

The Impact of Antiracism Education on Fifth-Grade Students' Perception of Classroom Culture

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Abstract

The purpose of this quasi-experimental pre/post-test study was to investigate the impact of antiracism education on fifth-grade students' perceptions of classroom culture. The 11 participants in this study took a five-question survey of their classroom culture perceptions including: feeling of belonging, teacher support, and equity in the classroom. This study was implemented over three weeks, with the intervention of an antiracist/social justice curriculum. After the intervention, the participants took the same survey, and the results of the pre and post test were compared. Overall, the data indicated that the antiracism education did not have a statistically significant impact on students' perceptions of classroom culture. However, continued research of this topic would be beneficial in creating a more equitable classroom for students, so as to increase student achievement in school and in the future.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Overview

Since 2015, the United States has undergone social unrest regarding the treatment of people of color, specifically African Americans. In the summer of 2020, there was a surge of Black Lives Matter marches and rallies. This movement sparked conversations among educators around the inequities students of color face within the classroom, and how to change those injustices. Educators know that learning is more than just the curriculum taught to students—learning includes the social and cultural interactions between peers and teachers, as well. In order for learning to occur, students’ needs must be met. This means they must feel safe and valued in their classroom communities. To do this, educators must celebrate the different cultures within their class. Once students feel valued, they do more than just survive they thrive.

The Black Lives Matter movement in 2020 also led to the Anne Arundel County Public School (AACPS) Board of Education creating a resolution supporting social justice and stating that Black lives matter. With this resolution came equity professional development for teachers, social justice community building questions, and four days a year where students focus on equity in AACPS schools.

Beginning in 2018, this researcher’s school implemented climate surveys twice a year to gauge students’ perceptions of classroom culture and belonging. When analyzing the data in the fall of 2020, this researcher noted a discrepancy between white students’ perceptions of belonging when compared to their nonwhite peers—nonwhite students’ selected answers to reflect that they did not feel like a valued member of the school community more often than white students.

With this data in mind, as well as the school board's support of social justice, this researcher began examining ways to bridge the divide between cultures. Antiracism education became the clear answer. While some adults worry that teaching students about race will cause an increase in prejudices, studies show that, unless a child is taught about race explicitly, they will draw their own conclusions. This could lead to prejudicial thinking and stereotyping. Research shows, antiracism education reduces prejudice in children, helps students feel more valued, and has the capacity to positively impact the school community.

Statement of Problem

The purpose of this study is to determine the impact of antiracism education on fifth-grade students' perception of classroom culture.

Hypothesis

Fifth grade students' perceptions of their classroom culture will not be impacted by antiracism education.

Operational Definitions

Antiracism education creates a "race-conscious right relation restorative justice framework" within the classroom (Sinha & Rasheed, 2018, p. 213). This means students learn about and understand injustices, identify injustices in their lives, and take action to make those injustices more equitable. When an antiracism curriculum is implemented, an *antiracism culture* can occur, where students feel accepted and empowered because of their culture. The antiracism curriculum was implemented between February 22 and March 12, 2021.

Classroom culture is the social/emotional environment in which students learn, including students' feelings of belonging, teacher support, and treatment of races in school. A teacher can help shape students' perception of their learning environment through social interactions, as well

as the curriculum. When a student feels they are supported, treated equitably, and valued by their teacher and peers, they perceive a *positive classroom culture*. The students' perceptions about the racial climate were measured with a survey.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The review of the literature examines the impact of implementing antiracism curriculum in the classroom. Section one outlines the definition of antiracism education. The second section discusses what antiracism education looks like in the classroom and delves deeper into effective strategies and actionable steps one can use to teach antiracism. Lastly, in section three, explores the importance of antiracism education.

What is Antiracism Education?

Defining Antiracism Education

A growing number of educators believe, especially for students of color, that antiracism education is the answer for helping students feel more valued in their classrooms. This form of education is sometimes referred to as social justice education. For years, schools and society have embraced the “colorblind” approach, where children are taught to not acknowledge race or different colors of skin. Children are naturally curious and will notice differences in skin color—discussing skin tone is the first step in children understanding it. Once educators started to move away from the “colorblind” approach, they moved onto multicultural education. It is important to make the distinction between antiracism education and multicultural education. Multicultural education “downplays inequities of difference by accentuating shared commonalities,” (Alemanji, 2018, p. 186). Predominantly, multicultural education simply incorporates different cultural backgrounds into lessons within the classroom. On the other hand, antiracism education creates a “race-conscious right relation restorative justice framework” within the classroom (Sinha & Rasheed, 2018, p. 213). This means that students are not just taught about different

cultures, but they delve into discrimination and the differences of power between cultures and races and attempt to fix those imbalances. Multiculturalism is just not enough to address the inequities of power that students feel inside and outside of the classroom. Antiracism education allows for a more honest and real understanding of one another to help students be more successful within the classroom and in life. It “strive[s] towards the goal of social equality” (Lerner, 2018, p. 43).

