Fear of Losing the Standard

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From 20th-Century Desegregation to 21st-Century Anti-Integration

> "What people actually do in relation to groups they dislike is not always related to what they think and feel about them." (Allport, 1954, p. 14)

When I was in college in Wisconsin in the early 1990s, I encountered White peers having cultural firsts—specifically, interacting with an Afro-Latino whose first language was Spanish. These encounters also occurred with my professors. I remember once, when I intended to major in economics, my macroeconomics professor in a lesson about economic conditions decided to use Detroit as an example. He turned to me, the only Black person in the class, and said, "Isn't that true? Economic conditions in Detroit are bleak." Though some of my White peers and I were taken aback by his question, none of us felt comfortable to challenge his associational bias. I realized then that this professor would interact with Black students in his class, but he carried a presumption that Black people come from urban centers potentially because his lived experience involved only seeing Black people in such settings. I think about this experience as a representation of Allport's (1954) opening quote; that is, this professor's associational bias about equating Black people to urban centers did not prevent him from interacting with Black students in his economics class. However, the interactions kept him in a place of superiority because his shopping cart of experiences fed him stories of Black people as inferior. As educators, we need to start understanding how Whiteness ideology frames our social understandings of "the other" as not quite meeting "the standard." In this chapter, you will have an opportunity to consider what Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2012) calls the "Invisible Weight of Whiteness."

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In other words, White identity is in a way invisibly cast as the standard; for instance, a movie that stars Black actors is a Black movie (e.g., *Boyz n the Hood* [Singleton, 1991], *Do the Right Thing* [S. Lee, 1989]), while movies starring predominantly White actors are simply movies (e.g., *Pretty Woman* [Lawton & Marshall, 1990], *The Godfather* [Puzo & Coppola, 1972], *Kramer v. Kramer* [Benton, 1979]). Thus, in this journey to unpack our shopping cart, we must consider how the invisible manner of the "standard" sustains the ideology.

Knowing That "the Standard" Is Not Culturally Universal

In 2018, I conducted a session with a school district's leadership team, consisting of the superintendent and their leadership cabinet (e.g., assistant superintendent, directors), principals, assistant principals, and lead teachers from each school—the third of five sessions using activities from Chapter 5 of my previous book, *Solving Disproportionality and Achieving Equity* (Fergus, 2016a). The room filled with energy and a sense of hopefulness as educators found themselves on the same page of understanding and working toward equitable outcomes for their students. This particular district, which served nearly 85% Black and Latinx, 5% White, 7% Asian, and 3% other (multiracial and Native American) students, maintained a persistent pattern of disproportionality: 30% of the total Black and Latinx student population were designated students with disabilities, compared with only 16% of White students and 7% of Asian students. In the gifted/Advanced Placement (AP)/Honors programs, 6% of the total Black, 3% of the total Latinx, 23% of the total White, and 32% of the total Asian student populations were enrolled in such programs.

These patterns, as the group acknowledged during the first session, reflected a systemic issue with how the teaching and administration community understood and engaged the Black and Latinx student population. For example, in the belief survey I conducted with several schools in this district, several educators noted revealing sentiments in the open-ended response to the statement, "I believe all students at my school have the capacity to learn." The responses included "Do they want to learn? That's the real question," "If only they were serious about being in school," and "I can't teach kids who don't care about others." At the time, I did not know whether these comments represented the larger teacher population, but as one principal stated, "Knowing that I may even have one teacher who thinks about my kids like that is one too many."

At the end of the session's intergroup contact activity, which included exercises to practice talking with someone different, a White female

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assistant principal approached me to share her sense of awe from the activity and energy to do more. "This was so eye-opening and really helps me to be a better educator. However, I can't live this conversation with my friends and family out on Long Island. They talk differently about people of color; they use stereotypes and at times the *N*-word. I don't know if I can do this work outside of school."

For this educator, the professional opportunity to understand and share that her shopping cart contains a significant set of experiences involving affinity and associational biases that limit her capacity to develop cross-cultural experiences was important; also important for this administrator was to situate "That is not me" or "I'm not like them."

