindrance. Participants reported discipline policies restricted their capacity to use personal discretion in addressing student behaviors. Participants' concerns about school policies align with prior studies. Researchers have found school conduct codes can be more punitive and reactive, even for minor behavioral incidents (Fergus, 2018, Green et al., 2015). Skiba and Rauch (2006) found mandatory disciplinary polices favored by administrators were associated with an increased use of exclusionary discipline (Skiba & Rausch, 2006). Alternatively, a rollback of mandated state discipline polices was associated with a moderate decrease in student suspensions (Lacoe & Steinberg, 2018).

Overall, the categories which emerged as influencing the commitment of others were found to refer to hands-on strategies and experiential opportunities to learn by doing. Helping categories such as Sharing Equity Focused Practices and Normalizing Discomfort in Addressing Race emphasized skill-building rather than self-reflection. Finally, categories observed to help others typically refer to strategies educators use in classrooms to engage students or help peers explore race with one another. This finding was not unexpected since participants typically referred to their colleagues working in schools.

Exposure to Disaggregated School Data

Disaggregating School Data by Race and Ethnicity was the largest endorsed helping category, with 14 of 15 participants (93%) who cited the category as influential (eight, self; six, others). This finding was consistent with studies demonstrating the

positive effects of visual feedback and data review for increasing fidelity to student

behavior plans or for raising rates of behavior specific praise during classroom instruction

(Noell, Gresham, & Gansle, 2002; Reinke, Lewis-Palmer, & Merrell, 2008).

Furthermore, regular data review has been cited in recommendations to improve racial

equity in school discipline practice (Gregory et al., 2017; McIntosh et al., 2017). Vincent

& Tobin (2011) also found schools that viewed data more often had lower racial

disproportionality in suspensions.

Participants reported disaggregated data allowed them to see racial disparities that

may not have been observable through their daily interactions with students in classrooms

or schools. Participants referred to viewing disaggregated data through two types of

activities: viewing discipline data reports across all school racial groups and viewing

individual student discipline files.

Reviewing school or district-wide data reports allowed participants to see

systematic racial patterns that were not evident when examining individual behavioral

incidents. Participant 11 noted she started to see disproportionate patterns visible in her

school's discipline data. Participants also reviewed student discipline files to gather

information on how other educators summarized or perceived disciplinary incidents

(information not typically reported in school-wide discipline reports).

Participants' responses also indicated classroom teachers may not always view

disaggregated data as representative of their experiences in classrooms. Participant 7

perceived teachers feeling self-conscious to review data disaggregated at the classroom

level. The awkwardness described by this participant may indicate staff was feeling

attacked or labeled as racist for contributing to classroom racial disparities. This type of

experience captures participants' concerns about how to effectively share disaggregated data without shaming or criticizing educators.

Prior studies have shown that in the absence of direct experience and engagement with racial inequality, efforts to enhance equity by showing data displaying racial disparities could lead others to justify racial gaps or confirm racial stereotypes (O'Brien et al., 2009). For example, extreme racial disparities in police stops and incarceration rates have been interpreted as either as a clear sign of systemic racial bias or as evidence that specific racial groups commit crime at higher rates (Hetey & Eberhardt, 2018). If school data serves to reinforce racial stereotypes, disaggregating school discipline may hinder educators' efforts to enhance racial equity.

In schools, teachers who lack adequate context or background for why racial disproportionality persists may interpret data showing racial discipline disparities as confirming stereotypes of African American students as "troublemakers" or as more likely to misbehave. However, racial and ethnic differences in suspensions and expulsions have been shown not to be related to different base rates of misbehavior (Bradshaw, Mitchell, & Leaf, 2010). Given that disaggregating data was highly endorsed by participants, it is important to consider the unintended consequences of sharing disaggregated data in schools.

In an attempt to make data review less daunting, researchers have recommended using disaggregated data to narrow down where, when, and for what behaviors disproportionality is strongest during the school day (McIntosh, Eliason, et al., 2014). Overall, participants' responses indicated no common approach to reviewing data has emerged yet in the field.

Supporting school use of disaggregated data. Coaching strategies to explore data with educators have been evaluated in prior work (Gueldner & Merrell, 2011; Noell, Witt, Slider, & Connell, 2005; Rosenfield, 1995) and may guide how educators can use disaggregated data more effectively. Studies conducted on classroom consultation have demonstrated the importance of providing visual performance feedback (i.e., sharing data via graphs) to modify how teachers deliver classroom instruction (Noell & Gansle, 2009). Reinke and colleagues (2008) found that providing visual performance feedback with motivational enhancements (i.e., allowing a teacher to choose from a menu of interventions, adapting interventions to match a teacher's strengths and weaknesses) can increase teachers' rates of classroom praise with students.

Researchers are beginning to examine the effects of sharing disaggregated data with classroom teachers. Gion (2018) implemented a classroom intervention that integrated use of disaggregated data reports to increase teachers' use of praise delivered to students of different races (i.e., African American, all other races). Results demonstrated a functional relation between implementation of the classroom intervention and an overall increase in teachers' use of praise (reduction of corrections) for African American and non-African American students.