Antiracism Education Values

When discussing antiracism/social justice education, experts have noted core values. While the names of these values may be different from expert to expert, they have the same spirit. Social justice is the ideal that all people should be treated equitably, meaning people are treated fairly and their needs are met. Hence, social justice teaching investigates the impact of race, class, etc., and “emphasize[s] moral values, justice, equity, care, and respect,” according to Winterbottom & Winterbottom (2017, p. 756). The following researchers of social justice education outline sets of values to describe the essence of antiracism teaching.

Welton (2015) named “content mastery, tools for critical analysis, tools for social change, tools for personal reflection, and an awareness of multicultural group dynamics” as the five essential components of social justice education (p. 551). Mastering antiracist curriculum is the first element, as it gives students the language to address inequities they see. Tools for analyzing, enacting change, and reflecting are instilled in students, as is validating the experiences and viewpoints of different cultural groups.

Another expert, Connie North, identified that “recognition/redistribution, micro/macro, and knowledge/action” are the four basis of social justice education (Woodrow, 2018, p. 47). This means cultural groups are respected (recognition), wealth and power are shared more

equitably (redistribution), ideas are aimed at both the individual (micro) and the institution/system (macro), and objectives should incorporate education (knowledge) as well as how to address social injustice (action).

While not stating specific values, Styslinger (2019) asserts that a major structure of antiracism teaching is fostering students' critical thinking skills, "sense of agency[,] and capacity to interrupt and change oppressive patterns in themselves and in the world which surrounds them" (p. 9). Developing critical thinking skills in students is essential to their ability to notice injustices around them. Students can then use those skills to enact change.

Finally, Hagerman & Porath (2018) echo Styslinger's sentiment when they state that antiracism/social justice education "encourages students to recognize and discuss injustices within their communities and in the larger world, and to inspire and empower students with the belief that they can be creators of change" (pp. 26-27).

When all of the pieces are put together, antiracism/social justice education values students learning about and understanding injustices, identifying those injustices within their community and the world, and taking action to change those injustices for a more equitable world.

What does Antiracism Education Look Like in the Classroom?

Research Studies of Schools Teaching Antiracism

The implementation of antiracism, or social justice education, is becoming a more common trend both domestically and internationally. The following examples demonstrate how schools are incorporating antiracism education into their curriculum and school culture.

The Academy Bilingüe is a low-income, K-5 school in a Rocky Mountain city. It is a small, Catholic, urban, and bilingual establishment. They implement social justice/antiracism

education through their environment, behavior management, and curriculum. First, large murals inside and outside of the school, depicting the Academy students, teachers, and community members with intellectual and social justice leaders, convey justice and opportunity. Within the classrooms, there are plants, classroom pets, and class jobs to encourage student responsibility, bulletin boards fostering social justice themes and student work, and space for students to work as a whole group, space for students to work in small groups, and space for conflict mediation and resolution. Restorative justice is instituted school-wide to resolve conflicts by correcting the harm done to the individual or community. The curriculum is developed locally, organized around one essential question with big ideas based on the subject. It incorporates social justice themes, connecting the larger world issues to students' individual experiences. Finally, community meeting to build relationships and unity, as well as service learning, to further the social justice education within the community are also utilized. Largely, researchers found "an overarching theme of 'connection' emerged from the data and undergirds the social justice work being done there" (Woodrow, 2018, p. 51).

Two primary schools in Manchester, England were also studied for their use of antiracism pedagogy. The first school is a Church of England School where most students speak English as a second language and have a range of ethnic backgrounds. The second school is a Methodist Community School where white British heritage is the majority, with few students speaking English as a second language. The researcher noted that, "in order for any primary social justice prevention to work effectively, it is important that students feel comfortable and accepted in their home and school communities" (Winterbottom & Winterbottom, 2017, p. 766). The headmasters of these schools endeavor to collaborate with teachers and families, as well as engage students in democracy through choice, to create a learning and school community that

works for all students. In addition, teachers are more focused on the engagement of students and their families, as well as the process of learning, than test scores. Through these efforts, both schools exhibit themes of building and creating school community, building relationships, and empowerment through education.