As I noted in the introductory chapter, the majority of friendship circles, particularly among individuals who identify as White, are also White. The concern is that such monocultural experiences reinforce associational biases of out-group members and minimize the development of cross-cultural skills and dispositions. These types of monocultural experiences are pervasive in all our shopping carts. When I was in high school, one of my best friends, Jay, identified as Jewish. Prior to my friendship with Jay, I had no personal or curricular exposure to Judaism. Jay gave me my first lessons in Yom Kippur, Shabbat, and Rosh Hashanah. Without intentional exposure, we miss the opportunity to build a knowledge base for understanding ideas—for example, that not every person who comes from a Latin American country uses the identifier *Hispanic*, especially because of the etymology of the term, which emerged as a catch-all ethnic identifier developed in the 1970s. We miss the opportunity to understand why within the African American community Juneteenth serves as the Independence Day for African Americans. We miss the opportunity to understand why within the LGBTQIA+ community the history of the Stonewall riots as a response to police raids in the gay community is so significant. We miss the opportunity to develop the cross-cultural disposition to learn cultural nuances around various holidays (e.g., Eid, Hanukkah). We also miss the opportunity to develop the linguistic dexterity needed to hang out with multilingual individuals who can move in and out of various languages. The absence of these cross-cultural skills and dispositions obviously does not exclude an individual like this educator from becoming an administrator. However, unless a systematic strategy is devised to unpack her Long Island White-only experiences and create new experiences to replace these beliefs, children of color will continue to be targets of these monocultural experiences and their translated beliefs.

This activity, and probably others, helped this educator understand the types of experiences missing from her shopping cart. She needed to

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amass new knowledge about individuals beyond the racial and ethnic enclave found in some parts of Long Island, New York—knowledge that would challenge any associational bias she had about groups different from her White-identified family and friend community. What I consider important to understand about this school leader's dilemma, besides being a White school leader within a school district that predominantly enrolls Black and Brown students, is whether she is ready to challenge the experiences of Whiteness continuously topping off her shopping cart from her home community.

This educator shows us the deluge of experiences existing in all our shopping carts that construct a singular frame for determining standards and expected ways of being. Let's discuss how notions of standard are developed in a variety of arenas. For instance, in the cosmetics and hair industry, a certain standard of beauty[1] has affected women in particular. For example, in the "Good Hair" study conducted by the Perception Institute, researchers identified that, on average, White women show explicit bias toward Black women's hair; 1 in 5 Black women feel social pressure to straighten their hair for work; and, on average, White women show preference for smooth hair.

A standard of health is present as well. For example, the body mass index (BMI), used to calculate the obesity range of an individual, is based on White men. Various organizations, such as the World Health Organization, have adjusted their obesity measures in various parts of the world. The standardization of BMI based on White men affects not only the determination of obesity but also eligibility for life insurance. Without knowing it, we are continuously exposed to a society that operates based on affinity and associational biases.

Education, similar to these industries, has developed a way to position the experiences of White students as the standard for operation. The concept of standard is based on and mired with experiences of affinity and associational biases. For instance, I once did a walk-through of a hallway with a White male principal. He lamented the "change in demographics" happening in his middle school, and stated, "We have all these new Black students, but they are really loud—they don't know how to be quiet." I stopped the principal and asked him to be curious about the basis of his standard of noise, where it came from and his level of cross-cultural exposure. I shared with him that I lived in Berlin and Wiesbaden, Germany, for five years during high school. During that time period, when I traveled

[1]Perception Institute. (2016). *Do we have an implicit preference linked to hair?* https://perception.org/goodhair/

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on public transportation, I often noticed Germans would stand very close to each other. This made me uncomfortable because my standard of physical space had been established via my monocultural experiences. I shared that example with the intention of encouraging him to show curiosity about the basis of the noise standard, most likely established via his own monocultural experiences.

For us as educators to unpack and replace our Whiteness ideology, we need to understand how the "standard" emerged as part of our curricular and instructional process, and our real struggles to replace it in our shopping carts. In another experience, I supported a school district to examine their English language arts (ELA) curriculum in Grades 6–12, which they had recently realigned. I asked to review with the district equity committee the books students would be reading in the new ELA curriculum. Our review surfaced that between Grades 6 and 12, among the nearly 40 books assigned to the students in this school district, only one book would have a Black protagonist, and only one book would have a Latinx protagonist, across these grade levels and this critical developmental phase. However, the realigned curriculum contained the curriculum committee's version of "the classics": *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (Twain, 1885), *Death of Salesman* (Miller, 1949), *To Kill a Mockingbird* (H. Lee, 1960), and so on. These books set and continue to set the standard of what stories matter most. After the review, I asked the superintendent, "How do you want to proceed with replacing some books?" And he responded, "What if they don't want to because they don't know the books?" The concern centered not on the underdevelopment of the social, cultural, economic, and political cognitive skills of students but rather on the adults. The fear of replacing the content in our shopping carts—in particular, the idea of changing the standard—is paralyzing.

