“WE HAVE THE POWER”: YOUTH, RACIAL EQUITY, AND POLICY IN A PREDOMINANTLY WHITE HIGH SCHOOL

by

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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The confluence of racial equity work – where district policy, students, staff, and administrators converge – creates significant tensions when enacting an educational racial equity policy that is intended to produce meaningful and transformative racial equity for all students. It is not only critical to analyze how educational policies conceptualize race and equity in relation to students' experiences in schools, but also how students are positioned as recipients, stakeholders, and/or partners within such policies. This study examines the effects of power "at its extremities" when policy, race, and equity are localized in relation to beliefs, actions, and behaviors between students and adults enacting racial equity work. Using student focus groups with students of color and white students, participant observations from positions as a teacher/researcher, the research considers Foucault's (1980; 1994) work on power to examine how students identify, engage, and address racial equity issues in their school.

Educational equity policies discursively constitute racial inequities by defining "racial equity" from positions outside of schools, away from the very places where policies are enacted. The study explores how students of color and white students

navigate tensions between themselves, administrators, and staff members as they organized a student-led racial equity club then leadership class to address racial inequities in a predominantly white high school. Despite the implementation of a six-year District racial equity policy, students' "lived experiences" questioned enactments of the policy by administrators and staff members (see Dumas, 2014).

The study argues meanings about race and equity are caught within "divergent discourses" (see Ball, 2013); that is, who is allowed to participate in conversations about race and equity, and who decides what racial equity issues take precedence in a predominantly white high school. Students are positioned in schools in unstable and contested ways to administrators and staff members, even if invited to participate in racial equity work as "student voice." The concept of "student voice" in school-based decisions or policy work has inherent tensions between adults and students, however this should not dissuade policy processes that include students. Student involvement is strongly, but cautiously encouraged.

Keywords: education policy, racial equity, youth, student voice, power relations

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INTRODUCTION

In *The New Jim Crow,* Michelle Alexander (2010/ 2012) writes "[a]ny candid observer of American racial history must acknowledge that *racism is highly adaptable* [emphasis added] (p. 21). Although it is widely recognized that race is a historically social and political construct, the effects of racism on racialized bodies, particularly in schools, are quite tangible (Grande, 2004; McCarthy & Crichlow, 1993; West, 1993/ 2001). Education scholars recognize there are significant challenges to defining and supporting racial equity within the context of national, state and local school-based reform policies. Educational equity policies attempt to address issues informed by data-driven or evidence-based results that often focus on achievement gaps, standardized tests, enrollment and retention, and/or graduation rates (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Gutierrez & Dixon-Román, 2011; Jordan, 2010; Lipman & Gutstein, 2001; Price-Curtis, 1981). Students, as well as teachers and administrators, become representations of this data: that is, they are constituted by variables such as race and ethnicity, socioeconomic status, home or native language(s), immigrant status, and/or gender, and written into policies designed to support specific student groups who demonstrate limited and/or struggling academic progress. In particular, these designations assertively influence discourses around equity and codify students of color as "objects" of school or district policies and inscribe "common sense" actions that attempt to identify and address educational inequities in schools (Dumas, Dixson, & Mayorga, 2016).

As a high school teacher for over 19 years in the Pacific Northwest, I admit it is somewhat unexpected for me to research about policy work instead of teaching and

learning or curriculum. Policy work is often done at a distance from the work I do as a teacher, and from this position, I often assume it yields little difference to the day-to-day activities in my classroom. However, in 2011 I became interested in a district policy that explicitly called attention to the ways race affected equitable outcomes and experiences for students of color in our schools. I am a white teacher who works in a predominantly white and *urban* school; according to district enrollment data in 2011, 70% of the school's population identified as white. In education scholarship, urban is a term often associated with "city schools" and predominantly students of color, described through deficit terms such as "poor," "struggling," or "low achievement" (Ayers, Ladson-Billings, Michie & Noguera, 2008). However, this research was conducted in the Portland Public Schools District, located in a *metropolitan* city with 78% of the population self-identifying as white according to U.S. Census Bureau in 2010 (in 2018, the population showed no significant change or growth in another racial demographic group). Both *urban* and *metropolitan* are terms often not associated with predominantly white populations, but I draw attention to these descriptors and propose a correlative relationship between the city's racial demographics and the school district's decision to design a racial equity policy. More specifically, I want to consider how race and equity are addressed in what has been described as the whitest city in the United States, "the modern-day hub of progressivism" (Semuels, 2016).

When I first learned about the district's Racial Educational Equity Policy it seemed hopeful, like something new and different was going to happen with regard to racial inequities I had observed at my school. What made this policy seem different? First, it was unanimously passed by the school board. Second, it publicly acknowledged

alarming and glaring racial inequities between students of color and white students measured by "achievement and success" across the district. Most of all, the policy explicitly recognized and emphasized the district's complicitness in creating racial barriers for students: "The policy calls out race-based disparities in schools, identifies the district's role in erasing them and holds up high expectations to ensure that all students reach their academic potential" (Five-Year Racial Equity Plan, 2011/2014, p. 1). At a more localized level, it generated quite a lot of excitement at my school from the administration and many faculty members.

As a local government document, the policy functioned through three broad strands: it provided a definition of institutional racism for district employees; it applied data-driven methods to identify how institutional racism affects particular groups of students; and it outlined how teachers and administrators can provide academic and disciplinary support for all students to succeed. Since 2006, the district partnered with Glenn E. Singleton's company, Pacific Educational Group, for professional development and for coaching and consulting services, and spent over $2 million to implement the policy throughout the district (Douglass, 2015). To implement the policy, all district employees were required to participate in racial equity training, commonly called 'equity work,' using *Courageous Conversations about Race* by Singleton and Curtis Linton (2006).

"Equity work," the term often associated with implementation of the Racial Educational Equity Policy, occurred in many ways: explicitly talking about race and the effects of racial inequity with school colleagues; staff and administrators talking about race to share and learn about their racial experiences in relation to colleagues and

students; learning about the effects of structural racism and the impacts to academic and/social success for students of color in schools; examining curriculum and learning about culturally responsive teaching practices; and reviewing data about student achievement, attendance, and discipline to address issues of race and equity in individual schools. This approach promised to "create a systemwide plan for transforming the district office, schools, and classrooms into places that truly support ALL students achieving their highest levels!" (emphasis in original, Singleton & Linton, 2006; 2014). Equity work also required each school to create an 'equity team' comprised of administrators and staff members, either by direct invitation from an administrator or through solicitation of volunteers, to lead monthly trainings with school staff members using protocols and procedures from *Courageous Conversations*. The policy outlines six goals to teach and create racial equity in schools, however the last goal is the most central to this study and my interests in educational policy studies because it specifies involvement and input from students and families as "essential partners in their education, school planning and District decision-making," (Racial Educational Equity Policy, 2011, p. 3).

Background to the Problem

In 2016, five years after the Racial Educational Equity Policy was implemented and enacted through various district and school levels, student groups from three high schools independently organized to discuss and address racial inequities they experienced and/or observed at their schools. Unaware of the Racial Educational Equity Policy or the equity work that staff and administrators did in professional development meetings, students who became involved in this kind of equity work expressed their concerns from

a different set of variables than used by the district. Specifically, these concerns reflected their "lived experiences" – day-to-day school interactions with staff, administrators or other students (Dumas, 2014).

I became involved with one of these groups during the fall of 2016 when two students of color asked me to serve as the adviser for the Students for Racial Equity (S.R.E.) club. As teacher at Hamilton High School, who self-identifies as a white woman, I work with various student organizations as well as teach courses that involve academic and non-academic conversations about race and equity. For the past four years, I have been a member of the staff equity team which involved attending district equity training sessions and preparing equity professional development meetings for the entire staff at Hamilton with other volunteer staff members of the equity team. As the adviser of the S.R.E. club, my initial role was to attend and provide classroom access for club meetings, work with S.R.E. student-leaders on their agendas and goals and facilitate meetings between administrators and S.R.E. student-leaders.

One of S.R.E.'s first goals was to create an opportunity for students of color to take an active role in identifying and changing racial inequities they experienced and/or observed at the school. The formation of the S.R.E. club coincided when school administrators were charged by the district to include students in their equity work; this was the next phase for implementing the Racial Educational Equity Policy. At first, S.R.E. students were invited to attend equity work meetings with the staff equity team to develop strategies between students and staff for the adoption of the school's new climate plan. After attending two meetings with the staff equity team, S.R.E. students were not invited back, and the administration did not explain why. Although the S.R.E club, staff

equity team, and school administrators shared similar concerns regarding racial inequities at the school, there were many differences in the ways race and equity were discussed, as well as how to address and change these issues within the school. While not much collaboration and support followed from these meetings between students and the administration, S.R.E. club leaders convinced the social studies department to create an elective S.R.E. leadership class for the following year, (2017 - 2018), in order to make it part of the school's racial equity commitment to student-led equity work; and I became the teacher-of-record for this class.

To enroll in the class, students in the S.R.E. club created a short, two-question application for any student interested in the class; students were not permitted to select the class without an interview. Club members also recruited students of color who were not familiar with S.R.E. to consider joining the class. Members of the club, a counselor, who self-identifies as white and Japanese, and I interviewed students interested in the class, intentionally including more students of color than white students. Since one of the goals of S.R.E. was to create space for students of color to have an active role to address and change racial inequities at the school, this recruitment was a priority for club members.

During its first year as a class, S.R.E. students shared, discussed, and reflected on the ways that race and equity have affected effects for students of color in a predominantly white school. White students listened and learned in this process. During these conversations about race and equity, an issue came up after a student of color voiced her concerns about the regularity with which she was stopped, followed and questioned in the hallway during class time by either a security guard or an administrator.

As students discussed this concern, they soon realized that all self-identified black and brown students in the class had experienced similar situations, while self-identified white students and students who present white and/or self-identify as Asian were never stopped. Students were interested to know if this was an isolated coincidence or if other students of color had experienced this, too. They created an all-school survey to find out what students experienced if they went in the hallway during class time, with or without a pass, looking to see if race played a role in this situation. However, the actions taken by the S.R.E. Leadership class over this particular issue positioned the students' racial equity work, and the students themselves, in conflict with the expectations of staff and administrators for this class. Although students had been encouraged and supported by administrators and staff to have a class about racial equity, *doing* equity work, particularly about the school's disciplinary procedures and the overall climate in the building, created noticeable tensions between S.R.E. students and certain staff members and administrators.

While this study explicitly draws attention to the district's Racial Educational Equity Policy, it is not a traditional study of educational policy but rather an analysis of the effects of power for students involved in the enactment of racial equity work at one school in a major metropolitan school district on the west coast. In particular, the study explores how students of color and white students committed to racial equity work in their school navigate the enactments of a racial equity policy through interactions with staff members and administrators. As such, understanding how S.R.E. students were positioned through relations of power when doing equity work provides opportunities to observe how race and equity are discursively constituted at a predominantly white school.

The confluence of racial equity work – where policy, students, staff, and administrators, at a predominantly white school converge – creates significant tensions when enacting policy that is intended to produce meaningful and transformative racial equity work. It is not only critical to analyze the ways in which educational policies conceptualize race and equity in relation to student experiences in schools, but also how students are positioned as recipients, stakeholders, and/or partners within such policies.

Problem Statement

The Racial Educational Equity Policy is not unlike other racial equity reforms in educational institutions across the United States where school boards and superintendents create such policies, and school administrators and staff members enacting them through various protocols (Castagno, 2014; Childers, 2017; Henze, 2005). What is problematic are the ways in which educational equity policies discursively constitute racial inequities by defining "racial equity" from positions outside of schools, away from the very places where policies are expected to be enacted. Likewise, policies discursively define, manage, and maintain "equity," "race," and "equity work" from positions of authority; throughout each school within the district, policies explicate their implementation through practices related to their goals. Essentially, policies create the rules and/or conditions for speaking about these terms and regulate their meanings. Even when policies intentionally include policy-stakeholders, such as students, families, and teachers, their involvement is already embedded in a field of "divergent discourses" about equity and race (Ball, 2013). "Divergent discourses" represent the rules and structures that constitute certain truths around racial equity. In Ball's (2013) application,

divergent discourses represent the discursive field where "new and old, confront one another, in which some are marginalized or subjugated and others are appropriated" in racial equity work (p. 23).

To be clear, many policies and/or reforms which attempt to confront racial inequities can provide important and necessary steps to create equitable learning outcomes and a positive school climate for students. However, due to the deeply embedded assumptions and practices about students of color, and the continued presence of structural and institutional racism in schools, and within our society, racial educational equity policies may have minimal effect if only enacted by district employees. If racial inequities are recognized as part of a system of institutional and structural racism, it will require more involvement from all policy stakeholders. Thus, student perspectives and experiences about race and equity significantly matter in protocols of policy implementation and enactment, particularly in predominantly white schools.

Within the broader contexts of educational scholarship, this qualitative study attempts to understand policy in relation to race and equity, as well as the conceptualization of youth-as-students as policy recipients and/or partners. For over two decades, education researchers have challenged traditional educational studies of school policies, "seeking to recognize the local complexities of policy […from] methodological frameworks like policy ethnography, feminist critical analysis, and poststructural policy analysis" (Childers, 2017, p. 7). Furthermore, examining the nuances of education policy, particularly thinking about it as a "complex social practice," draws explicit attention to the ways policy and its processes become normalized and uncontested by policy actors, or those asked to implement policy in schools (Levinson & Sutton, 2001, p. 1). By

locating policy studies in context to historical and contemporary educational issues, critical policy studies articulate how policies and their goals and/or outcomes in schools and for students become entangled in discourses about "practices" (Levinson & Sutton, 2001), "enactments" (Ball, Maguire, & Braun, 2012), and/or "as lived experiences" for students (Childers, 2017; Dumas 2014; Dumas, et al, 2016; Pillow, 2004). Finally, shifting away from traditional policy studies that explicitly define and refer to the "problems" of race and inequity in schools using positivist, data-driven sources such as graduation rates, standardized test scores, and suspension/expulsion reports, can provide a more nuanced analysis of this study (Lipman, 2011).

Also problematic are the ways in which students are often conceptualized as recipients of policy, such as "subjects" (Ball, et al., 2012) or "objects" of policy (Dumas et al., 2016, p. 4). That is, school policies create, implement, and enact goals for students that affect and impact their social and learning experiences at school. Research on the position of youth-as-students in schools is integral to this study because of the ways in which students, particularly students of color, are discursively constituted by/through policies that are implemented and enacted by staff and administrators. Studies that focus on students/youth experiences often include student voice and youth participation in school policy decisions since they are stakeholders and potential partners to district policies and are valuable assets to the success of good policies or to the detriment of bad policies (Ginwright, Noguera, & Cammarota, 2006; Mitra, 2008; York & Kirshner, 2015).

This study also interrogates "student voice" in relation to power. While the term "student voice' is often conceptualized in the research as an empowering trope, there is a

continued need to explore how this term enters and becomes applied in/through policy discourse. Concepts of student voice, race, and equity became messy places in my fieldwork that required attention in my analysis. Acknowledging that scholars have discussed significant epistemological and methodological concerns regarding "voice" in qualitative research (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012; Mazzei, 2011; St. Pierre, 2008), I found it difficult *not* to address how the term student voice was discursively deployed by policy, staff, and administrators as well as district officials when referring to students' involvement in equity work. Therefore, this study explores the messiness that surfaces when race, equity, and student voice are embedded within "divergent discourses" (see Ball, 2013) located in predominantly white schools.

Statement of Purpose

Racial equity is an important topic in educational research. Often equity is measured by access to educational resources, curriculum, teacher preparation, and student academic achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Gardner-Allers, 2017). However, the purpose of this qualitative study is to examine the effects of power when students become involved in racial equity work in relation to policy, staff, and administrators. As an ethnographic study, this research also contributes to an on-the-ground analysis of policy enactments through individuals in one high school.

Qualitative data gathered focuses on how power moves through individuals: that is, how meanings about race and equity caught within "divergent discourses," but also the decisions made about who participates in racial equity work (e.g. "doing equity work"), and what methods or steps are taken to impact and mitigate racial equity. The study also

highlights the tensions between policy stakeholders, including students, staff, and administrators; although staff and administrators are primary implementors of the racial equity, they are also policy stakeholders because policy goals are explicitly tied to public accountability.

Research Questions

As previously discussed, race and equity located within predominantly white schools are central to this study. My focus on whiteness required me to reflect a great deal before starting this project. I would like to underscore this point: this research is designed to interrogate race and equity from my position as a white woman, who collected data from many participants who self-identify as students of color.

DiAngelo (2011) argues "white people in North America live in a social environment that protects and insulates them from race-based stress" (p. 54). This includes "who has the power to define whom, and when, and how" issues of race and equity are framed in and by discursive practices in schools (McCarthy & Crichlow, 1993, p. xvi). It is important to note that the district's Racial Educational Equity Policy defines race using critical race theory (CRT) and much of the equity work training involved the concept of race defined by CRT, along with the concept of whiteness (see Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; 2012; 2017). Although equity training offered tools for a predominantly white staff and administration to grapple with concepts such as institutional and structural racism and how these are embedded within educational practices, enactments of the racial equity policy were often limited to "doing equity" during designated staff meetings.

It became clear that this study required a theoretical tool to look deeper into the tensions unfolding between student equity work and what equity work meant to staff and

administrators. Beyond textual and verbal definitions, actions taken, or actions not taken are embedded within discursive practices. Foucault's (1980; 1995; 1997/2003) work on power helps explain the beliefs and actions produced in/through racial equity work in and its effects on and through individuals in predominantly white schools. Specifically, Foucault (1980) offers conceptual and methodological guidance to examine the effects of power "at its extremities" when policy, race, and equity are localized in relation to beliefs, actions, and behaviors between students and adults enacting equity work. Thus, I investigate the individual and shared actions and behaviors of students in S.R.E. doing racial equity work. These actions correlate to how students of color and white students view problems of race and equity from their school experiences and their understanding of the "problem of race" in school spaces (Dumas, et al., 2016).

This investigation is guided by the following questions:

- What happens when S.R.E. youth/students of color and white youth/students become involved in racial equity work in a predominantly white high school?
- How are S.R.E. youth/students of color and white youth/students positioned by staff and administration to be part of race and equity policy enactment (as recipients of policy and/or partners in enacting policy)?
- How do S.R.E. youth/students of color and white youth/students navigate racial equity discourses embedded in the Racial Educational Equity Policy and enacted by staff and administrators in a predominantly white high school?

- What happens when S.R.E. youth/students of color and white youth/students become involved in racial equity work in a predominantly white school?

I explore these questions through student focus groups with students involved in racial equity work and participant observations as an insider with multiple roles: community as teacher/adviser/staff member/researcher. The next section briefly articulates the methodology grounding this study.

Overview of Methodology

While I will elaborate more on this more in Chapter III, here I describe some initial challenges to my various positions in this study: as an adviser, as a teacher, as a staff member, as an equity team member, as a student confidant and ally, and as a researcher. Often times these roles overlapped and created tensions with administrators and other staff members. I am an advocate for the S.R.E. students and have pushed strongly to have their work recognized by the school community and at the district level. It bears mentioning that my previous observations and experiences as S.R.E. club adviser in 2016 – 2017 significantly influenced my decisions about the design of this study.

My fieldwork (January 2018 to June 2018) included over 60 hours of written and digitally recorded participant observations and two student-participant focus groups. I also examined an archive of documents ranging from district policy directives, explanations of the Racial Educational Equity Policy, professional development materials, school equity memos, reflections from S.R.E. student-participants, samples from the S.R.E. racial equity work on the hallway policy, and articles written by the school newspaper about S.R.E. club and class activities. Although much of the data were

collected at the school site, there were other opportunities for me to work with student-participants outside of school: these included participating and attending an interview with two student-participants for a local radio program about their survey and the student presentation to the PPS school board and superintendent. To understand how S.R.E. student-participants perceived racial equity work and their understanding of race and equity, I designed two semi-structured focus groups with seven students, each session lasting two hours. Groups included students who participated in the original club but did not join the class and students who were part of the club and joined the class. Although I only conducted two focus groups with seven of the thirteen student-participants, I was able to examine all of their written reflections after S.R.E.'s presentation to the staff at an equity meeting.

Based on my observations and experiences as a high school teacher, I felt that student focus groups would provide opportunities for individual students to express their ideas, concepts and/or experiences with other students and build on shared experiences. Kamberelis and Dimitriadis (2010) argue "focus groups can provide a more comfortable space for participants to engage in a dialogue with those who are part of a specified homogenous group." In this case, these are students who are concerned about racial equity. Focus groups worked well for me because I was involved in both the club and class from the start. This helped me design focus group questions and direct conversations based on my knowledge of events or situations that we had shared together.

Notably, research and theory are linked in productive ways in this study. Poststructuralism helps me think about power and its effects to develop a nuanced and complex understanding of the ways race and racial equity function through discourses in

educational policies. This study draws from previous research where educational policies are situated within Foucault's relations of power and discourse analyses (Ball, 1990, 2013, 2015; Childers, 2017; Saavedra & Marx, 2016). Yet there are some limits to my discussion on the effects of power, race and equity. While poststructuralist contributions (see Ehlers, 2008; McWhorter, 2005; 2010) that examine race informed my analysis using Foucault's work, knowledge from critical theory, critical race theory, identity politics, and critical youth studies also added to my understanding about how race functions across institutions and structures (Campos-Holland, 2017; Childers, 2017).

These theoretical paradigms acknowledge and identify institutional and structural impacts of race and racism in schools over time and how these have continued today. Notably, through various mechanisms of oppression in the United States, race and racism have affected the educational system: from racial segregation to Indian Boarding Schools, from academic tracking to suspension and expulsion procedures, and the School-to-Prison Pipeline. As these examples point to structural issues within the broader context of school systems, the tenets of CRT are particularly important to understand. Central to this examination of this particular policy, CRT is often cited, (in a condensed form), and discussed by district officials, administrators, and staff. Critical youth studies helps me think directly about students doing equity work. Since the focus of this study is about students, literature on youth-as-students in schools helped me analyze how "student voice" functions in policy discourses.

Rationale, Significance, and Limitations of the Study

Since schools nationwide are increasingly required to do equity work, this study

adds to existing research on diversity, equity, and inclusion policies – especially in predominantly white institutions. The study offers a new different perspective about the enactments of policy when done by students. In academic studies that include students, such as Youth Participatory Action Research, (YPAR), there is a significant need for more research about students involved in policy work. As is clear from this study, it is important to include students in discussions regarding racial equity policy enactments at their school. At a more localized level, this research provides opportunities for the district and one of its high schools to examine its racial equity policy as experienced by students of color. Currently, the school district is in the process of changing its racial equity focus. The equity work by S.R.E. leadership students can significantly contribute to continuing conversations about racial equity both at the school and at the district level.

Although the study does not intend to produce clear outcomes or suggest specific interventions, it contributes to the growing literature regarding student involvement in policy decisions that affect their day-to-day school experiences, especially when designing, implementing, and enacting racial equity policies in predominantly white schools (Conner, Ebby-Rosin & Brown, 2015; Mitra, 2008; Mitra, Serriere & Kirshner, 2014). At the very least, this study may provide input to education policies that are intended to address racial equity in schools.

A significant limitation of this study includes is its focus on only one high school in a district with 10 comprehensive high schools. While it was not within the scope of my research project to conduct a comparative analysis of the policy and equity work in more than one school, an examination of the enactments of the Racial Educational Equity Policy in other high schools could provide additional context to understand how this

particular policy functions in different schools.

Definitions of Key Terminology

Discourse

Discourse refers to not only what is said, already said, or who can say something and who cannot; it is also part of thoughts, actions and behaviors. Foucault (1971) argues discourse constitutes an object/subject through a particular truth, or set of truths, to produce certain effects of power. How does discourse relate to policy? Pillow (2004) emphasizes "educational policy does not develop in a vacuum, but is affected by beliefs, values, and attitudes, situated in discourses, which in turn affect school policy by creating or limiting educational policy options" (p. 9). Jackson and Mazzei (2012) suggest "competing discourses [that reflect certain values] emerge within discursive fields, and the language and practices of these discourses give rise to an individual's conflicting subjectivities" (p. 50). Ball (2013) builds on this concept with "divergent discourses" to recognize these contradictions and tensions in policy work.

Implementations and Enactments in Policy Studies

I consider "implementation" as more traditional term than enactment to describe policy. It implies a top-down action of policy, often associated with positivist conceptions of policy work. I use this term when speaking about the policy *implemented* by the school district because it was designed with positivist methodology. "Enactment" is a more nuanced term. *Enactments* attempt to understand how people interpret, accept, resist and subvert policy. Webb and Gulson (2013) offer a way to consider the tensions between policy and its *enactments* in places such as schools by suggesting "policy intensions (intensions with an "s" rather than a "t") that pay attention to how policy folds actors and

subjects" within political, social, economic, and historical contestations (p. 51). Likewise, Braun, Maguire and Ball (2010) consider "the term 'enactment' as an understanding that policies are interpreted and 'translated' by diverse policy actors in the school environment, rather than simply implemented" (p. 549).

Power

How is power produced? What are the effects of relations of power? How do power relations constitute the subject through power relations? Foucault (1980) argues "the effect of power […] is above all a relation of force;" it is articulated through individuals rather than systems of government or economies (p. 89). To Foucault, power is an unstable force; it is neither static or stationary. Rather than consider power operating through hierarchal structures, power "functions in the form of a chain" that relies on relations within a network to allow it to freely circulate, to a certain point (Foucault, 1980, p. 89).

By applying Foucault's conceptual analysis, I consider power moving through individuals. Thinking about power and its effects, I employ three distinctive moves in the study: first, how race and equity, embedded in discursive practices within education policies, are effects of power, in the district and school, as well in practices deployed by students in S.R.E.; second, how youth are positioned in education policies through effects of power; and third, the effects of power as students in S.R.E. club and the leadership class navigate tensions when doing racial equity work at a predominantly white school.

Racialization

Omi and Winant (1994) define racialization "to signify the extension of racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice, or group" (p.6).

Building on this definition, I associate terms such as "racialize" or "racialized" to the structural, discursive, and epistemological processes of race and racism (Pillow, 2004). Race is socially constructed and has no biological legitimacy; however, race continues to determine status, privilege, and power in the United States. Many of the scholars researched in this study deploy variations of the term *racialize* (e.g. racialized or racialization) in their work, as do I. In discussions about race and equity in school policy discourses, racialization is a salient concept.

Student Voice

Critical youth scholars (Conner, et al., 2015; Mitra, 2008; Mitra, et al., 2014) recognize that student voice and agency are connected to student experiences and involvement in school-based policy decisions that directly affect their day-to-day interactions. Student voice is privileged in schools, education research, and policy studies, however representing the voices of student voice is often problematic (see Bragg, 2007).

I discuss how students doing equity work are positioned by staff, school administrators, and district policy. This discussion also considers students' understanding about race and equity in their school, and their involvement in racial equity work with peers, staff and the administration. The concept of student voice is constituted through discursive formations about race and equity between adults and youth. For example, I observed that staff and administrators used this term several times to suggest more students needed to be part of conversations about equity in the school; however they never defined who would speak, how many would speak, and to what they would speak about. When used by staff and/or administrators, "student voice" signified a discursive

shift in equity discourses, however it was unclear how adults conceptualized student voice. Thus, this study will examine the effects of power through the conceptualization of youth-as-students and when student voice is deployed by staff, administrators, and in the district policy through racial equity discourses.

Conclusion

Education researchers have been "less concerned on *how policy is lived* [emphasis in original], and too often suffered, by those who have little hand in policy formation or implementation, and more to the point, have not been invited to weigh in on how we who research policy should assess the deep impression of policy on flesh, bone and soul" (Dumas, 2014, p. 2). Therefore, this study does not focus solely on educational policy as the focus of inquiry, rather it explores the discursive field that frames race and equity through various discourses in an urban, public high school, on the west coast. As such, the study seeks to examine the effects of power when students enact equity work.

Briefly, Chapter II explores the concept of educational policy in public schools in the United States to contextualize how policies are historically situated by political, cultural, social and economic dynamics of race in education. This chapter also examines how race and representations of race are embedded in policy discourses, particularly for youth of color, as "objects" of policy. Finally, the literature review outlines my theoretical framework and thinking with Foucault's analysis of power. Chapter III provides a discussion of the methodology as well as a description of the research site, methods, and vignettes about each focus group participant. Chapter IV presents the data in three sets: "Divergent discourse," the logic of "hypervisibility/hyperinvisibility," and

effects of power, with an analysis of each data set. Finally, Chapter V discusses concerns for policy work in schools and research ethics and youth-as-students.

CHAPTER II:

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

For many years, educational policies and reforms have had significant impacts to my role as public school teacher. As a participant in policy decision-making, as someone impacted by policy/-ies and reform(s), and as someone who is required to implement policies and reforms, I have witnessed how policies come and go; I also question whether reforms actually make a difference in the day-to-day lives of students in schools. In *The Flat World and Education*, Linda Darling-Hammond (2010) suggests that "policy can matter" particularly if one looks at the disparities – academic, disciplinary, resources, etc. – between students of color and white students. From a practical point of view, policies in schools are implemented to mitigate these disparities. However, some critical policy scholars argue that studying the implementation of educational policies does little to address the "enactments" of policies across diverse and dynamic localities (see Ball, et al., 2012). Further, implementation tends to focus solely on policy and reform through analyses of inequitable access to resources and academic outcomes without developing an understanding of the broader impacts on students' "lived experiences," particularly when it is addresses race and racial equity policies (Dumas, et. al, 2016). This narrow focus on policy implementation eschews interrogating the discursive practices of policy as a process and through discourses in which "subject positions are formed and re-formed by policy" (Ball, 2015, p. 30).

Literature on educational policies, race, racial equity, and youth as subjects of policy provide context to consider *how* policy discourses are constituted in schools. To

begin, I lay the foundation of my research by exploring the concept of policy in education and schooling through some examples in the literature. I follow this trajectory by examining educational equity policies, including those based on equality, to contextualize how such policies are historically situated by the political, cultural, social and economic dynamics of race in public education. Next, I review literature that identifies and explicates concerns regarding the concept of race and how representations of race become embedded in policy discourses. Finally, I review literature that examines how youth, particularly students of color, are defined by and articulated through policy discourses as "objects" (see Dumas, et al., 2016) and/or "subjects" of policy (see Ball, et al., 2012). This includes some discussion of contemporary studies which advocate for "student voice" in policy decisions.

Part I: What is Policy? Thinking About the *How* of Policy in Education

Perhaps it is an oversimplification to begin by asking, what do we mean by policy in education and schools? What internal and external factors influence policy-making in education? It isn't much of a stretch to suggest that the meaning of policy in schools is often taken for granted or perhaps defined superficially as a procedure to identify a "problem to be fixed" through some sort of action(s) (Dumas, 2014; Dumas, et al., 2016; Henze, 2005; Iverson, 2007; Pillow, 2004). Critical policy scholars claim to focus on policy and implementation as a problem/solution binary rather than the processes of policy – specifically, the *how* of policy – contributes to normalizing and legitimizing particular rules in policy discourses (Ball, 1990, 2013; Ball, et al., 2012; Levinson & Sutton, 2001; Ríos-Rojas, 2014). Thus, it is helpful to consider *how* policy is "enacted" in

schools, and "interpreted and 'translated' by diverse policy actors in the school environment" (Braun, et. al, 2010, p. 547).

Decisions for school policy are made at various institutional levels and involve actors who may or may not be directly connected to local school districts or school sites. Although there are many examples where government and/or technocratic organizations dictate and control policy-making in schools, it is important to consider how decisions are made by policy actors based on their values, beliefs, and knowledge. Levinson and Sutton (2001) propose there are "other moments of the policy process" that connect the "place and role of values, beliefs, and identities in the policy process […] that occur across many contexts of contemporary social life" (pp. 2 – 3). Thus, values, beliefs, and identities shape, influence, and affect educational policy. Ball (1990) argues policy processes contribute to establishing policy norms, e.g. what is normal versus what is not normal, through discursive practices in education. How does a policy become a normal practice in education and more specifically, inside schools? And what assumptions do policy actors, particularly policy-makers, have about making a policy?