Lastly, House E of Rolling Hills Middle School uses a personalized learning model with eighth graders, which has authentically led to “teaching about, with and for social justice” within the classroom (Hagerman & Porath, 2018, p. 28). Social justice is taught *about* using the curriculum, which includes project-based applied learning with real-world applications, current events, critical thinking, and discussion requiring the consideration of multiple perspectives. Teaching *with* social justice was embedded in the guiding design principles where students have ownership over their own learning and teachers facilitate and support student work. Also, classroom environments are not just spaces for learning, but risk-taking. Both teaching *about* and *with* social justice enable teaching *for* social justice—students use their content knowledge and co-created classrooms to make change within their worlds. Applying the personalized learning model, allows for social justice as a way of being within House E.

Overall, these schools give a better understanding of what antiracism/social justice education looks like in the school building and a largescale idea of how antiracism education can be implemented.

Tools/Actionable Steps Educators Can Take to Implement Antiracism in the Classroom

While understanding what antiracism education looks like within school buildings gives a macro-level perception, individual teachers can begin this learning to the micro-level of their own classrooms by implementing some actionable steps.

The first step to implementing antiracism education in the classroom is for teachers to examine their own biases, specifically implicit/unconscious biases. Next, teachers must understand racism and its historical and structural foundations. The more a teacher is prepared and empowered, the better equipped they will be to help students' understanding of racism and antiracism.

Next, teachers should have positive, honest, open, and age-appropriate conversations with their students around identity, culture, race, and history. "Research shows that talking about identity with young children is fundamental to reducing prejudiced thinking and to promoting equity, tolerance, and justice" (Flanagan & Hindley, 2018, p. 64). Encourage students to use "I" statements and avoid generalizations for more genuine dialogue. During conversations, students should share the airtime, contributing to the conversation but allowing time for others to do so as well. Students should also be reminded that this is a safe space where no one will be judged, but also a brave space where students should speak up and out. These conversations are steppingstones to a safe, anti-bias environment for students.

Using a text is an effective way of beginning a conversation. The teacher should select these resources purposefully; pairing literary works with informational texts can more authentically address social issues. Texts should be read analytically and used to foster critical reflection. Teachers can ask direct questions around social, cultural, and political structures discussed in the text, as well as questions around active and missing perspectives and author's bias. Encouraging students to take the information and strategies they have learned and apply them to the world around them will help support inquiry and activism—two important facets of antiracism.

Presenting social justice scenarios for students to problem solve is another way to get conversation flowing. These scenarios should include issues of equity and a need for activism. Encourage students to “engage in problem-seeking and -solving skills” (Bruce-Davis, 2017, p. 256). Through the use of scenarios students develop empathy for those around them, as well as a sense of autonomy in how they learn and express their learning. This will also help students apply what they have learned to future problems they notice.

Teachers should also encourage friendships and groupings of students with different backgrounds to help students learn and practice empathy. When working in groups, especially with different experiences, group norms or guidelines should be created and utilized to facilitate conversation and equal power among the group members.

Within the classroom, the teacher should model humility and vulnerability, especially during social justice conversations. Finally, teachers must remember: “None of this is easy. Teaching for social justice is indeed complex, constant, messy, frustrating, and long,” but it is critical work (Styslinger, 2019, p. 13).

Why is Antiracism Education Important?

As educators, we are constantly striving to find better way to “reach” our students. Particularly with the social unrest that has struck the United States since 2015, educators have become aware of racial tensions and their impact in the classroom. Moreover, some educators realize that curriculum, policies, and practices in schools may perpetrate racism, and strive to change the curriculum to be inclusive of all students. Antiracism education takes this one step further, attempting to bridge the divide between cultures within the classroom and the community.

Many parents wonder if teaching students about race and enhancing cultural awareness will cause students to have prejudices or worse, cause strain between races in the classroom. This is simply not true. Flanagan and Hindley (2018) note, “[by six months, babies recognize racial differences, and by eight years, prejudicial thinking and stereotyping is established” (p. 64). Age-appropriate conversations regarding race and perceptions must begin early in a child’s life. If race is not spoken about, children will come to their own conclusions. For example, if a parent minimizes a child every time they bring up different skin tones, children may start to believe that something is wrong with the people that have those skin tones. Teachers want to educate students before biases take hold. Antiracism education discusses the differences between cultures and skin-tone at length to normalize noticing differences, as well as takes care to treat all cultures with equity.