At the core of this struggle with the contents of our shopping carts is a serious concern of whether our society desires to fundamentally challenge or expand the frame of standard. One of my favorite books is *Faces at the Bottom of the Well* by Derrick Bell (1992), a renowned legal scholar, in which he writes an allegory that involves the United States being visited by aliens who propose providing all the resources (oil, energy, etc.) necessary to exist forever in exchange for all the Black people in the country. Bell describes the conversations that happen in Congress, in town halls, and at dinner tables about how the United States grapples with this proposition. The story is captivating on many levels, but Bell challenges us to consider whether American society has or will have enough of a commitment to value all groups beyond those that identify as White, male, heterosexual, physically able, and Christian. This contemplation presents in our contemporary

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examples of minimal attention to Black lives lost, trans Black lives lost, and state legislations that minimize the discussion of queerness, Blackness, and immigrant status. In the prior chapter, we had an opportunity to consider the use of educational laws and policies to sustain and augment Whiteness as part of the educational purpose and regulate the standard of educational practice. In this chapter, I explore that Whiteness ideology has established ways to cultivate this standard via ideas of desirability, fear of losing resources and monopoly, social threat of "the other," and fearing loss of being the standard. Understanding these ideas allows us to unpack that the maintenance of a Whiteness-based standard limits our opportunity to grow and replace it with other cross-cultural experiences and beliefs.

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Unpack 1: "The Standard" Harms Black Children

As defined in the introductory chapter, Whiteness has two major components: (1) Whiteness supports White identification and its related identities (economic, sexuality, gender expression, etc.) as *the* socially desirable identity, and (2) Whiteness denies the presence and relevance of non-White identities through subordination. Challenging the social desirability of Whiteness has been an ever-present reality in our various civil rights movements (e.g., the 1930s–1960s Reconstruction era movement and the Black Lives Matter era movement). One of the arguments made in the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* case was that Black children viewed White identity as more desirable and cognitively superior. In 1947, Drs. Mamie and Kenneth Clark published a psychological experiment now popularly referred to as the Doll Test. They intended for the experiment to determine how Black children identified themselves as well as their racial attitudes:

> The specific problem of this study is an analysis of the genesis and development of racial identification as a function of ego development and self-awareness in Negro children . . . Because the problem of racial identification is so definitely related to the problem of the genesis of racial attitudes in children, it was thought practicable to attempt to determine the racial attitudes or preferences of these Negro children. (K. B. Clark & Clark, 1947, p. 169)

The experiment involved a total of 253 children: 116 males and 137 females ranging in age from 3 to 7, 46 with light, 128 with medium, and 79 with dark skin color. The children represented northern

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and southern cities—three in Arkansas (Hot Springs, Pine Bluff, and Little Rock) and Springfield in Massachusetts. Black children were provided a White doll and a Black doll and asked the following questions:

Racial preference questions:

1. Give me the doll that you like to play with
2. Give me the doll that is a nice doll.
3. Give me the doll that looks bad.
4. Give me the doll that is a nice color.

Racial difference questions:

5. Give me the doll that looks like a White child.
6. Give me the doll that looks like a Colored child.
7. Give me the doll that looks like a Negro child.

Self-identification question:

8. Give me the doll that looks like you.

The experiment was revolutionary during this time, particularly in the field of psychology. Prior to the 1940s and 1950s, psychological research focused on what we now refer to as scientific racism, which emphasized a eugenics argument—the notion of biological or hereditary differences existing between racial groups and the use of those differences as justification to "purify" the society (McNeill, 2017). By the 1940s, a few psychology scholars were moving more toward the study of the genesis of racial prejudice.

The Clark study provided three critical findings that aid us in understanding the impact of Whiteness on Black children: (1) Among the 5- and 6-year-olds, they had a well-developed knowledge of racial difference between White and Colored, signaling absorption of racist attitudes at an early age; (2) northern and southern children maintained no difference in their knowledge of racial differences; and (3) light-, medium-, and dark-skinned children showed a preference for the White doll, a preference most pronounced among light-skinned children.

In the qualitative component of the study, Drs. Clark noted that the children spoke in simple and powerful terms about their preference for

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the White doll—"'cause he's pretty" or "'cause he's White" or "his feet, hands, ears, elbows, knees, and hair are clean." When it came to the rejection of the Brown doll, they used another kind of speech—"'cause he's ugly" or "'cause it don't look pretty" or "'cause him Black" or "got Black on him." These findings proved critical in the *Brown v. Board of Education* case because they affirmed that allowing Black children to get better resources and opportunities was not enough. A national strategy needed devising to fix the valuation of Whiteness over all others and the devaluation of everyone else. And, as I highlighted in Chapter 1, school segregation—the architectural design of separate schools—was predicated on the notion of Whiteness not only as better for the distribution of school resources but also as the best lens through which we should make decisions. Whiteness set and continues to set our standards for desired beauty, cognitive ability, quality schools, and so on. Whiteness frames the experiences in our shopping carts. I am always fascinated when educators in schools with a student population eligible for free or reduced-price lunch state, "My school is X% disadvantaged or free/reduced-price lunch," as if that descriptor provides a story of the schools enduring a challenging condition. Those without students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch never consider making that claim because the absence of poverty is a desirable condition.