In my experience, teachers are often introduced to new policies in staff meetings by an administrator who explains how the policy will be implemented in the school. With the exception of the Racial Educational Equity Policy, rarely do administrators explain why a policy was written and/or what assumptions teachers and administrators (or policy actors) might have in implementing with students. During my fieldwork, I had the opportunity to observe an official discussion regarding a newer version of a district policy by the school board and superintendent at a school board meeting. The new policy, referred as the "complaint policy," was discussed before a final vote was given by the

board and superintendent. Before passing the policy, one of the co-chair board members shared her beliefs about the need to have a policy that allowed families a more accessible and efficient process to formally make a complaint about a school, district employee and/or the district. In describing her own experiences as a parent of a former student, she said, "I wished it had been easier to do this when my student was in school." As other board members nodded in agreement, the idea of what policy means and/or represents to people making and passing policy, became exceptionally nuanced for those of us at this meeting. "Even individuals have been known to refer to their 'policies' on a range of matters, including the regulation of interpersonal relations" (Levinson & Sutton, 2001, p. 3). In this context, policy was conceptualized as a tool for families to use, if necessary, to "make complaints" in order to effect some change in their school experiences if deemed unsatisfactory to them. Policy provided a recourse for families, as policy stakeholders, to address grievances with the district through a specific, but "easier" process. And based on experiences expressed by a few board members, this policy was personal to them.

How Do We Conceptualize Policy in Education?

Miller (1981) suggests that although there is no exhaustive list to explain what education policy means, it is helpful to recognize how policies function and to what capacity they effect change(s) in schools. He identifies three broad categories of education policies: (1) "historical or contemporary statement or series of statements which describe, prescribe and/or proscribe a course of action; (2) "a set of statements (at whatever level) that direct or guide individuals to formulate new policies (courses of actions); and (3) "a set of statements directed toward producing or predicting a specific

'end,' or goal, or practice" (Miller, 1981, pp. 119 – 120). These categories offer a starting point to understand how policy is conceptualized not only in the literature but also in schools: Policies identify a problem(s) and produce statements that recommend some type of action through reform(s) to "fix the problem(s)." Ball, et al. (2012) expands on this conceptualization by adding that policy can include "texts and 'things' (legislation and national strategies) but also discursive processes that are complexly configured, contextually mediated and institutionally rendered" (p. 3). These meanings of policy acknowledge potential tensions to explore when conceptualizing the meaning of education policy and its enactments in schools. Specifically, is policy in schools conceptualized by problem-solution orientations or regarded as a dynamic, on-going, and fluid process by policy actors (policy makers, administrators, teachers, etc.)? And do these distinctions really matter?

In education, legal precedence at federal, state, and local (district and/or school) levels often influences and establishes policies, however some policies may or may not be directly implicated by any contractual or legal obligation. This suggests that policies can exist as stand-alone statements, meaning that policy can be written without specifying how it will be evaluated or measured for compliance. For example, the Portland Public School District Racial Educational Equity Policy was not mandated by state or federal law but rather it emerged under the direction of the district based on student achievement data: "Race must cease to be a predictor of student achievement and success" (p. 1). To measure its progress and hold the district accountable, assessment and evaluation of the policy through annual progress using a "milestones framework" was implemented, however no specific evaluation mechanism of the policy to document its

effectiveness or ineffectiveness was used at the school level (5-Year Racial Equity Plan, p. 6). This example represents how the policy process defines and shapes meaning about the intention or goal of a policy, as well as identifies a concern and/or problem to be fixed, without specific methods to hold policy actors accountable.

However, while some educational policies lack accountability measures, policy statements still "do" something. Ball (1990) argues policy statements produced within social spaces express an "allocation of values by a decision-making body" that represents and constitutes an "ideal society" (p. 3). In public schools, which are understood as social spaces, "social policies" function to codify particular values through various meanings and interpretations of a decision-making body that affects many aspects of school life: such as teaching and learning, standardization and assessment, resource allocation, teachers, administrators, students, and families, etc. Miller (1981) suggests these meanings and interpretations correlate to specific policies that articulate and frame particular problems, actions, or intentions, thus creating and solidifying bounded definitions of what *is* policy and what a policy *does*.

To articulate a more nuanced approach to understand what *is* policy and what a policy *does*, scholars in the field of critical policy studies conceptualize policy through social and cultural practices, such as *policy as a process* or *policy as/in practice* (see Ball, et al., 2012; Darling-Hammond, 1990; Levinson & Sutton, 2001). Early education policy studies recognize *policy as/in a practice* to distinguish the broader scope of policy work in schools. *Policy as a practice* "gets at the way individuals, and groups, engage in situated behaviors that are both constrained and enabled by existing structures, but which

allow the person to exercise agency in the emerging situation" (Levinson & Sutton, 2001, p. 3).

Similarly, *policy as a process* draws on multidimensional methods to consider various factors at work when policies are put into action in schools. Ball et al. (2012) suggest *policy as a process* recognizes that policies manifest themselves through "enactments" across many different and individual localities. Thus, policy as a written text functions differently as it is enacted in individual schools. "Policy as process […] is diversely and repeatedly contested and/or subject to 'interpretation' as it is enacted in original and create ways within institutions and classrooms" (Braun, et al., 2010, p. 549). *Policy as a process* considers the various manifestations that policy inscribes itself into school practices: the context of "policy work" in schools; policy subjects; policy actors; policy texts, artifacts, and events; and standards, behavior, and learning policies (Ball et al., 2012). *Policy as a process* also recognizes how policy enactments operate across diverse and different localities through discourses that identify and frame "problems" to address through policy work. "Problems" are emblematic in school and district policy discourses and allow actors to conceptualize policy as method(s) or action(s) to identify and solve or even obscure "problems" through seemingly value-neutral practices (Ball, et al. 2012; Dumas, et al. 2016; Pillow, 2004; Popkewitz & Lindblad, 2000). These practices require closer analyses as they are often constructed in highly politicized and contested contexts.

There are recognizable tensions when thinking of education policy in terms of problem-solution orientations in which school policies often identify a "problem to fix." In this study, racial inequity is viewed as "the problem to fix" through a policy; however

how are students, particularly students of color written into this policy? In the next section, I explore how subjects and/or objects of policy are produced in/through policy discourses using historical and contemporary examples.

Historical and Contemporary Influences in School Policy: Identifying a "Problem"

Education policies are shaped by and tethered to broader historical, political, social, cultural, and economic agendas which produce subjects of policy (Ball, 2013; McCarthy & Crichlow, 1993; Dumas, 2014; Pillow, 2004). Defining subjects of policy is a concern many scholars share and address, especially when race and equity are discursively constituted within policy discourses. This concern also emphasizes how the process of policy moves across various sites and between diverse social actors to acknowledge that policy work in schools produces dynamic, complicated, messy, contested, and complex effects.

Historically, methods of educational reforms for control and management of teachers and students were ushered in during the 20th century urban school. As noted by Tyack (1974), "administrative progressives" were part of "a movement with identifiable actors and coalitions [with] a common ideology and platform for public education (p. 128). Their goal was to centralize the public school system through structural measures to reflect a corporate model of authority and control. To create a corporate model of school organization, new professors of educational administration developed "scientific" ways of measuring inputs and outputs in school systems as a tool of management, and to elaborate ways in which the school might rationalize its structure and curriculum to fit new industrial and social conditions (Tyack, 1974, p. 136). "Scientific ways of

measuring" have historical significance in contemporary policy discourses. Not only do such measures contribute to a myriad of systematic methods of evaluation and assessment, they also determine and drive policy initiatives. For example, the rationale for the PPS Racial Educational Equity Policy explicitly refers to the "persistent achievement gap between White students and students of color" using state assessments, graduation rates, and disciplinary infractions. At first glance, these measures provide potential tools to hold schools and the district "accountable" to the larger society and may appear helpful to identify and mitigate inequitable issues that can be improved through law, reform, and policy. However, these methods create, instill, and legitimize the need for particular policies that assert and promote progressive and/or liberal agendas (Lipman & Gutstein, 2001; Lipman, 2011; 2002; Ríos-Rojas, 2014). Ultimately, ways of measuring are embedded in policy decisions that often discursively produce and constitute deficit discourses that examine bodies – students and teachers – across a broad range of social policies (Ball, et al., 2012; Childers, St. Pierre, & Jackson, 2014; Pillow, 2004; Saavedra & Marx, 2016).

Other methods also identify, shape, and deploy deficit discourses of "problems" across institutional spaces to reflect broader political, social, cultural, and economic concerns. Often perceived as social problems, these concerns allow policy to constitute and "speak" for subjects of policy. In other words, as subjects of policy, students are examined by external social problems which are translated through policy discourses that measure and evaluate their educational success or failure, as well as determine specific standards of their moral behavior and character (Pillow, 2004) or their belonging in schools (Ríos-Rojas, 2014). However, such "problems" are not neutral assessments nor

are the proposed "solutions" from policy decisions and underscore societal tensions that are often overlooked or taken-for-granted in school policy discourse.

For example, in *Unfit Subjects: Education Policy and the Teen Mother*, Wanda Pillow (2004) situates the "problem" of teen pregnancy within national, state, and local discourses. Although teen pregnancy is discursively constituted as a national crisis in predominantly urban schools, any policy development was largely left at the local level to determine an appropriate "solution." Pillow argues that "policy enacts and reinforces modern regulatory power and is most regulatory when a social problem, like teen pregnancy, is defined as being of epidemic proportions" (p. 19). However, teen pregnancy for white girls is treated differently than for African American and Latina girls. As subjects of policy, or in some cases as subjects *avoided by* policy, teen mothers and the "problem" of teen pregnancy are constituted within an "economic, political, racial, and moral climate" (Pillow, 2004, p. 18).

The fluidity of social policies that involve political, social, economic, and historical influences is central to understanding educational policy decisions, particularly in terms of how these influences contribute to identifying "problems" in schools and what "solutions" are proposed through policy discourses. As subjects of policy, "bodies speak, without necessarily talking, because they become encoded with and as signs. They speak social codes. They become intextuated, narrativized; simultaneously, social codes, laws, norms, and ideals become incarnated" (Grosz, 1995, as cited by Pillow, 1999, p. 201). As subjects of policy, students are directly impacted by social policies that express values, beliefs, and practices that inscribe and reinscribe notions of difference through a myriad of discourses. As such, policy discourses name a "problem" through "ways of measuring"

that are presented as valid and objective truths and influence the enactment of policy/-ies in schools.

I turn now to explore race and equity in policy as discourse (see Ball, 1993) that has not been adequately articulated at this point. Specifically, I focus on the ways in which race and equity often become targets of intervention in school policy and through policy enactments.

Race and Equity in School: Targets of Policy

In *The Souls of Black Folk,* W. E. B. DuBois (1994) asks, "How does it feel to be a problem" (p. 1)? Originally proposed in 1903, this question still evokes a provocative consideration to the ways in which race is discursively constituted in school policy work today. If school policies are conceptualized through a problem-solution binary, attempts to mitigate and potentially dismantle the effects of institutional racism in schools will be problematic. As discussed, policy discourses constitute subjects of policy through various articulations that identify concerns about students, as well as produce deficit ways of seeing students. For example, schools that describe their student population as "diverse" and/or "urban" are discursively produced through policy discourses as "struggling schools" or schools suffering "low achievement" (Pollack, 2009). Policies about race therefore establish and codify rules to organize and produce different forms of knowledge, or "truths," about schools and the bodies of students. As Fine and Weis (2003) argue "schools do not merely inherit or manage 'racial' or ethnic identities; they create and enforce 'racial' meanings. Schools, as contested spaces, structure the conditions for the embodiment, performance, and/or interruption of sustained and

inequitable 'racial' formations" (p. 246). Racialization "is an ideological process, an historically specific one. Racial ideology is constructed from pre-existing conceptual (or if one prefers, "discursive") elements and emerges from the struggles of competing political projects and ideas seeking to articulate similar elements differently" (Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 7). The literature on education policy discourses and race argues that racial differences are constituted and produced through school policy practices. Dumas, et al. (2016) argue educational policy continues to serve "as the site of political contestation over what race *means*" (emphasis in original, p. 5).

Since the late 1960s, policy and reform movements regarding race and equity in the United States have identified noticeable and growing academic, behavioral, and economic disparities between white students and students of color in public schools (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Dumas, 2014; Gordon, 2017; Kozol, 1991; Price-Curtis, 1981). While many significant acts of federal legislation have attempted to mitigate and rectify inequitable issues in education, the landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education,* (1954) most clearly established legal precedence for reforms and policies regarding race and equality in public schools, reversing state laws that allowed for segregation and "separate but equal" school systems. The effects of the *Brown* decision in school policy forwarded liberal concepts about race and equality, and arguably continue to influence racial equity discourses today (Strayhorn & Johnson, 2014). These liberal concepts of race in schools promoted racial equality, yet also produced and constituted concepts of racial disparities experienced by students of color. *Brown* launched a proliferation of federal, state, and local policies and reforms designed to address and dismantle racial inequalities, despite the "social suffering" many of these

policies had on students of color (see Dumas, 2014). Although informed by a wealth of educational research, "race-conscious" policies and reform efforts have done little to mitigate current disparities for students of color in public schools (Jordan, 2010; Johnson, Jr., 2017). However, despite the lack of success by these efforts, schools have failed to limit the ways in which education policy takes up race and equity, no matter how problematic.

Dumas, et al. (2016) argue "education policy, […], contributes to the common sense about race" both explicitly and implicitly in school policy discourses (p. 5). In what ways does this "common sense about race" inform school policy decisions today? Scholars argue policy discourses that explicitly advocate for racial equity, diversity, and/or social justice through school policy continue to stabilize racial identities, particularly for students of color, and construct knowledge or truths about racial groups (Noguera, Pierce, & Ahram, 2014/2015; Orfield & Lee 2004; Ríos-Rojas, 2014). As subjects of policy, students of color are imagined within a complex web of contested meanings that not only influence school policies working to promote practices that interrupt and/or dismantle racial inequities, but through the enactments of race-oriented policies. The following three examples examine educational policies that explicitly target race and equity as sites of policy intervention through desegregation efforts, academic tracking, and setting standards of achievement. These examples also demonstrate the various ways that enactments of race-oriented policies – specifically those focused on equality, diversity, inclusion, and equity – are problematic in schools.

After the *Brown* decision, schools across the country were mandated to abolish segregated school systems; many districts implemented school busing plans to

desegregate their schools by busing students from non-white schools to predominantly white schools. Desegregation was a much-needed educational reform, however it was fiercely contested across the United States and normalized racial hierarchy for students of color and white students, particularly in predominantly white schools. For example, Dumas (2014) explains "white administrators and teachers were ill-prepared to address the racial climate in their schools, and often failed to recognize or nurture the academic abilities of black children" (p. 11).

From his own experiences with Seattle's desegregation policies, Michael Dumas (2014) describes schools as "sites of suffering" where students of color endured overt and covert acts of devaluation by white teachers and administrators (p. 23). The policies of desegregation, as a project of integration, did not rectify or mitigate the effects of segregation for students of color. Disciplinary tactics and academic tracking contributed to other forms of segregated systems within schools, which Dumas correlates to historical and collective "social suffering" for many black students who were forced to participate in bus programs. In Portland, many black students shared similar experiences in desegregation plans that included students of color moving into predominantly white schools in predominantly white neighborhoods (Johnson & Williams, 2010). Such actions did not mitigate or address the deep political, social, cultural, economic, and historic effects of segregation in schools in part due to structural and institutional racism in the United States (Johnson, Jr., 2017).

Arguably, analysis of such policies in education policy research failed to recognize how enactments of desegregation reforms in predominantly white schools affected students of color (Dumas, et al., 2016). Dumas (2014) argues that policy

research "have been less concerned with how policy is lived, and too often suffered, by those who have little hand in policy formation or implementation" (p. 2). Policies that included race as a variable or factor provide insight into ways in which race and equity are discursively embedded in education policy enactments in predominantly white schools. As Henze (2005) argues, by examining educational discourse "in its larger context, we can better understand how educational discourse both constructs and is constructed by the social order" (p. 244).

Academic or ability tracking, a form of second generation segregation (Leonardo & Grubb, 2014; Oakes, 1985/2005), rearticulated race-oriented policies in response to state and federally mandated desegregation laws and policies. Castagno (2014) argues that enactments or practices of race-related policies are tied to the social construct of whiteness, specifically "niceness." Her analysis of schools located in Utah examines how diversity-related policy and practices are impacted by whiteness which,

> "refers to structural arrangements and ideologies of race dominance. Racial power and inequities are at the core of whiteness, but all forms of power and inequity create and perpetuate whiteness. The function of whiteness is to maintain the status quo, and although White people most often benefit from whiteness, some people of color have tapped into the ideological components of whiteness for their own financial and educational benefits. Whiteness maintains power and privilege by perpetuating and legitimating the status quo while simultaneously maintaining a veneer of neutrality, equality, and compassion." (Castagno, 2014, p, 5).

Niceness is a social construct of whiteness enacted through policy discourses from particular behaviors, interactions, and values by the social actors involved in policy work. Niceness obfuscates the impacts of racializing and pathologizing discourses when enacting a policy of diversity through multicultural education. Some of Castagno's (2014) findings suggest teachers enacting multicultural education practices that are part of diversity policies, often equate multicultural education to "colorblind ideology that

ignores race and posits that race and racism do not matter in the lives of students or within schools" (p. 61). Therefore, race-related policies created to respond to inclusivity using culturally responsive teaching practices may illustrate the problems of policy as it is written and as it is enacted in schools.

Childers (2017) identifies similar issues as Castagno (2014) in race and equity policy and enactment through her critique of academic tracking at an urban high school in Ohio. Diving deeper to analyze educational policies enacted and negotiated at a local school level, she contextualizes the "lived experiences" of an equity and academic achievement policy from the perspectives of many policy actors including the subjects of policy, the students. By focusing on students experiencing academic tracking based on race, Childers (2017) articulates how policy produces and constitutes students of color through discursive constructions of "those students." Her analysis also exposes linkages between federal and state standards of achievement to those on the ground at this particular school. Moving beyond an analysis of whiteness, Childers (2017) examines the social, cultural, economic, and political tensions to reveal the underpinnings of structural racism at work through enactments of an "equity" policy. Furthermore, she acknowledges the correlations between race, equity, and policy are significantly important in schools:

> In spite of our desires to believe otherwise in the US, race continues to matter in schools. It matters in the creation and implementation of educational policy. It matters in practice and the everyday lives of teachers and students. (Childers, 2017, p. 114)

Her discussion demonstrates not only how race-related policies that promote racial equity, diversity, and/or inclusion are problematic through enactments of policy, but also how her participants, as subjects of policy, negotiate and resist traditional discourses of "those students."

Dumas, et al., (2016) call attention to include "youth, parents, community activists, and other social actors [to] engage in public and counterpublic deliberation on policy questions, how they themselves see the problem of race, or more precisely, *racism*, in educational policy discourse and practice […]" (emphasis in original, p. 4). Arguably, inclusion requires more active participation from subjects of policy and is vital in race-related policy work, especially in predominantly white schools. Castagno's (2014) study highlights policy enactments through the work of predominantly white administrators and teachers, however a fuller discussion on the ways in which race impacts schools with higher percentages of white administrators and teachers requires further attention.

Localizing Race and Equity in Portland and Across Oregon

In *How Do Schools do Policy*, Ball, et al. (2012) argue contextual dimensions of policy research are important to understand policy enactments in schools. These dimensions recognize how policy becomes enacted through material, structural, and relational conditions in schools. Race-related policies require further discussions that examine the situated contexts – historically and contemporary locales – in relation to policy enactments in schools. Omi and Winant (1993) assert racial formations are process-oriented and relational, recognize historicity and social comprehensiveness of the race concept, and account for how individual and collective actors manage incoherent and conflictual racial meanings and identities in everyday life (as cited in McCarthy & Crichlow, 1993, p. 6).

In a project sponsored by an independent, nonprofit affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities, Oregon Humanities, self-identified writer, educator, and

poet Walidah Imarisha toured the state recently to engage in conversations centering on one central theme: "Why Aren't There More Black People in Oregon?: A Hidden History." In this interactive and community-focused program, Imarisha critically examines state and local policies that contributed to today's historically low population of black people living in Oregon. Based on these community conversations across metropolitan and rural areas of the state, she argues that knowledge of Black History in Oregon is still largely unknown to a vast number of Oregonians because it is not taught in many schools. This lack of historical knowledge regarding black people's experiences has not gone unnoticed and connects to recent legislative changes to teaching Oregon history in public schools. Senate Bill (SB) 13 passed during the 2017 legislative session also recognizes the lack of historical knowledge of Native histories in Oregon and the Pacific Northwest in school curriculum. In the same legislative session, House Bill (HB) 2845 passed to begin developing standards for a mandatory K – 12 curricula in ethnic studies for all Oregon public schools. Notably, these examples are indicative of the many historical and political actions taken to address racial inequities in the state's public schools (Johnson & Williams, 2010). More pointedly, these actions provide critical context to examine how race and equity function through school policy discourses in a city recognized as the "whitest city" in the U. S. (see Semuels, 2016).

McCarthy and Crichlow (1993) argue "racial differences are produced" and "relational" within complex systems that require "attention to contractions, discontinuities, and nuances between social groups" (p. xix). Although brief, the above examples help situate "external contexts" (see Ball, et al., 2012) to school policy in relation to race and equity to Portland Public School District's seven-year-old Racial

Educational Equity Policy. The legislative mandates articulate educational concerns expressed by students in this study to highlight how youth are conceptualizing race, identities, and representations within the larger context of curriculum, schools, and society. At least four students in this study participated through personal testimonies and/or committee work for SB 13 and HB 2845. Ball, et. al (2012) assert that "context is a mediating factor in the policy enactment work done in schools – and it is unique to each school, [however] context is also dynamic, shifting within and outside of schools" (p. 40). Thinking about race-related policy within and outside of school contexts recognize the various and diverse roles and perspectives school policies have at local, state, and national government levels. Thus, *policy as process* or *policy as practice* is not limited to actors within schools.

Conclusion

Thus far, I have tried to articulate the *how* of policy in schools through studies that take various social and cultural perspectives to view *policy as process* (see Ball, et al., 2012) or *policy as practice* (See Levinson & Sutton, 2001). Taking up the view that *policy as process* is enacted rather than implemented, my discussion intended to disrupt "easy" or "universal" understandings of policy-making, policy work, and policy enactment across a myriad of institutional localities. Some historical as well as contemporary methods used "to make" policy were also discussed, with particular attention to students as the subjects of policy. Whether students are directly or indirectly the subjects of school policy, I argue that they are always implicated in education policy work as well as through policy discourses and enactments of policy. Finally, in the

section on race and equity as targets of policy, I explored some examples of historical and contemporary race-related school policies. This discussion underlines the importance of analyzing educational policy, but especially race-related policies, which are situated within historical, political, social, and cultural contexts.

Part II: Youth in Schools

Education policy researchers acknowledge that students in the U.S. are most affected by school policies although rarely do policy makers solicit any input from students regarding the policies enacted in their schools (Zaal & Ayala, 2013). However, historical and contemporary examples demonstrate that students are interested and willing to have more active roles in school decision making through policy involvement. Student involvement over issues in schools and society can be historically traced to the East L.A. walkouts and the Vietnam antiwar protests, to today's ethnic studies protests in Tucson, Arizona and Portland, Oregon, the Black Lives Matter walkout in Minneapolis and most recently, the national protest against gun violence in schools. These events highlight a fraction of the ways in which students show their interests to improve their lives in schools, as well as their awareness of the world around them; yet, students face many challenges in/by schools that limit their involvement in issues affecting their day-to-day school experiences, communities, and world.

In this section, I explore the concept of youth – as students and in schools – and "student voice" initiatives that encourage student participation and involvement in school policies. To examine the effects of power in a district policy on racial equity, it is important to discuss potential tensions and contradictions that emerge between students

and adults (district officials, administrators, and staff members). Students are discursively and materially positioned through policy discourses, particularly when race and equity are involved; however, this does not suggest students are passive and submissive subjects to these policies. This discussion relates to conceptualizing student voice in school policies and reform efforts. During my study, the term "student voice" was used often by administrators and staff members to categorize and describe the racial equity work done by S.R.E. students, however this was not a term S.R.E. students used to describe themselves or the work they did in the school. I explore some of the current scholarship on student voice to understand how the term is often conceptualized in education policy research. Finally, this section concludes with a discussion about the potential tensions of racial equity work in predominantly white schools to articulate complex and nuanced issues for students doing racial equity work within such spaces.

Youth-*as*-*Students* and *in Schools*

Various research from disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, psychology, history, and education explore youth in contexts *as students* and *in schools*. Contributions from early folklore and anthropology studies, the term "betwixt and between" delineated stages of youth through analyses of liminality and rites of passage (see Thomassen, 2009 on the works of Arnold Van Gennep and Victor Turner). These earlier analyses about youth contribute to contemporary issues when thinking of youth, particularly as students and in schools, through a linear stage of their cognitive and social development (Caputo, 1995; Maira & Soep, 2005).

Conceptualizing youth in process-of-but-not-yet-fully an adult or becoming-an-

adult-but-still-a-child, complicates the opportunities and possibilities for youth in schools to engage and interact with adults in schools in decisions affecting school communities. Adults (district officials, administrators, teachers, and/or family members) attach various and complex social meanings onto youth, in schools and as students, that traverse a myriad of power relations. Maira and Soep (2005) argue "the most salient, and troublesome of these social meanings is the portrayal of youth as inadequately formed adults, as subjects lacking in the presumably desired qualities of adulthood, rather than as subjects in their own right with specific (even if they are not always unique) needs and concerns" (pp. xxi-xxii). Adding to this, in *Beyond Resistance! Youth Activism and Community Change* (2006), Shawn Ginwright and Julio Cammarota argue, "schools often infantilize young people, treating them as 'empty vessels' to be filled in by the more powerful and all-knowing adult teacher" (p. x).

In my research, there were many moments when an administrator or staff member suggested to me that S.R.E. students had "a lot to learn about equity work" before tackling the issues that the students wanted to address in their school. But S.R.E. students were very aware that administrators and teachers often did not take them seriously. In focus groups, student participants shared their beliefs about how adults viewed them as "just students." They believed this perceived status made students "easy to dismiss," particularly in leadership roles that took an active position on school issues. Thus, youth-as-students and in relation to adults-in-schools is a concern for developing and maintaining youth participation and engagement in school policy initiatives and reforms.

Positioning Youth-As-Students in Relation to Adults-In-Schools

York and Kirshner (2015) assert that youth-as-students are positioned in ways that limit or allow their participation in their schools by administrators and teachers. "Positioning" is a discursive and material process that constructs actors, or subjects, as particular kinds of people "which enable(s) or constrain(s) opportunities for participation in systems of activity" (York & Kirshner, 2015, p. 107). As a theoretical concept, positioning contextualizes students' roles in policy work with administrators and staff members in schools through various discursive and material mechanisms. Positioning connotes relations of power between youth-as-student participants and adults in schools or in other positions of authority (Conner et. al, 2015). The dynamics of race, class, gender, culture, language, etc. contribute to understanding how students are "positioned" across varied contexts within the school, by administrators and staff members.

Further, York and Kirshner (2015) propose "positioning shapes opportunities for student agency in schools," suggesting adults have a great deal of influence over engagement and participation in issues that matter to students. Yet, other researchers argue students can be resourceful and creative when responding to positioning imposed on by adults (Conner, et al., 2015; Jones, Stewart, Galletta, & Ayala, 2015). Rather than wait for school administrators to decide if, who, when, and how students can participate in school policies, Jones, et al. (2015) assert "through formal and informal connections" youth-as-students create their own opportunities to engage in education policies affecting their school experiences. Youth positioning operates in relation to not only adults in schools, but also adults in their communities, thus such relationships help situate concerns by youth-as-students about their schools across wider contexts.

The discussion of the concept of youth *as students* and *in schools* articulates critical issues for youth participation in their schools and explores how youth-as-students navigate tensions and contradictions in relation with administrators and staff. Notably, global, national, and local issues contribute to factors about the roles youth-as-students can have in their schools, particularly in policy decisions. Also, positioning plays a significant part in how students are placed in relation to adults in schools, as well as in context to student agency. Research about youth-as-students and in schools often discusses student agency and student voice in school policy. In Chapter III, I will discuss some of the ontological and methodological concerns in qualitative research about "voice," however in the next section, I intend to situate student voice within critical youth studies and education policy scholarship.

Youth Participation and Student Voice Initiatives

Scholarship on youth participation in schools identifies many tensions students experience when working with adults in schools and/or at a district level on issues that matter to their day to day experiences. Much of the research suggests these tensions are more problematic in the U.S. compared to the U.K. or other European nations. Compared to other countries, Mitra, et al. (2014) contend that the U.S. is an "outlier in youth participation" because it lacks any formal policy to encourage youth to participate in school-based decisions. Student voice scholarship locates the lack of youth participation in education policy discourses to the refusal of the U.S. to ratify the 1989 *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC), which recognizes "youth participation is defined as series of rights, including access to information, expression of views and

freedom to form collective organisation" (cited by the United Nations, 1989, in Mitra, et al., 2014).

From this globalized and liberal agenda to a national context in the U.S., Mitra, et al. (2014) assert recent efforts to promote and establish youth participation in school policy decisions are also greatly limited by federal government legislative actions such as No Child Left Behind, Race to the Top, and the adoption of Common Core Standards. Such measures have effectively placed pressure on schools to comply with national and state testing, and established punitive measures if schools fail to show adequate yearly progress. The authors argue that accountability measures using standardized testing practices – which can lead to loss of funding for schools, school closures, and/or loss of teacher jobs – limit opportunities for youth to actively participate in discussions about policy with school administrators, teachers, and district officials. In other words, the emphasis on schools is to demonstrate student academic proficiencies through standardized testing rather than promote and encourage student voice in democratic and civic participation in their schools.

Research on youth engagement and student voice in education policy describe the process as "liberating," "empowering," and "inclusive" prompt questions and considerations that I will address in Chapter III. However, it is important to note how these descriptions are tied to ideals of neoliberalism through civic responsibility and participatory democracy (see Ríos-Rojas, 2014; Popkewitz & Lindblad, 2000). As Bragg (2007) argues, liberal perspectives posit that

> student voice will help students become better citizens and more active learners, and schools to become better places. Such perspectives, however seem reluctant to engage with shifting power relations that have accorded students their new authority to speak, or to be critically reflexive about the means used to shape and

channel what can be recognised as "student voice." (p. 344)

As expressed by the CRC, descriptions of youth participation in education policy calls for their "right to participate in conversations and decisions that affect their lives" (Mitra, 2015, p. 239). While this raises important concerns regarding the rights of youth, Caputo (1995) reminds us that youth are often "viewed as reproducers of adult culture [and] their lives are seen in relation to the lives of adults" (p. 25). Are youth actually being liberated and empowered through these processes? Are adults sharing power with youth to improve their experiences in schools? This leads to critical questions regarding how youth-as-students are positioned in relation to adults while engaged in work related to school practices and policies.

Student Voice in School Discourses

> *S.R.E. did not start by an adult or group of adults in the school; it was conceived through a collaboration with several students of color and white students. They did not "need" approval from an adult except for access to a classroom and to be present during meeting times. However, in its nascent stage, a core group of students (and a few teachers), met with the administration at the time to explain what their mission was and if they could count on support from the school's administrators. The two administrators at the meeting were immediately excited about what the students proposed to them. One of the vice principals exclaimed, "This is exactly what our next step in our racial equity work is supposed to have, [sic]to have student voice!"*

I begin this section on "student voice" with an excerpt from my fieldnotes to highlight how the term is used by administrators and staff members in many events I observed during this study. In this section, I locate student voice in the context of education research about students as well as school policy. In the discussion, I explicate some of the key concepts and concerns regarding student voice, however this is not an

exhaustive examination of the research. Finally, I note that defining and situating student voice in the literature presents some challenges regarding how it is used in relation to students, schools, and policy. As Arnot and Reay (2007) argue, "student voice is problematic" (p. 311).