With that said, educators know that learning is facilitated socially and culturally. When teachers utilize an antiracism education with a focus on celebrating different cultures within their classrooms, they, “[empower] students intellectually, socially, emotionally;” it improves their cultural awareness, which, in turn, reduces prejudice (Durdin, 2015, pp. 223, 230). This sentiment is reiterated by Hochman (2020) when they state that social justice teaching creates “changes in participants’ warmth, color-blind racial ideology, ethnocultural empathy, and White privilege attitudes” (p. 13). In short, when students learn antiracist ideals, they are less likely to have biases against others with different skin tones. To take it a step further, Welton asserts that “students who participate in social justice education have a greater awareness of inequities that impact their school, community, and society, and learn tools for taking action to address these inequities” (Welton, 2015, p. 549). Not only are their biases gone, but students actively look for and attempt to address inequities and injustices.

While teaching students to become social justice warriors, antiracism education also develops more intrinsic skills. For instance, learning about other cultures and antiracism education “can work to remove barriers that interfere with genuine dialogue and understanding” (Lerner, 2018, p. 45). When prejudices are removed, individuals are more open to having real conversations, as well as understanding and empathizing with people of different cultures. Being open to and having these conversations is a vital skill not just for school, but, for life.

Adding on, schools typically use college and career readiness standards when planning curriculum to ensure students will be successful when they leave school. Antiracism education also cultivates students who are college and career ready. When combined with creative problem seeking and -solving, antiracism education can “lead to the emergence of leadership skills, creative abilities, [...] foster both learning motivation and the development of leadership and problem-solving competencies” (Bruce-Davis, 2017, p. 258). Welton (2015) echoes this idea when they state that social justice education “not only reinforces academic achievement in the core curricular areas, but also teaches students problem-posing” (p. 550). A student with these skills and abilities would be an asset to any college or occupation.

Finally, schools are an echo chamber of their communities. When antiracism education curriculum is taught to students, it does not just stay in the school—it permeates into the community. This raises awareness to social justice issues within the community, which one would hope would lead to a push for equity.

In summary, antiracist education reduces prejudice in children, develops life-long essential skills in students, and has the capacity to positively impact the school community.

Conclusion

At the beginning of education in America, the focus was on the students at the time: white males. As our schools have become more diverse, educators have moved from “colorblindness” to including more multiculturalism into their lessons, but this is no longer enough. With the continued increase of diversity, teachers want their classrooms to be a safe and inviting space with equity, meaning each students’ needs are met. For this to occur, antiracism/social justice education must be put into place. It helps to eradicate biases and prejudices, so all students are seen for who they are and their identities, not the social constructs the world has put upon them. This education teaches children to identify and fix social inequities they encounter, as well as make the community better and more comfortable for People of Color. Students also learn life skills that will ensure they are prepared for the rest of their schooling and beyond.

Antiracism education is not a quick fix. It involves reflecting on oneself, purposeful planning, uncomfortable conversations, and calling out injustices, but the positive impact it can have on schools, communities, and the world is worth the time and effort, as evidenced by the schools that are already implementing antiracism curriculum. This work is essential, especially during the current climate of our nation.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Design

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of antiracism education on fifth-grade students' perception of classroom culture. It was a quasi-experimental pre/post-test design. The participants were not random, as they were chosen based on their class assignment and scheduling availability. The independent variable was the implementation of an antiracism curriculum, while the dependent variable was students' perception of classroom culture.

Students were given a climate survey in November 2020, as part of a school-wide initiative, and this survey was used as a pretest for baseline data. During the second semester, students received three weeks of antiracism education. In March 2021, students were given the same climate survey as a posttest.

Participants

The participants in this study were students in a fifth-grade classroom at a public elementary school in Anne Arundel County with a total enrollment of 779 students. About 46% of students identify as White, 28% of students are Black, 12% of students are Asian, 7% of students are Hispanic, and 6% of students identify as two or more races. Approximately 18% of students attending this elementary school qualify for free and reduced meals (FARMS). Finally, almost 10% of students are English Language Learners (ELL).

There were 11 participants in this study whose ages ranged from ten- to twelve-years old. Of these students, about 36% are identified as White, 36% are Hispanic, 18% are Black, and 9% is of another racial/ethnic group. About 27% of the 11 students are ELL, and 27% qualified for

FARMS. 55% of the participants are female, and 45% are male. Finally, 0% of the students have IEPs or 504 Plans.

Instrument

The instrument utilized in the study was a climate survey. This survey was first developed at the beginning of the 2018 school year by the school's leadership team. It was given at the beginning of the second and fourth marking periods in the 2018 school year, as well as twice during the 2019 school year. At the beginning of the school year in 2020, the leadership team met again and made adjustments to the survey to address virtual learning due to COVID-19. The survey consists of structured, Likert Scaled items. Students self-assess their feelings of belonging, teacher support, treatment of races at the school, etc. The participant's answer choices are limited to "Strongly agree," "Agree," "Disagree," and "Strongly Disagree". Participants completed this survey online using the Performance Matters platform.