In an 1876 speech at the Republican National Convention, Frederick Douglass framed this challenge of desiring Whiteness. He poignantly stated to an all-White audience, "What is your emancipation?"

> You say you have emancipated us. You have; and I thank you for it. You say you have enfranchised us. You have; and I thank you for it. But what is your emancipation?—what is your enfranchisement? What does it all amount to, if the black man, after having been made free by the letter of your law, is unable to exercise that freedom, and, after having been freed from the slaveholder's lash, he is to be subject to the slaveholder's shotgun? Oh! you freed us! You emancipated us! I thank you for it. But under what circumstances did you emancipate us? Under what circumstances have we obtained our freedom?[2]

[2]Muller, J. (2016, May 6). *Speech of Frederick Douglass at the 1876 Republican National Convention.* https://thelionofanacostia.wordpress.com/2016/05/16/speech-of-frederick-douglass-at-the-1876-republican-national-convention/

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The emancipation of the desire for Whiteness has not been on the table of conversation or as a national curriculum of repair. Though an agreement on a national curriculum has not been reached, various racially, ethnically, linguistically, and sexually minoritized communities have sought their own forms of emancipation by solidifying their own valuation. Latinx, Black, and LGBTQIA+ communities have created empowerment-based organizations and media outlets that focus on rights, advocacy, and self-love, including Black Entertainment Television (BET), Univision, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), La Raza, Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF), Greek sororities and fraternities, Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN), Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP), and Lambda Legal. These efforts have been monumental for marginalized communities in developing and displaying a sense of identity valuation in the face of a society that sustains habits of devaluation.

The long history of devaluation is also clear in films and movies, product representation, elected government officials, and books. The lack of Black and Brown actors in Hollywood led to the #OscarsSoWhite movement. Due to racist stereotypes evidenced in the representation on products like Aunt Jemima and Uncle Ben's, brands are slowly making changes. Governmental positions have historically been assumed by White people. It took 233 years before a Black woman served on the Supreme Court and 220 years before a Latinx woman served on the Supreme Court. Most recently, novels and textbooks that acknowledge the presence of Black, Latinx, LGBTQIA+, Native American, and Asian communities were removed from school libraries (Friedman & Johnson, 2022). In these ways, our society takes steps forward and backward. In fact, our society has not removed its grip on the valuation of Whiteness—the type of valuation that continues to place greater desire and value on the White doll. This central ingredient sits in our shopping carts, and everyone has a role in understanding and sustaining, as well as challenging and abolishing, this ingredient. To develop a national curriculum, we need to understand how this valuation of Whiteness has sat so comfortably in all our shopping carts. The remainder of this chapter will unravel how fear of losing Whiteness as the standard continues the devaluation of Blackness, Latinx-ness, Indigenous/First Peoples–ness, and Queerness.

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Shopping Cart Exploration Pause

1. What's your standard for student behavior (e.g., behavior, cognitive ability, personality)? Where does that come from?
2. What's your standard for a student being in advanced classes (gifted, AP, Honors, International Baccalaureate [IB])? Where does that come from?
3. What's your standard for a student receiving tiered intervention supports (e.g., behavior, cognitive ability, personality)? Where does that come from?
4. Write down the top 10 television shows, toys, and other influences that you interacted with as a child (12 and under) and teenager (13 and up). What elements of your identity can you see in these experiences (e.g., mostly TV shows with [insert identity])?

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Unpack 2: "The Standard" Defines Educational Concepts and Practices

These standard experiences have been normalized within the social DNA of educational concepts like meritocracy, grit, and resilience. While these concepts may strike many readers as harmless, they have been weaponized in a manner that sustains associational biased belief systems. Meritocracy, grit, and resilience are weaponized because these concepts are derived from the experiences of White, middle-class, Christian, male, and heterosexual values. Marginalized groups are compared against the standards that originated from Whiteness (C. I. Harris, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 1994; O'Connor & Fernandez, 2006). Research studies (Black et al., 2018; Duckworth et al., 2007; Farington et al., 2012) suggest that acquiring certain "noncognitive skills" is essential to ensuring academic achievement and advancement. More specifically, the research shows that the social and emotional dimensions of development bear greatly on academic performance. These dimensions have been described as "noncognitive" because they include personal attributes such as self-regulation, impulse control, perseverance, and grit.