In response to conservative education reforms in public education and the so-called culture wars of the 1980s – 1990s, several scholars observed an overwhelming absence of student voices in discussions pertaining to their school experiences (Fine, 1987; hooks, 1994; Kozol, 1991; Weis & Fine, 1993). Their critique and attention to "silence" contributes to the current conception of student voice in education policy studies. As Michelle Fine (1987) argues "to pose a critique of silencing requires a parallel commitment to exploring the possibility of voice in public schools" (p. 170).

Bahou (2011) locates student voice "within a complex web of school structures and cultures that are shaped by policy makers, school leaders, teachers, researchers, and students themselves" (pp. 2 – 3). Rodríguez and Brown (2009) assert student voice legitimizes the unique perspectives of youth to actively participate in policies and practices that affect their day-to-day school experiences. Research using student voice often aligns with participatory action research (PAR or YPAR, Youth Participatory Action Research). PAR or YPAR is an empirical methodological approach that invites people, including youth, to research their lives and use research as a tool for informed action (Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Mitra, et al., 2014). In this sense, YPAR recognizes students as producers of knowledge who have the "right to research" their own lives based on their own decisions and actions (Appadurai, 2006). Rights-based arguments closely align with the declarations made in the CRC as well as some advocates who

encourage student voice in education policy (Rodríguez and Brown, 2009).

Literature reviewed for this project frames the concept of student voice in context with power and youth agency (Jones, et al., 2015; Rodríguez & Brown, 2009; York & Kirshner, 2015), youth participation (Mitra, et al., 2013), "developing a voice" (Mitra, 2008), and "bottom up reform" (Conner, et al., 2012). Similar to YPAR, Conner, et al. (2015) suggest student voice "can be understood as a strategy that engages youth in sharing their views on their experiences as students in order to promote meaningful change in educational practice or policy and alter the positionality of students in educational settings" (p. 3). Student voice is conceptualized differently by efforts from school officials, administrators, and/or teachers to invite students to share narratives and experiences about their daily lives in schools. Three primary goals for student voice efforts are:

1. To share students' perspectives on their educational experiences with adults;
2. To call for reform that the students feel will better address the learning needs of themselves and their peers; and
3. To change the social construction of students in the school or in the school system, (Conner, et al., 2015, p. 3)

These goals require adults in schools to intentionally "reposition" students from "passive to active and from impotent to empowered" and "endow students with greater authority and agency than students are typically granted in schools (Conner, et al., 2015, p. 4).

In its singular form, student voice presents contradictions when used in various educational spaces. Student voice is not typically used in the plural form. However, it functions as a discursive move to imply multiple voices have been heard and included. Conner, et al., (2015) observe "*student voice* has entered the everyday lexicon of teachers, administrators, and education policy makers; however, some uncertainty still

surrounds the concept" (emphasis in original, p. 1). They worry that inside of schools, student voice may be highly misunderstood and suggest this term has become trendy among many educators. In relation to student voice, policy work, and practices, this trendiness raises the potential for students to be manipulated and/or co-opted by adults in charge of enacting school policies (Conner, et al., 2015). Furthermore, these concerns raise questions about whether or not student voice initiatives are as emancipatory and liberatory for youth as they claim to be (Arnot & Reay, 2007; Cook-Sather, 2006; Fielding, 2001; Fielding & Rudduck, 2002). Bragg (2007) challenges the perception that student voice is an "emancipatory" project for students, and questions how it is framed as a "liberal notion of 'empowerment' as handing over power to less powerful groups (such as students), or as a removal of previously oppressive power relations" (p. 345). Even with efforts to "hand over power to less powerful groups," such as students, it is often unclear how many students are invited to participate in decisions that may affect the larger population of students within schools.

Power, Race, and Student Voice

Relations of power are a prominent concern for those who advocate for student voice in policy work. "Power is a central facet of student voice, but how much power students actually hold relative to adults can vary across institutions" (Conner, et al., 2015, p. 4). In "We Fought for Fairness and Won," Maceo Bradley (2015) describes his experiences in challenging a truancy policy in the Los Angeles Unified School District that had police officers issue tickets if students were tardy to school. Facing potential economic charges and amassing a police record for being late to school, Bradley and

other students organized with the help of a teacher and a local community group to testify to the Los Angeles City Council how the policy was unfair and disproportionately discriminated against African Americans and Latinos. He recounts his experience at the council meeting,

> I got intimidated as soon as we entered the council chambers. The room was packed with a few hundred parents, students and other activists prepared to speak about the truancy ticket problem. I had no idea that many people would be there, but it was empowering to see so many people willing to fight. Teachers and parents were on our side. (p. 62)

Bradley's example emphasizes a wide range of expectations for student voice across many different educational and governmental contexts. This example valorizes student voice in response to policies that adversely affect students of color and suggests the "power" of student voice relies on a network of relations between adults and youth. Thus, efforts to include student voice in policy initiatives that directly affect their lives is shown to have positive impacts on students.

Efforts to include student voice in equity, diversity, and/or inclusion policy initiatives in schools that attempt to mitigate and address academic, social, and economic inequities faced by students of color can seem empowering. In some instances, policies that explicitly refer to the systemic and institutional factors of racism in the U.S. as a contributing factor to educational inequities, assume there is a social justice stance or moral imperative to recognize and undo. However, student voice scholars raise concerns that students of color become tokenized in school policy discourses (Conner, et al., 2015; Ríos-Rojas, 2014; Rodríguez & Brown, 2009). Tokenism can be expressed in relation to more a numerous, dominant group to the visibility of underrepresented groups in schools (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998). There are significant concerns

about how student voice is deployed in predominantly white schools alongside policies that involve "climate," "equity," "diversity," and "inclusion" (Hurtado, et al., 1998; Iverson, 2007; Ríos-Rojas, 2014; Rodríguez & Brown, 2009). Bragg (2007) raises concerns over how government and school officials have embraced student voice in school improvement policy discourses, suggesting these attempts may be problematic, and urging that "a more sophisticated understanding of the power relations embedded in student voice initiatives" is needed (p. 343).

Fielding (2001) poses four critical questions to consider alongside the three primary goals of student voice efforts:

- *Who* is allowed to speak?
- *To whom* are they allowed to speak?
- *What* are they allowed to speak about?
- What *language* is encouraged/allowed? (p. 100)

The complexities of these questions are germane to my study and complicate some assumptions about the stated goals for student voice efforts in school policy. Fielding (2001) argues student voice is inherently "misleading" and problematic when used in policy and reform initiatives (p.101). These questions provide important context to understand student voice in relation to school racial equity policies attempting to dismantle the effects of institutional racism. In addition to tokenism, essentializing student voice from students of color within a predominantly white school and in a predominantly white city is highly problematic. Essentializing refers to identities that can best be described as static, imposed, and ascriptive, and are "historical and collective, and generally operate through the 'logic of visibility'" (Moya, 2006, p. 97). Moya (2006) correlates essentializing to the "logic of visibility" where racial or gender categories are assumed and taken for granted as truths about the identities of others different than

yourself. It is important to recognize that essentializing can occur from multiple positions, such as students, administrators, staff, district officials, etc. Essentializing impacts what student voice should look in a predominantly white school, where the "logics of visibility" may determine which students are invited to participate in racial equity work and who are not.

Conclusion

The goals of Part II in my Literature Review were to explain and contextualize student voice in schools and in policy discourses. In this discussion, I have contextualized how student voice is conceptualized across multiple fields of analysis. This included: conceptualizing *youth as students* and *in schools*; youth participation and "student voice" initiatives; how youth-as-students are positioned in relation to adults in schools; student voice in school discourses; and power, race and student voice. In Part III, I connect Part I and II of the literature review with my theoretical framework to discuss the effects of power in racial equity work at a predominantly white school.

Part III: Effects of Power

"We are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth."
Michel Foucault, 1980, p. 93

This final section explores power relations and the effects of power when doing racial equity work with youth in a predominantly white high school. My analytical questions guiding this research are:

- How do S.R.E. youth/students of color and white youth/students navigate racial equity discourses embedded in the Racial Educational Equity Policy and enacted by staff and administrators at a predominantly white high school?
- What are the effects of power when S.R.E. youth/students of color and white youth/students become involved in racial equity work at a predominantly white high school?

I begin with Foucault's (1980) thinking on power to discuss the *how* of power and its effects through discourse. Foucault's work on power and its effects is quite prolific, but for the purposes of my research, this discussion focuses on what has been most influential on my thinking about power. By applying critical policy studies to Foucault's work, I consider how "discursive power 'makes' race perceptible" in policy discourses (Ehlers, 2007, p. 333). Finally, I explore poststructural theories of subjectivity and identity, and return to Moya's (2006) "the logic of visibility" to consider how ascriptive identity and colorism function as effects of power in a predominantly white high school.

Effects of Power

First, to think about power, one must also think about the problem of the subject. As Foucault (1994) explains in "The Subject and Power" he is concerned how "modes of objectification transform human beings into subjects" (p. 326). Foucault's analysis of power is not complete without an explicit understanding that the problem of the subject is placed in relation to his thinking about power and knowledge (Rabinow, 1984). Foucault (1980) considers power as a "relation of force" and focuses his attention on the *how* of power, meaning *how is it exercised,* rather than attend to *who* or *what* of power. He argues "power is not something that is acquired, seized, or shared, something that one holds on to or allows to slip away; power is exercised from innumerable points, in the interplay of nonegalitarian and mobile relations" (Foucault, 1990, p. 94). His analysis of power distinguishes itself from foundational theories that consider power as a stable force of domination or of oppression, and instead asserts that power is dynamic and fluid, and "only exists in action" (Foucault, 1980, p. 89). This important distinction suggests power is relational and its effects move through individuals rather than suggest they are targets of power. For example, as recipients of policies, students are not without their own actions to accept and/or dismiss enactments of policy. These actions are dependent on the relations between individuals rather than from a constant force of power designed for total compliance.

Foucault's (1980) analysis of power expresses a concern for individuals and how "subjects are gradually, progressively, really and materially constituted through a multiplicity of organisms, forces, energies, materials, desires, thoughts etc." (p. 97). For Foucault (1980) the subject is "already one of the prime effects of power that certain

bodies, certain gestures, certain discourses, certain desires, come to be identified and constituted as individuals" (p. 98). This conception of the individual without agency is hardly Foucault's intention. In other words, although power constitutes the individual *it simultaneously* functions as a vehicle for power to circulate (emphasis my own, Foucault, 1980).

To understand *how* power is exercised, Foucault provides a conceptual framework to demonstrate the circulation of power through individuals. He relates this concept to a triangle, where there are two points of reference, rules of right (or the "domain of law") and the effects of truth, where one point provides a "formal delimitation of power" while at the same time, the other "produces and transmits power" which becomes the active force of power moving between these two points (Foucault, 1980, p. 93). Foucault argues that power is always "on the move" due to the relational forces between the rules of right and the effects of truth. This analysis of power includes placing knowledge with power to recognize the reciprocal relationship power/knowledge share. He argues "there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time, power relations" (Foucault, 1995, p. 27). Returning to his conceptual framework of power, truth – which represents knowledge – produces effects of power and constitute power/knowledge. This suggests an effect of power is the production of truths through power/knowledge discourses.

Foucault's explanation of discourse requires us to ask, how is it that one particular statement becomes a truth rather than another statement? In other words, whom do truths serve, and what do truths do, and how are they produced, or rather, what precedes them?

Discursively, discourses regulate statements, produce knowledge about subject/object, and constitute certain "truths;" materially, discourses produce norms that influence behaviors and actions of oneself and/or with interactions with others. Discourses are productive to power, in that "there are a manifold relations of power which permeate, characterise and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse" (Foucault, 1980, p. 93). Power is dependent, if you will, on discourses that speak to and enact the production of knowledge (Foucault refers to this as an "economy" of discourses). This does not mean power disappears or retreats in the absence of discourse but suggests discourses function as an effect of power. For example, doing racial equity work implied particular meanings to administrators and staff members in relation to the Racial Educational Equity Policy, which suggested equity "benefits all students and our entire community" (Racial Educational Equity Policy, p. 2). Equity work, or *doing equity work*, always and deliberately focused on race and the academic achievement and behaviors of students of color by a predominantly white staff. However, when S.R.E. students were *doing equity work*, their focus was on the behaviors and interactions between administrators and staff with students of color. From this example, discourses are neither "uniform or stable" and can be "both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling-block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy" (Foucault, 1990, pp. 100 – 101).

In "Subject and Power," Foucault (1994) proposes an examination of power relations that

> […] implies more relations between theory and practice. It consists in taking the forms of resistance against different forms of power as a starting point. To use another metaphor, it consists in using this resistance as a chemical catalyst so as to bring to light power relations, locate their position, find out their point of application and the methods used. Rather than analyzing power from the point of view of its internal rationality, it consists of analyzing power relations through the antagonism of strategies. (p. 329)

This suggests an analysis of power can be understood as an analysis of strategies (Foucault, 1994). If power is a relational force that moves and circulates through individuals – regulating, governing, restricting, naming, norming, etc. – Foucault (1994) argues it will be met with certain acts of resistance. Rather than attempting to locate the origins of power (which Foucault believes is problematic), an analysis of power requires us to consider how power functions and to pay attention to strategies that individuals deploy in response to power.

> Power is exercised over free subjects, and only insofar as they are 'free.' By this we mean individual or collective subjects who are faced with a field of possibilities in which several kinds of conduct, several ways of reacting and modes of behavior are available (Foucault, 1994, p. 342).

Understanding the effects of power involves analyzing power away from a "center" or starting point, by its extremities, where it intends to locate itself and "produce real effects" (Foucault, 1980, p. 97). Acknowledging how power circulates and that power relations are inherently relational, the productive *effects* of power are observed through the "practices of people" (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 56). For example, data gathered from participant observations and focus group sessions I noticed several iterations of power relations between S.R.E. students and each other, with administrators, with staff members, with family and community members, the school body, and with the PPS school board. Likewise, such power relations included me and S.R.E. students, staff and administrators, students' families, and so on. Thus, through the "practices of people"

power is an active force as it moves through a "productive network.

Foucault (1980) argues, "what makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse" (p. 119). He sees power functioning through a "productive network which runs through the whole social body" (Foucault, 1980, p. 119). In other words, power is productive because its produces more than just negative consequences for individuals.

Foucault's analysis of power is challenging to distill within the allotted pages of this review, however this discussion outlines some of his thinking about power in ways that influence my understanding of power. His contributions to social theory and their prolific applications across the field of education are quite expansive. I now consider how this work is taken up in the field of critical educational policy and further explore Foucault's thinking with attention to the discursive and material effects of power in social issue policies, such as diversity, inclusion, and/or equity.

"Divergent Discourses": Power, Policy, and Race

In *Foucault, Power and Education*, Stephen J. Ball (2013) argues *divergent discourses* represent the discursive field where "new and old, confront one another, in which some are marginalized or subjugated and others are appropriated" in racial equity work (p. 23). In the context of my project, "divergent discourses" represent the rules and structures that constitute certain truths around racial equity. The concept of divergent discourses contextualizes one of my research questions: How do S.R.E. youth/students of color and white youth/students navigate racial equity discourses that are embedded in the

Racial Educational Equity Policy and enacted by staff and administrators in a predominantly white high school? I think about this question, both empirically *and* analytically, because I have certain theoretical assumptions about discourse and racial equity, *and* I can observe actions and behaviors by students when administrators and staff enact the racial equity policy in classrooms, hallways, equity meetings, etc. Divergent discourses represent the differing, conflicting, opposing, and sometimes contradictory ways that students, staff, administrators, and families may be "folded" into policy work (Webb & Gulson, 2013). Ball (2015) argues that "we do not *do* policy, policy *does* us" (emphasis original, p. 307). This understanding of policy and its effects, including those on the receiving end of policy, draw attention to the discursive practices of policy discourses. In this section, I explore how discourse and policy function as effects of power. I also examine how racial equity discourses are mobilized as "truth claims and constitute rather than reflect social reality" (Ball, 2015, p. 307). I expand on my previous discussion about policies that promote equity, diversity, and inclusion to examine how these policy discourses function as "regimes of truth" to stabilize race and racialized identities (Foucault, 1980).

"Policy discourses provide us with ways of thinking and talking about our institutional selves, to ourselves and to others; in other words, they form a 'regime of truth' […]" (Ball, 2015, p. 307). Policy discourses function to rationalize, normalize, legitimize, and privilege certain truth claims, or statements, over other truths about schools, teachers, administrators, students, and families. However, it is important to understand that power moves through all of the subjects of policy, whether they are enacting the policy or receiving the policy. Power is exercised through divergent policy

discourses by positioning subjects in relation to each other and within regimes of truths. For example, students are discursively positioned in relation to other students, teachers, and/or administrators through "dividing practices" that classify, contrast, and evaluate them individually and/or collectively (Foucault, 1994). Dividing practices make subjects visible in specific ways that constitute certain conditions, assumptions, and behaviors in policy discourses reflecting liberal social concerns such as "diversity," "inclusion," and "equity." Racial identities are discursively constructed and produced in policy discourses, and therefore are unstable and incomplete (Ehlers, 2008). Discursively constructing race and racial differences relies on the workings of power/knowledge to establish and legitimize not only racial differences but to constitute racial identities in policy discourses, which is an effect of power.

Recognizing that school policy and the concept of race are historically significant, I ask how power is exercised through policy discourses that acknowledge racial differences through "equity," "inclusion," and "diversity" policies? After researching a diversity policy at a Catalonian high school, Ríos-Rojas (2014) argues policy discourses that take up social issues are paradoxical in that what is often expressed in the policy is enacted through contradictions of the policy's intention. She explains, for example, that "even as [diversity] was celebrated and shrouded in liberal appeals to tolerance and cosmopolitanism, it was also something requiring management and disciplining" (Ríos-Rojas, 2014, p. 3). Here, examples of discursive and material effects of policy discourses exemplify the paradox of school policy and remind us that discourse is more than what is spoken or not spoken, but also has physical consequences to the subjects of policy. Policy discourse embraces diversity yet, at the same time, distinguishes between the subjects of

the policy through dividing practices, in this case "immigrant" and "native" students. In a policy intended to celebrate diversity, subjects of the policy are discursively read by staff and administrators as those who belong ("citizens"), compared to those who do not belong ("immigrants"), who are then managed and disciplined in ways different than native students. Thus, the role of the "immigrant" becomes an *object* of a diversity agenda that functions to racialize and discursively to "other" non-native students in relation to native students rather than promote inclusionary practices (Ríos-Rojas, 2014, p. 4).

Adding to these concerns, Saavedra and Marx (2016) argue policy discourses normalize how students are "gendered, classed, and racialized" through "careful discourse management of top-down reform and policies" that contribute to surveillance and control (pp. 42 – 43). By tracing how discursive practices function in schools, Saavedra and Marx (2016) examine how bodies and subjectivities are positioned by classroom management policies designed to improve national standardized test scores where both teachers and students are affected by discourses of surveillance and control. Rather than thinking about the who or what of power, the authors consider how power is exercised through the bodies of predominantly white teachers and linguistic and ethnic minority students: "Through these policies, educators become discursive subjects, entangled in a web of national discourses simultaneously configuring particular subjects and making them the product of dominant values in education (white, middle class, Anglo-American English speaking)" (Saavedra & Marx, 2016, p. 49). This example recognizes how subjects of policy, including teachers, administrators, and students, are positioned within policy discourses.

Webb and Gulson (2013) propose another way to conceptualize the effects of policy discourse on the subjects of policy:

> [P]olicy is always (already) contested; moreover, it is a process whereby policy contradictions, indeterminacies, and contingencies are folded into policy, and subsequently, folded into subjects. For instance, even in the eventual political compromises that produce educational policy, policies maintain a number of political contestations folded within them, and these end up folding subjects during implementation. (p. 54)

"Folding" provides an important visualization of how the subject is constituted by policy, along with its "contradictions, indeterminacies, and contingencies," to underscore the inherent tensions of divergent discourses. For example, despite district attempts to address and mitigate the effects of educational inequities for students of color in PPS schools, the implementation of the Racial Educational Equity Policy ensures "all students" will benefit from educational equity. Thus, racial equity is intended not just for students of color but for *all* students. It is also significant to recognize the political nature of policy work and its paradoxical effects when attempting to promote diversity, inclusion, or equity-based policies. These policies are fraught with conflict and struggle, from inception to enactment, and are conceptualized in racialized discourses that work to constitute the subject of policy through the "rigors of visibility" (Ball, 2015, p. 308). Thus, "folding" is representative of the precarious positions between policy actors – namely those receiving or enacting a policy – who are always present in divergent discourses.

Youth Subjectivity and Identity: Sites of Struggle

Foucault gives much attention to the constitution of the subject, or self, through his work on power. The problem of the subject is discursively constituted by forms of

knowledge which produce a certain "economy" of discourses that attempt to stabilize race and youth/student, even if temporarily. Foucault (1997/2003) argues,

> It is therefore, I think, a mistake to think of the individual as a sort of elementary nucleus, a primitive atom or some multiple, inert matter to which power is applied, or which is struck by a power that subordinates or destroys individuals. In actual fact, one of the first effects of power is that it allows, bodies, gestures, discourses, and desires to be identified and constituted as something individual. The individual is not, in other words, power's opposite number; the individual is one of power's first effects. (p. 30)

My final theoretical section situates youth/student subjectivities and identities in racial equity policy discourses at a predominantly white school in a predominantly white city. Foucault (1980) calls for an "ascending analysis of power" that starts

> from its infinitesimal mechanisms, which each have their own history, their own trajectory, their own techniques and tactics, and then see[s] how these mechanisms of power have been – and continue to be – invested, colonised, utilsed, involuted, transformed, displaced, extended, etc., by ever more general mechanisms. (p. 99)

The location of these discourses draws specific attention to the site of the racial equity work that is being enacted in one of ten district high schools for youth/students. The Racial Educational Equity Policy is intended to improve the lives of students of color and white students (this is specifically stated in the policy), therefore it is germane to this study to consider the social construct of race alongside poststructural conceptions of subjectivity and identity.

In thinking about the constitution of the 'raced' subject, Ehlers (2008) argues "discursive power 'makes' race perceptible, because it teaches or instructs people to read by it – and the racial meanings that are generated within this form of power condition the organization of the individual's relations, their world, their comprehension of others and of themselves" (p. 333). This discursive power does not only come from others but comes

from the self; however it is relational. Poststructural theories view the self as always in process and produced within power relations, and subjectivity is not stable, but "constructed in relationships with others and in everyday practices" (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, pp. 52 - 53). Subjectivities and identities are socially constructed in ways that serve particular interests. Subjectivities are of the self, and represent conscious and unconscious beliefs, behaviors/actions, and emotions constituted by discourses produced through social and cultural practices. Identities may be socially, culturally, and institutionally assigned however, the subject can refuse – as one can with subjectivities (see Jackson, 2013) – an identity imposed on them. Thus, subjectivity and identity can be considered "sites of struggle" (Ball, 2015).

Identity and subjectivity are often internalized by the individual who assumes them. Butler (1990) argues this internalization is an act of "performativity" and that "identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (p. 24 – 25). Ehlers (2008) applies Butler's performativity theory to racial discourse and argues that it functions "as a group of statements that govern the 'truths,' practices, value systems, beliefs, and assumptions pertaining to race" (p. 336). Power/knowledge work to regulate the formation of racial subjects and invest in the production of racial discourses, even if these discourses are fractured, multiple, and contradictory. As Ehlers (2008) asserts,

> […] in order to claim that the subject is formed in discourse is to acknowledge that this formation is marked by the inextricable workings of power and knowledge; that power, in this operation, is always mutating or shifting; that power works at both local and broader levels in a system of double conditioning; and that contradictory discourses exist simultaneously. (p. 337)

Again, power produces things, it produces realities and truths; therefore, "racial subjects

are effects of power" (Ehlers, 2008). However, power is "everywhere" and subjects have agency to work against such realities and truths. Foucault argues (1994) "[a]t the very heart of the power relationship, and constantly provoking it, are the recalcitrance of the will and the intransigence of freedom" (p. 342). For example, unknowingly, the justifications to create the S.R.E. club by students of color pushed against the assault of deficit discourses about the underachievement of students of color narrated by the Racial Educational Equity Policy and carried out through school's equity work. Also, many students in S.R.E. self-identified as bi-racial and multi-racial students, and demanded more nuanced and complex conversations about race in their classes.

In other words, narratives from students of color not only included racial equity in academic achievement (they were concerned about academic tracking) *but* also their day-to-day experiences in a predominantly white school taught by predominantly white teachers.

Thinking about race, subjectivity, and identity in a predominantly white school, Moya's (2006) application of the "logic of visibility" provides another layer of context to the workings of power/knowledge. The "logic of visibility" is conceptualized with ascriptive identities, or socially imposed identities, that include racial and gender categories. Adding to this concept, I propose thinking about it as a "logic of *hypervisibility*" in a predominantly white school. In this context, hypervisibility refers to the heightened sense of one's perceived racial identity based on skin color when located in a space where there is an assumed dominant racial group. Moya challenges these ascriptive identities because such "logic" is based on perceived visibility and argues this kind of reasoning is inherently flawed when determining one's racial identity. Using

visual and textual mediums, Claudia Rankin's (2014) *Citizen* highlights the sense of invisibility/hypervisibility by contrasting black bodies to white bodies; black bodies are rendered both invisible (none or too little) *and* hypervisible (excessive and surveilled) in spaces dominated by white people. In predominantly white schools, students of color may be discursively and materially invisible/hypervisible in various contexts, such as bodies physically present but invisible inside classrooms on the one hand, and bodies neither represented in the curriculum nor in images in the classroom on the other hand.

Adding to this concept is *colorism*, or skin color that privileges light-skinned people of color over dark-skinned people (Hunter, 2007). In predominantly white schools, colorism is a signifier of race that marks bodies of students of color invisible/hypervisible. That is, do they *appear* as a person of color to someone else and how does one know? Ehlers (2008) cites Foucault's process of normalization, an effect of power, that forms the racial subject by comparing, differentiating, hierarchizing, homogenizing bodies, in which what is not normal is defined (p. 338). This normalization process functions, even if temporarily, to "fix" racial possibilities in opposition to black or brown, and white as the norm in white spaces, such as schools. And it can also *shift*, where black and brown bodies collectively identify themselves against white as norm in white spaces (see Tatum, 1997/2017). For example, among students of color whose subjective self-identifications as biracial or multiracial are discursively and materially "seen" more or less white, or more or less of color (Williams, 2009). Colorism and the logic of hypervisibility further the understanding of the effect of power through the process of normalization.

To understand how perceptions of identity and colorism function as effects of

power in a predominantly white high school Chris Wheedon (2004) emphasizes,

> access to the forms of subjectivity and identity constituted for the individual within different discourses is structured through power relations of inclusion and exclusion, often based on visual signifiers of difference that acquire particular meanings in racist, heterosexist and patriarchal societies (p. 13).

Arguably, visual signifiers of racial differences are intrinsically more heightened in spaces where perceived dominant groups are the "norm," where power relations of inclusion and exclusion are perceptible. Visual signifiers function in complex and complicated ways that are not solely determined by the perceived dominant group but can also operate from marginalized groups. Thus, discourses about race prompt careful considerations of the *how* of power in racial equity policies.

Conclusion

To analyze two of my research questions, I discussed Foucault's (1980) thinking on power to consider the *how* of power and its effects through discourse: (1) What happens when S.R.E. youth/students of color and white youth/students become involved in racial equity work in a predominantly white high school, and (2) how do S.R.E. youth/students of color and white youth/students navigate racial equity discourses embedded in the Racial Educational Equity Policy and enacted by staff and administrators in a predominantly white high school? Critical policy studies considers how "discursive power 'makes' race perceptible" in policy discourses (Ehlers, 2007, p. 333). Foucault's work on the subject and other poststructural contributions of subjectivity and identity were discussed to situate youth/students and race in racial discourses. I took Moya's (2006) concept of "the logic of visibility" and extended this understanding to my own concept, the *logic of hypervisibility*, to understand how perceptions of identity and

colorism function as effects of power in a predominantly white high school. This framework informs my understanding of the effects of power and racial equity work through policy enactments by students at a predominantly white high school.

CHAPTER III:

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

During the summer of 2012, after the first year of my doctoral studies in Critical Sociocultural Studies in Education, I had the privilege to attend a week-long workshop by the Public Science Project Institute (PSP) at the City University of New York. During the week, I was introduced to Critical Participatory Action Research (or PAR), a framework for "creating knowledge that is rooted in the belief that those most impacted by research should take the lead in framing the questions, design, methods, analysis and determining what products of actions might be the most useful in effecting change" (Torre & Fine, 2006, p. 456). After working at the same high school for many years, I had come to the belief that the ongoing cycle of school reforms – where adults were always attempting to change processes to make education more successful for students, particularly for underrepresented students – was not working. Of course, I cannot claim that such an epiphany was mine alone, however during my week at CUNY, as I learned about the theoretical assumptions and methodological practices deployed by PAR researchers, I envisioned how such an approach might work with students-as-researchers in my high school.

I experienced something significant after reading Arjun Appadurai's (2006) "A Right to Research." I remember where I was while reading it and the effect it had on me as a teacher, researcher-in-the-making, adult, etc. As I look back at the pages of his paper, it is clear from my highlighting and notes in the margins that Appadurai's words had an effect on me. Connections were being made and re-made for me: Foucault's subjugated

knowledges, what is knowledge and how do we know what we know, why is research positioned in the ways that it is (especially in schools), what is my role as a researcher, what are the roles of those I am researching, can we research together, and on and on.

Although I have had time to read "A Right to Research" many more times and pose some critical questions to Appadurai's argument that the ability to conduct research should be conceived as "more universal and elementary," one point continues to resonate with me: students can do do research about their own lives to improve their day-to-day experiences in school practices. My concerns for universalizing liberal discourses that include the concept of rights has greatly shifted in the process of this study. I have observed on many occasions the co-opting of students and "student voice" to forward policy enactments claiming to be part of the school's equity work, but instead end up essentializing and tokenizing students of color in a predominantly white high school. However, I view Appadurai's argument to democratize research – that is, to recalibrate the research process and recognize its effects of power – as a worthwhile endeavor for students whose lives have been researched through broad strokes of positivist, data-driven approaches so often used in education. Thus, I find myself in precarious and contentious positions, epistemologically, ontologically, and methodologically, as I seek to advocate for school youth to have the "right to research" and participate in policy decisions that impact their lives, while recognizing the potential dangers of liberal, emancipatory projects that could co-opt, essentialize, and/or tokenize students' experiences and voices.

My research is guided by Foucault's theoretical and methodological goals to analyze power and its effects when high school students become involved in racial equity

work. I am influenced how poststructuralist scholars interrupt and interrogate binaries between policy and school actors involved in various enactments of a district policy, and question systems of knowledge that are prioritized and privileged over other forms of knowledge. In poststructuralist theory, language, through discursive practices, is the "common factor in the analysis of social organization, social meanings, power and individual consciousness" (Wheedon, 1987/1997, p. 21). In thinking with poststructuralism, I consider language to be an important site for political struggle, where meanings of words are contested and in conflict, and produce thoughts, behaviors, and actions representative of such contestations. At the very least, my study intends to examine contested meanings through discursive practices of racial equity as it is conceptualized in a policy and enacted by different social actors in a predominantly white school.