Screenshots of this instrument are attached as Appendix A at the end of this research paper.

Procedure

Before any antiracism education was implemented, all students completed the pretest climate survey in November. During the second semester, the students interacted in a teacher-created, antiracism activity three to four times a week during the 15-minute "Community Building" morning block. Each antiracism activity was guided by a Social Justice Standard from "Teaching Tolerance".

This study was implemented for three weeks. Each week was focused on one of the four domains of the Social Justice Standards—identity, diversity, justice, and action. Due to time constraints, and past AACPS lessons, identity and diversity were combined in the first week.

On the first day of the study, the teacher explained to students that for the next few weeks, instead of their typical morning meeting, they would be interacting in anti-bias lessons. Each day, students participated in an activity with a Social Justice Standard as the outcome. On the first day of week one, students defined “identity” and identified the groups they belong to. Then, students defined “diversity” and identified accurate and respectful words to describe identities on the second day. On the last day of the first week, students developed and asked respectful questions about other people, and identified attributes and practiced listening carefully and non-judgmentally.

The second week focused on justice. On the first day of week two, students defined “justice,” then discovered how national laws are made and how that connects to the concept of government protection. For the second day, students defined “privilege” and participated in an activity identifying their privileges. On the last two days of the week, students learned about the actions of people and groups that brought justice.

For the last week of the study, students explored the concept of action. On the first day of this week, students defined “action” and learned about ways people are using the Internet for activism. Building on that lesson, students explored a change they would like to see in their community and developed a plan on day two. On the third day of the week, students’ role-played their response to unjust situations. On the last day of this week, students took the same climate survey as they did in November for posttest data.

The schedule of antiracism lessons is attached as Appendix B at the conclusion of this paper.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This study investigated the impact of antiracism education on students' perspectives of classroom culture. The goal of this study was to compare fifth grade students' feeling of belonging, teacher support, and equity in the classroom before and after the implementation of a series of social justice lessons. Students' perceptions were measured using a self-assessment—a pre and post survey consisting of structured, Likert Scaled items.

A paired samples *t* test was used to determine if the pre and post test data differed from each other statistically. In order for the data to be statistically significant, the *p*-value for each pair [referred to as *Sig. (2-tailed)* in table two] must be less than 0.05. Analysis revealed no significant differences in student perceptions from pre to post survey.

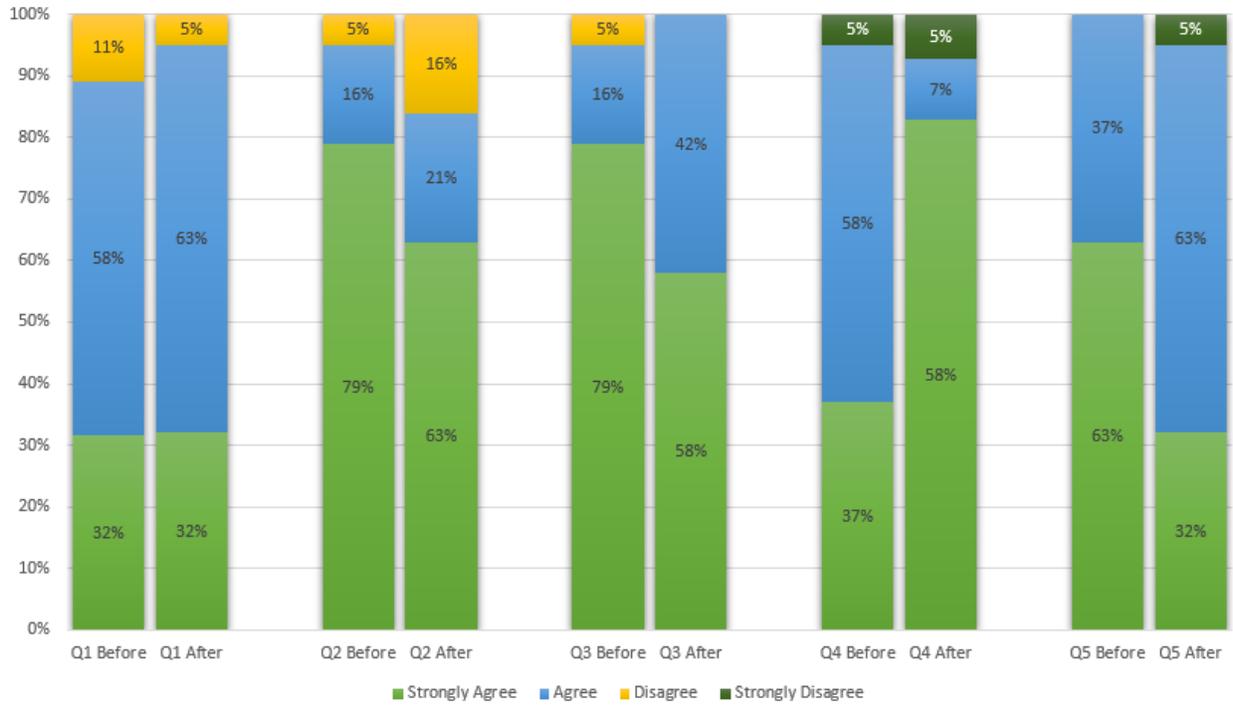
On question one, which asked students about whether they feel like a member of the school, the mean score was 3.21 on the pre and slightly but insignificantly increased to 3.26 on the post-test, $t(18)=-.29$, $p=.77$. The second question, asking students if they feel that all races are treated the same at the school, had a mean score of 3.74 on the pre survey and decreased insignificantly on the post survey to 3.47, $t(18)=1.42$, $p=0.17$. On question three, students were asked if they liked attending their school. The mean on the pre survey was 3.74 and it insignificantly decreased to 3.58 on the post survey, $t(18)=1.14$, $p=0.27$. Question four, asking students if they felt like the adults at their school cared about them, had a mean score of 3.26 on the pre survey, which significantly increased to 3.47 on the post survey, $t(18)=-1.71$, $p=0.10$. Finally, for question five, which asked students if they felt comfortable and supported engaging in learning, the pre survey had a mean score of 3.63, while the post survey decreased insignificantly to 3.21, $t(18)=2.04$, $p=0.06$. With a *p*-value of 0.06, question five was the closest