In my own published studies on boys of color, I have found the term *noncognitive skills* to be problematic and incongruent with the strong and ongoing relationship between social, cognitive, and behavioral factors and interaction with academic performance (Fergus et al., 2014). Furthermore, several relevant studies have found that variability in the academic performance of students of color is highly correlated with

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beliefs and perceptions of the social, cognitive, and behavioral supports available within the learning environment (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1991). For example, several researchers have explored the correlation between academic performance and perceptions of racial bias, stereotype threats, and an assortment of variables related to school conditions (Carter et al., 2016; Fergus et al., 2014). Despite educators' access to such research to demonstrate the complexities of grit, perseverance, and self-regulation derived among children, their daily handling of these educational concepts does not pay attention to cultural diversity. When I worked with a district on diversifying their Honors classes in ninth grade, they used their long-standing criteria of automatically placing students with As in eighth-grade English in ninth-grade Honors English. Their use of this criteria alongside their commitment to diversification resulted in nearly 100 Black and Latinx students receiving placement in the ninth-grade Honors English classes. Within the initial two weeks of students entering the classes, the English Department chair, as well as the assistant superintendent (both White males), started receiving emails from some of the English teachers: "These kids don't have the stamina like our veteran Honors kids," "We are harming them because they are not used to being so studious," and "They are not showing the initiative like our regular students." These educators were merely espousing their own cultural understandings of "initiative," "stamina," and "studious," which for many of them had developed from the cultural exposure to only White students in their Honors and AP courses. The challenge of unpacking these educational concepts involves determining their incompleteness and the need for a more culturally evolved concept.

Even to unpack its incompleteness when our field of education so willingly consumes these incomplete educational concepts proves difficult at times. For example, the concept of grit received a boost of relevance when Duckworth et al. (2007) published a study of grit as predictive of success markers. Grit is defined as perseverance and passion for long-term goals. Researchers tested the grit scale on Ivy League graduates, West Point cadets, and spelling bee finalists. These demographic groups primarily comprised White students, and also represented specific types of cultural, economic, and political affluence. As a result of this research, grit has been weaponized as the noncognitive factor missing in the educational success of minoritized populations. In fact, various schools, and charter networks specifically, have created GRIT report cards intended to measure whether students are *getting along with others*, taking *responsibility*, showing *integrity*, and demonstrating *tenacity*. They prompt teachers to measure subjective qualities that could easily be interpreted (or misinterpreted) according to specific and unexamined personal beliefs. These qualities include whether a student "is polite" and "has good manners," whether

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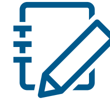
they show “good sportsmanship,” and whether they are “respectful to all adults” and “willing to take positive risks.”

These educational concepts are valuable; however, the manner in which they have been used toward minoritized populations brings to question their inclusivity. In other words, are we talking about White students struggling with grit or anxiety? The day-to-day narrative of minoritized children’s educational progress is framed through the lens of how much effort, focus, and care they demonstrate. The day-to-day concern about White children’s educational progress, in contrast, is tied to the amount of anxiety and pressure they are exposed to that jeopardizes their progress. As educators, we need to unpack “the standard” in how we define and apply these educational concepts.

Shopping Cart Evaluation Pause



1. What do you consider the strength and challenge of GRIT report cards?
2. In what ways does culture (language, dispositions, interactional styles, etc.) influence educational concepts like grit, self-regulation, and perseverance?
3. Where do these desired behaviors come from?
4. Why do educators desire these behaviors and not others?

Unpack 3: Monopolizing Resources to Keep the Standard

This layer of Whiteness speaks to tools used to ensure in-group members police the social and economic mechanisms of society and exclude out-group members from those mechanisms through a cultural strategy called social closure, “a dynamic process of subordination in which a dominant group, aided by the state, secures advantages by utilizing exclusionary practices to monopolize scarce resources” (Wilson, 2021, p. 2387). The concept of social closure, derived from sociological theory, provides a manner for understanding how tools like school attendance boundaries, cognitive assessments, and/or behavioral expectations (e.g., interest, grit, drive) for gifted program entry, participation in activities sponsored by the Parent-Teacher Association, sibling enrollment policies, and so on are either operationalized or co-opted by the in-group to sustain the resources for the in-group and exclude the out-group.

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This type of in-group power and out-group exclusion I found in a high school with a majority (60%) of Black and Brown students. The high school had IB, AP, Honors, and general tracks, but in 2018 school leadership sought to diversify the IB track since those classes comprised less than 10% Black and Latinx students. The principal anticipated that teachers and parents would not support an explicit statement of diversity as the goal. Thus, the principal decided to frame the strategy as a class size issue. In other words, the IB courses contained fewer than 10 students while other tracks such as Honors and general had class sizes of 25–30 students.

A historical element of the school important to note is that during the 1980s, the high school added these additional accelerated programs (IB and AP) to minimize White flight. Fast-forward to 2018 when the principal shared out the strategy of creating greater class size balance. Nearly immediately after sharing this goal at an all-staff meeting in September, the principal started receiving emails from parents stating their disappointment. One parent even stated, "Adding more students who do not have the skills into IB classes will bring lesser quality and dangerous behaviors into our classes." Eventually, the strategy to diversify through class size failed, and the principal started to have town hall meetings with parents to get their input on what they desired for the school. In this example, the White families utilized their resource of complaint, already primed in this district as a constituent to "keep them happy so they don't leave." This tool helped sustain social closure within the IB classes.