My analysis is informed by critical policy scholars working with poststructuralism to deconstruct, destabilize, and trouble fixed assumptions about race, equity, and youth subjectivities and identities, particularly in predominantly white schools. In thinking with theory (see Jackson & Mazzei, 2012), I visualize my study as an entanglement of many ongoing processes where there were no "breaks" between the development of my research questions, fieldwork, data collection and methods, and analysis, mostly because I teach at the site of my research and with students who volunteered to participate in my study. Thus, my research process was in constant motion, rearticulating and responding to my professional and personal engagements both in/out of the field, as were the tensions of my positionality as adviser/researcher/teacher of the S.R.E. club and leadership class. Although this study is not an ethnography by traditional or conventional

standards, as a staff member at this site for over 18 years, I have had an insider's view within the school. My empirical and analytical questions in this project are:

- What tensions arise when S.R.E. youth/students of color and white youth/students become involved in racial equity work in a predominantly white high school?
- How are S.R.E. youth/students of color and white youth/students positioned by staff and administration to be part of race and equity policy enactment (as recipients of policy and/or partners in enacting policy)?
- How do S.R.E. youth/students of color and white youth/students navigate racial equity discourses embedded in the Racial Educational Equity Policy and enacted by staff and administrators in a predominantly white high school?
- What are the effects of power when S.R.E. youth/students of color and white youth/students become involved in racial equity work in a predominantly white school?

Ontological and Epistemological Assumptions

Thinking about what I learned from PAR and Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) helps me work against potential epistemological, ontological, and methodological binaries that arise when doing research with youth, such as adult/child and/or teacher/student relations. Although the work represented in this dissertation is not a YPAR project, there are certain theoretical, ontological, and methodological influences that contributed to the various ways I approached this research, particularly since I frame

my unit of analysis around the experiences of youth involved in racial equity work.

Working cautiously with Appadurai's concept of the right to research by youth-as-students in their schools, I heuristically explored multiple "truths" – through experiences shared by students and myself – about racial equity work to understand the effects of power between policy and its enactments, as well as interactions with various social actors at a predominantly white school. As a white, female teacher/researcher, working with students of color and white students, how I chose to "locate [myself] in the tensions that characterize fields of knowledge," requires me to eschew forms of knowledge and research practices that offered neat and tidy analyses of such work (Lather, 2006, p. 47). Poststructuralism reveals tensions that work to destabilize what we think we "know" and deconstruct the realities that we believe to be "truths." Working against technical forms of research that claim *truths* (where objectivity, authenticity, and legitimacy are normalized) and the researcher is the authority on the "subject," poststructuralism critiques how knowledge claims in research are historically, linguistically, socially, culturally and politically mediated (emphasis added; Lather, 2001; St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000).

Elizabeth Adams St. Pierre's (2014) essay, "A Brief and Personal History of Post Qualitative Research: Toward 'Post Inquiry,' encourages me to *"begin with the epistemological and ontological commitments of the analysis* – […] and use it to think about whatever [you're] interested in thinking about" (italics in original, p. 10). To me, epistemological commitments of the analysis begin with my engagement of Foucault's understanding of power, to ask the *how* of power, and then following his methodological precautions in my analysis. The ontological commitments of an analysis of power

required me to push against established and accepted scientific *truths* of "conventional humanist qualitative methodology" that influenced how I think about subjects in my study, assumptions about language, subjectivity, knowledge, and truth. (St. Pierre, 2014, p. 2). In *The Order of Things*, Foucault (1966/1989) offers a salient critique to Western epistemological and ontological assumptions by tracing its origins in relation to scientific consciousness:

> For two centuries, Western discourse was the locus of ontology. When it named the being of all representation in general, it was philosophy: theory of knowledge and analysis of ideas. When it ascribed to each thing represented the name that was fitted to it, and laid out the grid of a well-made language across the whole field of representation, then it was science – nomenclature and taxonomy. (p. 132)

Foucault's critique of the formation and constitution of scientific knowledges requires me to understand the complex relationship between epistemology, as a system of knowledge, and ontology, the practices established within that system of knowledge. This understanding not only affects the "doing" of social science research, but also has significant methodological importance to thinking about data, power, youth and voice, and my positionality as an insider researcher. The next section focuses on epistemological, ontological, and methodological assumptions that influenced the approaches I took in this project.

Pushing Against Norms: Rethinking Data

In K – 12 public schools, data often constitute systems of knowledge that privilege "data-driven" or "evidence-based" policy decisions that are often made without, or with very little, theoretical context that places data alongside theory. However, some policies reference theoretical beliefs within the policy as well as in its enactments (E.g.

the policy discussed in this study and refers to critical race theory). Data, as represented in educational research and in schools, produces certain effects when used to describe particular narratives about students' lives in school.

Some scholars argue that new critiques are needed to rethink traditional/conventional humanist qualitative researchers views about data, in both collection and analysis (Childers, 2014; Freeman, 2014; Jackson & Mazzei, 2012; Lather, 2006; St. Pierre & Jackson, 2014). Post-qualitative research, (postmodernism, poststructuralism, postcolonialism, critical feminism and others), challenge traditional responses to research by disrupting normalizing discourses about what counts as knowledge or that which is knowable from qualitative research practices. This includes examining how research is structured as a technical and scientific process.

It has been argued that scientific knowledges constitute discursive formations that privilege the researcher as the "knowing subject" to "capture" and "contain" the "authentic" experiences of their subjects in research (Eisner, 1997; Lather, 2001, 2006; Scott, 1991; St. Pierre, 2014; St. Pierre & Jackson, 2014). St. Pierre and Jackson (2014) argue that interpretive approaches lead us to imagine that "data exist[s] out there waiting in the real world to be found, collected, and coded" (p. 715). Introductory texts in qualitative research generally recommend casting a wide net to capture as much as data possible (Creswell, 2013; Glesne, 2010). Again, such approaches assume that data is ever-present, and tacitly privileges words captured and data counted during collection as "supposedly uncontaminated by theoretical interpretation" (St. Pierre & Jackson, 2014, p. 716).

In *Thinking with Theory*, Jackson and Mazzei (2012) propose a methodological

approach with data, that is to "think with theory" alongside collecting data, to illustrate how knowledge is opened up and proliferated rather than foreclosed and simplified" (p. vii). Pushing against traditional qualitative approaches, the researchers argue using theory throughout all stages of the research process – before going in the field, in the field, collecting data, analyzing data, and representing data – and consider epistemological and ontological limitations of data collection by recognizing when data gets collected, participants have "already 'made meaning' of their experiences" (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 3). Specifically, they encourage researchers to think about data as "always in a process of re-telling and re-membering" (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. ix). Similarly, Anyon (2009) describes the researcher's approach as a "data/theory mix" to illustrate its productive and relational process (p. 5).

These examples helped me mitigate the rigidity of a conventional research process and instead allowed more fluid, flexible positions for me during various interactions and phases in my research. For example, I knew I wanted to conduct student focus groups with my participants, however I did not consider, beyond transcribing each session to analyze, that listening to the recordings of each session could potentially affect my thinking about the effects of power. Because of my relationship with the students in S.R.E., there was much more meaning to me conveyed by the sound of their voices which was quite productive to my analysis. This process was helpful because it reminded me that I, too, in conversation with them.

Understanding data, even its limitations, challenges me to resist making meaning, essentially to "knowing" something about some phenomenon or event, from the work with my participants, even if I was there with them. We experience these events in

different ways, some of our experiences are collective, some are individual, and some are a bit of both. As scholars have suggested, what is shared to/with us from social realities are "partial truths" (Clifford, 1986; Hall, 1997), and how we make meaning from partial truths is at best, "situated knowledge" (Haraway, 1988). In other words, I tried to "see" and "read" the field differently by situating myself, the participants in the study, and my encounters with other staff members and/or administrators alongside my reading of Foucault's concept of power.

Analyzing Power

From the beginning of this project, I experienced much trepidation by bringing Foucault's analytical work into my theoretical framework. Ball (2013) provides a salient warning to those venturing to "put Foucault to work" in their theoretical framework: "Foucault is routinely misread and misused by educational researchers" (p. 18). As I move forward with this awareness, I acknowledge that my "borrowings" from Foucault's work and how I apply them to my analysis are fraught with certain challenges. Finally, in my desire to understand how power functions across a network of relationships, students, staff, administrators, the school, families, policies, and school board officials, I found Foucault's power analysis productive to analyze the tensions between policy actors when enacting a racial equity policy in a predominantly white high school.

In thinking about power in context with youth/students involved in racial equity work, Foucault (1978/1990) encouraged me to be mindful that "where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power" (p. 95). Meaning, power is inherently everywhere, as are

its tactics and mechanisms, and yet there is also recognition of resistance. In this Foucault (1978/1990) is clear that there is no "great Refusal, no soul of revolt, source of all rebellions," but instead, "there is a plurality of resistances, each of them a special case; resistances that are possible, necessary, improbable" (p. 96). "A plurality of resistances" recognizes the active and productive effects of power, avoiding the conception that there is one source of rebellion or resistance. For example, the structure of school inherently produces power relations between youth-as-students and adults-as-teachers/administrators. By examining a relationship of power, such as the equity work decided by S.R.E. students as opposed to by administrators and/or climate or equity staff members, we can understand that resistance can be *a response to* power. Of course, there can be a variety of responses or reactions to power, producing many results, however there are multiple possibilities. Thus, to consider the "how" of power, rather than who possesses it or why someone uses it, provides a more productive analysis to examine the effects of power.

Foucault's analytical methods, "how" and "what happens," were instructive to my research questions that explored the effects of power when students became involved in racial equity work. As Foucault (1994) explains,

> [to] begin the analysis with a "how" is to introduce the suspicion that power as such does not exist. It is, in any case, to ask oneself what contents one has in mind when using this grand, all-embracing, and reifying term; it is to suspect that an extremely complex configuration of realities is allowed to escape while one endlessly marks time before the double question: what is power, and where does it come from? The flat empirical little question, "What happens?" is not designed to introduce by stealth a metaphysics or an ontology of power but, rather, to undertake a critical investigation of the thematics of power. (pp. 336-337)

His early work on power outlines the nature of power through an explanation of several

methodological precautions to consider for analyzing power. While this is not prescriptive, (Foucault is anything *but* prescriptive), it was helpful to my study. There is much that he says about each of these methodological precautions, however in this section I focused on parts of his work that are germane to my analysis. First, he argues that the researcher "try and locate power at its extreme points of its exercise, where it is always less legal in character" (p. 97). Second, we should be concerned with where power "installs itself and produces its real effects" (p. 97). Third, "power must be analysed as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain" (p. 98). Fourth, "one must conduct an *ascending* analysis of power, starting, that is from its infinitesimal mechanisms…" (emphasis in original, p. 99). And fifth, the "major mechanisms of power" are through its "production of effective instruments for the formation and accumulation of knowledge – methods of observation, techniques of registration, procedures for investigation and research, apparatuses of control" (p. 102).

In his later work, *Society Must Be Defended*, Foucault (1997/2003) argues that an analysis of power should begin "with the power relationship itself, with the actual or effective relationship of domination, and see how that relationship itself determines the elements to which it is applied" (p. 45). He insists we do not ask "subjects how, why, and by what right they can agree to being subjugated, but *showing* how actual relations of subjugation manufacture subjects" (emphasis mine, p. 45). With Foucault's epistemological, ontological, and methodological guidance, I tried to examine how power functioned through the relations between S.R.E. students in the club and between S.R.E. students in the leadership class, and with administrators and staff. Thus, my focus was to

understand the power relationships present rather than how students perceived their positions as subjugated or dominated by staff members and/or administrators.

Thinking with Poststructuralism: Race, Equity, and Student Voice

In working with predominantly youth/students of color in a predominantly white school, Foucault (1980) reminds us that régimes of truth produce discourses that not only privilege not only particular ways of knowing but also are ordered in such a way as to constitute that knowledge as a "science." The concept of race is produced and constituted through/by science, therefore it is important to resist positivist forms of policy research that attempt to identify problems, provide solutions through interventions that do little to disrupt the power relations between researcher and those included in such projects. It is my responsibility as the researcher to know and understand how "[r]esearch has not been neutral in its objectification of the Other" (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, p. 39).

Poststructuralism helped me to think about ways to interrogate power, knowledge, and race. Yet its critique of the self and of identity questions the recognition of individuals and/or of a collective who believe there is a choice in how they want to be identified and whom they want to identify with. Poststructuralism suggests identities are socially constructed, and as such, forms of knowledge that seek to stabilize these identities are not without contradictions and ideological contestations. While it is widely acknowledged and accepted that race is a social construct, many scholars recognize race and ethnic identities (and, for that matter, gender, sexuality, and class) are nonetheless tied to political, cultural, linguistic, and economic contestations and conflicts about race that have made meaning about what it means to identify racially and/or ethnically

(Alcoff, et al., 2006; Lipsitz, 2011; Pollack, 2004; Maira & Soep, 2005). As Pollack (2004) argues "all Americans, every day, *are* reinforcing racial distinctions and racialized thinking by using race labels; but we are also reinforcing racial inequality by refusing to use them" (p. 4, emphasis in original).

Emirbayer and Desmond (2011) insist researchers studying about race must "acknowledge that reflexive thinking entails much more than observing how one's social position (racial identity or class background, for example) affects one's scientific analyses" (p. 574). In doing work that requires attention to reflexivity and race, I considered how my academic gaze affected various stages of the research project, beginning with breaking with traditional (read: white) researchers doing research on race (Emirbayer & Desmond, 2011; Lather, 2006). And, noting how external and internal factors shape race consciousness, particularly in policy work, there is a need to provide better responses to race-related concerns in K-12 schools. As a researcher/teacher positioned in relation to students, I believe this understanding is exceptionally important. In sites of K - 12 schooling, race-related research is important because youth are quite capable of making meaning of their lives if opportunities are provided to them (Alcoff, et al., 2006; Maira & Soep, 2005). To confront potential problems of representation in discussions about racial equity, opportunities must be provided for students of color to be active participants in making meaning about their experiences in schools, particularly in predominantly white schools.

In "Slips That Show and Tell: Fashioning Multiculture as a Problem of Representation," Britzman, Santiago-Válles, Jiménz-Múñoz and Lamash (1993) cite Michele Wallace's (1991) work in deconstructing the binaries between equity and

difference:

> Whereas equity concerns access to the contexts and structures of inclusiveness, visibility, and attainment of civil rights – and thus references the conditions for development and progress – difference confounds the terms of equal treatment with subjectivity, relations of power, and the respective identities produced in the social realm. Difference concerns the refusal to collapse the specificities of identity with the imperatives of equal access. (p. 190)

The knowledge of difference, of culture, or of the specificities of identity, highlights the problem of "the slippery and shifting meanings of equity and difference concerns how individual and collective perspectives on these terms become implicated in larger discourses of social regulation" (Briztman, et al., p. 190). The concern is how certain knowledges form, particularly racialized knowledges, and stabilize racial identities while subjugating or dismissing other forms of knowledge as well as normalizing formations of identity as natural and acceptable representations. Finally, complicating fixed, static identities of youth-as-students is the concept of student voice as an inclusive practice to encourage and promote students to participate in school-based decisions.

Epistemologically and ontologically, poststructural scholars critique the concept of *voice* used in qualitative research methods as well as the beliefs that voice validates and authenticates research. Mazzei and Jackson (2009) argue "the privileging of voice in traditional qualitative research assumes that voice makes present the truth and *reflects* the meaning of an experience that has already happened" (emphasis in original, p. 4). Also, to "allow participants to speak" in research, avoids acknowledging the behind-the-scene research process where the researcher chooses what to include or not include in the presentation and analysis of their data (Mazzei & Jackson, 2009). Going further, youth research that celebrates and advocates for student voice in school issues often conflates how many students are actually involved in these projects, how student voice is collected

and whose voices are selected to be heard, as well as how their voice is being used by researchers. Should student voice involve a majority of students' voices at one school? Whom might that include at a predominantly white school that is enacting a racial equity policy?

The epistemological and ontological tensions that underlie voice and student voice in qualitative research are problematic: from collecting data using interviews, focus groups, and observations; to the subjectivities of participants and to the researcher; to the privileges of certain truths; and, recognizing the space and time between the field and our analysis of the data (St. Pierre, 2008). In my study, it was not possible to capture multiple perspectives of students involved in S.R.E. or those students not involved S.R.E., staff and administrators, and even family and community members. While I was in contact with multiple perspectives at many times during the research phase, I chose to pay attention to the effects of power only from the perspectives of students and myself, in my observations as their teacher and staff member, thus in certain ways I privileged these experiences over other experiences.

Poststructural readings about voice productively and importantly complicates the ways in which the concept of "student voice" is described and referenced in educational research and in schools. The scholarship helped to challenge my role as a researcher in relation to the voices of my participants in which I was both an insider *and* participant in the racial equity work with my students in S.R.E. I found it difficult to *not* privilege student voice as one of my primary methods for this study. Specifically, I had to rethink my assumptions and biases about student voice as an emancipatory and democratic project in schools for students.

An Insider's Considerations of Ethnographic Methods

In *Saints, Scholars, and Schizophrenics*, Scheper-Hughes (2001) argues,

> we now realize that there is no escape, no exit from the deeply subjective component of ethnographic research and writing. What is minimally required is a continuous and relentless form of self-criticism through which the anthropologist takes stock of her 'object relations' in the field and later throughout the process of writing culture. But the real dilemma is this: *How can we know what we know other than by filtering our observations and field experiences through the subjective categories of thinking and feeling – call them biases, if you will – that represent our particular ways of being in the world*… (emphasis added, p. 53).

How do we know what we know other than to try and recognize *how* we are filtering our observations and field experiences? Ethnographic methods require the researcher to assume particular positions in relation to the participants of her study. Specifically, ethnographic study "requires direct observation, it requires being immersed in the field situation, and it requires constant interviewing in all degrees of formality and casualness" (Spindler, 1997). As a teacher, parent, union member, and resident in the school's neighborhood for over 18 years, I believe I have met certain requirements for "being immersed" in this school community. My understanding of this research site is filtered by my situated experiences and the many roles I have taken at this particular high school and in this district. Through these experiences, I am not a stranger or an outsider looking in, but rather I am an *insider looking around*. As such, my experiences invariably filter my choices for data collection as well as my analysis.

Doing ethnographic work in qualitative research requires the researcher to draw on her participant-observation experiences to narrate a story to an audience who may not have been "there" to experience it. Drawing on anthropological descriptions of ethnography, Fetterman (2010) suggests "ethnography is about telling a credible,

rigorous, and authentic story," or as Geertz (1973) famously put it, to provide readers with a "thick description" of a culture through one's writings. Poststructural critiques of interpretive ethnographic methods within conventional qualitative research helped me to think about myself in relation to my research objectives, considering my close proximity with youth/student participants and the many experiences at this high school which I have known for most of my professional teaching career. Brown (1992) asserts that ethnographic researchers must engage in "deliberate attention to the power issues" between researcher and participant(s) and that "more extended, intimate, and committed contact between researcher and subject" is needed to challenge conventional ethnographic writing (p. A56). The power dynamic was constantly present in my project, and although I worked alongside students in S.R.E. club and leadership class, I was still their teacher. However, the relationships I created with the students, not only as their teacher, but also as an advocate and ally in the racial equity work they decided to address in their school, relied on Brown's "extended" and "committed" understanding between researcher and participant.

Poststructural critiques of ethnography – and for my purposes, ethnographic methods –disrupt conventional qualitative methods by challenging the authority of the ethnography and ethnographer. As Britzman (2000) argues

> Poststructuralist theories raise critical concerns about what it is that structures meanings practices, and bodies, about why certain practices become intelligible, valorized, or deemed as traditions, while other practices become discounted, impossible, or unimaginable. For poststructuralists, representation is always in crisis, knowledge is constitutive of power, and agency is constitutive effect, not the originator, of situated practices and histories. (pp. 29 – 30)

Knowledge of my site of research is based on my positionality as an insider as well as the teacher of S.R.E. This positionality allowed certain privileges with my youth/student

participants in racial equity work, as well as provided me access to equity meetings based on my status as a staff member and member of the equity team. Knowledge of the research site, students, staff, administration, the community, etc. informed my understanding of the problem I researched; however, this knowledge is only partial and incomplete, and limited by the privileges that granted me certain access in this community. These can be defined by what I am not: I am not a person of color, I am not a student, I am not an administrator, I am not a policymaker, etc. In other words, as much as I was "there" with students and in the school, participating and observing all of us "doing" racial equity work, I was not everywhere; how I chose to collect, represent, and analyze my data was based on my situated practices and history with this school, staff, administration, and students. My ethnographic accounts are always a "second glance" or 'after thoughts' of experiences occurring even if recording them in 'real' time" (Britzman, 2000, p. 30).

Hodkinson (2005) troubles what it means to conduct insider research, arguing that it is "non-absolute;" although it provides certain benefits to the researcher, it "requires a cautious and reflexive approach" (p. 131). I understand this to mean that we should not allow the researcher's description and analysis to be accepted as privileged truths. Also, disrupting the "absolute sense" of a researcher's status, that is, how one enters the field in an either/or position – insider *or* outsider – challenges how status, and even validity, are conditions of the researcher. My insider position does not give me complete knowledge of the problems I am investigating, and yet I had certain access and insight from this position. However, this position also had potential dangers associated with it, including but not limited to my authority as the researcher, as the teacher of S.R.E., as a staff

member, and parent of this school community. Thus, my commitment to this project was explicitly to the S.R.E. students involved in their racial equity work.

Researching *with* youth, as opposed to *about* them is tricky to do in a dissertation. I wanted to use ethnographic methods that allowed me to explore my research questions without creating formalized experiences with students with whom I am informally interact. Ethnography is both a process and a product of anthropology, as well as in qualitative research, and we must examine its methods as well as the narratives it produces about the subjects of research. Thus, ethnographic entanglements between the researcher and participant(s), and teacher and students, the researcher and staff and administration, were present in the methods selected for my project, which will be discussed in the Research Methods and Methodology section.

Research Methods and Methodology

This project explores the discursive practices between a district racial equity policy through its enactments in a high school by staff and administrators, and student involvement in racial equity work to address and improve racial inequities at a Pacific Northwest high school. This empirical study of one of ten high schools in the Portland Public Schools District examined the effects of power through students' experiences doing "equity work." In addition, correlations to broader issues around race, equity, youth subjectivities, student voice, and education policy were also considered in this analysis. This study does not provide suggestions for intervention or particular ways to problem-solve the issues raised in the analysis; rather, it aims to complicate taken-for-granted assumptions about school policies seeking to address racial inequities among students. It also argues that those who enact equity policies through various individuals or actors in

schools, especially at a predominantly white school/institution, should consider how policies are practices or acts of power (see Levinson, et al., 2009). Thus, assuming that a district policy will attend to the monumental task to create racial equity in all of its schools, as well as at a predominantly white school, is unlikely. Finally, my project explores the tensions experienced by youth-as-students as they enact parts of a racial equity policy through their perspectives of equity work.

Research Site

The research site is located in the largest school district in Oregon with over 49,000 students enrolled in 79 schools in 2017 – 2018. According to the district website, current student demographics in all schools include 16.3 percent Latino/a, 9.3 percent African American, 7.1 percent Asian, 0.6 percent Native American/Alaskan Native, 0.7 percent Pacific Islander, 56.1 percent white, 3.9 percent multi-racial, Asian/white, and 6.00 multi-racial, other ethnicities. More than 7 percent of the students do not speak English as their first language and over 23 percent receive free and reduced lunch. 14 percent of the students in the district receive special education services. According to state reporting, this school district includes more than 30 different languages, with English, Spanish, Russian, Vietnamese, Chinese, Arabic, Somali, Korean, Ukrainian, and Japanese as the top ten languages spoken in K-12 schools.

Student demographics obtained from the district during 2017-2018 show out of 1,609 students in the school, over 69 percent of the population is white, 2.8 percent African American, 9.4 percent Hispanic/Latino/a, 8.9 percent Asian, 0.6 percent Native American/Alaskan Native, 0.6 percent Pacific Islander, and 8.1 percent report multiple ethnicities. Thirteen percent of students receive free and reduced lunch. Students who

speak other languages besides English as their first language are not reported in this source.

Figure 1 provides a visual understanding regarding the racial demographics between students, staff, and administrators across the entire district in 2016 – 2017. According to the 2017 Oregon Educator Equity Report, there are more administrators of color than teachers of color across the school district; at Hamilton High School, there are two administrators of color and a predominantly white classified and teaching staff.

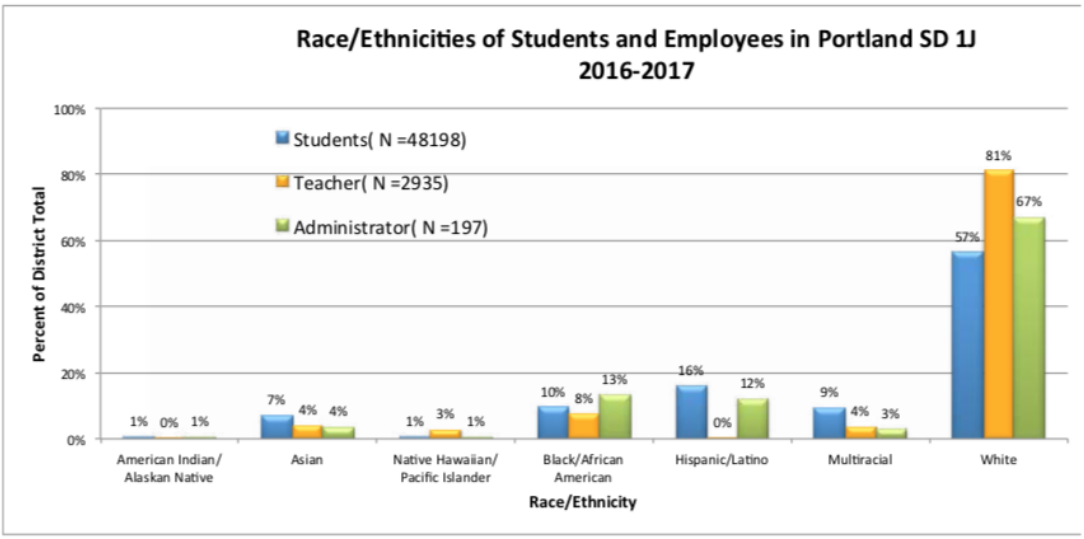

Figure 1. Race/ethnicities of students and employee data for Portland Public Schools presented by the 2017 Oregon Educator Equity Report.

In Figure 2, student racial demographics for Hamilton High School indicate white students compose the largest group at the school, with Hispanic, Asian, and "Multiple Races" as groups with relatively higher numbers than African American, Native American, and Pacific Islander. It should be noted that the racial demographic groups are identifiers used by the school and the district, and do not include the school's African students nor how students self-identified in the "Multiple Races" category.

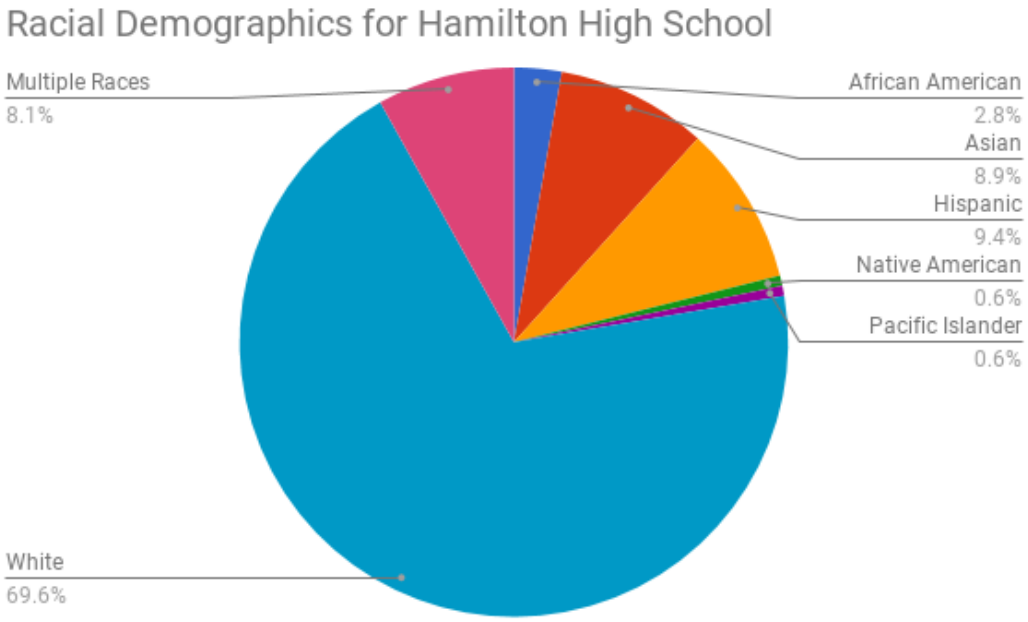

Figure 2. Racial demographics data prepared by S.R.E. Leadership class based on District reports of student enrollment figures in 2016 – 2017 at Hamilton High School.

The high school is located in an inner, southeast neighborhood of a metropolitan city, alongside a busy four-lane street that is one of the city's access points to the downtown area. It occupies one city block in a 3-story brick building, built in 1916. It is an urban site without a traditional campus for students to occupy in between classes or during lunch. The school is surrounded by a variety of mixed-use buildings, including businesses such as fast food restaurants, strip clubs, a bowling alley, second-hand clothing shops, as well as a large city park and various types of housing. Across the street from the high school, adjacent to a large city park, is the largest low income and affordable housing complex near Hamilton High, operated by Catholic Charities for single mothers, refugees, and homeless families.

As this brief composite of the research site shows, this school is located in what is typically referred to as an urban, inner city school. However, according to a 2017 city real

estate report, neighborhoods closest to the school show median home increases between 10 – 20% and the "hottest" area to buy a home (DeNies, 2017). This data correlates to the Gentrification and Displacement Study (Bates, 2012) commissioned by the city that predicted rising housing costs in neighborhoods closest to Hamilton High School, and other areas in the city, which impact people based on four risk factors: renters, communities of color, population age 25 or older without a bachelor's degree, and households at or below 80% median family income. This data is relevant to my study because it highlights race and equity outside of Hamilton High within a city that was labeled as the "whitest city America" in 2016 (see Semules, 2016). While the district sets expectations in a racial equity policy for its staff and schools regarding the experiences of students of color, external pressures such as gentrification and displacement contribute to and complicate the enactments of such as policy in the school, particularly around race, identity, and class.

Participants

Clark and Richards (2017) argue researchers who analyze voice as a research method must interrogate the assumptions of youth voice as a "revered status" and "avoid privileging youth voices, where their words go unquestioned and as uninterrogated truths (p. 133). Similar to concerns expressed by poststructuralists, Clark and Richards (2017) identify methodological issues concerning "youth voice" in research: researchers often do little to interrogate how and why voice is used; researchers often fail to question if the disembodied voice really represents a youth's truth or their reality; and researchers often neglect their positions of power in choosing what to include of youth voice (p. 139).

In the initial design of this project, I envisioned multiple focus groups with S.R.E.

students as the backbone of my research inquiry in an attempt to "capture" reflections and observations of their experiences doing racial equity in their school. As I edited my research proposals for the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Oregon and the Research and Evaluation Department in the school district, I reflected on these concerns and thought about how I was thinking about voice, in particular student voice, in my project. During the data collection stage of my project, student voice not only became a worn-out phrase used by staff and administrators, it also became a floating or empty signifier. Worried that my analysis might slide into the easy but problematic use of student voice as my main source of data, I decided on two focus groups and relied on other data sources in my analysis.