The study participants (Gion, 2018) indicated it was difficult to maintain and differentiate higher rates of praise delivered to African American or White students when implementing the intervention (Bastable, Meng, & McIntosh, 2018). Although review of disaggregated data was highly endorsed by participants as influencing commitment, the practice needs to be evaluated as a part of larger efforts to address racial equity. Nevertheless, use of disaggregated data in combination with other strategies like

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providing more socio-economic context for racial disparities and exploring educators'

values related to their work may help enhance racial equity in practice.

Experiencing Lack of Conviction from Leaders and Peers

The category Experiencing Lack of Conviction from Leaders and Peers was cited

by participants as hindering their personal commitment and hindering others' observed

commitment. Hindrances reported in this category refer to administrators withholding

support for equity work, peers observed as lacking interest, and district leaders paying

lip-service to equity (i.e., stating equity as a priority, but not dedicating resources to

schools).

Participants' responses describing a lack of leadership or support from leaders or

peers align with prior studies examining barriers to school implementation efforts.

Bambara (2009) reported that among the strongest barriers to PBIS implementation were

the mindset of a school staff and their adherence to traditional discipline practice.

Pinkelman and colleagues (2015) similarly found lack of staff buy-in was a frequent

barrier reported by school staff sustaining PBIS. Other studies have documented staff

concerns about poor administrative leadership and lack of consistent support from

colleagues as hindering implementation of school-wide prevention efforts (Tyre,

Feuerborn, & Woods, 2018).

Participants describing a lack of peer or administrative support is unfortunate

given that studies have shown school leaders with favorable attitudes toward racial equity

have been associated with lower use of suspensions in schools (Skiba, Chung, et al.,

2014; Skiba & Rausch, 2006). Related studies have also demonstrated the positive effects

associated with administrator supportive of providing equitable supports for students. An

administrator's moral commitment to serving students experiencing disabilities (beyond compliance with district or state laws) was associated with a higher percent of time students with IEPs were being educated in general education classroom (Salisbury, 2006). Brooks and Miles (2010) remarked, "School leaders are not only uniquely positioned to influence equitable educational practice, their proactive involvement is imperative" (p. 20).

The category Experiencing Lack of Conviction from Leaders and Peers also refers to the role administrators play in shaping normative and political dimensions of schools. For example, participants cite a need for leaders to prioritize and align school initiatives to address racial equity. In the absence of committed leaders, participants described feeling isolated, burnt out, and more likely to abandon efforts to enhance equity in their schools and districts. Surprisingly, participants reported school leaders had contributing to barriers to enhance equity. Participant 6 referred to district leaders denying her access to classrooms after school to provide extra tutoring to students. Other participants referred to leaders acting inconsistently and not backing up public statements about improving equity with action.

Wiley (2018) hypothesized schools addressing equity need leaders and educators capable of influencing the normative and political dimensions of school discipline, along with implementing technical innovations (e.g., disciplinary practices). The wishlist category Experiencing Conviction from Leaders and Peers reflects Wiley's dimensions. Participants desired leaders that could establish equitable school norms and rally political support from the community. Wishlist items included having leaders who could prioritizing equity, seek external funding, and build community-school support.

Wider scale improvements in disciplinary equity are less likely to occur in the absence of committed school leaders. However, colleagues and peers can play an important role. For example, participants described engineering solutions, recruiting resources, and analyzing data in teams in lieu of administrative support. The helping categories and wishlist items endorsed by participants may be viewed as offering viable alternatives when administrative support for racial equity is absent or insufficient. Accessing Equity Mentors and Accessing Exemplars, Receiving Training on Culturally Responsive Practices, and Learning from Trusted Peers all include actions that could be taken without administrative leadership. Activities such as conducting classroom walk-throughs focused on equitable practices, sharing culturally responsive classroom practices with peer teachers, or forming a community of practice focused on racial equity (e.g., book study) may contribute to commitment among peers in a school or district.

Prior studies have found that educators value having informal channels of communication (e.g., such as talking with peers or visiting other schools) to help build peer networks, provide forums for problem-solving, and nurture champions to engage others in adopting new practices (McIntosh et al., 2016; Rogers, 2010). Future research on the functions and activities of informal networks is needed to identify mechanisms or strategies that could increase involvement from peers, leaders, and other school stakeholders to invest in racial equity.

Formation of Educator Commitment to Racial Equity

To further describe the findings of this study, I drew from Guskey's (1986) models of teacher professional development (PD) and Forscher and Devine's (2012) Prejudice Habit Model. I found concepts and studies described by these researchers

helped to conceptualize the process of commitment formation as described by the participants interviewed.

Guskey's two approaches to teacher professional development. Guskey (1986) conceptualized two approaches to delivering PD to educators in schools. Guskey described two sequences of PD activities used to support professional learning and staff implementation of school practices.

First approach to professional development. Guskey's first approach to teacher PD assumed that changes in teacher attitudes and beliefs preceded changes in classroom practices or student outcomes. For example, a school administrator seeking to persuade teachers to adopt a classroom practice could ask them to reflect on the costs and benefits of the practice before asking teachers to change how instruction would be delivered to students. This approach was described by Guskey as evolving from psychotherapeutic models which prioritized efforts to shape teachers' beliefs and attitudes (Lewin, 1935). According to Guskey, schools adopting the first approach would seek to garner support from staff to enhance use of equitable practices or policies.