to being statistically significant. Altogether, for questions one and four, the mean value of students' perceptions of classroom culture were higher in the post test, while the mean value for questions two, three, and five were higher in the pre test.

Figure 1 displays the frequency of each answer choice on the survey (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree) for each of the five questions asked. For question 1, "I feel like I am a member of the school family," 32% of students strongly agreed, 58% of students agreed, and 11% disagreed, on the pre survey. On the post survey for question one, 32% strongly agreed, 63% agreed, 5% disagreed, and 0% strongly disagreed. Question two stated, "All students of all races are treated the same at this school." On the pre survey, 79% of students strongly agreed, which decreased to 63% strongly agreed on the post survey. Question three, which stated, "I like attending my school," 95% of students agreed, which increased to 100% agreement on the post questionnaire on the pre survey for question four, "I feel the adults at my school care about me," 37% of students strongly agreed on the pre survey, which increased on the post survey to 58% strongly agreed. Finally, question five stated, "I feel comfortable and supported engaging in learning." On the pre survey, 100% of students agreed, which decreased to 95% agreed the post survey.

Figure 1

Pre-and Post-Survey Answer Choices



Race

Table 1 shows the mean value of each question, pre and post intervention, by race: Asian, Black, Hispanic, and White.

Table 1:

Pre-and Post-Test Mean Values by Race/Ethnicity

| | Question 1 | | Question 2 | | Question 3 | | Question 4 | | Question 5 | |
|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | Pre | Post |
| Asian | 3.4 | 3.2 | 4 | 4 | 3.8 | 3.8 | 3.2 | 3.8 | 3.8 | 3.6 |
| Black | 2.8 | 3 | 3.8 | 3 | 3.8 | 3.6 | 3.2 | 3.6 | 3.4 | 3 |
| Hispanic | 3.67 | 4 | 3.33 | 3.67 | 4 | 3.67 | 3.67 | 3.67 | 3.33 | 3.67 |
| White | 3.17 | 3.17 | 3.67 | 3.33 | 3.5 | 3.33 | 3.17 | 3 | 3.83 | 2.83 |
| TOTAL | 3.21 | 3.26 | 3.74 | 3.47 | 3.74 | 3.58 | 3.26 | 3.47 | 3.63 | 3.21 |

With regard to Asian students, for questions one and five, their perceptions of classroom culture were slightly lower post intervention, their perceptions stayed the same pre and post intervention for questions two and three, and their perceptions were higher post intervention for question four (I feel the adults at Nantucket Elementary care about me). Regarding Black students, for questions one and four, their perceptions of classroom culture were slightly higher post intervention, and their perceptions were lower post intervention for questions two, three, and five.

Concerning Hispanic students, for questions one, two, and five, their perceptions of classroom culture were slightly higher post intervention, and their perceptions stayed the same pre and post intervention for question four. Their perceptions were slightly lower post intervention for question three (I like attending my school). Finally, in regard to White students, for question one, their perceptions of classroom culture were the same pre and post intervention (I feel like I am a member of the school family). Meanwhile, the White students' perceptions were slightly lower post intervention for questions two, three, four, and five. Overall, the mean of students' perceptions was inconsistent across race, except for question three. On question three, the mean was either lower or the same post survey than it was pre survey for all four races.