Why focus groups? Since the "interpretive turn," Kamberelis and Dimitriadis (2010) argue that "primary goal of [focus group research] is to generate rich, complex, nuanced, and even contradictory accounts of how people ascribe meaning to and interpret their lived experience with an eye toward how these accounts might be used to affect social policy and social change" (p. 2). In thinking with Freire's work in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970/2000), Kamberelis and Dimitriadis propose focus groups are "pedagogical" and "political," where participants experience the "power of dialogue" that Freire "defined as collective reflection and action" (p. 5). "Collective reflection" and the "power of dialogue" guided my efforts in planning and leading the discussions in both focus groups. More so, they created a familiar affect that we were having a conversation more than an interview. Focus groups provided me with a method for students to discuss their thoughts individually and collectively about experiences that they shared with each other. Finally, since equity work is not done by one person, having multiple people

participate in a dialogue allowed these experiences to be heard and connect to each other's perspectives.

Student Recruitment

There were several challenges getting the necessary approval for students in my project. It took over three months for IRB approval, while for the district Research and Evaluation Department, it took less than 6 weeks. Harger and Quintela (2017) argue that although IRBs "serve as important gatekeepers in research, especially in qualitative work with children and youth," the basis for approval rests with IRB evaluators who have little knowledge of a researcher's familiarity of the research site or of the researcher's field (p. 2). Ethical concerns were understandable, considering I wanted to invite students who were enrolled in the S.R.E. class that I taught. I needed to prove to IRB that student participation was completely voluntary and not part of any grade assigned in the S.R.E. Leadership class.

Students enrolled in the S.R.E. Leadership class in 2017 – 2018 were invited to participate via a letter of explanation that briefly introduced the project. At the end of a S.R.E. class period in mid-January, I explained the project and made the letter available to students by leaving it on a table near my classroom door. I invited students who were interested to take and read the letter and if interested, discuss it with their families and sign the required assent and consent forms. Students who were 18 years old were required by IRB to get family consent as well. That same day, I emailed all of the S.R.E. families and attached the same documents I distributed to students to clarify that participation in the study was completely voluntary and would have no impact on student

grades. Students had the option to participate in the focus groups as well as to opt out of the study or withdraw their responses from the focus group at any time during the project.

Twelve students enrolled in the S.R.E. Leadership class volunteered to participate in both the focus groups and through written reflections based on their experiences doing equity work with S.R.E. and/or staff. I also attempted to recruit three students who were in S.R.E. club but did not enroll in the S.R.E. Leadership class; only 1 student decided to participate in one of the focus groups, bringing the total number of participants to 13.

To protect the identities of the student participants from other students, staff members, and administrators, choosing a location to conduct focus groups also presented some ethical challenges. Fortunately, we were able to use my classroom, which provided not only an overall sense of privacy, but also familiarity for the students who participated in the focus groups. Due to student availability, both focus group sessions were conducted over the course of two lunch periods.

The district also required me to have a counselor available for students to speak with in the event the focus group created any concern or anxiety for students. I provided this information to students and families in the letter; at the beginning of both focus group sessions I reminded students that a counselor was available if they needed to talk with someone, and reminded them of the opportunity to opt out at any time during or after the project.

Focus Groups

This project includes youth-as-students who participated in S.R.E. as a club in 2016 – 2017 and/or enrolled in the 2017-2018 leadership class. Ages of participants range

between 16 - 18 years old, and in grade levels from sophomores, juniors to seniors. 13 students participated in the student reflections and of this group, seven students participated in the focus groups. Students self-identify as black, white, Asian, Native, Southeast Asian, and Hispanic. Most of the participants self-identify as "mixed" or bi-racial. Nine participants use she/her pronouns, two use they/them, and two use he/him. Six of the 13 participants were involved in both the S.R.E. club and the leadership class, and only one student was involved in the club and therefore did not submit a reflection to me.

Five students in the focus groups were part of the original S.R.E. club. Two other students participated in the focus groups but joined the S.R.E. club later than the original five. Although there were other students interested in participating in the focus groups, I decided to recruit students who were involved in S.R.E. for more than just one year because some of the questions I was interested in had to do with events prior to S.R.E. Leadership becoming a class. I wanted to understand how students navigated the tensions of the club, with each other and with staff and administrators. I sue the real name of the school district due to the district documents in the appendix and references from the state of Oregon. However, students' names as well as the name of the school are pseudonyms.

Student Participants

To introduce student participants, I have included a brief biography of each before I share my discussion of the data in Chapter IV.

Chris is a senior and co-founded the S.R.E. as a club when he was a junior. He self-identifies as "male, mixed race, Indian American and white," and describes himself

as a "POC" and "brown." One of his reasons to create S.R.E. was based on his sister's experiences at a predominantly white middle school. He says he began to "notice race more" because she did. At Hamilton, he tried to "assimilate to the dominant culture" as he did in elementary and middle school, but his sister "is more resistant to that" and she "helped him to see things that were problems in schools for students of color." He also said he "noticed these problems more" when he became a junior and was taking all International Baccalaureate (I.B.) classes, where it became very clear to him the classes were academically and racially tracked. Chris was unable to take the S.R.E. Leadership class in the first semester due to a class schedule conflict; however he redid his second semester schedule in order to be in the leadership class during the last half of the school year.

Jackson, is a senior and the other co-founder of S.R.E. with Chris. He self-identifies as "mixed, white and Asian, but white passing." Both students discussed the idea of S.R.E. in their junior year when they noticed how race contributed to tracking students into I.B. classes: "At the very beginning, I noticed in predominantly white IB classes, teachers were talking about race in modern and current society, and it was very uncomfortable; everything was speculating about how people of color would feel," and it was coming from white teachers. He started S.R.E. to establish a space for students of color to talk about race. Jackson admits he had a lot to learn about race, which was one of his reasons for wanting to start the S.R.E. club. Jackson almost did not take the S.R.E. Leadership class due to some of the tensions he experienced while in the club, however he did enroll in the class and stayed the entire year.

Katherine is a senior who self-identifies as female and white. Although she was

not one of the original founders of the S.R.E. club, Jackson and Chris encouraged her to get involved. As she says, "I wanted to get involved and utilize my position on the newspaper. I also thought it would be good for me. I started observing my International Baccalaureate education where almost all of the students were white. I had a problem that that was becoming my sole academic experience around race at my school." Katherine utilized her connections to the school newspaper several times during the two years of S.R.E. as a club and later as a class. Her influence with some of the administrators was also helpful in situations where the S.R.E. club and/or class were in conflict with decisions made by the administration. Katherine was involved in both the club and leadership class.

Lara, a senior, self-identifies as "mixed, both Mexican and white," but says she looks "white." Lara was also one of the early members of the S.R.E. club who became a strong voice when students met with administrators and staff on the equity and climate teams. She describes her reasons to join S.R.E. because "I noticed a lot of microaggressions in my life, and I didn't know how to respond to these, and also happening to my dad. Like a teacher at this school said rap music was destroying youth, and I felt like that was a racist comment, but I didn't know how to respond. In my classes, I noticed a lot of ideas about race seemed to be going on unchecked, like a lot of assumptions about race were happening by teachers." She demonstrated a deep understanding about race when speaking in S.R.E. meetings and with adults. Lara stopped participating in the S.R.E. club due to tensions she experienced with some S.R.E. students and staff members, and decided not to enroll in the class the following year. However, she remained close friends with Jackson and supported the work done by the

S.R.E. class.

Tina, a senior, joined the S.R.E. club later in 2017 when the club moved its meeting times after school. A friend of Jackson, Chris, and Katherine, Tina self-identifies as female, "mixed," white and Asian. She became involved in the S.R.E. club in her junior year because of "conversations with sister and similar conversations came up for her and sisters, similar to Chris." She adds, "I know how it feels to not fit in" and she saw S.R.E. as an opportunity for her "to do something about it." By not starting with the club early in the year, Tina had none of the negative experiences some of the other students described. She enrolled in the leadership class to "continue the work we did from the previous year" because it was "important to kids like her at Hamilton," and for her brother, who is also a student at the school.

Kiki, a senior, who self-identifies as white and female, joined the club early in its development because of Chris. She says, **"**Chris is my friend and why he cared made me care." Kiki said that she didn't know "what I was getting into" when joining the club. However, she says she "learned about implicit bias and being part of a system that is racist made me realize my privilege and not learning about it in school made me want to learn more on my own and in the class." Kiki and Chris were strong friends since middle school, and when S.R.E. did an event at their middle school, she saw how "important S.R.E. could be" in facilitating "conversations about race with students." She believed S.R.E. was a class she "wanted to take so I could learn more about race and didn't have to rely on Chris or other people of color to teach me."

Sydney is a sophomore, and self-identifies as female, "mixed" Black and white. Chris recruited Sydney to join the S.R.E. club early in 2017. She believed S.R.E. was

important for students like her because at the **"**beginning of middle school, I could always see problems of my race at school, and these were problems that I didn't cause or create." She had heard rumors about Hamilton as a "predominantly white school and was kinda nervous" in her freshman year. Sydney saw similar problems from middle school to high school: "There was no class to help me advocate for myself or for others like me. When Chris invited me to go to S.R.E. I was leery at first." After becoming involved in S.R.E. club events she says, "S.R.E. can actually help students who don't get help from the school." Sydney enrolled in the leadership class.

In the focus groups, I tried to be intentional by exploring what racial equity meant to these particular students, especially since it represented students of color in a predominantly white school. Some of the questions included:

- What does racial equity (at school) mean to you?
- What are racial equity issues that you are concerned about (at our school)? Why?
- What are some of the challenges when working with students, staff and/or administrators about racial equity work?
- What are challenges when working with students who are also involved in racial equity work?

In both focus groups, all questions were asked to the participants, however some groups chose to discuss certain questions more than other questions.

Data Collection and Management

The study utilized ethnographic methods to collect data from a variety of sources

to provide analytical insight to my research questions from January 2018 until June 2018 (see Appendix A). These methods included participant observation in the S.R.E. Leadership class, Equity and Climate team planning meetings, staff professional development meetings, S.R.E. student-led equity meetings with staff, S.R.E. presentations to family and community members, events surrounding an interview with a local radio show with two students from the leadership class, and a school board presentation. Two semi-structured, focus groups (see Appendix B) were conducted with former and current students in the S.R.E. club and Leadership class. I recorded these sessions using a digital voice recorder and transcribed these conversations. A collection of school and district documents pertaining to racial equity policy and school climate improvement were also collected and examined. Additional sources I used were from articles published in Hamilton's student newspaper and my evaluation report completed by my principal, completed in May 2018.

Archived Documents

From the beginning of this project, I collected many documents about the school and district that pertained to the Racial Educational Equity Policy. Most of these documents were found on the district website and the Oregon Department of Education website. I also found archived on-line newspaper articles about the district's contract with Pacific Educational Group and Singleton's company that sponsored his book *Courageous Conversations*. I also researched articles about the implementation of the policy and the enactments of the *Courageous Conversations* protocols at other schools in the district. I was interested to find out how other schools used the program and its protocols to

compare with my school.

I used school documents from both the staff equity and climate meetings. As a member of the equity team, I was part of discussions lead by the administration to implement the Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS) program; I had access to many documents relating to this program and how the district planned to fold the equity work into the climate work, essentially collapsing the equity team and with only the climate team, in all of its schools. To manage the number of documents from these meetings I collected, I only focused on those that pertained to equity and students. I also incorporated the school's mission statement, Student Parent/Guardian Handbook, and "climate commitments" that were listed on the school website and visibly posted in each classroom and around the school.

In addition to these documents, I collected student reflections from 13 participants in the study after the class gave a presentation to the staff at an equity meeting during the latter end of the 2018 school year. Some of these documents also included images from the staff presentation (but not images of students) as well as materials distributed to staff prior to the meeting. Student data gathered, analyzed, and prepared by S.R.E. in their school equity work is included, too.

Documents included in this analysis were my email correspondence with the principal that pertained to S.R.E. and/or equity work in the school. I also include my teacher evaluation report which was completed by the principal because it directly pertains to the S.R.E. Leadership class, even though this was not formally or informally observed by the principal. My evaluation was not anticipated as a potential source of data, as were other sources I later collected. I include articles published in Hamilton's

student newspaper which were specifically about S.R.E. Leadership and events related to an interview with two student-participants on a local radio program. This interview was recorded and made available in the archived in the radio program's website.

Participant Observation

I collected hours of observation notes between January 2018 – June 2018 in the S.R.E. Leadership class when students were involved in equity work, at Equity/Climate planning meetings, at staff professional development meetings, S.R.E. student-led equity meetings with staff, S.R.E. presentations to family and community members, and a school board presentation. In staff meetings and equity or climate team meetings, I took notes on the back of the agendas that were distributed by an administrator and later transferred the notes to my field notebook at home in the evening. My field notebook was used only at home, and I never brought it to school. During S.R.E. leadership classes when students prepared for presentations to staff and community members, I took brief notes in class, then wrote more descriptive narratives at home in my notebook. Documents produced by S.R.E. were collected and taped inside my notebook, accompanied by a narrative discussion of my observations.

Since not all students in S.R.E. participated in my study, any participant observations made in class generically referred to all students and no one by name. Students who were part of the focus groups were given numeric codes in my notebook to indicate who they were, however these codes were kept separately in a locked filing cabinet in my home office. Likewise, staff and administrators were also coded by the first initial of their names; most of the time I just discussed "staff" in general terms rather than

identified specific people.

Data Management

Data was managed using several methods to keep participants' identities anonymous, even during the two focus groups. Names were given a numerical code and all consent and assent forms were kept in a locked filing cabinet in my office at my house. No one at the school knew any of the participants in the focus groups, and to my knowledge, no one was aware of my project with the exception of the principal and one of the school's counselors. I did not store or retrieve any data on district computers or any district shared cloud sources; all recordings were transcribed away from school and I used earphones for added security.

There were two methods of recording field notes: a notebook that was kept in a locked closet and hidden if I brought it to school; most field notes were taken away from school after events had occurred. Focus group recordings were stored on my passcode protected recording device, which was kept in my locked closet during the day and transferred to my home desktop after each session. Transcriptions were stored only on my hard drive computer. Written reflections from the 13 S.R.E. student participants were sorted, copied, anonymized, and kept in a locked filing cabinet at my house. Originals were returned to students and never graded.

Data Analysis

> The exercise of power is not simply a relationship between "partners," or individual or collective; it is a way in which some act on others. Which is to say, of course, that there is no such entity as power, with or without a capital letter; global, massive, or diffused; concentrated or distributed. Power exists only as

> exercised by some on others only when it is put into action, even though, of course, it is inscribed in a field of sparse available possibilities underpinned by permanent structures. This also means that power is not a matter of consent. (Foucault, 1994, p. 340)

To say that theory and methodology exist in separate places in an analysis of power, even if dictated by conventional scientific research, is problematic. In my understanding, theory informs the research process and methodology is the action, or actions, related to theory. To separate and draw distinctions between theory and methodology feels quite dangerous to me. In working against these distinctions, I acknowledge that my project was in a constant motion, even in the decisions I made with my research questions and focus group questions. It seems presumptuous to believe these questions were ever in a fixed state and that they did not bend and shift to the ongoing and often jarring processes of field work.

This project is an analysis of power and its effects on/to high school students involved in racial equity work at their school. To think about power through theory, data, and analysis, I collected data that allowed me to listen to the voices of students speaking about race, equity, and the work they were committed to doing at their school. This part of my analysis tried not to privilege their voices as "speaking subjects" but to interrupt the fields of discourses about youth/students as recipients of a policy, as youth/students involved in racial equity work, and as students positioned in ways when doing racial equity work by the student body, staff and administrators (Foucault, 1994). The listening phases of my analysis included replaying the focus group sessions and an interview for a local radio show with two of my student participants while thinking about my research questions. The opportunity to include events surrounding an interview from a local radio show was unexpected but fortunate addition to my data set. I will discuss this further in

Chapter IV, however this data differed from my focus groups because it was not about the information discussed in the interview but what the interview represented to students, staff, and administrators with regard to student equity work. This event was significant because it broadcasted the students' racial equity work to a wider audience outside of the school to the metro community.

Listening to students' voices had a different effect on me than reading the transcripts. I wrote brief, analytic memos about some of the participants' responses that connected to my research questions or to some of the concepts I was trying to interrupt, such as "equity work" and "student voice. Other times I reread my notes during different stages of my fieldwork if I was recording events related to my study. Piecing my data together was challenging. Having lived through most of the events I wrote about, I felt I needed an organizational structure to help me process the data and think about my research questions, even if data was placed in chronological order.

Yet, I worried that organizing my data into thematic concepts would stabilize meanings around some of the concepts that I wanted to challenge such as "racial equity work." I also realized that sometimes one part of my data collided with another part, such as writing about successful moments of student equity work, as opposed to my experiences of the disciplining effects in my teacher evaluation. So, while data did get sorted, (which I refer to as "data sprawl"), I tried to think about how I was making meaning when I was in the process of *moving around* my data. By moving data around, I placed what I had collected externally – district documents, student participant reflections, student newspapers, and my evaluation – separate from data collected internally, such as my field notes, focus groups, and the interview student participants

had done on a local radio program. Then, I thought about how the events unfolded through time, not trying to reproduce events in precise chronological order, but to allow myself to experience certain memories from various data sources.

Kaufman (2011) argues that the meanings of "empirical matter" become stabilized through processes in analyses that organize data sources by thematic concepts. "By using the same concepts to stabilize meaning, qualitative researchers have the propensity to limit the possibilities of experience and knowledge" (Kaufman, 2011, p. 148). Kaufman's argument offered a cautionary approach; to organizing, sorting, and categorizing data by concepts could potentially reify concerns that I thought I would address such as "equity work" and "student voice" in my project. This is certainly not what I wanted to do, however I needed something structured, albeit loosely structured, to help me present my data, answer my research questions, and support my analytical framework. So, I used a *move around* method to resist an "easy re-telling" of power in the classical sense, that would have been inevitable if I had used themes to "make sense" of my data. In other words, I knew I had to work against myself to avoid the "heroification" (see Lowen, 1995/2007) of student narratives rather than an analysis of power, so I literally moved data around, sometimes clustering them or standing by itself, to try to imagine how power was operating in the discursive spaces of my data. This process pulled examples from my data to help me think about how I could respond to my research questions. These intuitive acts were part of my intention to attempt an analysis of power. As Childers (2014) argues, "analysis is always ontological, made up of practices that respond to the materiality of the field as well as the materiality of working with empirical materials produced during research" (p. 821).

Finally, to keep me thinking about Foucault's analysis of power, I created a process to make me reread his scholarly work that was most germane to my study. This involved selecting primary sources and making new copies of these sources that did not have my annotations or highlighting on them. I pushed my engagement and interaction with his texts as I made decisions about what data to present and what not to present. Ultimately, there was too much data to use in this project and I had to consider what was most important to include in order to provide an analytical response to my research questions.

Role of the Researcher

While it was difficult to always maintain a systematic process to collecting data, my involvement in this project was inevitably challenging because I was often submerged by the weight of the events surrounding the students' equity work. As previously discussed, my many roles as an insider in this school, (the S.R.E. teacher, staff member, and equity team member), positioned me across many fields of power. Thus, power dynamics were present not only when I conducted focus groups, but also when I was a participant-observer in staff and equity team meetings, as well as in the evaluation of my performance by an administrator. My role as researcher and as insider positioned me in ways that inevitably influenced my understanding of power.

Power dynamics are inherent in any research project, especially when youth are the focus of an analysis. In research about children and/or youth, scholars identify issues related to researchers who are outsiders to their sites of research and thus rely on specific methods to build rapport and create trusting relationships with their participants (see

Campos-Holland, 2017; Fine & Sandstrom, 1988; McTague, Froyum, & Risman, 2017). This project was different because I had already built a rapport and formed trusting relationships with the S.R.E. students. More than half of the students had me as a teacher prior to their enrollment in the S.R.E. Leadership class. To minimize the power dynamics in my project, I used focus groups instead of interviews to encourage and privilege conversation and dialogue between one adult researcher and three or four youth participants. Member checking in this project was an important component in the study but also in minimizing power dynamics.

In my efforts to support S.R.E. Leadership students in their equity work, I was positioned in particular ways with my administration and some staff members. Although only the principal and a school counselor knew about my research project, I do know for certain if they kept this information confidential. This was another challenge for the IRB, that at first required me to acquire consent from staff members, the equity team, and/or administrators. I argued that if everyone knew I was doing this project, it would impact the data. IRB granted my request to not acquire consent from staff members and administrators other than the principal as long as I did not keep any records of any specific individual speaking. Yet, it was difficult to not discuss specific administrators in my research since they were involved in equity work and they have different responsibilities in the school than staff. I obtained permission from the principal prior to the district's approval, followed by IRB. Since I did not interview any members of the staff, equity team, or administration, I, as the researcher, did not experience any issues regarding power dynamics with my colleagues or superiors.

Limitations

This is not a comparative project where I examine racial equity work across schools in one school district. The circumstances at the research site are unique and not found in any of the other high schools in the district. I am not quite sure what this says about this particular school and why S.R.E. Leadership became a class here and not in other schools, but what I have learned from equity teachers on special assignment (a.k.a. equity TOSAs) is that racial equity conversations happened at some schools with students and staff yet had not transformed into something foundational and had not become part of the school's culture. At this time, that may be what is unique at this particular school.

Other limitations of this study included the number of students participating in focus groups, the number of focus groups that were conducted, and the fact that only students were asked to be participants. There were a number of factors contributing to these decisions. IRB was a bigger obstacle that I originally anticipated, and even though I was cleared for research by the school district's research and development department much earlier than IRB, the waiting period for IRB significantly impacted the number of focus groups I was able to conduct. Another factor was the busy lives of students. Focus groups were very helpful to my study, however trying to arrange meeting times proved to be a challenge. While data presented in the research consists of my observations in meetings with adults, from the administration to equity and climate teams, I suspect there might be differences in my analysis if had interviewed adults. It could be argued that not informing the entire school that I was conducting research was not ethical, however many staff and administrators did know, such as my principal and members of the equity team. In all circumstances when writing about individuals in the study, I made efforts, when I

could, to keep specific attributes about staff and/or administrators anonymous. I did seek out staff members to check my interpretations of some of the examples in my data and analysis, although these were not formal member checks because I did not interview any adults.

These are some of the limitations to this study. However, the research still has value given Foucault's (1994) argument, "one can analyze such relationships, or, rather, I should say that it is perfectly legitimate to do so by focusing on carefully defined institutions" (p. 342). I have a "privileged point of observation" of a carefully defined institution with certain limitations (Gore, 1995, p. 101). Much of my research was driven by my relationships with students and their desire to "change" their school. I included neither the perspectives of adults nor of the district staff to compare with student perspectives. Despite these limitations, this study provides needed discussions regarding policy implementation and enactments in schools. The broader implications are elevated by recognizing that this policy was designed to include students.

CHAPTER IV:

DATA EXPLORATION AND PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

> Thus, it is not power but the subject which is the general theme of my research. It is true that I became quite involved with the question of power. It soon appeared to me that, while the human subject is placed in relations of production and of signification, he is equally placed in power relations which are very complex.
> Michel Foucault, 1994/2000

Introduction

Power relations are productive, and Foucault is concerned with the effects of power on the human subject. He reminds us that power is "rooted in the whole network of the social" and that we must consider the movement of power – because power circulates rather than accumulates – is through individuals (Foucault, 1994/2000, p. 345). This chapter examines how youth/students navigate the effects of power within racial equity discourses embedded in the Racial Educational Equity Policy and enacted by staff and administrators at a predominantly white high school. In this chapter, youth participants describe and respond to their understanding of racial equity in relation to the work they set out to accomplish in their school. I observed actions and responses to this work by staff and administrators in relation to students' narratives; all of this allowed me to explore the active effects of power. Because a relationship of power is represented by actions upon actions, I intend to represent these kinds of active movements – a circulation rather than a back and forth exchange – from my data. The chapter is organized by exploring data through my understanding and application of Ball's (2013) concept of "divergent discourses," the logic of hypervisibility in a predominantly white school, and

effects of power on the subject. These organizational concepts provide structure and cohesiveness to notice the interplay between policy discourses and material practices.

A Starting Point: "Institutional Speech Acts" About Race and Equity

When thinking about effects of power, how are power and the politics of race embedded policy discourses in education institutions? Before examining the data from my site of research, I turn to Sara Ahmed's (2006) "The Non-Performativity of Anti-Racism" to think about how discourse functions through institutional speech acts which make declarations or statements as commitments to racial equity. As discursive formations, institutional speech acts do not only refer to what is spoken, they can also be represented through writing and visual images. Focusing attention on education institutions, Ahmed argues speech acts are "non-performatives" for they "do not do what they say: they do not commit a person, organisation or state to an action" (para. 3). In other words, speech acts do not bring about change as they claim. Ahmed considers how the "politics of admission," that is admitting to bad practices through speech acts of admission, is now valued as a "form of good practice" (para. 2). For example, an institution can admit it *used* racist practices and *through* policies of equality and diversity it can *implement* and *change* itself, as well as the individuals working at the institution through anti-racist practices.

Ahmed (2006) examines institutional speech acts about race equality in three forms, commitments, performances, and descriptions, to analyze how speech acts function, (she argues even if they do nothing, they still do something). Ahmed asserts that commitments to racial equality, diversity, and inclusion made through policy documents

begin with an institutional commitment that is publicly acknowledged. This declaration recognizes the organization as being anti-racist, which she argues "can ironically participate in the concealment of racism" within the institution (para. 14). Ahmed argues that speech acts allow an institution to represent itself as a subject or entity in these statements, however it (the institution) is not embodied or represented by a speaking subject through its institutional speech acts. In other words, the institution becomes a disembodied voice. After making the public aware of its racist practices, the institution creates and establishes practices to measure the effectiveness of its commitment through what Ahmed refers to as "performing equality." Citing Butler's (1993) work on performativity, Ahmed argues that policy for racial equality are forms of institutional performance, where an institution "performs an image of themselves" to demonstrate that they have made improvements and are "doing well" for the public (para. 25). Through systems of measurements, or audits, improvements are identified and collected by the demonstration of performances from institutional employees. This means that through training and evaluations, institutions can measure their commitments to racial equality in order to demonstrate how they hold themselves accountable to their antiracist commitments.

In her final analysis of institutional speech acts, Ahmed (2006) examines how policy documents function to create specific language and meaning around diversity and equality. "The politics of diversity and equality has become about what we could call 'image management': diversity and equality work is about generating the 'right image' and correcting the wrong one" (para. 43). This understanding requires some unpacking: first, language and meaning are implicated in speaking about diversity and equality;

second, managing images is political; third, images are discursively constituted by "right" or "wrong" interpretations, however it is unclear how these decisions are decided. By thinking about these considerations with Foucault, these exemplify how discourses are functions of power and constitute truth claims, or knowledge, and constitute rather than reflect social reality. In other words, by managing images of "right" or "wrong" about equality and diversity, social realities are produced through truth claims based on certain types of knowledge about racism and anti-racism. As Foucault (1974) argues, discourses "form the objects of which they speak" (p. 49).

Ahmed's (2006) critique of anti-racist policy practices demonstrates how problematic discursive practices can be when placed within institutions via policy or statements of equity (or equality or diversity or inclusion…); discourses *are* productive in power relations. Ahmed's (2004a; 2004b; 2006) collective work on anti-racism and whiteness is equally informative for my research. Her critique of anti-racist policies allows me to understand policy as a performative act that produces particular discourses about race, equity, and students through policy enactments. By examining how institutional speech acts function through discourse, Ball's (2013) concept of "divergent discourses" recognizes contested discourses where some discourses are marginalized or subjugated while others define the "domains of validity, normativity and actuality" (Ball, 2013, p. 22, citing Foucault, 1974, p. 68). For power to function, discursive practices make it almost impossible to think outside of discourse.

"Divergent Discourses" in Racial Equity: Data Exploration #1

In this section, I present data in racial equity work as defined through policy discourses. These are statements of equity within discourses that portray three perspectives about racial equity work from students in S.R.E., the school, and the district. I define racial equity work, or "equity work," as a key term that began closely after the district adopted the 2011 5-Year Racial Equity Policy. "Equity work" for staff and administrators included time during specific staff meetings over the school year, (in 2017 – 2018 there were five staff equity meetings) where professional development discussions centered on race and how race impacted students, classrooms, disciplinary outcomes, academic success and achievement, etc.

Courageous Conversations by Glenn E. Singleton (2005) informed much of "equity work," which included activities designed to discuss race using specific protocols and agreements. Staff, administrators, and classified personnel were required to be part of this training because the "School Board commits to holding the Superintendent and all central and school leadership staff accountable for making measurable annual progress towards meeting the [six policy] goals" (see Appendix C). However, I argue the meaning and use of the term "equity work" became contested depending on who was speaking or what it referred to. According to Ball (2013), "policy discourses provide us with ways of thinking and talking about our institutional selves, to ourselves and to others; in other words, they form 'a regime of truth'" (p. 307).

In an attempt to understand how a regime of truth functioned in racial equity work, various documents were collected from mission statements, video transcripts, racial equity policy documents, school newspapers and student responses from focus group questions. In the focus groups, students were asked to discuss why S.R.E. became

a club and reflect on their experiences working together with other students and with the administration. There have been two different principals at Hamilton High School since S.R.E. was formed as a club and then became a leadership class. This distinction is needed to understand how the effects of power function at a predominantly white school through discursive formations about racial equity. In following Foucault, I intentionally organized my data in an ascending order to understand how power functioned, starting with the S.R.E. club. Although the club did not organize until five years after the district implemented its 5-Year Racial Equity Plan in 2011, the formation of this club correlates to the intention of the policy. As Foucault (1972/1980) argues

> one must rather conduct an *ascending* analysis of power, starting, that is, from its infinitesimal mechanisms, which each have their own history, their own trajectory, their own techniques and tactics, and then see how these mechanisms of power have been – and continue to be – invested, colonised, utilised, involuted, transformed, displaced, extended, etc. by ever more general mechanisms… (emphasis in original, p. 99).

Finally, after presenting the data, I respond to two of my research questions through an analysis informed by Ball's concept of "divergent discourses."

Statements of Racial Equity: The Club

Students for Racial Equity, or S.R.E., formed against the backdrop of the fall 2016 Presidential election between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump. It originated from the work of two students who were enrolled in my I.B. Social and Cultural Anthropology classes. They wanted to form a student-led committee that would address issues of racial inequities that they observed in their I.B. classes. In developing the idea of S.R.E., they drafted a "Mission Statement, a Living Document" that defined their goals and actions to the school, staff, and administration. Drafted in 2016, the document continues to be

revisited by new and old members from the S.R.E. club. As a living document, members of S.R.E. change, add, or edit the message, using it to connect to their purposes as well as distribute to administrators, staff, and/or students. As a statement of equity, the mission statement explains S.R.E. and its goals:

> S.R.E. is a student-formed, student-run committee at Hamilton High School with the sole purpose to promote practices of racial equity.
>
> The goal of S.R.E. is to promote recognition of racial biases, and prevent the marginalization of those who identify as racial minorities. (S.R.E. Mission Statement, 2016, p. 1)

The beginning of the mission statement contextualizes how students identify and frame racial equity and explains the committee's purpose at the school. First, the identification that this is a "student-formed, student-run committee" emphasizes a student-centered distinction compared to other groups at the school that may not be organized or run by students. The second part connects its goal to potential tensions that students of color feel in the spaces of the school, such as bias and marginalization. I also read this part of the mission statement as saying something meaningful about the location or place, at a predominantly white school where students of color experience their school differently than white students.

The next section of the document locates S.R.E.'s understanding about race and racial equity, not only in the school but also across the city in other institutions:

> As a group, we feel that it is imperative for further promotion of racial conscientiousness to become a priority at Hamilton, as well as across institutions in the city. As a committee active in a predominantly white school, we feel it is especially necessary to include the role of white people in racial equity. We feel that recognition of the problem must be a priority for all people, not just people of color. (S.R.E. Mission Statement, 2016, p. 1)

Here, the mission statement identifies broader issues that affect the school as well as other institutions in the city. The call to action is not just for students of color but also the "role of white people in racial equity" and argues that to "promote racial conscientiousness" its practices must be a "priority for all people."