In another example, a different school district partnered in an initiative with a local foundation that supported school districts' development of yearly equity plans and monitored their implementation and progress. In 2017, I was invited to attend one of the progress monitoring visits of this school district composed of nearly 8,000 students—55% White, 25% Black, 8% Latinx, 3% Asian, and 7% multiracial. The visit began with an overview of the high school's data on AP/Honors enrollment and its levels (general, college, Honors, AP, IB). This district, similar to many other districts, were sued for using this "leveling" strategy as a proxy for continuing segregation through social closure. In other words, the increase of racial and ethnic integration was met with additional levels. The high school principal started by describing their journey of moving from 10 to 5 tracks based on various levels of "rigor"—basic, general, college preparatory, Honors, Advanced Honors, Accelerated Honors, Advanced Placement, and IB. And, as been noted in previous research, tracks organize children based on ability to further expose them to differential beliefs about their cognitive and behavioral abilities (Oakes, 1985).

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This school practice reflects the statement made by Judge Walter A. Huxman in 1951: "Segregation with the sanction of law, therefore, has a tendency to retard the educational and mental development of negro children and to deprive them of some of the benefits they would receive in a racial integrated school system."[3] In our current time, the sanction is made through the social and cultural monopoly of resources, a monopoly that has not dissipated since 1954!

Over the last 30 years, various communities have found ways to justify social closure by using income as a rationale for hoarding resources. This justification assuages any sense of Whiteness guilt or shame. For example, the hoarding of resources through social closure occurred in housing in the affluent Lincoln Square area of Manhattan in New York City. In 2016, a mixed-income, high-rise building in which the "poor" and "rich" residents had separate entrances, as well as separate amenities and even addresses, was opened.[4] The 55 units for the "poor" residents offered no laundry room, doorman, gym, courtyard, or river view of the Hudson. Meanwhile, the 219 units for the "rich" residents offered a gym, a movie theater, a pool, a bowling alley, an exclusive courtyard open only to them, a 24-hour doorman, and a separate entrance facing the Hudson River. This project underwent multiple levels of approval from various boards. Multiple entities considered this hoarding of resources as appropriate and aligned with their understandings of class hierarchy, which sanctioned separate but not necessarily equal entrances. Additionally, this housing project utilized monopoly of resources to sustain a valuation of Whiteness as well as contain a close-knit community for Whites.

In schools, we see this same hoarding of resources justified through concepts like "who is deserving of these resources" or "they may squander those opportunities or resources" or "as parents we earned to be able to provide for our children." For example, at an elementary school in an affluent neighborhood, parents can bid for parking signposts with placards with their names to park right in front of the school. At the same school, the immediate surrounding neighborhood holds an annual festival fundraiser with rides and animals to pet, but they stipulate it's only for residents. Another community's elementary school built a turf soccer field using tax levy dollars; this unique request was proposed and passed

[3]Linder, D. O. (2023). *Famous trials: Brown et al. v Board of Education of Topeka, Shawnee County, Kansas et al.* UMKC. https://www.famous-trials.com/brownvtopeka/658-brownhuxman

[4]Licea, M. (2016, January 17). "Poor door" tenants of luxury tower reveal the financial apartheid within. *New York Post*. https://nypost.com/2016/01/17/poor-door-tenants-reveal-luxury-towers-financial-apartheid/

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by a school board member whose child attended the school and enjoyed soccer. Meanwhile, the elementary school on the other side of town serving the majority of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch had a playground with uneven pavement that got closed down whenever a bad storm passed through. These types of actions are continuously occurring in all of our communities, supported through a monopoly of resources (e.g., board membership or city council roles) with a social closure for the in-group.

Unpack 4: Fear of Losing Relevance or Desirability

Another element of Whiteness is the worry of losing superiority. In 2020, during a Democratic presidential debate, Joe Biden stated that he would name a Black woman to the Supreme Court, and then in January 2022, he again declared this commitment. On numerous news outlets, in particular Fox News and Newsmax, various commentators and elected officials, such as Senators Ted Cruz, Lindsey Graham, and Marco Rubio, continuously stated that Biden used "identity politics" or that the "most qualified" should be the criteria for selection. In fact, Senator Cruz stated on the podcast *Verdict* that "Black women are, what, only 6% of the American population?" He's saying to 94% of the population, "I don't give a damn about you; you are ineligible," and goes further to outline his "most qualified" argument. "If he came and said, 'I'm going to put the best jurist on the court,' and he looked at a number of people and he ended up nominating a Black woman, he could credibly say 'OK, I'm nominating the person who's most qualified.' He's not even pretending to say that."[5]