Gender

Table 2 shows the mean value of each question, pre-and post-intervention, by gender: female and male.

Table 2:

Pre-and Post-Test Mean Values by Gender

| | Question 1 | | Question 2 | | Question 3 | | Question 4 | | Question 5 | |
|--------|------------|------|------------|------|------------|------|------------|------|------------|------|
| | Pre | Post |
| Female | 3.22 | 3.22 | 3.89 | 3.33 | 4 | 3.56 | 3.56 | 3.67 | 3.78 | 3.11 |
| Male | 3.2 | 3.3 | 3.6 | 3.6 | 3.5 | 3.6 | 3 | 3.3 | 3.5 | 3.3 |

Regarding female students, for question one, their perceptions of classroom culture were the same pre and post intervention (I feel like I am a member of the school family). Female students' perceptions were slightly lower post intervention for questions two, three, and five, while their perceptions were slightly higher post interventions for question four (I feel the adults at Nantucket Elementary care about me). Concerning male students, for questions one, three, and four, their perceptions of classroom culture were slightly higher post intervention. Male students' perceptions were the same pre and post intervention for question two, and their perceptions were slightly lower post intervention for question five (I feel comfortable and supported engaging in learning). Overall, the mean of students' perceptions was inconsistent across gender, except for question five. On question five, the mean was lower post survey than it was pre survey for both genders.

Conclusion

Overall, the data indicate that the antiracism education did not have a statistically significant impact on students' perceptions of classroom culture: feeling of belonging, teacher support, and equity in the classroom.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The original hypothesis stated, “Fifth grade students’ perceptions of their classroom culture will not be impacted by antiracism education.” Through the data collected by conducting this study, this hypothesis was supported.

Implications of Results

The data imply that teaching a social justice lesson three to four times per week does not impact fifth-grade students’ feeling of belonging, teacher support, and equity in the classroom between the pre-test and the post-survey. The results of this study show an increase in mean scores between the pre-and post-test on question one (the student feels like a member of the school) and question four (the student feels like the adults at the school cared about them). While there was an increase in the mean scores for those two questions, the increase was not statistically significant. On question two (the student feels that all races are treated the same at the school), question three (the student likes attending the school), and question five (the student feels comfortable and supported engaging in learning), the results show a decrease in mean scores between the pre-and post-survey. Though there was a decrease in the mean scores for those three questions, the decrease was not statistically significant. Therefore, the data do not provide evidence to support that teaching social justice lessons has a positive or negative effect of fifth grade students’ perceptions of classroom culture.

Race/Ethnicity

The data, categorized by students’ race/ethnicity, also imply that teaching antiracism lessons did not affect students’ feelings about classroom culture. Asian students’ perceptions of classroom culture, in essence, stayed the same on the pre-and post-survey. African

American/Black students' perceptions, as well as White students' perceptions, were overall more negative regarding classroom culture from the pre-to post-survey. Hispanic/Latina/o students had a more positive perception of classroom culture between the pre-and post-survey. While these trends were noticed, the variations were not statistically significant, meaning, the antiracism education did not significantly impact specific racial/ethnic groups' perceptions of classroom culture.

Gender

The results of this study were also dichotomized by students' gender. Female students' perceptions were overall more negative regarding classroom culture from the pre-to post-survey, while male students' perceptions of classroom culture, in effect, stayed the same on the pre-and post-survey. Overall, the trends were not statistically significant, which implies that the social justice lessons did not affect specific gender groups' feelings regarding classroom culture.

Theoretical Consequences

While this study's results showed that the social justice lessons implemented had no effect on students' perceptions of classroom culture, it is important to note that this study was carried out over a three-week period. According to Styslinger (2019), antiracism education is "complex, constant, messy, frustrating, and long" (p. 13). Thus, this study's timeframe may not have been long enough to demonstrate theoretical consequences.

Threats to the Validity

When considering the results of this study, several threats to validity should be taken into account. Most notably, this study was implemented during an unprecedented year. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, schools in the county received virtual instruction for the first six months of school. Not interacting with peers and teachers in-person could have a marked impact

on students' perceptions of classroom culture. Furthermore, as this study was in progress, the schools transitioned to hybrid learning where some students in the class were taught in person two days a week while the rest remained virtual, and every student was virtual three days a week. The transition to hybrid learning also compelled schedule changes and class roster changes—this researcher's class list changed five times within the three weeks this study was in effect. The lack of consistency in environment and classmates, as well as confusion about times of classes, could also have an effect on students' feeling of belonging, teacher support, and equity.