In relation to the findings, Guskey's first approach to PD appears more aligned with the categories which emerged as personally influential. For example, Learning About Racial Discrimination in Society, Witnessing Racial Prejudice in Schools, and Discussing Race and Discipline with Peers describe participants engaging in activities that shaped their beliefs and attitudes toward racial equity, such as discussing a new teaching approach with a peer, watching a student getting unfairly treated based on their race, or reading an article describing a historical account of racial discrimination. Across personally helpful categories (with the exception of Implementing PBIS as a

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Foundation for Equity in which participants described implementing a school-wide behavior framework) participants appeared to report experiences which shifted their beliefs and attitudes prior to becoming actively committed to racial equity. Participants needed time to reflect on experiences which then led to changes in how they worked with students or colleagues in schools, or how they applied disciplinary practices.

Second approach to professional development. Guskey's second approach proposed teachers needed to first implement and observe the effects of a practice before a shift in beliefs or attitudes was likely to occur. An example of this approach could be a school administrator asking teachers to implement a new disciplinary practice before attempting to persuade teachers the practice could lead to reductions in racial discipline disproportionality.

Based on the study's findings, Guskey's second approach appears more aligned with the categories participants observed as influencing the commitment of others. For example, Sharing Equity Focused School Practices, Confronting Racial Prejudice, and Getting Cited for Disproportionality described educators engaging in actions which appeared to precede a shift in their beliefs or attitudes toward racial equity. For example, participants described the benefits of needing to respond when their district was cited for disproportionality, by piloting new classroom practices, or by calling attention to remarks or acts perceived as racist or biased toward others. Overall, the categories observed as influencing others suggest participants learned about racial equity through specific actions which then promoted self-reflection and solidified commitment.

Prejudice Habit Model. The Prejudice Habit Model (PHM) emerged from a set of research studies developed to explain why individuals reported beliefs and attitudes

condemning bias or prejudice, but still could act in discriminatory ways toward persons of color (Forscher & Devine, 2014). PHM helped corroborate the findings as it describes conditions under which changes in personal bias or prejudice are most likely to occur**.**

Forscher and Devine identified three conditions associated with helping individuals to overcome or reduce implicit bias: (a) personal motivation, (b) awareness, and (c) effort. The three conditions have been referenced in prior studies examining how to reduce bias in hiring decisions (Carnes et al., 2015; Devine et al., 2017).

Conditions associated with commitment formation. The first condition, personal motivation, is described as an individual's desire to act less prejudicially or more equitably toward others. The second condition, awareness, is defined as the extent to which a person is aware of bias and accepts a need to change their behaviors in relation to societal norms. The third condition, effort, is conceptualized as a sustained process to maintain motivation and awareness of an individual's biases over time, even when threats (e.g., guilty feelings, shame) may encourage a return to prior behaviors or thoughts.

Forscher and Devine's conceptualization of the conditions of motivation, awareness, and effort was evident in the findings. For example, Witnessing Racial Prejudice in Schools refers to educators viewing acts of discrimination and racial prejudice among peers or students that raised their awareness of inequities. Implementing PBIS as Foundation for Equity was described as evoking difficult discussions among staff about how to equitably address student behaviors. Disaggregating School Data by Race and Ethnicity refers to challenging educators to reconcile racial inequities documented in school data with their current practices. Participants' efforts to understanding students' backgrounds, to detect systemic or historical patterns of racism,

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and to gain awareness of different types of bias or privilege can be seen to align with the conditions described by Forscher and Devine.

Guskey's models of PD and Forscher and Devine's three conditions both offer theories that can help conceptualize personal commitment formation and the observed commitment of others. The theories also offer prior work which appears to align with the emergent categories formed from participants' responses.

Limitations

I used a qualitative approach for this study to explore an emerging area in educational research. The study was not intended to produce generalizable results beyond the 15 participants interviewed. Use of a purposeful sampling procedure (i.e., selecting informants from a known pool) allowed me to identify information-rich participants given a limited sample size (Patton, 2002). Unlike probabilistic or random sampling procedures, purposeful sampling does not allow for controlling potential sources of known or unknown biases (Palinkas et al., 2015). For example, several of the participants I interviewed for the study received training on the topic of school discipline and racial equity from my dissertation chair or were personal acquaintances. Participants' responses were likely biased by their relationship to my advisor or myself, or exposure to training content my advisor or I shared with participants related to the study's topic.

I invited participants to join the study based on their self-assessment of prior and current commitment to racial equity in school discipline (i.e., can you recall a time when you were ambivalent or less committed to racial equity in school discipline practice?). All participants interviewed for this study at a minimum needed to respond affirmatively to this question and be able to describe a time when they were less committed to racial

equity in school discipline. The measures used to assess commitment to equity was a rough approximation dependent on participant self-report. Additionally, how well an individual can assess their own or another's commitment is subjective. There is a need for future research using more objective measures. For example, evaluating whether educators' viewing of disaggregated discipline reports to observable changes in how educators deliver praise or corrections to students (Gion, 2018).