> Students include a section that acknowledges the difficulty of discussing race:
>
> > While we understand that race is a difficult topic to broach, we believe that it is crucial to address. As a community, we must recognize the sensitivity of the subject at hand, the impossibility of resolution to the racial stigmas engrained in our society, and the feelings of discomfort and frustration that these conversations will spur. S.R.E. understands these limitations, but recognize the power of awareness and the change that it can promote. (S.R.E. Mission Statement, 2016, p. 1)

This section is crucial to understand how race impacts experiences for students of color in this school as well as in society and how experiences of students of color differ from white students. It also recognizes that the task to discuss race and find resolutions for racial equity is an "impossibility" due to "racial stigmas engrained in our society," yet collectively, there is the belief in the "power of awareness" that can stimulate "change." The mission statement concludes with a literal definition and linguistic representation of racial equity, however I was unable to determine the location of where students found this definition:

> **racial equity**
> [rey-sh*uh* l]
> noun
>
> > The provision of separate entities to instigate equal opportunity for different individuals based around an individual's identity surrounding the social construct of race. (S.R.E. Mission Statement, 2016, p. 1)

There was considerable discussion about finding the "right" definition for racial equity. When composing this document, students debated using the term "equal" in the

definition; some students expressed concerns that "equal" often confused meanings about "equity." After much discussion, students decided to use the mission statement in a video script as an introduction to the club and explain its purpose to a wider audience.

Placing Statements of Equity in More S.R.E. Contexts

Recognizing that the mission statement had certain limitations as a document, particularly for those who would see and read the statement, the club decided to use the mission statement as a script for a video, titled "We are S.R.E." and post it on YouTube with access to various social media platforms. In the video, students, including myself, recite the mission statement, however the statement was rearranged differently. Also, equity and equality were defined and differentiated as separate terms:

> Equity is about fairness, it's about thinking of people having needs that may be different from your own. It's about making sure people get what they need in order to have access to the same opportunities.
>
> Equality is sameness. It promotes fairness and justice by giving everyone the same thing, however this can only work if everyone starts at the same place. (S.R.E. Mission Statement, Video webcast, 2016)

Video production involved another layer to the representation of S.R.E. because faces of students of color and white students were seen and heard rather than in just a textual format. In this new medium, S.R.E.'s statements of equity reached a wider audience through digital spaces, such as Instagram and Facebook, to build an awareness about the club, its goals, and its focus on promoting racial equity at Hamilton High School.

When S.R.E. students presented the video to administrators, they expressed their concerns to show it to the student body. They wanted to know "what happens next?" after showing students the video. S.R.E. students replied that the purpose of the video served

to introduce the club to students and encourage more students, particularly students of color, to join the club. They also argued the video helped to define equity and equality, so students had some understanding and context of equity as it related specifically to the club. The administration insisted that there needed to be a "lesson" to follow the S.R.E. video that teachers could deliver to their students, and suggested this was a "teachable moment." Reflecting back on this moment in one of the focus group sessions, Chris, one of the co-founders of S.R.E., exclaimed, "I was so frustrated at this because they wanted time to create a lesson and I was like, this is my life." S.R.E. students felt this decision was a stall tactic – they resented the implication that teachers should be the ones creating a lesson and without including S.R.E. students in the process. After this meeting, the administration neither followed up with S.R.E. students to discuss and plan a lesson, nor invited teachers to write a lesson to accompany the S.R.E. video. The video was not seen by staff and the student body during the year S.R.E. was a club; it was viewed the following year when S.R.E. became a leadership class.

After the video failed to provide a platform for S.R.E., some club members decided to take their message to students using the school newspaper. In February 2017, the school newspaper ran a spotlight piece on the S.R.E. club. Adding more to definitions of equity and equality, the article included terms identifiable in bold font that were explained adjacent to the article under "definitions and terminology." Terms such as inequality, injustice, intersectionality, microaggression, privilege, race, reparation, reverse racism, etc. were represented in two formats. Also, the term racial equity was transformed once again and defined as:

> Racial equity is the condition that would be achieved if one's racial identity no longer predicted, in a statistical sense, how one fares. When we use the term, we

> are thinking about racial equity as one part of social justice, and thus we also include work to address root causes of inequities not just their manifestation. This includes elimination of policies, practices, attitudes, and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by race or fail to eliminate them. (Racial Equity Resource Guide)

The action to discuss racial equity using the school newspaper, which is run by students, demonstrates a strategic response to the administration's avoidance to allow the S.R.E. video be seen by students and staff. Taking the discussion to the student newspaper also provides further student perspectives of racial equity from students not in the S.R.E. club. The article also served as a "teachable moment" to educate students about racial equity, particularly the intentional inclusion of key terminology and definitions to terms embedded in the featured article about the S.R.E. club. Notably, this action introduced many students and staff about the S.R.E. club, despite the lack of support by the administration. S.R.E. students used resources available to them to promote and educate the school, as best as possible, about the club, racial equity, and extend an invitation to students of color to come to meetings.

Data presented express particular discourses about race and equity from various perspectives of students in the S.R.E. club and in the school newspaper. The examples also demonstrate that students were aware that they needed to define and speak about racial equity to students, staff, administrators, and their community through multiple formats. Concerns expressed by the school's administration led to a reluctance and later avoidance to support the club's efforts by allowing them to show their video during classes. Finally, data demonstrates the specificity of racial equity in context to student desires to address and make changes in their day to day experiences in their school, and their responses without administrative support in order for their work to move forward.

Statements of (Racial) Equity: The School

When thinking about statements of (racial) equity made by schools, I wondered how students would know or recognize equity in their day to day experiences. If these statements are made public, how are students and families informed? Also, how were district policy statements about racial equity included in statements of equity at individual schools? I include parentheses around the term racial to stress the absence of the word in school equity statements. This next section examines official school documents from 2017 – 2018 in relation to six years of racial equity work based on the district's Racial Educational Equity Policy to understand the function of equity discourses at the local school level.

As an official school document, the Student/Guardian Handbook is distributed to all students at the beginning of the year to explain the rules, disciplinary actions, graduation requirements, and the organizational structure at Hamilton High School. Distributions of student handbooks and its accessibility on school websites are standard procedures for all high schools across the district. As stated in 2017 – 2018 Student/Guardian Handbook, the mission statement claims,

> Hamilton High School offers opportunities that students find relevant, accessible, and challenging. We promote active, responsible citizens and provide a community where everyone is included. All students find learning that inspires their passion. (p. 2)

Below the mission statement, the school also provides its "vision statement,"

> At Hamilton, everyone is valued, safe, and connected so that every student graduates. (p. 2)

These statements implicitly convey messages about equity, however it is not clear what accountability measures (actions) ensured that these statements were "true" for all students. Interestingly, both statements do not mention either equity or racial equity however it seems to be implied in inclusion statements such as "everyone is included" and "everyone is valued, safe." However, it is unclear how many students and families read these statements and how are these statements are known within the school.

In 2016, the same year that S.R.E. became a club, the school developed "Climate Commitments" to be visibly posted in each classroom and around the school. On the school website, "Climate Commitments" are described as,

> On the first day of school the HHS Positive Climate Commitments were shared and discussed in all classrooms. The HHS Community Values: Compassion, Honor, and Scholarship were selected based on the input of students, families and staff. Our hope is that this document will also be used at home as a conversation tool. It will come as no surprise that research shows that students do best when home and school expectations support each other. Building shared language is just one way to reduce the complexity of our kids' lives, lessening anxiety and the potential for misunderstanding while increasing their young minds' capacity to succeed in all areas of their lives. (2017)

These commitments express behavioral expectations for both staff and students for "hallways and common areas," "classrooms, library, and computer labs," "assemblies, games and activities," and "community and neighborhood." Similar to the S.R.E. mission statement, the school's Climate Commitments were presented as a "living document" and intended to be revisited each year with participation from students. families, and the school community. Climate Commitments acknowledged that it was "created by staff with input from students and families," although it was not clarified or explained how many students and families were involved, and which students and families were invited to be part of the review process.

Moreover, these commitments included statements about equity, however these were not specific to racial equity nor was there any reference to the district racial equity policy made on the posters. The commitments outlined expectations for students as well as staff in specific locations around the school. For example, in "hallways and common areas" the expectation of staff is to "ensure students feel accepted." In "classrooms, library, and computer labs" and "assemblies, games and activities," statements about diversity are prevalent for staff behavior are,

> "We embrace all students for who they are"
> "We appreciate and celebrate diversity"
> "We celebrate diversity"
> "We model inclusive behavior"
> (Climate Commitments, 2017)

In addition to the expected behavior of the staff, students were expected to "celebrate diversity" at "assemblies, games and activities" and to "ensure that all students have the opportunity to be included." In "classrooms, library and computer labs," students were expected to "seek an appreciate other's perspective," "appreciate and celebrate diversity," and "practice tolerance." While these statements were clearly present around the school and in the classrooms, I wondered how students felt and/or recognized equity, implicit or explicit, in the school and in their classrooms. In other words, were these official school statements of equity for all students?

However, not all examples concerning statements of equity came from official school documents. Soon after the November presidential election of Donald Trump in 2016, the school administration requested student leadership classes create inclusive posters in response to growing student concerns about the political rhetoric around issues targeting specific groups of people, such as undocumented immigrants, members from

the LGBTQ community, Muslims and women. However, rather than create posters for these specific groups, the administration requested "more open and inclusive" messages for "all students" (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. The wall in the main hallway between the offices of the principal and the vice principals with posters after the election of Donald Trump. Similar posters were placed around the entire school building.

During one of the focus group sessions, students of color reflected and discussed these experiences, believing these actions generated a great deal of anger by students who self-identified with the specific groups that the newly elected president had targeted in his campaign speeches. Specifically, they felt these messages were just "feel good" posters that did little to recognize the anxiety and concerns of groups within the school and expressed concern that these messages "white-washed" the concerns of students of color and how they felt being in a predominantly white school. For example, there were only three self-identified Muslim female students in the entire school, and some students in the focus group argued how would those students know any of the posters were made to support them? During this discussion, Lara, who self-identifies as Mexican and white, explained, "it's easier to put up a poster that by your room and say, 'We're good!' without really giving students a sense that you'll do anything more than just put up a poster." As unofficial statements of equity, the posters in Figure 3 alongside official documents such as those presented in the Student/Guardian handbook and Climate

Commitments, were visible expressions of implicit acts of inclusion and equity. In comparison to the presentation of the S.R.E. video to all students in their classes, these documents contradicted explicit discussions about equity, specifically about racial equity, that was written in a district policy.

As Ball, et al. (2012) argues

> in the processes of policy enactments, school leaders and managers will sometimes consciously attempt to 'draw attention' to the substance of policy through the production of visual materials and resources that document/illustrate what has to be done, or what is desirable conduct. These are artefacts that 'mark' policy directionality; that circulate and reinforce and represent what is to be done. Sometimes these artefacts come to stand for/represent the subjects of policy […].
>
> Policies become represented and translated in and through different sets of artefacts, experiences, material resources and inservice activities; these are the micro-technologies and representations of policy that serve as meaning makers and controls of meanings in the social-material world of the school. These artefacts are the cultural productions that carry within them sets of beliefs and meanings that speak to the social processes and policy enactments – ways of being and becoming – that is, forms of governmentality. (pp. 121 – 122)

I wondered if the implicit statements about (racial) equity "drew attention to the substance of [the Racial Educational Equity] policy" through official and unofficial but nonetheless visible and approved documents at Hamilton High School. As statements of equity, these examples reflected different discourses than those expressed by students in S.R.E. club and in the student newspaper. More importantly, discourses from these statements stand visible through administration approval, distributed throughout the school and within the school community. Furthermore, while equity statements embedded in unofficial documents – such as the posters made at the administration's request – were intended to allay feelings of insecurity and exclusivity for students of color, some S.R.E. students expressed this was not specific enough. As Lara argued,

"hanging posters or white teachers wearing Black Lives Matter t-shirts or getting it tattooed on their arms, doesn't mean they get it!" In other words, from the handbook to the Climate Commitments to the handmade, unofficial posters about inclusivity, what was represented via school equity statements were not enacted in ways S.R.E. students believed made a difference to their experiences in school and in their classrooms.

In describing the concept of enactments, Ball (1994) argues, "policies do not normally tell you what to do, they create circumstances in which the range of options available in deciding what to do are narrowed or changed, or particular goals or outcomes are set" (p. 19). Through broad strokes, policy statements construct and delineate the goals or outcomes without specifying specific actions for school administrators and/or staff members to take when enacting policy at the local level. Thus, policy decisions must be contextualized at the local level to understand how such enactments are taken up by administrators and/or staff members. Taking a step away from the school, I now explore statements of equity from the district's racial equity policy.

Statements of Equity: The District

In 2011, the Portland Public School District issued its 5-Year Racial Equity Plan, and publicly acknowledged district and school practices had contributed to "race-based disparities in schools;" and to undo these practices, the district outlined its commitment to "ensure that all students reach their academic potential" (p. 1). The Plan describes the district's Racial Educational Equity Policy and its mission statement declares,

> By the end of elementary, middle, and high school, every student by name will meet or exceed academic standards and be fully prepared to make productive life decisions. We believe that every student has the potential to achieve, and it is the

> responsibility of our school district to give each student the opportunity and support to meet his or her highest potential. (2011, p. 1)

Focusing primarily on the academic achievement gap between white students and students of color, the policy also identified specific racial groups who were disciplined "far more frequently" than white students. The policy acknowledged the results of these disciplinary practices negatively impacted the academic success for black, Hispanic, and Native American students (p. 1). Similar to the S.R.E. mission statement where students recognized that racial inequities exist in other places besides their school, the policy also noted that "student achievement data from school districts across the country reveal similar patterns, and that complex societal and historical factors contribute to the inequities our students face" (p. 1). Finally, the district promised a solution to prevent the perpetuation of these racial disparities by stating, "Portland Public School District must address and overcome this inequity and institutional racism by providing all students with the support and opportunity to succeed" (p. 1).

To achieve racial equity for students, the policy established six goals (see Appendix C), and "commits to holding the Superintendent and all central and school leadership staff responsible for making measurable annual progress towards meeting these goals" (p. 2). A system of accountability included provisions that the superintendent would report to the school board twice a year on the district's progress towards meeting its six goals and promised to update action plans each subsequent year to maintain the policy's intent. Specifically, the policy states

> The ultimate goal of educational equity: raising the achievement of all students while (1) narrowing the gaps between the lowest and highest performing students and (2) eliminating the racial predictability and disproportionality of which student groups occupy the highest and lowest achievement categories. (2011, p. 3)

This section of the policy contextualizes the district's "ultimate goal" by defining educational equity and broadly identifying how the policy will be assessed. "Key strategies" or four areas of focus, were specified to provide an evaluation of the policy for district officials: culturally responsive teaching and learning, culturally responsive workforce, culturally responsive family and community engagement, and cultural and organizational transformation. Each of the strategies were defined by a series of belief statements, "We believe... if we do this, then this will happen…". For example, one of the belief statements for cultural and organizational transformation says, "We believe if we apply a Racial Equity Lens to key policies, programs, practices and decisions in core business areas—with an intentional focus on "equal outcomes" rather than "equal inputs"—students and families of color will experience more equitable outcomes" (p. 5). To hold school employees accountable, including the superintendent, an evaluation of the policy was recommended after five years of implementation. While it is beyond the scope of this study to incorporate all of the findings from the 2017 district evaluation, assessment of the four strategies showed some improvements in narrowing the gap between lowest to highest academic performances between students of color and white students. The results from the evaluation were reported by The Skanner, a local Northwest newspaper, as "staggeringly effective" (Sevcenko, 2017).

However, when I showed this policy with students in the focus groups, they immediately noticed the inconsistencies between what the policy stated and their experiences at their school. First, all seven students had no idea this policy existed until the focus group sessions. As we read over the policy together, students focused on two of the policy's goals that specified certain changes that they believed they would have

noticed or should have noticed, considering the policy had been in effect for over five years in the district. Responding to one of the goals, "all staff and students shall be given the opportunity to understand racial identity, and the impact of their own racial identity on themselves and others," Lara replied,

> from a Mexican American standpoint, I have yet to hear about any sort of Mexican…anything. I got to research something in [history] last year on my own and I chose to look into Mexican independence. That was the only time that I felt that I was ever given like any background to who I am. I don't feel like I've had an experience where I could understand my own racial identity on myself or others. I feel like we just don't talk about race and if we do we basically talk about black people and white people. I feel like there's a lot of other people of color, a lot of other racial identities that just get completely ignored. Especially since I don't see any of these goals being met at our school.

Jackson, another senior, who self-identifies as white and Asian, added,

> Me and Chris founded S.R.E. last year because as juniors we noticed in predominantly white I.B. classes, teachers were talking about race in modern and current society, and this was very uncomfortable for us. We had not talked about race before in our other classes, so there was no perspective, and everything that was being said was basically speculating how people of color would feel. There was one darker student of color in our class, that seemed uncomfortable and all the other students would look at her. Conversations lacked perspective without any first-person account about race from white teachers.

Examining the racial equity policy with students of color, some of whom recognized that they "often pass as white," (which will be discussed further in the next data section), suggests that its enactment in this particular school was inconsistent and problematic. All staff were required to attend equity trainings through professional development, however the type of training staff received neither impacted students in meaningful ways nor met the policy goals at Hamilton. Furthermore, these students spoke about teachers who have been at the school a number of years and have received years of equity training each year, yet were not using equitable teaching practices. While the policy may have good

intentions regarding racial equity, how it is enacted suggests issues to critique in how policy functions at individual schools.

Despite the promises to measure progress and hold schools and the district accountable to the policy, the students' responses suggest that the racial equity policy was not directly managed or regulated by the district. Although teacher evaluations and goal setting procedures required teachers to specify and identify culturally responsive curriculum and teaching practices, accountability measures were not effective at this specific school.

Analysis of "Divergent Discourses" in Statements of Equity

If discourse is a function of power, and thus of knowledge, how are discourses about equity operating at Hamilton High School? How do statements of equity constitute knowledge about (racial) equity in a predominantly white high school? How are discursive formations about racial equity functioning in a predominantly white school? In thinking about discourses, I am not concerned so much about who is speaking, but what is being said and how it is mediated by others. In the examples provided, various forms of discourses are presented. Some are expressed through documents, while others are expressed through actions, however it is not my intention to provide a critical discourse analysis. This analysis recognizes discourse as a form of political and social practice which establish the rules of discourse, and in this case the rules of racial equity and how these rules contribute to producing certain truths about racial equity.

Critiques from Ball (2013) and Ahmed (2006) intersect in ways that examine the effects of power in equity discourses through the establishment of certain truths or rules.

What is revealed about the school's "institutional self" in statements of equity? What regimes of truth about equity are formed by official district and school statements of equity? How are truths, or meanings, about racial equity mediated between students in S.R.E. and school administrators? To answer my research questions, I considered not only statements of equity – stated through the Racial Educational Equity Policy, club and school mission statements, and school climate commitments – but also responses from student focus groups, the student newspaper, a S.R.E. promotional video, and messages from posters visibly placed around the school and in classrooms.

The first research question related to this discussion is: What tensions arise when S.R.E. students of color and white students become involved in racial equity work at a predominantly white high school? The club's mission statement focused on racial equity, not only in the school but also across institutions in the city. The statement recognized that institutional racism is a systemic issue is not explicit, but implied. Students acknowledged that it will be difficult to achieve racial equity, however they believed it was important to try to make equitable changes, particularly at a predominantly white school. On a broader scale, the mission statement implicated issues of racial inequity occurring at a predominantly white school, where they believed white students needed to be involved in discussions about race. At first, school administrators responded optimistically to the S.R.E. video and saw the opportunity as a "teachable moment." However, despite support from some teachers to help S.R.E. students make a lesson – myself included – administrators did not invite other staff members to participate in crafting a lesson to go with the video and eventually decided not to allow the video to be used in classes.

The significance of this event created tension between S.R.E. students and the administration. Notably, this was the first time a student group, consisting mostly of students of color, made a request to administrators that they wanted to have explicit discussions about racial equity with the student body. However, requests by S.R.E. leaders to have these discussions with students at an assembly or in classes were controlled and regulated by the administration. The actions of school administrators, showed that knowledge about race and equity that came from S.R.E. – specifically through its mission statement and in the video – required administrative approval and discussions about racial equity was delegated to (predominantly white) teachers. Furthermore, discussions about race and were postponed forever with the suggestion that a "teachable moment" was needed if the S.R.E. video was viewed by the student body, even though it was only intended to promote the club and recruit students of color to join. The administrative decision to only show the S.R.E. video with a teacher-created "lesson" was not lost on Chris, one of the co-founders of S.R.E. In his re-telling of this event in one of the focus groups, this underlying tension was exposed when he exclaimed, "…they wanted time to create a lesson and I was like, this is my life!" This suggests his need to discuss race and equity in his day-to-day school experiences was a priority for him as a student of color. As a self-identified "brown" student in predominantly white I.B. classes, Chris felt certain pressures to have an open dialogue about racial equity throughout the school with his peers.

This example indicates some of the underlying tensions between students of color and the administration when discussing race and equity. First, based on the actions of the administration, they did not want to show the video to the student body, even though it

was clearly created as a recruitment tool to get the word about club out to students, especially to students of color. Second, Chris' comment suggests his urgency to spread the word about S.R.E. to the student body and specifically to students of color. Feeling the effects of tracked I.B. classes, many of the seniors in the focus groups (who were juniors at the time), discussed the significant differences in who was enrolled in their I.B. classes and who was not. Students were not opposed to create a "lesson" along with their video, however in the focus groups they discussed that this as a "stall" tactic by administrators. Due to the actions of the administration, S.R.E. students were unable to advertise their club to the entire school body.

(Racial) equity, expressed through the statements of equity from the school can be analyzed from the Climate Commitments and mission statement in the Student/Guardian Handbook. I purposefully enclosed the term *racial* in parentheses to demonstrate the literal absence of this word in many school documents, including the posters in front of the main office (see Figure 3). Discourses, e.g. verbal or textual statements about equity, do not mention race or the commitment to achieving racial equity for all students across the school district as indicated by the district's 5-Year Racial Equity Plan. Statements of (racial) equity produced by the school implied there is an inclusive environment, such as "celebrating diversity" through "culturally responsive instructional practices." These school statements of equity elided any district commitments outlined in the 5-Year Racial Equity Plan, particularly Goal F which states, "the District shall create welcoming environments that reflect and support the racial and ethnic diversity of the student population and community." Statements of (racial) equity circulating in and around the school through the student handbook, Climate Commitment

posters, and posters made after the presidential election, may have appeared innocuous within a space that is occupied by a predominantly white staff and student body. However, in the focus groups, students of color and white students interpreted these statements as problematic and ineffective to address racial equity in their school.

Foucault (1972/2003/2004) argues, "the real political task in a society such as ours it to criticize the working of institutions which appear to be both neutral and independent" (p. 171). In these examples, statements of equity indeed "appear to be both neutral and independent." Signs around the school and in the Student/Guardian handbook avoided specific concerns for students of color and were independently produced without alignment to the district's racial equity plan. This example also illustrates crucial understandings between the implementation of policy and its enactments at the local level. Specifically, enactments of policy do not reflect neutral actions by policy actors.

At the local level, actions by policy actors, such as administrators and staff, were expected to implement the six goals in each school. For example, the district's strategic plan was to provide opportunities for students to "understand racial identity, and the impact of their own racial identity on themselves and others" (p. 2). In the focus groups, S.R.E. students discussed this part of the policy, commenting "culturally responsive instructional practices" were not used in many of their classes. Looking deeper at policy enactments at a local level, the Climate Commitments expressed by the school have no accountability measures by school administrators, thus these particular statements of equity go unsupported or superficially recognized by "neutral" language on school approved posters.

In my second research question related to the data I asked: How do S.R.E. students of color and white students navigate racial equity discourses embedded in the Racial Educational Equity Policy and enacted by staff and administrators at a predominantly white high school? From the inception of the S.R.E. club, students emphasized the importance of defining and explaining how they were using and thinking about the term *racial equity*. If discourses are a function of power, and "power produces things, such as knowledge, subjectivity, and resistance," then measures taken by the school administration to regulate and control the mission statement by S.R.E. should be viewed as an effect of power (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 61). The administrators' actions, however, did not dissuade students from finding alternative routes to promote their club and to begin discussing racial equity with the student body. Navigating racial equity discourses meant students needed to rely on other actions to move their plans forward in order to do their racial equity work in their school.

One of the more interesting examples of navigating racial equity discourse was defining what racial equity meant to students. In my data, several iterations were used to define racial equity as well as how it was represented in different forms, such as a written mission statement and later into a student-centered video and finally to a school newspaper article. By distinguishing between equity and equality, S.R.E. students exemplified their knowledge in action: "a knowing subject, then is an acting subject" (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 60). For example, in the video, S.R.E. students demonstrated their knowledge of racial equity, without prior knowledge of the district's policy, to school administrators and later through various social media platforms. This knowledge was also expressed in the student newspaper where terms, images, and

featured articles centered on race, equity, and the organization of the S.R.E. club. In order to navigate policy discourses about race and equity through policy enactments by school administrators and staff, S.R.E. students had to develop their own methods to define racial equity and create alternative methods to communicate their intentions to the student body.

Divergent discourses about racial equity at Hamilton existed between students involved in S.R.E., school administrators, and the district racial equity policy which created many tensions. The confluence of divergent discourses within the school collided with many contested meanings about racial equity as well as how to achieve it. In Foucault's (1994) analysis of power, two "points" may be applicable:

> *The types of objectives* pursued by those who act upon the actions of others: maintenance of privileges, […] the exercise of statutory authority, […].
>
> *Instrumental modes*: […], by the effects of speech, […], by more or less complex means of control, by systems of surveillance, with or without archives, by rules, explicit or not, fixed or modifiable, with or without material means of enforcement. (emphasis in original, p. 344)

"Types of objectives" by administrators can be seen through the actions taken when students of color want to initiate conversations about race and equity in their school. Discourse about equity through the school's climate commitments and mission statement functioned to maintain and mediate certain statements about (racial) equity. Although visible signs about "inclusion" were posted around the school and in classrooms, as well as on the school's website, race or racial equity were not used in any official school document. In addition, definitions of racial equity by S.R.E. students were controlled by the administration. School administrators exercised their authority by not allowing the

S.R.E. video to be seen in either an assembly or classroom, however these actions led to other actions that students took by using social media and the school newspaper.

In contrast to the S.R.E. video and its mission statement, "instrumental modes," explicit or not, such as the Climate Commitments and the Student/Guardian Handbook used race-neutral language, where "everyone is valued, safe, and connected," to establish rules of racial equity throughout the school community. Such discourses served as effects of power by normalizing and validating behaviors that exemplified equity statements without using the term race or racial.

Foucault (1980) encourages that we must reveal and describe the "more" that discourses do. I have discussed this "more" to demonstrate how discourse, as a function of power, operates through statements of (racial) equity in a predominantly white school. In the next section, I extend Moya's (2006) concept of the "logic of visibility" to understand how a *logic of hypervisibility/hyperinvisibility* operate in a predominantly white school.

The Logic of Hypervisibility/Hyperinvisibility: Data Exploration #2

I feel most colored when I am thrown against a sharp white background.
Zora Neale Hurston, 1928

Race and gender operate as our penultimate visible identities.
Linda Martín Alcoff, 2006

In this section, I explore the logic of hypervisibility/hyperinvisibility. Building on previous discussions of Paula Moya's (2006) logic of visibility, the logic of hypervisibility examines how administrators, staff, and students' perceptions of race are often tied to ascriptive or imposed identities (p. 97). Moya refers to these as "social categories," those defined by appearance most often imposed onto bodies and, "come to us from outside the self, from society, and are highly implicated in the way we are treated by others" (2006, p. 97). This distinction characterizes how racial identities are socially constructed. However, even when we understand that race is a historical, social, and political construct, racial knowledge is often conflated by the visibility of one's perceived racial identity. In other words, in a predominantly white city and in predominantly white schools, racial identity is often based on visible perceptions of someone else rather than by an individual's own identification.

To make race "visible," the district's policy goals focused attention on the achievement disparities between students of color and white students. The intention of the district's Racial Educational Equity Policy was to close the achievement gap between white students and students of color "while raising achievement for all students" (2012, p. 1). By centering the policy on race, all administrators and staff were required to attend monthly equity meetings to receive training about how race affected students in their classrooms. "Equity work" made particular racial groups visibly perceptible to a

predominantly white staff at Hamilton High School where administrators and teachers primarily discussed students of color, often through deficit discourses – whether they were failing their classes, not attending, or exhibiting disruptive behavior. In addition to the logic of hypervisibility, hyperinvisibility functioned to make other perceptions of race invisible. For example, over 16 percent of students at Hamilton identify as multiracial, and depending on perceptions of racial identities, not all multiracial students were discussed through deficit discourses. As Ehlers (2008) argues, "discursive power 'makes' race perceptible, because it teaches or instructs people to read by it – and the racial meanings that are generated within this form of power condition the organization of the individual's relations, their world, their comprehension of others and of themselves" (p. 333). Thus, understanding how perceptions of race operate in district and school "equity work" is significant to my discussion of the S.R.E. club, particularly how it was perceived by administrators and staff and by doing "equity work."

Data presented in this section focuses on three overlapping concepts related to the logic of hypervisibility: the politics of race in a predominantly white school, "white passing," and interrupting the logics of hypervisibility. In both focus groups, students discussed what it meant to them to be involved in the S.R.E. club and the unexpected tensions they experienced among club members and from staff and administrators. To understand how "equity work" was enacted by staff and administrators, I include my observations from equity staff meetings that included S.R.E. students as well as interactions between S.R.E. students and administrators and staff where "equity work" was discussed. The presentation of findings are followed by an analysis and discussion of my research questions.

Hypervisibility/Hyperinvisibility: The Politics of Race in a Predominantly White School

> When it first started, we had a lot of skepticism from everybody, admin didn't want us doing it, our video about the equity policy got shut down, we were promised we'd get another venue to show it, but it didn't happen. Our small group was pretty diverse then got flooded by white people. The small group got frustrated because of this – some wanted to end the club. (Chris, senior, one of the founding members of S.R.E. club)

After their initial meetings with administrators and a few staff members, the club faced many challenges over the next few months as it started gaining popularity in the school, especially among white students. While some students of color also attended the lunch-time meetings, the core founders of S.R.E. had concerns about the number of white students at the meetings, feeling it would discourage students of color from coming to meetings, which it did. Students of color and white students in the focus groups discussed that the popularity of the club was due to the timing of the club's formation. In the months leading up to the presidential election, when issues about race and gender were discussed by candidates in national media, students wanted a place to talk and voice their concerns. A few students in the focus groups, mostly the seniors, felt that some white students had just wanted to add it to their college applications.

Although the S.R.E. mission statement stated that one goal was to have conversations about race with white students, a few students of color in the focus group discussed that they did not anticipate that they would be expected to "teach" the white students about race. Chris, who self-identifies as southeast Asian-Indian and white, explained that it was important to include white students in conversations about race, but insisted that everyone would "need to do the work, too." Most of the early members of S.R.E. in the focus groups expressed that they were learning about race themselves and in

the early stages of the club believed it was important to do together. All of the students in the focus groups agreed that as the club's numbers of white students increased, they grew very uncomfortable when talking about race. As Katherine, a senior and early member of the club and in the class shared,

> Joining S.R.E. as a white student was a strange experience I didn't prepare myself for. I was never really comfortable talking about race, at all. I had never had any experience talking about it - in the classroom or within my white family. My family wondered whether it was my place to be involved in. My dad asked if it was my place and if I should be spending my time on it. I felt like last year, I shouldn't be speaking or I shouldn't be here, but I came even though I felt very uncomfortable. (2018)

How to speak about race and who should speak about race were issues students reflected and discussed in their focus groups. Despite the intentions to create a safe space for students of color to have conversations about race and equity *and* include white students in these conversations, S.R.E. students did not predict that the dynamics of the club would be affected by a majority of white students attending meetings more than students of color. Furthermore, students of color and white students in the focus group shared how not only was it difficult to talk about race and equity in a roomful of white students, but also there was an added stress when some staff and administrators sat in these meetings.