Finally, the study was completed using non-random sampling, specifically convenience sampling. This was due to class assignment and availability, which also resulted in a smaller sample size of 11 participants. The participants of this study were chosen because they were the only 11 students that remained constant on the researcher's roster from November 2020, when the pre-test was given, until March 2021, when the post-test was given.

Connections to Previous Studies

Multiple studies have been conducted to examine the impact of antiracism/social justice education on students, as discussed in Chapter II. First, Woodrow (2018) studied The Academy Bilingüe's implementation of social justice/antiracism education. The researchers found a theme of connectedness and positive culture throughout the school, through their use of their environment, behavior management, and curriculum to teach social justice. While this researcher's study did also use curriculum to teach social justice, the study was limited to implementation in a classroom setting, as opposed to the whole school. In addition, this researcher did not study the incorporation of antiracism ideals in the environment and behavior management system.

Additionally, Winterbottom and Winterbottom (2017) studied the application of antiracism pedagogy in two primary schools in England, which resulted in community and empowerment. The headmasters of the schools collaborated with teachers and families, while this researcher's study was limited to one classroom within a school. A similarity between this researcher's study and Winterbottom and Winterbottom's study is that both focused on the importance of students feeling comfortable and accepted in their school environment.

Finally, Hagerman and Porath (2018) studied the social justice learning model that became a way of being in House E of Rolling Hills Middle School. The middle school taught students *about*, *with*, and *for* social justice. Both the middle school's curriculum and the curriculum in this researcher's study taught *about* social justice using real-world examples, current events, and discussions considering multiple perspectives, as well as *for* social justice by encouraging students to make change within their world. However, this researcher's study did not include the implementation of social justice *within* the curriculum.

Implications for Future Research

Future research is necessary to investigate the impact of antiracism/social justice education on students' perceptions of classroom culture. This could include broadening the sample size to all fifth-grade classrooms, all intermediate grades (grades 3-5), or all grades in the elementary school. The larger sample size could be more representative and provide more generalized results of the impact of antiracism education. Further, it is recommended that future research be conducted when schools resume full in-person learning and a more stable environment can be provided for the study. The results of which could be beneficial in understanding the impacts of a social justice curriculum, as opposed to the unprecedented and unpredictable environment caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic. Finally, future research could

expand the length of the study. A full year of antiracism education, as opposed to three weeks, could be more effective in seeing the impact on students' perspectives of classroom culture since, as stated previously, incorporating social justice into the culture of a classroom is a long process.

Conclusions/Summary

This study explored the impact of antiracism/social justice education on fifth grade students' perspectives of classroom culture. The results of this study indicate no statistically significant difference in students' feelings of belonging, teacher support, and equity in the classroom between the pre-and post-survey. It would be valuable to continue researching the impact of implementing antiracism curriculum as this topic is a constant in the modern discourse of education and could be a means to achieve equity and thus, greater achievement for students in the classroom and in life.

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Appendix A

DIRECTIONS:

3282 PBIS and Climate Survey 20-21 ×

[Special Instructions](#)

Special Instructions

Think about your experiences at Nantucket Elementary so far this year in general. Answer each question honestly. If you have a question, or don't understand, ask your teacher for help!

[Back](#)

[Start Test](#)

6. I feel like I am a member of the Nantucket Elementary School family. *

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

7. All students of all races are treated the same at this school. *

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

8. I like attending Nantucket Elementary School. * ☰

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

9. I feel the adults at Nantucket Elementary care about me. *

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

10. I feel comfortable and supported engaging in learning. *

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Appendix B

Week 1- Identity/Diversity

| <u>Monday</u> | <u>Tuesday</u> | <u>Thursday</u> | <u>Friday</u> |
|---------------|---|--|---|
| N/A | -Define identity -Identify groups we belong to | -Define Diversity - Identify accurate & respectful words to describe identities | -Identify respectful questions to ask about other people -Identify attributes of listening carefully & non-judgmentally. |

Week 2- Justice

| <u>Monday</u> | <u>Tuesday</u> | <u>Thursday</u> | <u>Friday</u> |
|--|--|--|--|
| -Define Justice - Laws/Crimes | -Define privilege -Privilege activity | -Actions of people and groups to bring justice | -Actions of people and groups to bring justice |

Week 3- Action

| <u>Monday</u> | <u>Tuesday</u> | <u>Thursday</u> | <u>Friday</u> |
|---|--|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| -Define Action - Internet activism | - Change in your community | - Role Playing | -Take climate survey |