Another limitation of this study was that it did not include participants who reported as not committed or as currently ambivalent toward racial equity. As a result of using this selection criteria, it is possible hindering CIs were not as well represented by this sample. Not surprisingly, participants identified approximately twice as many helping CIs than hindering CIs. Future studies could address this limitation by allowing for a wider range of participants to be included in studies examining practitioners' perceptions of racial equity (i.e., interviewing educators who view their disciplinary approach as "color-blind").

A majority of the participants interviewed were school administrators ($n = 7$) or technical assistance providers ($n = 3$). The study included only three classroom teachers. School administrators or TA providers typically have more access to school data and are often responsible for reviewing data as part of their professional duties. School administrators also hold a unique position in schools that is not representative of typical educators. Inclusion of more classroom teachers may have resulted in the emergence of a different set of categories; particularly, categories describing what helped or hindered the commitment of others, since classroom teachers are typically responsible for delivering instruction to students, not supervising teachers or leading PD or other forms of trainings.

Finally, all data collected for this study relied on retrospective recall of events or incidents that occurred in the past. Retrospective recall is always subject to bias and cannot be tested for reliability or validity. The data, or incidents collected for the study, represent participants' recollection of events that may not accurately depict what occurred recently or decades ago. Further replication of the study's findings (i.e., emergent categories) are warranted to determine if results could be corroborated on a larger and more diverse sample (e.g., different regions, different school roles, school types).

Implications for Practice

The categories reported as personally helpful include activities that may not be easy to deliver or replicate through typical school PD (e.g., encouraging staff to attend a political rally, observing racial bias in TV commercials). Yet, exposing school staff to experience reported in these categories may be needed to promote personal commitment to sustain use of equitable practices. For example, Learning About Racial Discrimination in Society, Discussing Race and Discipline with Peers, and Examining White Privilege and Identity may be difficult to cover in school PD, but they are necessary elements to increase staff support for equity. However, the findings also suggest significant time and effort may be required to build personal commitment, which may be less realistic in schools, where resources allotted for sustained PD are limited or not used effectively (Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, & Shapley, 2007).

In an attempt to support educators, organizations like Facing History and Ourselves and the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity have developed programs designed to help teachers integrate race, history, and culture into classrooms

through learning about historical events (e.g., Jim Crow Segregation, Civil Rights Movement). This approach is reflected in the category Learning About Racial Discrimination in Society. Yet, there remains limited empirical evidence of whether the approaches to teacher PD used by these organizations can reliably shift educators' commitment to address racial equity in school contexts (Bottiani, Bradshaw, & Gregory, 2018). Furthermore, it may be impractical or difficult to motivate educators to take part in PD not related to their subject areas or assigned school duties (e.g., science teachers learning about lessons from the Civil Rights Movement).

Despite the utility of teaching educators to use concrete strategies to address equity, findings from this study indicate educators need access to experiences that can deepen their knowledge and awareness of why racial disparities persist. Exposure to these types of experiences may be especially pertinent for White educators. Scholars have suggested that persons of color may acquire an understanding of discrimination and "outsider" status just by growing up in U.S. society (Ferguson, Stellar, Schools, & Morganton, 2010). The findings suggest that the educators interviewed were affected by experiences that may be common events for Black or Latinx colleagues, parents or students. This may explain why participants described a need for challenging activities (e.g., confronting others, citations for disproportionality) to help them become aware of personal assumptions or biased beliefs about race, equity, and discipline that influence their current educational practices.

Conclusion

The 20 categories that emerged in this study provide a starting point for thinking about how to increase educators' commitment to address racial equity in schools. There

remains a need to develop and evaluate how equity-focused interventions are perceived and implemented by educators. To date, it is unclear whether action-based or more self-reflective approaches to teacher PD will result in long term behavior change and contribute to educators' active commitment to address racial equity in practice. Participants' responses suggest commitment to racial equity is shaped by personal experiences that can occur outside of schools and require time and effort to develop. Tapping into personal experiences and having educators share these experiences with peers may help trigger commitment. However, participants' experiences also indicate there is a need to offer school PD designed to challenge educators' beliefs or current practices to transform norms or improve systems contributing to racial disproportionality. The findings appear to suggest a skills-based approach informed by culturally responsive practices or experiences (e.g., historical perspectives, personal narratives, awareness of biases) may be a promising strategy warranting further application and evaluation. Though there is much more to know about how commitment to racial equity forms, this study can offer a set of specific categories to help advance future research on this important topic.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

(Interview ~ 60 to 90 minutes)

Before we begin, I want you to know that this interview is being recorded and will be transcribed for research purposes. Do I have your verbal consent to record and transcribe this interview?   Circle YES / NO.