These responses, as an example, demonstrate the manner in which, when confronted with centering another group, people show a fear of losing Whiteness as a centered frame. In the instance of the Supreme Court nominee, this move created an interruption of the associational bias of "qualified" justices equating to cultural dispositions associated with White males. Various studies have documented how this fear of losing Whiteness shows up in our schools. Donnor (2021) demonstrates through several case examples how White parents and educators find themselves fearful of losing the valuation of Whiteness. More specifically, Donnor highlights a set of Mississippi court cases in 2017 and 2018 in which a Black female high school student was denied being named class valedictorian despite having the highest grade point average (GPA), and was instead made co-valedictorian with a White female with a lower GPA.

[5]Verdict with Ted Cruz. (2022, January 29). *Only Black women need apply: Episode 107* [Video]. YouTube. https://youtu.be/2seoK5xAdjo

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The specifics of the case include (1) the White female student's grades were inflated due to an unapproved online AP physics course, and (2) the Black female was made to repeat a course she had already passed. The Black female would have been the first Black valedictorian in the 110-year history of the high school. Donnor argues that the fear of losing valuation of Whiteness appeared as subtext in this case of a racially divided community.

Some argue that the presence and eventually election of President Barack Obama reignited a need for Whiteness valuation because of a fear of losing Whiteness. Politically and socially supported movements such as the Tea Party, "Trumpism," and "anti–critical race theory (CRT)" emerged in ways to sustain or recenter economic, political, social, and educational priorities toward Whiteness ideology. When it comes to schools, the socially and now politically and legally supported anti-CRT movement asserts itself through monopoly and fear language to move Whiteness back to center.

For example, during the 2020–2021 school year, a renewed energy emerged, which focused on limiting ideas of identity diversity in our pre-K–12 educational system. In 2021, Texas legislators and the governor passed a regulation (HB 3979) to limit the discussions of "controversial issues":

> For any social studies course in the required curriculum: A teacher may not be compelled to discuss a particular current event or widely debated and currently controversial issue of public policy or social affairs.[6]

The energy behind this law is to limit what some legislators consider the "indoctrination" of children with ideas they've codified as CRT.

Other states follow this same blueprint, which at times appears to demonstrate a White rage (C. Anderson, 2016) and/or level of racial apathy (Bobo et al., 2012). In other words, some Whites and other racial/ethnic groups find themselves "tired" of having to consider the presence of cultural diversity. In 2021, Tennessee state legislators also enacted a regulation (Section 49-6-1019) to limit instruction pertaining to race, ethnicity, class, nationality, religion, or geographic region:

> The following concepts are prohibited concepts that shall not be included or promoted in a course of instruction, curriculum, instructional program, or in supplemental

[6]Texas Legislature. (2021). *House Bill 3979*. https://capitol.texas.gov/tlodocs/87R/billtext/pdf/HB03979I.pdf

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> instructional materials: a. One (1) race or sex is inherently superior to another race or sex; b. An individual, by virtue of the individual's race or sex, is inherently privileged, racist, sexist, or oppressive, whether consciously or subconsciously; c. An individual should be discriminated against or receive adverse treatment because of the individual's race or sex; d. An individual's moral character is determined by the individual's race or sex; e. An individual, by virtue of the individual's race or sex, bears responsibility for actions committed in the past by other members of the same race or sex; f. An individual should feel discomfort, guilt, anguish, or another form of psychological distress solely because of the individual's race or sex; g. A meritocracy is inherently racist or sexist, or designed by a particular race or sex to oppress members of another race or sex; h. This state or the United States is fundamentally or irredeemably racist or sexist; i. Promoting or advocating the violent overthrow of the United States government.[7]

Moms for Liberty (www.momsforliberty.org), a nonprofit group organized around the principles of liberty and freedom as cornerstones of what children should learn, filed a complaint with the Tennessee state education commissioner in June 2021 to highlight that the second-grade curriculum contained anti-White, anti-police, and anti-firefighter imagery in books about Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King Jr., and Ruby Bridges. In specific, they complained,

> The classroom books and teacher manuals reveal both explicit and implicit Anti-American, Anti-White, and Anti-Mexican teaching. Additionally, it implies to second grade children that people of color continue to be oppressed by an oppressive "angry, vicious, scary, mean, loud, violent, [rude], and [hateful]" white population . . . and teachers that the racial injustice of the 1960s exists today.[8]

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[7]Tennessee Legislature. (2021). *Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-1019*. https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/education/legal/Prohibited%20Concepts%20in%20Instruction%20Rule%207.29.21%20FINAL.pdf

[8]Herald Reports. (2021, November 29). Complaint filed by local Moms for Liberty chapter rejected by state. *Williamson Herald*. https://www.williamsonherald.com/features/education/complaint-filed-by-local-moms-for-liberty-chapter-rejected-by-state/article_81146dc4-518f-11ec-9d9a-237001a4ab9f.html

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This action illustrates how such a group viewed text that centered experiences of Black and Mexican Americans as a threat to the narratives of White identity. In 2022, Florida legislators included directives on employment practices as well as banning specific books. House Bill 7 prohibits employment practices that require trainings on diversity, and prohibits schools from requiring the teaching of an African American history course. These laws regulate whether individuals are allowed to develop cross-cultural competencies.