At first, S.R.E. met every Tuesday during lunch in my classroom. Some teachers who were supportive of S.R.E. attended lunch meetings; two administrators often attended the S.R.E. meetings, too. However, S.R.E. students perceived the presence of administrators and some staff members with concern. As Chris explained,

> Another problem was the staff/admin presence in the club meetings that didn't try to help what we were doing but just watching. Assumed we were going to talk about the issue of race. And, people have internal problems with it; you'd come into the conversation when an adult comes into the conversation with their problems and makes it about them and that wasn't fair.

Also, administrators shared concerns with me (as a member of the equity team) that students had no "official" district training to have conversations about race; they worried what students would say about race in their meetings. The overall impression of S.R.E. by staff members and administrators was similar to the core group's concerns, that there were a great deal of white students in the group; however, students felt a lack of support by the administration, who only attended meetings and took notes but rarely spoke. Such actions indicated to S.R.E. students that they were not taken seriously by the administration. Students in the focus groups felt the administration wanted the club to fail.

The general concern of the two administrators who had attended S.R.E. in the earlier months in equity meetings was that S.R.E. was not an inclusive space for students of color as the core group had said it would be, and some adults believed this was due to the lack of training students had about race. However, equity training did not guarantee that adults knew how to talk about race with each other either. Although the demographics of the club changed significantly over the school year with more students of color joining than in earlier months, some staff and administrators held onto their initial impressions of S.R.E., that it was a club with more white students than students of color.

As students reflected about their first-year experiences as a club, Kiki, a senior who identifies as white, recalled, "I just remember a lot of pushback by staff and admin when we told them we wanted to do equity work with them, and they said we didn't have any training." The belief that some administrators felt students needed "official" equity training to talk about race was problematic. Arguably, once-a-month professional

development trainings on race and equity did not mean that all staff members and administrators were properly prepared to talk about race. Students *and* adults had difficulties talking about race, especially in a predominantly white school where the politics of race determined who should speak about race and who should listen, were constant tensions not only between S.R.E. students but also among staff and administrators.

Hypervisibility, Hyperinvisibility, and Colorism: The Problematics of "White Passing"

> It's kind of strange, as a white-passing, mixed person, when I first started S.R.E. with Chris, I didn't know what I was getting into. The more we got into what was happening at school from students of color it was super powerful but also super weird. I am a person of color, but I am not a target of white people because I look very white. It was powerful to hear stories from other students who have darker skin than I. However, I felt very silenced [in the club] because I look white and was treated that way by some students of color in S.R.E., but I am a person of color, but I'm not. (Jackson, self-identifies as Asian and white, a senior at Hamilton High School, 2018)

> I never had issues or had anxiety around my racial identity until I joined the S.R.E. committee (club). Then I had a lot of racial identity and concerns. I was hoping, as a mixed-race person, I would find a community in S.R.E. I never really fit in with my white friends or my Mexican friends, so I was kind of hoping S.R.E. would give me that space. However, I constantly felt othered. I was told to be quiet because I look white, but then told as a POC to speak up. I was hoping my voice would be more beneficial since I am a person who experiences both sides. But I never got that (Lara, a senior at Hamilton High School, 2018)

Talking about race, whether with or between students and/or with or between adults, is exceptionally challenging especially when certain assumptions about race are based on one's perceived appearance. The logics of hypervisibility is based on

perceptions of race and implicit rules about who could speak about race and who could not. In S.R.E., the logic of hypervisibility/hyperinvisibility functioned to position those who were perceived as "white" or "white passing," outside of conversations about race by students of color whose racial identities were not questioned by peers and/or adults. When asked about challenges that the club experienced internally, students in the focus groups who self-identify as "mixed-race" shared various experiences about being included or excluded based on their perceived racial identity by students in S.R.E., administrators, and staff. With the exception of two white students in the focus groups, all of the other students self-identify as "mixed-race." This was a term students most often used to describe themselves in the focus groups. On more than one occasion, I observed white students and students of color who identified in more than one racial group had difficulty talking about racial descriptions of themselves to others. Of course, many knew the often-repeated explanation about race, that "race was a social construct," however there were noticeable tensions between students who were perceived as a student of color based on their appearance, typically by their hair and/or skin color, and students who described themselves as "white passing."

Jackson and Lara's experiences in S.R.E. as "white passing" posed similar concerns regarding the perceptions of their racial identities, yet they expressed different understandings of their racial knowledge. Jackson, who self-identifies as white and Asian, reflected that he learned a lot from peers who had "darker skin" than him and who experienced mistreatment. Lara, who self-identifies as white and Mexican, commented that prior to joining S.R.E. she had never had any "anxiety about her racial identity;" however, this changed significantly for her once she joined the club. Both students were

core members of S.R.E., and vocal about their commitment to doing equity work at the school, however Lara's racial knowledge, including the way she spoke about race was exceptionally strong. She impressed several staff members and administrators with the level of confidence she had regarding racial issues that she had observed in the school, yet in S.R.E. she felt silenced by other students of color who perceived her appearance to be white. Jackson was aware that he had a lot to learn when talking about race, however he, too, felt silenced by S.R.E. members. As Lara explained,

> Race and oppression became more linked last year instead of race and heritage, and became the dominant conversation. What made you a person of color was the oppression you experienced. I didn't feel it was all right for me to say I was Mexican because I don't experience racial bias that much, I'm not targeted, I didn't grow up in Mexico, and because I didn't get targeted I couldn't say I experience oppression as Mexicans might. (2018)

Lara's comments reflect the concept of colorism, in which people are treated differently based on social, political, and cultural meanings associated with skin color. She highlighted the tensions many students, and adults, had when having conversations about race where students of color were viewed against a "sharp white background" at a predominantly white school (Hurston, 1928). The logic of hypervisibility heightened a perception of appearance based on the color of one's skin *and* correlated to one's credibility to speak about their experiences as a person of color. In other words, because race and oppression were discursively constituted in conversations about race and equity in a predominantly white school, students of color who were perceived as "white passing" felt they were unable to talk about race in the S.R.E. club and with some staff and administrators.

Students' experiences indicated the normalization of certain racialized discourses that were present in the district's racial equity policy, and in much of the training administrators and staff experienced for over six years. At staff equity meetings, teachers were asked to "isolate race" when thinking of their students and their academic success in their classes. Teachers identified students based on their racialized perceptions; many teachers were unaware that many students they discussed in equity meetings, self-identified as bi-racial or multi-racial. Physical traits, particularly darker skin, were stereotypical racial indicators that white teachers referenced during equity staff meetings, and these were also examples presented by administrators and equity and/or climate staff members. In thinking about these racialized discourses, O'Farrell (2005) argues discourses are "controlled, limited, and defined by exercises of power and draws attention to the way boundaries between the true and the false are erected within certain contexts" (p. 42).

Such "erected" boundaries imposed a logic of hypervisibility/hyperinvisibility that continue to normalize racial identities based on historical, social, and political contestations about race in a predominantly white school. However, since many students in S.R.E. club and the leadership class identify as multiracial, conversations about race based on physical perceptions shifted during the equity work. During their project about school climate, S.R.E. students found ways to interrupt the logic of hypervisibility/hyperinvisibility and pointed out the ways that the district and the school reported racial demographics that conflated understandings about race in a predominantly white school.

Interrupting the Logic of Hypervisibility/Hyperinvisibility

In the fall of 2017, when S.R.E. became a leadership class, its 26 students decided to do an all-school survey about school climate after one of the S.R.E. students shared that she was followed to class by an administrator after arriving late to school. She explained to him that she was on her way to class, but instead of letting her go on her own, he followed her, attempting to make small talk with her but nonetheless following her. As a student of color, who self-identifies as black and one of two female Muslim students in the school, she felt he targeted her while other white students passed by them without the administrator asking these students where they were going or if they had a hallway pass. In S.R.E., we discussed this student's experience as a group to see if other students of color experienced similar situations. Students who self-identify as black, or bi-racial but perceived black, and students who self-identify as Latinx and Cambodian, specifically students with darker skin color, said they had similar experiences. Students who self-identify as white, Asian, and biracial but present as "white" said they were never stopped, even if they didn't have a pass.

After this discussion in class, students decided to conduct a survey with the entire school to better understand what was going on in the hallways during class time. They created a concise questionnaire to collect both quantifiable and qualitative data and collected over 1,200 surveys in a school with approximately 1,600 students. More about the S.R.E. student survey experiences will be explained in the next section, however interrupting the logic of hypervisibility/hyperinvisibility required S.R.E. students to think about how to collect data from the student body based on self-identifying their race or ethnicity. This promoted an epistemological and ontological discussion about race,

ethnicity, identity, subjectivity, and how to compose categories for the survey. Students in S.R.E. grappled with the concept of racial or ethnic demographic "boxes," which they felt compromised the ways they viewed themselves. With more than a third of the class self-identifying as bi-racial or multi-racial, this was an interesting topic of exploration; they decided that to better understand how multiracial students were represented in the school, they would encourage students who took the survey to "check more than one box." After working on a four-question survey regarding hallway pass policies/experiences, students struggled most on crafting the first question which they referred to as the "racial identifier question," especially the bi-racial students (see Appendix D). "Other" was taken out and in its place they added a single line asking participants to "fill in the blank with your choice."

This was an opportunity for students in the *only* racially and ethnically diverse class at Hamilton to grapple with issues about how to gather information about students' racial identities without becoming complicit to the dominant discourses on race in a typical survey tool. Data gathered using these methods was sorted, graphed, and analyzed, with their results presented in a PowerPoint. The Hallway Climate Survey provided S.R.E. students with an opportunity to engage in strategic discussions about equity – specifically, having data informed discussions – with administrators, staff, and students in a predominantly white school.

In Figure 4, students created a graph to illustrate their concerns about how race and ethnicity data are collected by institutions, such as schools and school districts, and how they often misrepresent and/or conflate racial identities. For example, both Hamilton and the district do not recognize "African" on documents reporting student racial

demographics, even though the school has several students who self-identify as African. Also, on the school's profile document, which was available in the main office to school visitors, whites are classified as "European American" and multiracial students are "mixed race."

To engage in a more nuanced conversation about race with staff, administrators, students, and community members, students presented data from the Hallway Climate Survey in several different ways. In Figures 4, 5, and 6, data from the S.R.E. survey is represented as well as student presentation notes that accompanied each slide; these notes show how students spoke about race in their presentations and how deliberate they addressed perceptions of race and ethnicity in a predominantly white school.

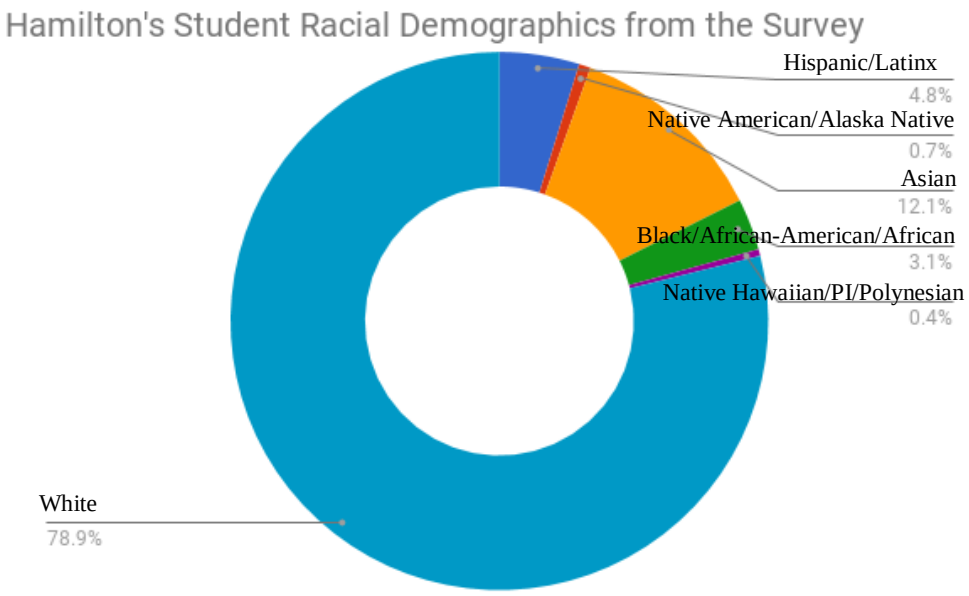

Figure 4. Based on over 1,200 surveys, S.R.E. Leadership class created this graph to demonstrate how race and ethnicity are often misrepresented by institutional data.

> First question on the survey. Explain why we are showing them this graph. We made this graph to show the ways that race and ethnicity are often represented in institutional data. This kind of information was very problematic for us because many of us self-identify with more than one race, and we see that that is a value that needs to included, especially in a predominantly white high school, where

> race is often conflated into binary categories. (Hallway Climate Survey presentation notes, S.R.E. Leadership, 2018)

In Figure 4, students who self-identified as multiracial, white and another race, were purposefully added to different categories, mostly to the white student category. The intention of this graph is noted in Chris' speaker notes. He argued that in a predominantly white school, "race is often conflated into binary categories;" students who self-identify in more than one race and/or ethnic group are *devalued* by representing them in only one racial category.

In Figure 5, data was re-presented to accurately report students who self-identify as multiracial or reported two or more races.

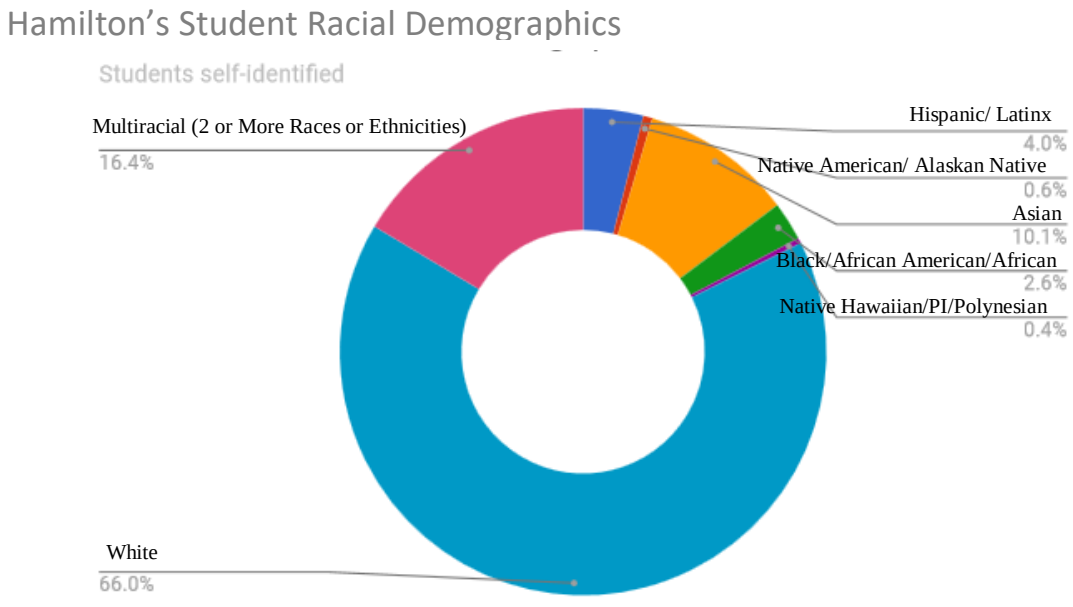

Figure 5. Created by S.R.E. Leadership for their Hallway Climate Survey to represent how students self-identify at Hamilton High School, including students who self-identify as two or more races.

This is a second interpretation of the first question we asked students (in the Hallway Climate survey about self-identity), including those who identify as multiracial. We feel like this graph is more representational to understanding the

> demographics of race and ethnicity in a predominantly white school (pws). People don't fit neatly into boxes. (Hallway Climate Survey presentation notes, S.R.E. Leadership, 2018)

In the S.R.E. class, students discussed the reasons to disaggregate their data for the presentation. To raise more complex views about race in a predominantly white school they felt it necessary to present a more nuanced perspective of multiracial groups. Since many S.R.E. students self-identify both as students of color *and* multiracial, they recognized the importance to look at racial demographic data in a different way. Data for students who self-identify as multiracial was disaggregated again in their presentation in Figure 6 to connect to the perceptions of racial identities of the students who were found to be more frequently stopped in the hallway whether they had a hallway pass or not during class time. The presentation notes for Figure 6 highlights this understanding: "many people identify as white and another race, *however they are perceived by the world based on the color of their skin*" [emphasis added].

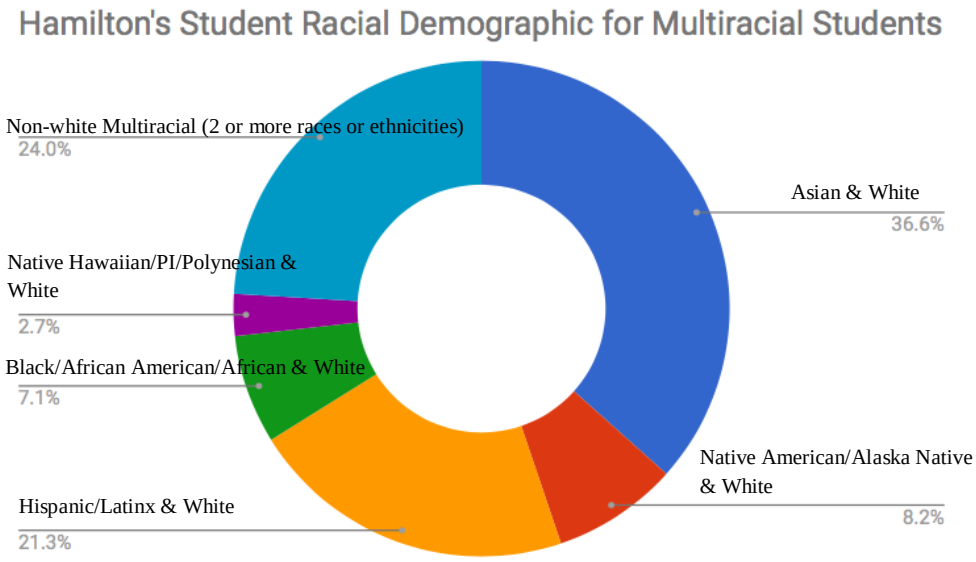

Figure 6. Created by S.R.E. Leadership for the Hallway Climate Survey, this graph represents the 16.4% of students who self-identify as multiracial at Hamilton High School.

> Remember to say why we made this graph: In the first graph, it looks like 78.9% of Hamilton's student body identifies as white, but within that population, many also identify with another race. We made this graph because there are many different demographics within the category multiracial. We also wanted to clarify that many of the students who identify as white also identify as another race, and vice versa. Many people identify as white and another race, *however they are perceived by the world based on the color of their skin*. This graph represents 16.4% of students who self-identify as multiracial in the total student population that we surveyed. (emphasis added, Hallway Climate Survey presentation notes, S.R.E. Leadership, 2018)

Figures 4, 5, and 6, along with students' presentation notes, correlated to perceptions of racial identities and the effects of colorism in a predominantly white school. To demonstrate student awareness of what was happening to some students of color in the hallway during class time (and how colorism was functioning), S.R.E. students took the qualitative responses from the survey and made visible posters of the quotes to either hang or hold during their presentation (see Figure 7). Approximately 13% of students reported they were sometimes or frequently stopped in the halls, compared to 87% not or rarely stopped. While that number might not suggest there is a problem, the 13% self-reporting students who were frequently stopped self-identify as black, Latinx, and students who self-identify as multiracial but are perceived as black and/or Latinx. Furthermore, data collected from white students indicated that they were aware of which students were being stopped and how their perceived identity "is a pass in itself" (see Figure 7).

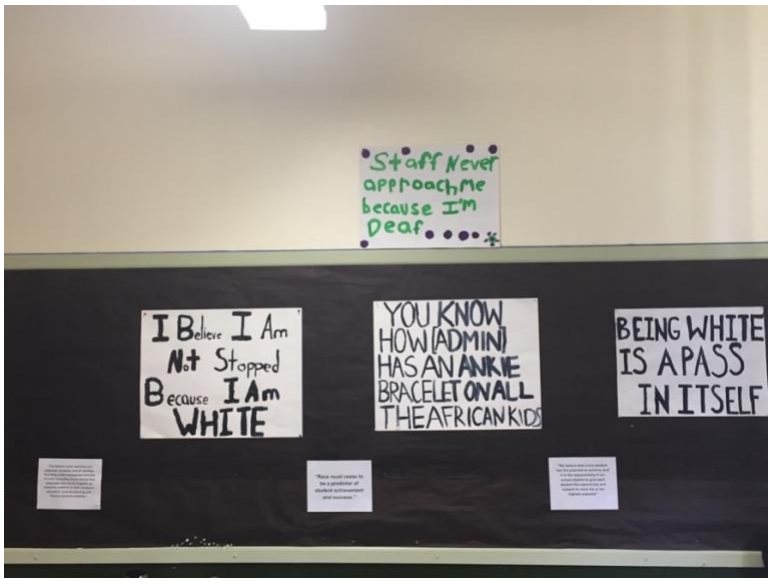

Figure 7. Examples from the responses from over 1,200 students surveyed about their observations and perceptions in the hallway during class time, collected, sorted, and made into posters by S.R.E. Leadership students.

Data collected from the Hallway Climate survey offered a significant critique of the enactments outlined in the Racial Educational Equity Policy. At this particular school, equity mandates were not followed as outlined by the district. Ball, et al., (2012) argues, policy "enactments will also depend to some extent on the degree to which particular policies will 'fit' or can be fitted within the existing ethos and culture of the school or can change ethos and culture" (p. 10). Data collected from the Hallway Climate Survey and the responses shared in focus groups contribute to interrupting the logic of hypervisibility based on perceived racialized identities. And data also highlighted how the logic of hypervisibility functions in predominantly white space as an effect of power.

Analysis of Hypervisibility/Hyperinvisibility

Data presented in this section responds to two of my research questions. First, what tensions arise when S.R.E. students of color and white students become involved in racial equity work at a predominantly white high school? The concept of

hypervisibility/hyperinvisibility functioned not only in the club among students, but also among administrators, staff, and the student body. A second research question I will address too, but will elaborate more in the final section of my data analysis is, what are the effects of power when S.R.E. students of color and white students become involved in racial equity work at a predominantly white school?

The logic of hypervisibility/hyperinvisibility functions in multiple ways as an effect of power. Foucault (1994) explains power relations as,

> The system of differentiations that permits one to act upon the actions of others: juridical and traditional differences of status or privilege; […]differing positions within the process of production, linguistic or cultural differences, […]. Every relationship of power puts into operation differences that are, at the same time, its conditions and its results. (p. 344)

The effects of power extended throughout the entire school body, however it manifested itself within the "whole network of the social" (p. 345). In consideration of the system of differentiations, some students in the focus groups who self-identify as "white-passing" felt the effects of power by other students of color in S.R.E. Lara's comment recognized distinctive discursive practices in the club: to talk about race is to speak *only* about oppression, rather than about heritage and culture. Her observations of these discussions in S.R.E. were not intended to dismiss S.R.E. students of color who wanted to talk about experiences of oppression. On the contrary, she felt that she was not permitted to speak about race and equity as a person of color because she had not personally experienced oppression due to her perceived appearance. Jackson was aware that he had a great deal to learn about race, which was the intention of the club; similar to Lara, he wanted to participate in discussions about race in S.R.E., but felt pressured by some students to be silent during meetings. Both students struggled to remain in S.R.E., and eventually left

the club. Lara did not enroll in S.R.E. when it became a class, however Jackson joined the leadership class in the following year.

The logic of hypervisibility/hyperinvisibility, as an effect of power, constitutes bodies through power/knowledge about race, regulating whom should/can speak about race as well as normalizing perceived concepts of appearance, whose skin is darker and whose is whiter. "As an identity, whiteness refers to the racial characteristic of being White" (Castagno, 2014, p. 7). Power produces certain behaviors that regulate people's everyday actions as well as their beliefs about identity and subjectivity. Wheedon (2004) explains "identities may be socially, culturally and institutionally assigned" whereas subjectivities are constituted by cultural and social practices, as well as in/through relationships" (p. 2). According to the qualitative comments from over 1,200 students, white students were highly cognizant of their privilege to move about the hallways during class time without much concern of being stopped by staff, administrators, and/or campus security. Further, they observed that students of color, mostly black and Latinx students, walking through the same hallways, did not have the same freedom as they did. Ehlers (2008) argues "the specter of race is itself a disciplinary regime that discursively generates, forms, and constructs the racial subject through the process of subjectivation" (p. 335). Even after operating under policy directives about racial equity for students of color and years of equity training, the specter of race in a predominantly white high school actively constituted norms and oppositional discourses about race for students of color, white students, staff, and administrators.

Despite these norms, the S.R.E. leadership class engaged in complicated conversations about race among themselves, staff, administrators, the student body, and

the district's school board and superintendent. Interrupting or disrupting the logic of hypervisibility meant resisting stable or fixed notions of race that discursively functioned in school conversations and actions to legitimize, normalize, and control discourses about equity and through the district's racial equity policy and enactments of the policy in this particular school. As Chris explained in one of the focus groups,

> It's ironic about data on race, when it's how we self-identify, but it's based on this external construct [that] no matter how you collect the data, what you're really trying to look at is how many brown people there are. But the survey you're giving can't say what you want to know is, "please circle what skin color you are," because that's really what they want to know. *What we're actually looking for is taboo, which is to ask: what color are you? but that's what we're surveying for*. (Emphasis added, 2018)

In "The Subject and Power," Foucault (1994) encourages an investigation of forms of resistance to understand how power relations function, "in such struggles, people criticize instances of power that are the closet to them, those which exercise their action on individuals" and they are "struggles that question the status of the individual" (p. 330). From the design of the Hallway Climate Survey to data collected, discourses about race collided with other discourses and perceptions of appearance (relating to colorism). Students in the S.R.E. Leadership class reported that it was the most racially and ethnically diverse class they had at Hamilton, so discussing race, identities, and subjectivities in this class ignited serious debates about race. Many students self-identified as "mixed" or "bi-racial" and, after examining data from their survey, they considered the effects of race on themselves when they wanted to be represented in more than one racial category. As S.R.E. students articulately argued, when asked to choose one of their identities for institutional data reports, how did one decide? To them, being

represented as “multiracial” was not accurate enough. By presenting the student self-reporting racial data in different forms, (disaggregating, then double-counting), S.R.E. engaged in nuanced conversations about race to question how individuals are often misrepresented by institutional data on racial demographics.

Inevitably tensions exist when discussing race and equity, however some students in the S.R.E. club were able to navigate these more successfully than others. The leadership class was not without its challenges; however, the Hallway Climate Survey focused students’ attention on specific racial equity issues in the school that was not only for themselves but also for all of the students in the school. Thus, the racial equity work decided by the S.R.E. students demonstrated practices of power, moving through individuals.

Practices of Power: Data Exploration # 3

> The conversations we have in S.R.E. about the school and the effects of the hallway policy opened my eyes to a problem I wanted to fix. The whole experience helped me understand what I, as a person of this school community, have to do. That is, help others receive support. I enjoy being here but sometimes need a break; not from the class itself but from the reality of [the] racial power dynamic at this school. (S.R.E. student of color reflection, junior, 2018)

There is no neutral place to stand free and clear.
Linda Martín Alcoff, 1991

The final examples in my study explore the practices of power by students. The discussion examines how power moves through individuals, in circulation and between individuals. The examples demonstrate the effects of power through actions by S.R.E. students doing racial equity work that was meaningful and impactful to them, and their beliefs that this was important for all students in the school. However, this kind of racial equity work was not what administrators or some staff members wanted. Most equity team members were supportive of the students' work and encouraged them to keep moving forward with it. Relationships students in the S.R.E. Leadership class shared with various administrators and staff members, whether supportive or not, are part of a field of relations. Foucault (1980) regards power moving through a relational field between various individuals; by examining the effects of power though the actions of S.R.E. students and the actions of other groups in relation to them, we can understand power forms a "chain" that restricts or supports the actions taken by the students doing their racial equity work.

The relational field to S.R.E. was not limited to the school and neither were the articulations of the students' racial equity work. This field expanded through invitations

of family members, state legislators, city council candidates, and representatives from the mayor's office to listen to the S.R.E. Hallway Climate presentations at the school. In addition, students planned and conducted school assemblies to share the results from the survey with the student body and two students from the focus groups were interviewed on a local radio show. Many of these events were not planned by me, as adviser of the class, or by the students, however as it became clear that the students' racial equity work was not aligned to the equity work that the administrators wanted them to do, other "chains" were formed to continue the work that students felt they needed to do.

This section examines the concept of student voice compared to students' voices, examples of resistance practices of power, and "exercises of power" (Foucault, 1995). Data includes discussions from students in focus groups, fieldnotes about the radio interview with two S.R.E. students and responses by the principal regarding the radio show, fieldnotes from five different presentations on the hallway survey results, fieldnotes from a conversation with the principal regarding student racial equity work, and finally, excerpts from my teacher evaluation report. Not only were students caught within power relations, but as the adviser for S.R.E. for two years, I was positioned within the relational field of S.R.E. students, their families, the administration, and fellow staff members where I experienced effects of disciplinary power (see Foucault, 1997/2003). In addition to these data examples, I include images from student survey responses selected by S.R.E. students to be visibly displayed on posters around the various locations where students gave their presentations. An important image that I include is the students' research process, which included their theoretical approaches and data methodology; I displayed it in my classroom on a large bulletin board, spanning 5

feet x 4 feet in dimension. My analysis follows the data discussions and I respond to two of my research questions: How are S.R.E. students/youth positioned by staff and administration to be part of race and equity policy enactments? and What are the effects of power when S.R.E. students of color and white students become involved in racial equity work at a predominantly white school?

Students' Voices *Not* 'Student Voice'

> By engaging them in reflecting on, analyzing, and speaking out about their educational experiences, student voice efforts endow students with greater authority and agency than students are typically granted in schools. Student voice initiatives push against the tendency to cast students simply as the targets of educational policies and the passive beneficiaries of educational processes. Rather, students involved in student voice efforts assume critical roles as, for example, educational innovators, analysts, researchers, or agents of change – not just in their schools, but on local, state, and national stages. (Conner, et al., 2015).

Student voice research offers very compelling reasons why students should have a say in policy initiatives that affect their daily experiences in their schools. Advocates for student voice (see Conner, et al., 2012; 2015; Mitra, et al., 2013; York & Krishner, 2015) often point to the benefits of students investing in deliberate and explicit processes for school-based decisions, arguing that reform efforts will be more successful with student decision-making actions rather than passive involvements. However, other scholars suggest student voice is "not mediated, but guided, facilitated, and supervised through specific techniques that delimit what can be said, how speakers conceive of themselves – techniques for shaping subjectivities" (Bragg, 2007, p. 349). Likewise, Fielding's (2001) critical questions – whom is allowed to speak, to whom, what are they allowed to speak about, and what language is allowed – express significant concerns regarding how adults in schools and districts deploy the term "student voice." During the student racial equity

work, planning and executing the Hallway Climate survey, students unknowingly adhered to Fielding's critical questions.