If NO, can we discuss alternative ways to gather information on your experiences and perspective for this study? YES, describe _____/ NO ____

1. Demographic information

Participant Number: _____   Participant Initials (if in person): _____

Telephone Number: _____   Date: _____

Interviewer: _____   Location: _____

Interview start time: _____

1.   For how many years have you been working in education?   _____

2.   What is your current role?

☐   District Administrator

☐   District Coach

☐   Educational Aide/Teacher Assistant

☐   General Educator

☐   Higher Education

☐   School Administrator

☐   Special Educator

☐   Student support/related services provider (e.g., counselor)

☐   Other

☐   I prefer not to answer

3.   What is your ethnicity?

☐   Hispanic/Latinx

☐   Not Hispanic/Latinx

☐   I prefer not to answer

4.   What is your race (please check all that apply)?

☐   Native American/Alaska Native

☐   Asian

☐   Black/African American

☐   Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian

☐   White

☐   I prefer not to answer

5.   What is your gender or gender identity?

☐   Female

☐   Male

☐   Other

☐   I prefer not to answer

6.   Is your school/district (or the schools you work with) currently implementing programs or strategies to improve equity in school discipline?

☐   Yes

☐   No

☐   If yes, what? _____

2. Definitions and purpose for study

Thank you _____ for taking time to do this interview today. Before we begin today, I want to take a few moments to review the purpose of the study and answer any questions you may have.

The aim of the study is to explore what incidents help and hinder the commitment of educators to racial equity in school discipline. I will be exploring this topic with you by asking you to describe specific/observable incidents to examine the following questions:

(a) What incidents helped or hindered your active commitment to racial equity in school discipline?

(b) What incidents helped or hindered you in motivating other practitioners' active commitment to racial equity in school discipline?

For this study, active commitment to racial equity in school discipline:

(a) Taking clear steps to increase visibility or focus of racial equity in school disciplinary practice (e.g., stating racial equity as a top priority for your school, district, or among your colleagues)

(b) Dedicating resources at your disposal [e.g., time, money, contacts] toward equity work, or actively applying strategies to enhance racial equity in school disciplinary outcomes

(c) Training, coaching, leading, or talking to educators with the intent to motivate them to improve racial equity in school disciplinary outcomes

In addition to asking questions about your own commitment to racial equity in school discipline, I will also ask you to recall and describe WHICH OF YOUR ACTIONS MAY HAVE PERSONALLY HELPED or HINDERED the MOTIVATION OF OTHER EDUCATORS toward prioritizing or focusing on racial equity in school discipline. Other educators can include colleagues in your school or district that you have worked with in some capacity (e.g., may be daily interaction or occasional contact during the school year via trainings, meetings, supervision, or consultation)

Based on this information, do you understand the definition of active commitment to racial equity in school discipline?

YES _____ NO _____

(tally the answers from each individual and provide clarification for any "no" answers)

Do you have any questions for me about the purpose of the study I am conducting?

YES _____   NO _____

(tally the answers from each individual and provide clarification for any "no" answers)

3. Initial questions

a. Can you please tell me a little bit about your current position/title and the role you have in schools today?

_____
_____
_____

b. You volunteered for this study because you identified yourself as experiencing a shift in commitment to equity in school discipline.

What does commitment to racial equity in school discipline mean to you?

_____
_____
_____
_____

c. Does your current role directly or indirectly involve disciplining students in schools or overseeing disciplinary policy or decisions?

☐   Yes

☐   No

     If yes, in what capacity/role?

_____
_____
_____

3. Critical Incident Interview Questions

a. What were the important events (i.e., specific behaviors, examples or observable happenings) that HELPED YOUR active commitment to racial equity in school discipline? These can be things you or another professional did or things that happened inside the school or
outside the school. Please describe each event or behavior completely and with as much detail as possible.

Incident #1 ○ Specific   ○ Observable ○ Behavioral ○ Example/Activity ○ Quantifiable

_____
_____
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Incident #2 ○ Specific   ○ Observable ○ Behavioral ○ Example/Activity ○ Quantifiable

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Incident #3 ○ Specific   ○ Observable ○ Behavioral ○ Example/Activity ○ Quantifiable

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Incident #4 ○ Specific   ○ Observable ○ Behavioral ○ Example/Activity ○ Quantifiable

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Incident #5 ○ Specific   ○ Observable ○ Behavioral ○ Example/Activity ○ Quantifiable

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Incident # 6   ○ Specific   ○ Observable ○ Behavioral ○ Example/Activity ○ Quantifiable

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Now, summarize all "helping" incidents back to the participant and ask if the information collected accurately described what they reported. If not, ask the participant to please clarify or explain what they said.

b. What were the important events (i.e., specific behaviors, examples or observable happenings) that HINDERED YOUR active commitment to racial equity in school discipline? These can be things you or another professional did or things that happened inside the school or
outside the school. Please describe each event or behavior completely and with as much detail as possible.