> An act relating to individual freedom; amending s. 760.10, F.S.; providing that subjecting any individual, as a condition of employment, membership, certification, licensing, credentialing, or passing an examination, to training, instruction, or any other required activity that espouses, promotes, advances, inculcates, or compels such individual to believe specified concepts constitutes discrimination based on race, color, sex, or national origin; providing construction; amending s. 1000.05, F.S.; providing that subjecting any student or employee to training or instruction that espouses, promotes, advances, inculcates, or compels such individual to believe specified concepts constitutes discrimination based on race, color, sex, or national origin; conforming provisions to changes made by the act; amending s. 1003.42, F.S.; revising requirements for required instruction on the history of African Americans; authorizing instructional personnel to facilitate discussions and use curricula to address, in an age-appropriate manner, specified topics.[9]

This bill comes on the heels of another bill that also limited any discussion of gender and sexuality diversity. House Bill 1557[10] stipulates that discussions of gender identity are not appropriate for children, specifically in Grades K–12, and parents have a right to determine when those discussions occur. The last element of parents' rights contains a provision in which parents can sue a school district if such discussions have occurred in school.

This fear of losing relevance and superiority has also been identified in the national moves to ban books. According to PEN America's 2022 report on banned books, a total of 1,145 unique books were banned across 86 school districts and 26 states, impacting nearly 2 million students

[9]Florida Legislature. (2022). *House Bill 7*. http://laws.flrules.org/2022/72
[10]Florida Legislature. (2022). *House Bill 1557*. https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2022/1557/BillText/er/PDF

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(Friedman & Johnson, 2022). Of particular interest are the policy drivers, similar to the ones outlined earlier; 41% of books banned are tied to policy directives from state legislation. Most importantly, the books banned are framed as representative of cross-cultural skills and knowledge that White communities, in particular, do not seek to include in their child's learning. For instance, among the 1,145 banned books, 41% have LGBTQIA+ themes or characters, 40% have themes and characters of color, and 21% have themes on race or racism. And in recent polls,[11] Americans demonstrate feeling split on whether removing books is a good thing, specifically Americans who identify as Republicans. Despite this reticence, the fear of the "other" in particular having presence in the intimate reading children do for building their cognitive and emotional development must be halted.

The combination of these particular layers of Whiteness tools—monopoly and fear—allows for a subconscious construction of a presumed social threat. Johnson and Shapiro (2003) make this point in their study of how White families describe their choices for schools and neighborhoods as bound to this notion of social threat. In other words, if I associate specific groups as being of less cultural value, I may translate their presence as a form of social threat—a perception of being exposed to criminality, of property values being decreased, of violence occurring in school environments, and of reduced academic acceleration or success in schools. As a result of this sense of "justified" social threat, Whiteness allows for rationalizing choices like where one lives and where one goes to school. We must understand that this further limits the desire to integrate—if Whiteness situates a greater value in monopolizing resources and maintains a fear of losing control because of a presumed social threat of the "other," the behavioral action is to continue the desire for a segregated environment absent of the perceived threat. This desire to sustain subconscious segregation can be inferred as the driver of our continued segregation 70 years later.

Now that we have had an opportunity to understand Whiteness as a social structure or contract, we need to unpack the specific bias-based beliefs used to sustain it, including colorblindness, deficit thinking, and poverty disciplining. The process of unpacking these beliefs, the focus of Chapters 3 and 4, provides an opportunity for individual educators to challenge the contents of their shopping carts. And Chapter 5 will provide a way in which to interrupt and replace these beliefs in our new shopping carts.

[11]Turner, C. (2023, June 2). Poll: Americans say teachers are underpaid, about half of Republicans oppose book bans. NPR *Morning Edition*. https://www.npr.org/2023/06/02/1177566467/poll-teachers-underpaid-republicans-book-bans

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Chapter Reflection Questions

These reflection questions are intended to encourage unpacking and replacing of our shopping carts.

1. What are examples of resources being hoarded in your community?
2. What is the history of housing in your community? Is it racially/ethnically segregated? If so, how did this happen?
3. Who is in your social circle? What is the story of how you became friends?
4. What groups are discussed in your household or friend groups that need to be feared? How do you handle such discussions?

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