Incident #1 ○ Specific   ○ Observable ○ Behavioral ○ Example/Activity ○ Quantifiable

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Incident #2 ○ Specific   ○ Observable ○ Behavioral ○ Example/Activity ○ Quantifiable

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Incident #3 ○ Specific   ○ Observable ○ Behavioral ○ Example/Activity ○ Quantifiable

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Incident #4 ○ Specific   ○ Observable ○ Behavioral ○ Example/Activity ○ Quantifiable

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Incident #5 ○ Specific   ○ Observable ○ Behavioral ○ Example/Activity ○ Quantifiable

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Incident # 6   ○ Specific   ○ Observable   ○ Behavioral   ○ Example/Activity   ○ Quantifiable

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Now, summarize all "hindering" incidents back to the participant and ask if the information collected accurately described what they reported. If not, ask the participant to please clarify or explain what they said.

c. Now that we've talked about incidents that have helped or hindered your active commitment, looking back, are there things that would have MADE IT EASIER for YOU to actively commit to equity in school discipline from the outset (i.e. sooner)?

Incident #1   ○ Specific   ○ Observable   ○ Behavioral   ○ Example/Activity   ○ Quantifiable

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Incident #2   ○ Specific   ○ Observable   ○ Behavioral   ○ Example/Activity   ○ Quantifiable

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Incident #3   ○ Specific   ○ Observable   ○ Behavioral   ○ Example/Activity   ○ Quantifiable

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Incident #4 ○ Specific   ○ Observable ○ Behavioral ○ Example/Activity ○ Quantifiable

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Incident #5 ○ Specific   ○ Observable ○ Behavioral ○ Example/Activity ○ Quantifiable

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Incident # 6 ○ Specific   ○ Observable ○ Behavioral ○ Example/Activity ○ Quantifiable

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Now, summarize the "wishlist" incidents back to the participant and ask if the information collected accurately described what they reported. If not, ask the participant to please clarify or explain what they said.

I will now ask you to recall and describe incidents that you can recall that MAY HAVE PERSONALLY HELPED or HINDERED the MOTIVATION OF OTHER EDUCATORS to prioritize or focus more on racial equity in school discipline. Other educators can include colleagues in your school or district that you have worked with in some capacity (e.g., could be daily contact or occasional contact during the school year via trainings, meetings, supervision, or consultation)

d. What were the important events (i.e., specific behaviors, examples or observable

happenings) that HELPED YOU INCREASE OTHER EDUCATORS' active commitment to racial equity in school discipline? These can be things you did or observed that helped you motivate the commitment of others. Please describe each event or behavior completely and with as much detail as possible.

Incident #1 ○ Specific   ○ Observable ○ Behavioral ○ Example/Activity ○
Quantifiable

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Incident #2 ○ Specific   ○ Observable ○ Behavioral ○ Example/Activity ○
Quantifiable

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Incident #3 ○ Specific   ○ Observable ○ Behavioral ○ Example/Activity ○
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Incident #4 ○ Specific   ○ Observable ○ Behavioral ○ Example/Activity ○
Quantifiable

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Incident #5 ○ Specific   ○ Observable ○ Behavioral ○ Example/Activity ○
Quantifiable

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Incident # 6   ○ Specific   ○ Observable   ○ Behavioral   ○ Example/Activity   ○ Quantifiable

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Now, summarize all the helping incidents that motivated others back to the participant and ask if the information collected accurately described what they reported. If not, ask the participant to please clarify or explain what they said.

e. What were the important events (i.e., specific behaviors, examples or observable

happenings) that HINDERED OTHER PRACTITIONERS' active commitment to racial equity in school discipline? These can be things you did or observed that hindered the commitment of others. Please describe each event or behavior completely and with as much detail as possible.

Incident #1   ○ Specific   ○ Observable   ○ Behavioral   ○ Example/Activity   ○ Quantifiable

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Incident #2   ○ Specific   ○ Observable   ○ Behavioral   ○ Example/Activity   ○ Quantifiable

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Incident #3   ○ Specific   ○ Observable   ○ Behavioral   ○ Example/Activity   ○ Quantifiable

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Incident #4 ○ Specific   ○ Observable ○ Behavioral ○ Example/Activity ○ Quantifiable

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Incident #5 ○ Specific   ○ Observable ○ Behavioral ○ Example/Activity ○ Quantifiable

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Incident # 6   ○ Specific   ○ Observable   ○ Behavioral   ○ Example/Activity   ○ Quantifiable

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Now, summarize all the hindering incidents that motivated others back to the participant and ask if the information collected accurately described what they reported. If not, ask the participant to please clarify or explain what they said.

f. Now that we've talked about incidents that have helped or hindered you to motivate other practitioners' active commitment to racial equity in school discipline (name them). Looking back, are there things that would have MADE IT EASIER for YOU MOTIVATE OTHER PRACTITIONERS' active commitment to racial equity in school discipline from the outset (i.e. sooner)?

Incident #1 ○ Specific   ○ Observable ○ Behavioral ○ Example/Activity ○ Quantifiable

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Incident #2 ○ Specific ○ Observable ○ Behavioral ○ Example/Activity ○ Quantifiable

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Incident #3 ○ Specific ○ Observable ○ Behavioral ○ Example/Activity ○ Quantifiable

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Incident #4 ○ Specific ○ Observable ○ Behavioral ○ Example/Activity ○ Quantifiable

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Incident #5 ○ Specific ○ Observable ○ Behavioral ○ Example/Activity ○ Quantifiable

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Incident # 6 ○ Specific ○ Observable ○ Behavioral ○ Example/Activity ○ Quantifiable

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Now, summarize the "wishlist" incidents back to the participant and ask if the information collected accurately described what they reported. If not, ask the participant to please clarify or explain what they said.

Possible follow up interview questions:

☐ Tell me what it was about (the incident) that influenced your/their commitment to racial equity in school discipline? What and where did the incident happen? Who was involved?

☐ What led up to the incident that most strengthened or hindered your/others' commitment to racial equity?

☐ What happened following the incident that changed your/their opinions or actions toward current disciplinary practice?

☐ How did you/they feel about the incident? What did you learn from the incident that influenced what you do with students, staff, families or other school stakeholders today?

☐ What was done, said or demonstrated during the incident that most helped or hindered your/others' commitment to racial equity in school discipline?

☐ What aspects of your school or district environment strengthened or hindered your commitment to racial equity?

☐ If you were conducting a training of school staff today, what would you say was most valuable or instructive about this helping or hindering incident in relation to racial equity in school discipline?

4. Closing & next steps

Thank you for your time today. Before we finish today, I have a few final questions.

Do I have permission to contact you should further clarification be needed upon transcription and/or extraction of critical data? Indicate participants answer: Telephone YES/NO and/or email YES/NO?

May I contact you in approximately 2 to 3 months to receive feedback on the "fit" of the categories generated for the CI's? E-mail YES / NO and/or phone YES/ NO?

Interview End Time: _____

Length of Interview: _____

Interviewer's Name: _____

APPENDIX B

EDUCATOR RECRUITMENT LETTER

Email subject line: Interested in participating in a study exploring commitment to equity in school discipline?

[Note: As we may be recruiting existing colleagues, we may add a paragraph here to reduce awkwardness. The rest of the email will be provided verbatim.]

Dear _____,

We are writing to ask you to consider taking part in a research project exploring educators' perspectives on racial equity in school discipline. For this study, we are looking for educators (e.g., teachers, principals, specialists or school consultants) who have experienced a shift from feeling previously ambivalent or only somewhat committed to very committed to improve racial equity in school discipline. This could include a shift in how you have allocated your time, set priorities or used resources at your disposal to focus more on racial equity in school discipline (more than before).

Your total participation would consist of ~ 2 hours to complete the following activities:

November-January 2018

- Complete 2 5-minute surveys on your motivation to respond to prejudice

- Complete a 60 to 90-minute phone (or in person) interview on your experiences of the events/happenings that influenced your commitment to racial equity in your school or district.

January-March 2018

- Completing a 15-minute follow-up email questionnaire to report your feedback on the "fit" of the categories for the events/happenings you reported.

Upon completion of the interview, you will receive a small honorarium (a $50 gift certificate) for time you spent.

Your participation in this research project is voluntary.

If you do wish to take part, please complete the attached consent form and return it to us in the enclosed envelope (or reply to this email). Following your indication of interest, we will contact you to schedule an interview for a time that works best with your schedule.

If you would like to learn more about this study and what is involved, please reply to this email or contact Eoin Bastable, a project research assistant, at (971)-263-2902.

APPENDIX C

MRWP QUESTIONNAIRE

First, please respond to the following 10 questions *retrospectively*. In other words, how you would have responded <u>BEFORE, as a practitioner non-committal (or ambivalent toward) improving equity in school disciplinary practice.</u>

1. Because of today's PC (politically correct) standards, I try to appear nonprejudiced toward Black people.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

2. I try to hide any negative thoughts about Black people in order to avoid negative reactions from others.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

3. If I acted prejudiced toward Black people, I would be concerned that others would be angry with me.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

4. I attempt to appear nonprejudiced toward Black people in order to avoid disapproval from others.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

5. I try to act nonprejudiced toward Black people because of pressure from others.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

6. I attempt to act in nonprejudiced ways toward Black people because it is personally important to me.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

7. According to my personal values, using stereotypes about Black people is okay.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

8. I am personally motivated by my beliefs to be nonprejudiced toward Black people.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

9. Because of my personal values, I believe that using stereotypes about Black people is wrong.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

10. Being nonprejudiced toward Black people is important to my self-concept.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Next, please respond to the same 10 questions <u>as you would NOW, as a practitioner actively committed to improve equity in school disciplinary practice</u>

(Repeat same 10 questions)

EDUCATOR FOLLOW-UP AFTER INTERVIEW EMAIL

Email subject line: Commitment to Racial Equity in School Discipline (3 brief follow-up questions)

Dear Participants,

Thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedules to provide detailed interviews on your perceptions of what motivates educators' commitment to equity in school discipline practice. Second, I want to tell you how excited we are to see the analyzed data converging into XX categories.

The next phase of this analysis involves getting your feedback on these XX categories. For the sake of efficiency and to respect your time, I have attached a summary of the larger descriptions that will be included in the final research document (see attached Word document).

Specifically, we are asking you to read the attached categorical descriptions and comment if they seem to "fit" the experiences you cited during the interview. Some categories have been grouped under larger headings to present a more pragmatic understanding of what helped or hindered practitioners' commitment to equity in school discipline. You will see two groups of categories listed: (a) Incidents that motivated practitioners themselves and (b) incidents that practitioners reported that motivated others (i.e., colleagues in their schools and districts).

An independent rater, expert rater, and minimum participation rater were also consulted to determine the categories to be included in this framework. Furthermore, the incidents extracted from the interviews had to be sufficiently detailed and observable to be included in the analysis. In the final analysis XX categories emerged that meaningfully summarized the data gathered and met these criteria.

Please carefully read the below category headings and descriptions, then reply to this email with YES/NO, and if NO provide a written comment on the following:

1) Do the category headings make sense to you? YES or NO

If NO, comment:

2) Do the category headings capture your experience and the meaning that the incidents had for you? YES or NO

If NO, comment:

3) Are you surprised by any of the categories? YES or NO

If NO, comment:

4) YES or NO – Outside of this study (all recording collected for study will only be used for stated research purposes as consented and destroyed immediately after analyses are completed), I would be willing to be contacted to discuss re-recording some of my more illustrative reflections on equity in school discipline for potential use in training materials as part of professional development offered to schools and community providers. A separate form of consent would be required for any interested participants as this would be a project conducted for non-research purposes.

Thank you again for your time and support for this project. Following receipt of this email and the tasks outlined, please let me know where I can send a $50 gift certificate to compensate you for your time (to ensure that you receive it, we recommend providing your home address.

Name and address to send $50 gift certificate for participation:

_____

_____

_____

Please contact Eoin Bastable at 971-263-2902 should you have any questions about the contents of this email or your participation in this study.

Sincerely,

Eoin Bastable

Doctoral Candidate

University of Oregon

ebastabl@uoregon.edu

APPENDIX E

LIST OF NOMENCLATURE AND ABBREVIATIONS

SWPBIS	School-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports
PD	Professional Development
CIT	Critical Incident Technique
CI	Critical Incidents
WL	Wishlist Item
ODR	Office Discipline Referrals
PHM	Prejudice Habit Model
RP	Restorative Practices
SWIS	School Wide Information System

APPENDIX F

PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES TO MRWP QUESTIONNAIRE

	Participants														
Questionnaire items	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1. Because of today's PC (politically correct) standards I try to appear nonprejudiced toward Black people.	2	5	4	4	2	1	4	4	6	6	2	6	7	1	6
2. I try to hide any negative thoughts about Black people in order to avoid negative reactions from others	6	2	2	4	2	1	6	4	2	2	2	3	1	2	6
3. If I acted prejudiced toward Black people, I would be concerned that others would be angry with me.	6	4	5	4	4	6	6	4	5	6	2	5	7	6	5
4. I attempt to appear nonprejudiced toward Black people in order to avoid disapproval from others	2	2	2	4	4	1	1	4	2	2	2	2	5	1	6
5. I try to act nonprejudiced toward Black people because of pressure from others.	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	4	2	1	1	1	5	1	5
6. I attempt to act in nonprejudiced ways toward Black people because it is personally important to me.	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	4	6	6	7	7	7	7	7
7. According to my personal values, using stereotypes about Black people is OK.(R)	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	1
8. I am personally motivated by my beliefs to be nonprejudiced toward Black people.	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	1	7	6	7	7	7	6	7
9. Because of my personal values, I believe that using stereotypes about Black people is wrong.	6	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	6	6	7	7	7	6	7
10. Being nonprejudiced toward Black people is important to my self-concept.	4	7	7	7	6	7	7	7	6	6	7	7	7	5	6

Note: (R) indicates reverse coded item

TRACKING OF EMERGENT CATEGORIES

Date of CI/WL extraction	Participant #	Date categorized	New Categories Emerged?
January 23	1	February 6	Disaggregating School Data by Race/Ethnicity; Learning from Trusted Peers; Avoiding Discussing Race; Getting Cited for Disproportionality; Experiencing Conviction from Leaders and Peers; Training on Culturally Responsive Practices; Experiencing Racially Diverse Students and Communities (7 CIs)
January 24	2	February 9	Learning about Racial Discrimination in Society; Lowering Expectations or Stereotyping; Imposing Cultural Norms; Adhering to School Discipline Policies; Sharing Equity Focused Practices; Sharing Equity Focused School Practices (6 CIs)
January 29	3	February 12	Examining White Privilege and Identity; Implementing PBIS as a Foundation for Equity (2 CIs)
February 16	8	February 21	Witnessing Racial Prejudice in Schools; Experiencing Lack of Conviction from Leaders and Peers; Discussing Race and Discipline with Peers (3 CIs)
February 15	7	February 25	No new categories
February 21	9	February 29	Acknowledging Racial Biases; Providing a Voice to Students and Families (2 CIs)
February 12	6	March 1	Normalizing Discomfort Addressing Race (1 CI)
February 23	10	March 5	No new categories
February 2	4	March 8	Accessing Equity Mentors and Exemplars (1 CI)
January 23	5	March 10	No new categories
February 26	11	March 6	No new categories
March 2	12	March 7	No new categories
March 5	13	March 13	No new categories
March 15	14	March 20	No new categories
March 21	15	March 25	No new categories

Note: CIs were not extracted in batches of three from the transcriptions, not chronologically by interview date

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