The S.R.E. Hallway Climate survey was conducted in late October 2017. One of the logistical challenges of a survey of this magnitude was the decision to use primarily paper forms to collect data, in order to make it more accessible and equitable for all students in the school to participate; thus processing and analyzing data took quite a lot of time. For administrators, it appeared that S.R.E. was not doing much after the survey, however this was far from the realities of the work students were doing during class time. In mid-January 2018, I was asked to meet with the principal to discuss the S.R.E. Leadership plans and projects that aligned with the administration and climate team work for the school. I was not asked what was the S.R.E. students were working on or how the survey was working out or if there were any results to share with administrators, equity team members, and/or climate team members. Instead, the principal outlined an agenda made by administrators and the climate team who wanted student voice on the climate team's work for the school:

> The principal presented goals and/or expectations and ideas to *bring* S.R.E. *into* climate work. A project was already decided by the climate team without any input from students, but they wanted students to participate in the project to have student voice. There were assumptions of tech support that students would need to write a script and shoot a video – rather than consider that S.R.E. students had already written and produced a video in the previous year or that they didn't have the skills for this kind of project. What was being asked of S.R.E. was to make a video around "compassion," "honor," and "scholarship," – values selected by a few IB students and teachers – that would be used as a beginning of the school year message for all students. This video would also explain the PBIS [Positive Behavior Intervention System] Tier plan for school climate, from mostly students of color! (emphasis added, Fieldnotes, January 17, 2018)

Instead of agreeing to this request, I invited the principal to come to the S.R.E. class and speak to students about what she wanted them to do for this project. I was concerned that S.R.E. was being asked to be the faces behind a video to introduce the Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS) as part of the school's climate work (which did not include most members from the equity team), and to speak on behalf of the school's values that presented race-neutral but "inclusive" language about the school. After meeting with the principal, students were able to convince her that they were unable to help at this time since they were still working on their hallway survey and suggested to her that students from other leadership classes could participate in the project.

Following this meeting and over the next month, one of the climate team members began to visit the class; they had been asked by the climate team to discuss the "Tier system" of PBIS with S.R.E. students and wanted their help to translate the program's behavioral expectations into "student friendly terms" (Fieldnotes, January 23, 2018). The continued message from the climate team to the S.R.E. students was that they wanted "student voice" to help carry the new behavior policies to the student body. When asked if the two other leadership classes, who plan and run school pep assemblies, were participating in this project, I was told no, "because they (administration and climate team) wanted a more diverse group of students to give voice to these important school policies" (Fieldnotes, January 23, 2018).

Student voice, when used by staff and administrators, carried meanings and desires that call into question some of Fielding's (2001) concerns: how many students should be included and who should be asked to speak on issues affecting the entire student body? These were questions students in S.R.E. raised when deciding how to

research their racial equity concerns regarding the climate in the hallways during class time. They insisted on creating a survey, believing they could capture more *students' voices*. This objective required them to make strategic decisions about how to structure the survey and make it accessible for all students. S.R.E. students met with teachers who taught English as a Second Language and teachers in Special Education classes to get their assistance in the wording of some of the questions as well as suggestions about how to deliver the survey. They met with staff of color to help with the question about racial and ethnic self-identification. Originally they wanted to collect the surveys digitally, but after discussions about student accessibility with a few supportive staff members, they changed their minds and had paper copies when visiting classes to ask for student participation. After pre-arranging a day to collect data with the administration and staff, students visited every class during the same class period, script in hand, showed the "We Are S.R.E." video (which was produced the previous year but not allowed to be shown by the former principal), then invited students to participate in their survey. The goal was to collect as many responses from students to make sure that S.R.E. was not speaking *for* them, but *with* them, about a racial equity issue that affected the entire student body.

The survey had an impact not only because it included so many student participants but also because of its importance to S.R.E. students. Some student responses also revealed how white students grappled with the concept of race, noticing they did not identify as Caucasian, which was one of the survey's selections, but sometimes wrote in other racial or ethnic identities such as European American, German, Irish American, etc. This was a surprise to some of the students of color, demonstrating the complexity of race

for white students in ways they did not expect, and added to our discussions about race in a predominantly white school.

To present the results, S.R.E. students felt it was important to represent students' voices in thought-provoking ways. They selected quotes that expressed salient points about what students observed and/or experienced in the hallways and painted on posters to make them visible during the presentation of the data to convey to their audiences that they were speaking *with* the student body. S.R.E. students "performed" their data differently for each presentation, depending on their audience and the venue. For example, when presenting to staff at an equity meeting, students walked around the library without speaking, holding posters with students' quotes from the survey. This was a strategy was quite effective because it disrupted the norms of presenting and/or discussing disembodied data, where students are often presented as numbers or percentages in educational discourses by adults.

Practices of Power: Actions Upon Actions

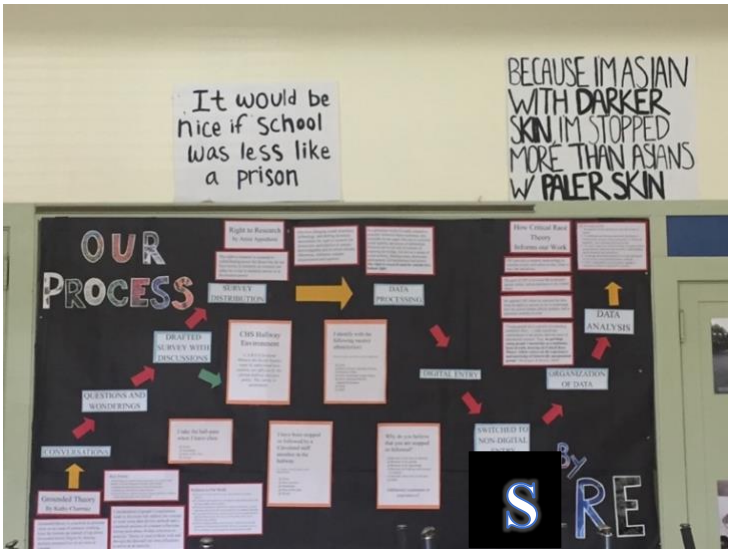

Figure 8. The Research Process Poster, explains the starting point of the survey, initial research, methodology, and analysis. Above the Research Process Board, are student comments from the survey, selected by S.R.E. for the survey presentation.

Foucault (1994) argues power cannot be possessed by an individual but rather power moves through individuals. Power is a force. Power can be understood through an analysis of strategies. Data from the hallway survey presented strong evidence and assertive arguments that students of color, particularly those with darker skin, were the subjects of consistent surveillance and implicit and explicit harassment by some staff members, administrators, and some security guards. The experiences that students of color reported in the survey were further corroborated by students (not in S.R.E.) who had me as their social studies teacher and/or visited my room at lunch to attend Black Student Union meetings, where the posters with students' beliefs were visibly displayed around the classroom. In my classroom alone, these hand-painted posters conflicted with the school's climate commitments posters, which were professionally printed and laminated, visible around the entire school and required to be posted in each classroom by the administration.

The goal of the hallway survey was to present as many students' voices that articulated their experiences in the hallway to administrators and staff; the objectives included sharing data with the entire staff and having small group discussions between S.R.E. and staff to brainstorm potential solutions. Some S.R.E. students wanted specific outcomes from staff and administration that immediately addressed students' concerns expressed in the survey, however other students questioned whether adults would follow through any proposals if they came from students. In one of the focus groups, Kiki, a senior who self-identifies as white explained, "They don't listen to us unless you (meaning me as their teacher) are backing us up; they listen and seem like they are on our

side, and we make ourselves sound articulate and credible, but they don't act on what we are saying."

Students gave a rehearsal presentation in February 2018 and invited members from the equity team, climate team, administrators and other staff members who supported their work but were not on either of these teams. In March, S.R.E. presented to the staff during the monthly equity meeting. Following the presentation, students organized break-out sessions for staff to talk about the presentation and propose solutions with the staff to address issues raised in the survey. S.R.E. also assigned a pair of students from the class, a student of color and a white student, to lead each session with one or two staff members from the equity and climate teams or administrators, for support if needed. Although over 70 staff attended the presentation, many did not go to the break-out sessions. Each break-out session went differently, however some issues between staff and students emerged, as discussed during our debriefing of each session:

> While many students had various stories to share during the debrief after the sessions, one group had probably the worst experience. It was even more concerning that the principal was in the group as an ally for students and did little to intervene or help guide the conversation in a positive way when some staff became hostile to students. In this group, the two students, one self-identifies as American Indian and the other as white, were questioned by some staff members to speak for all students about why they are in the hallways during class. One of the teachers said students are "unmotivated" and "lazy" which is why they don't stay in class. Some teachers expressed they felt it was their responsibility to confront students in the hallway if they were by their classroom. The two students were visibly shaken and bothered by their group's responses. (Fieldnotes, March 20, 2018)

S.R.E. students' reactions to the staff presentation and break-out sessions were revealing; one student wrote in her reflection,

> I realized that I take classes and interact with many of these teachers [who attended the S.R.E. presentation]. I look to these teachers as mentors, but I notice more and more that they are able to turn off their "race lens" while in their classrooms. *I am a person who thinks about race almost every minute of the day, whether it's my life experiences or someone else's*. It's difficult for me to trust my teachers as allies when they don't live with race on their minds like S.R.E. does. (Emphasis added, S.R.E. student of color reflection, sophomore, 2018)

The actions of some staff members and one of the administrators in this staff meeting led to further actions by S.R.E. that were not originally planned. Utilizing their resources, notably that some of their family members had powerful connections to important people in the community, students decided to go outside of the school to "be heard" by other adults to order to increase pressure on administrators to address the concerns raised from their survey (Fieldnotes, March 20, 2018). This presentation of the Hallway Climate survey included state legislators, a candidate for city council, representatives from the mayor's office, school board members, and the families and close friends of S.R.E. students. The day prior to this presentation, new hallway procedures were introduced at a staff meeting by the principal stating, "All students will be asked for a hallway pass" by a new campus security team, now referred to as "agents" (Fieldnotes, April 17, 2018). During the staff meeting, the principal explained the new changes,

> She first raised the question, "what's going on in the hallway?" she laughs as she says this. There is no direct acknowledgement of the S.R.E. survey and data but exclaims, "every" student will be asked for their pass – "there will be no exceptions except students with accommodations that will have a pink pass" – some teachers applaud and cheer loudly. We are asked to pick up yellow passes before we leave. Several staff members look at me and shake their heads, some look empathetic or roll their eyes. I have a hard time listening in the meeting after this. (Fieldnotes, April 17, 2018)

Reading the two data excerpts, the reflection from a student of color in S.R.E. and my fieldnotes, reflects how types of accepted or not accepted behaviors or actions are

connected to power. Power produces types of behaviors or actions by normalizing discourses that operationalize specific regulations of particular spaces through "exercises of power" (Foucault, 1994).

The Body: Exercises of Power

"Foucault assumes that people will always seek to modify the actions of others, in short to exercise power, but he also assumes that people will at the same time resist such attempts" (O'Farrell, 2005, p. 109). Considering that power is put into action, I want to turn to explore data how power is viewed within a field of possibilities, how relations of power operate, and how exercises of power constitute the body. I have discussed and demonstrated how relations of power functions across a field of possibilities that extend beyond spaces of classrooms, hallways and schools; they exist between students and staff, between students and administrators, between staff and administrators, between staff and staff, between school and community, and between school and district. Foucault (1994) explicates that the exercise of power

> operates on the field of possibilities in which the behavior of active subjects is able to inscribe itself. It is a set of actions on possible actions; it incites, it induces, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult; it releases or contrives, makes more probable or less; in the extreme, it constrains or forbids absolutely, but it is always a way of acting upon one or more acting subjects by virtue of their acting or being capable of action.

Exercises of power – the field of possibilities – behavior of active subjects – inscribe themselves. I want to call attention to Foucault's explanation of exercises of power, particularly as someone who experienced effects of power as a result of the racial equity work S.R.E. did for the school. As Foucault (1980) states, "the individual is one of

power's first effects." In thinking of the effects of power, the data explores how power is exercised to produce certain effects.

Following a successful presentation to state legislators, city officials, a candidate for city council, and students' family and close friends, S.R.E. was allowed to have four 30-minute school assemblies (one for each grade) to share results from their survey and announce its first schoolwide event, a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Summit. These efforts emboldened the group in ways that they had not felt since the staff equity meeting in March. The group's success peaked when a local radio show, which broadcasts nationally, invited students from the class to be interviewed about their survey. Two students (both of whom were in my focus groups) were selected by the class to be interviewed. To focus on the movement of power in time and space, I present the data in chunks of segments, truncated from my fieldnotes:

May 2: Fieldnotes

> Verbally informed my principal about the radio show; purposefully waited until the end of the day to let her know this was happening in case she tried to pressure one of the student's parent not to let her daughter do it since they know each other. She did not seem pleased that this was going to happen.

May 3: Fieldnotes

> In an email to all staff, the principal reports that she wants to "give you a 'heads up' that yesterday it was shared with me that two of our HHS students, will be on [a local radio show] from 12:20-12:40 speaking about their SRE research. It's my understanding that an HHS parent who heard the presentation called [the radio show] to connect SRE with the show. I am preparing to send a communication to our community after the show airs."

May 3: Fieldnotes

I drive to the radio station, meet with one of the student's parents and sister in the listening room, and the two S.R.E. students. Both are nervous. Listening to the show, both seem more relaxed. Then, host reads an email, as he says a "long" email from our principal, I immediately check my school email to see if she had sent me a copy. She did not.

Principal's statement to the radio show:

> Our SRE students have had multiple opportunities to share their research with staff, students, and community members and these presentations have initiated an important school dialogue. We are working hard to ensure our classrooms are welcoming and safe places where students remain engaged. If a student is in a hallway during class time, staff will ask why they aren't in class. My expectation is that these are respectful conversations and that students may be asked to return to class (Statement email, May 3, 2018)

May 3: Fieldnotes

> In the room with the student's parent and sister, I am asked if I knew about this, and I said no. When the students finish the interview, we go outside to talk. They were quite surprised and taken aback when the host read the statement from the principal; and upset that the host didn't tell them and upset that she had felt compelled to send an email even though the show did not reach out to her for comment. We all were talking excitedly about how well it went except for that part. We laugh about the district's response to the principal's email when the radio show asked about a district hall policy, and the response was that "we have no specific policy for schools to follow!"
>
> Back at school, I receive a text message from the principal praising the students for the "wonderful opportunity" they had today. I take note of the exclamation marks and thumbs up emoji she uses to express her excitement. I don't know how to respond to her text, so I just reply, "thanks!"
>
> A friend and fellow staff member came to see me at the end of the day. She was in one of the administrator's offices who was listening to the broadcast of the show, telling her that she was listening for "damage control." I'm caught off guard by this.

> I receive some supportive emails from colleagues who listened to the show and encourage me to continue the work with the students. I'm not sure what to expect from admin in the days to come.

The exercise of power, as Gore (1995) explains, in relation to oneself is a function of linking power relations with knowledge (p. 102). The segmented chunks of raw data from my fieldnotes and emails to staff from the administration captures not only knowledge about school policies, but also my actions, my decision to wait to tell my principal about the interview, and her actions to the interview through emails to staff and the radio show. Comments such as "damage control" compared to a "wonderful opportunity," function as competing discourses about the actual event. The email sent out by the principal to the staff, as a "heads up" about the interview, followed by an issued statement to the community in response to what was said during the interview, suggested there was significant concern from the administration. What is also noticeable is how exercises of power move through individuals and the actions upon actions of the individuals were involved in a field of relations.

A few days after the interview, I received my teacher evaluation report from the principal. Although the principal only formally observed me in one class, I.B. Social and Cultural Anthropology, there were multiple comments about other classes I teach, which she also did not observe, Government and Economics and S.R.E. Although she visited S.R.E. on some occasions, these visits were never established as part of my formal observation. In comments under the section, "Demonstrating Knowledge of Standards, Content, and Subject Matter" she wrote,

> Some wonderings I have for Lynne about S.R.E. class are related to scope and sequence and developmentally appropriate literacy and collaborative skills that she is embedding into the curriculum. I know it exists and wondering if Lynne

> were to transition this class to another teacher in the future, would she consider drafting a scope and sequence that serves as a foundation for the course.

In *Discipline & Punish*, Foucault (1995) writes extensively about disciplinary power – "the inspecting gaze," "normalization," and "the examination" – are some examples applicable to systems of evaluation to observe a teacher's practices. As my supervisor, she has the opportunity to exercise power through her critique that the content in the S.R.E. class might not be "developmentally appropriate" or teach "collaborative skills" to students. As described in the school's course guide, "S.R.E. is an inclusive, student-formed, leadership course with the purpose to promote practices of racial equity at Hamilton." The course is explained as a non-traditional leadership course, not as a traditional class, where a scope and sequence would be appropriate. The report, however, was part of my personnel file and provided documentation of an administrator's concerns about what was taught to students in S.R.E. Further, it felt intentional and personal to me when she "wonders" if the class would transition "to another teacher in the future." When analyzed from the actions and actions upon actions from the radio interview event to my teacher evaluation report, exercises of power are in circulation through disciplinary effects. As a form of "technology," Foucault says (1995), "how to keep someone under surveillance, how to control his conduct, his behaviour, his aptitudes, how to improve his performance, multiply his capacities, and how to put him where he is most useful: that is discipline, in my sense" (p. 191).

Through the three examples of data explored in this section, I provide examples of how the term 'student voice' is operationalized in schools through policy, how students in S.R.E. demonstrated practices of power, and finally how power is exercised. In the next section, I respond to two of my research questions and offer an analysis of the data.

Analysis of Practices of Power

> We have worked hard to explain to not only to the students but to staff that there is a racial problem within our school and we are in the process to come up with an equitable space to talk about race. I do have a fear that all of our work will not take any effect on the people in the school and won't change anything in the world. That the world and even the place we started, our school, will not change and all of our work would have been pointless. But the only thing we can do is to keep trying and pushing our way through all the small cracks to get some equity." (S.R.E. student reflection, junior, 2018)

Foucault (1980) describes power as something that "traverses and produces things." When power moves through individuals, it produces various effects; it cannot be described as always disciplinary or repressive, though it can produce these actions. In this analysis, two of my research questions will be addressed: How are S.R.E. students/youth positioned by staff and administration to be part of race and equity policy enactment (as recipients of policy and/or partners in enacting policy)? And, what are the effects of power when S.R.E. students of color and white students become involved in racial equity work at a predominantly white school?

In response to the first research question, I return to previous discussions regarding positioning. In this example, I am thinking about students in relation to adults in positions of authority in schools. Positioning, as explained by York and Kirshner (2015), produces discursive and material effects for students (or anyone) that enable or constrain their participation in opportunities that could benefit their school experiences. Positioning can be coercive if participants are invited to participate by those in authority positions with agendas that are not in collaboration with the participants. The invitation for S.R.E. students by the administration and climate team to participate in the school's

climate work and through a program such as PBIS was problematic in this way. Although this is not the space to offer an adequate critique of PBIS, the program is composed of a three-tiered system to monitor and report behavioral interventions for staff and administrators to use in disciplinary protocols with students. To have a group of students from a class that is one of the most racially diverse classes in a predominantly white school speak to the student body in a video as 'ambassadors' of a behavioral management program seems contradictory to the district's racial equity plan.

It also highlights the concerns Jones et al., (2015) address when agendas to include students in policy work and reform efforts are already chosen for them rather than with them. 'Student voice' in this context raises concerns behind the liberal notions of student 'empowerment' through invitations of participation in agendas and projects that are orchestrated by adults rather than students. Bragg (2007) argues assumptions made by adults "*produce* understandings and subject positions" about students that express particular beliefs about student involvement in schools (p. 348). In discourses about 'student voice' particular meanings are carried depending on the position of who is speaking. For example, it was imperative for S.R.E. students to gather as many surveys from the student body to present informative perspectives of as many student voices in the school as possible on the issue of school climate in the hallways. They resisted multiple attempts by the climate team and the administration to use their position in S.R.E. leadership class as a 'vehicle for student voice.'

Requests made by the administration and climate team in the name of 'student voice' corroborate concerns of tokenism and essentializing students' voices in policy practices that are not student-centered. Specifically, one goal of the racial equity plan for

the school district was to "welcome and empower" families and students, "including underrepresented families of color as essential partners" (p. 2). Through the district's Equity Department, each school administrative team was asked to create a core group of students to work on implementing this goal of the policy. At Hamilton, the S.R.E. class would be a logical choice, however enacting this particular goal of the policy meant doing equity work that adults wanted to students to do, such as the PBIS work. I do not know if the decision to ask for student voice on the climate work was made by the school' administration or if it was a district directive. However, when I asked one of the administrators on the climate team, I was told they were responsible to implement the policy's goals because the district was "folding" the equity team into the climate team.

Finally, the assumptions made by the principal and the climate team that S.R.E. students did not have their own agenda(s) for racial equity is equally troubling. It demonstrates how contradictory binaries function between adult/youth or administrator/student in schools. While it was not in my scope of research to interview adults involved in the decision to ask students in S.R.E. to work on the climate team's projects, I observed several times in meetings with administrators that they wanted "student voice" from S.R.E. students on projects they had in mind for climate work. I was never asked to report on projects S.R.E. students were working on or how their survey project was going after we collected student responses.

By the last focus groups in April, much had happened in S.R.E. leadership. After the March staff equity meeting and the issues students raised from the hallway data, students were well aware how some staff and administrators felt about the racial equity work they were doing. This focus group met a week before the third presentation to state

legislators, a candidate for city council, representatives from the mayor's office, and their family and friends. After mentioning this upcoming event, I asked students to respond to the question: what power do you think you have? The following represents their comments in response with each other:

> KIKI: We have the power to make people uncomfortable. They might not fix it, but we have the power to make them think.
>
> TINA: We have the power to reach students, to get them to talk to us because we're not adults and they know us.
>
> CHRIS: We have the power to talk to each other because we have the class and we have the space versus the staff who are alone, one teacher and the students; teachers are isolated, and they don't talk to each other like students do. (April 12, 2018)

Here, power may be viewed at first as a possession, however 'we' is productive in the subjective selves of these students. As Foucault (1994) argues "every power relationship implies, at least in potential, a strategy of struggle, in which the two forces are not superimposed, do not lose their specific nature, or do not finally become confused. Each constitutes for the other a kind of permanent limit, a point of possible reversal" (p. 346). Through strategies of struggle, students in S.R.E. communicated acts of insubordination, deliberately opposed to actions of power that positioned them as participants in racial equity work that was not of their own choice or that they felt would not make the kind of difference or change that they wanted in their school. By focusing on students' relations of power, it was not my intention to valorize the actions of students in S.R.E. in identifying and confronting racial equity at their school; yet, my position allowed me to participate and observe actions students took in an effort to address issues that mattered

to them regarding racial equity, even when it conflicted with the racial equity work that staff and administrators wanted them to do.

Exploring the effects of power is a critical question in my research, particularly when S.R.E. students of color and white students become involved in racial equity work at a predominantly white school. The complexity of power relations can be understood in response to certain behaviors, or actions, however these are neither stable nor continuously fixed in one location. Power relations are responsive, but not in temporal sense, meaning power is not necessarily responsive in that moment, but can be put into action at a later time. Recognizing that "power is embedded in relationships" (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 55), Foucault asks how power is exercised within a field of relations. In other words, through the actions of S.R.E. students – who were essentially "vehicles of power" – how did power 'happen' (Foucault, 1994)? From five different presentations by S.R.E. students to various audiences, relations of power were established internally in the class, between students, between students and adults, between adults and adults. Power relations keep power on the move and responsive to actions. For example, when S.R.E. students presented their survey results to staff at the equity meeting, some staff responded critically, asserting their authority as knowing adults of student behaviors. These local relations indicate the movement of power and its effects on individuals, as vehicles of power or as power operated on, through, and from individuals (see Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 56). Power is relational, thus practices of power rely on knowledge.

The decision to include examples that demonstrate how effects of power operated on/through/from me was difficult; however as club advisor and teacher of the S.R.E. leadership class, and as researcher for this project, I could not ignore how I was also

caught within relations of power with/between students, with/between colleagues, and with/between administrators. I included the examples from the radio interview and my teacher evaluation to distinguish the effects of power on/through/from me. As researcher and advisor/teacher, I was embedded in fields of power relations by various positionalities in this research project that produced certain subjectivities depending on interactions with other individuals. As a teacher, my evaluation report produces and constitutes particular discourses about me as a staff member in an official document that I am unable to change or dispute. The "wonderings" from an administrator about the preparation of the S.R.E. class through a "scope and sequence" model for an elective class not cohesively linked to other classes, and the suggestion that creating a scope and sequence would allow another teacher to teach the course in my place can be read as effects of power. In over 18 years of teaching, I have proposed and created other elective classes, and have never had an evaluating administrator suggest this to me. Thus, I am left to interpret my principal's "wonderings" about myself: As a white woman, am I fit to teach this course? Am I structuring the course with age-appropriate content? Am I teaching students to oppose authority? In all honesty, I do not believe I thoroughly prepared myself to feel the effects of power through the actions and exchanges between myself, administrators and colleagues.

In thinking with poststructuralism, the productive effect of power in the example of my teacher evaluation report interrogates certain assumptions about discursive constructions of the subject in its "constitution and its strategic position" within a wider field of power relations (Weedon, 1987/1997, p. 71). By viewing this example through a poststructuralist lens, Weedon (1987/1997) states,

> As individuals we are not mere objects of language but the sites of discursive struggle, a struggle which takes place in the consciousness of the individual. In the battle for subjectivity, and for the supremacy of particular versions of meaning, which is part of that battle, the individual is not merely the passive site of discursive struggle. The individual, who has a memory and an already discursively constituted sense of identity, may resist particular interpellations or produce new versions of meaning from the conflicts and contradictions between existing discourses. Knowledge of more than one discourse and the recognition that meaning is plural allows for a measure of choice on the part of the individual, and even where choice is not available, resistance is still possible. (p. 102)

Interpreting this passage from the position of the individual in the data example, Wheedon's "new versions of meaning" allows me to examine the moments of contestation and conflict between myself and certain discourses about the racial equity work by S.R.E. to resist certain effects of power operating on/through me. The examples from this section explore sites of discursive struggle about racial equity in a predominantly white school. These discourses function to constitute truths about individuals doing racial equity work through power/knowledge, noting that students, myself, administrators, and staff, are all embedded within relations of power.

In my final chapter, reflections of this project and the possible implications for this research will be discussed. Specifically, I will highlight the implications of student involvement in policy work, particularly for race and equity, and provide a discussion with more questions to consider when enacting policies, and the impact of equity work on S.R.E. students.

V. CONCLUSION:

REFLECTIONS AND POSSIBLITIES

Through this research and its focus on students in a racial equity leadership class, I have tried to examine the effects of power from "forms of resistance against different forms of power as a starting point" (Foucault, 1994, p. 329). Based on my analysis, I conclude that students are precariously positioned in schools in unstable and contested ways, particularly when resisting adults in positions of authority. I argue that deeply rooted assumptions about youth in schools in roles as "youth-as-student," are often in conflict with the ways that youth see themselves to that of the authority of adults as teachers, administrators, and district officials. To have student input, (or to call it "student voice"), in school-based decisions or even policy work will always be in tension with adults who are positioned in authority over students.

Truthfully, I do not know if students can equitably participate in policy discussions on important issues such as racial equity given the historic and contemporary restrictive nature of schools and the position of many adults in places of authority. However, rather than analyze my data through disciplinary power, it seemed more fruitful (and hopeful) to consider the "how of power" when students made decisions and acted on their beliefs when considering how to address racial equity issues in their school. While certainly disciplinary power was ever-present – from the formation of the S.R.E. club to the leadership class's equity work through the Hallway Climate Survey – I wanted to "understand what power relations are all about" and investigate these through forms of resistance (Foucault, 1994).

To conclude, I propose critical questions regarding student involvement in policy work as well as discuss some concerns when students are included in decision-making processes in their schools. Next, I consider ethical implications when doing research with youth-as-students. I also discuss the potential benefits when youth get involved in policy work and highlight the work students in S.R.E. leadership class accomplished throughout their school-wide equity work. Finally, I examine the impacts of "equity work" with some of the S.R.E. students in one of the focus groups and provide some updated information regarding the district's racial equity policy that occurred at the closing of this project.

Critical Questions for School Policies and Youth-as-Student Involvement

There are too few goals that I could definitively say were accomplished in the past four years by the group of adults I worked with on the equity team. This is neither to say this work was not valuable nor to diminish the work that we did do, or for that matter, others before me did, but to distinguish the differences between racial equity work students set out to do and racial equity work that adults set out to do. By examining a district's racial equity policy at one high school, with a high population of white students and teachers, surrounded by an increasingly gentrified neighborhood in one of the whitest cities in the United States, I have highlighted salient issues Ball, et al. (2012) raised regarding the enactments of policy by social actors (adults) in school spaces. Staff, whether they are teachers, campus security, office secretaries, etc., have a more tactical role in enacting policy because they are most in contact with students at various times of the school day and in various spaces in the school. Administrators organize these

enactments in the ways that they interpret the policy, but these can never be fully followed by staff. My questions regarding policy and student involvement are:

- Can policy be re-imagined from positions of students in individual schools? Given that the school district said that it was concerned about racial equity, but wrote its policy goals, without involving students and employees, could the discussions about policy happen differently?
- At the local level, in individual schools, how can students and families be involved in policies that affect them rather than appealing to liberal notions that "all" students "must" benefit from them? One of the more troubling aspects of the Racial Educational Equity Policy is that it defines equity, but the language of "all" students discursively constitutes equity as equality. In other words, examples in the policy that define equity are really about equality. If equity goals are to raise academic achievement for students of color, then the policy should address students who need equitable resources that they have not had access to.
- How can adults stand alongside students who want to be involved in policies that affect their day-to-day school experiences without producing agendas of their own? In other words, can adults be policy partners with students to make positive changes in their schools, guiding them, as well as listening to them to see the possibilities of potentials?
- Finally, disrupting meanings about "student voice" requires patience and perseverance. I do not have all the answers to this question; however, S.R.E. students taught me to encourage participation from the entire

> population at a school, no matter how long it takes. For example, the S.R.E.'s climate inquiry was succinct and specific, allowing for them to provide valuable information to adults to make informed decisions about school climate. It is unfortunate that the school chose not to utilize the results of their work to improve school climate for students of color.

These critical questions offer educational policy researchers as well as school administrators, district policy makers, and others to consider when including youth-as-students in policy decisions. These questions are more for adults interested in working with youth in policy work to consider before inviting students to participate in school decisions and/or policies that directly or indirectly impact students' day-to-day lives.

Potential Benefits: When Youth Get Involved in Policy Work

The decision by the S.R.E. leadership class to research a school climate issue significantly influenced the direction of my research and the initial conception of my project. The Hallway Climate project was student-centered in every way and the actions students took to address the issues raised from their research demonstrated the potential benefit when youth get involved in policy work. Although students were unaware of the Racial Educational Equity Policy, their project was in every way an example of racial equity work and it aligned with the district's racial equity policy. Their racial equity work evolved alongside my research project and soon became a driving force behind my research questions, particularly *what happens* when students become involved in racial equity work in a predominantly white school.

One of the assumptions of Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) is that "all people have valuable knowledge about their lives and experiences" (Torre, 2009).

Although the students' hallway climate survey grew out of shared experiences by students of color and white students in the S.R.E. leadership class, there was a genuine concern that other students of color were experiencing similar treatment in the hallways by administrators and some staff members. The development of the hallway climate survey and the research students in S.R.E. leadership collected, analyzed, and presented to the student body, staff, administrators, city officials, state legislators, and families is an example of a profound and positive benefit when youth-as-students are invited to participate in educational policy. Specifically, the trajectories students in S.R.E. took to investigate the inequities of race in the hallways during class at a predominantly white school underscore the potential for YPAR in schools and with students involved in educational policy.

First, students have an important position in their schools to examine district and school policies. For example, although unaware of the existing district racial equity policy, the students' racial equity work revealed significant concerns when enacting a policy at localized levels by staff and administrators. Second, students have access to other students to determine how policies are "lived" in the day-to-day experiences at school (see Dumas, 2014). While the survey acknowledged that students of color were most often surveilled in the hallways, it also revealed larger issues regarding race in a predominantly white school. White students were aware of the inequities students of color experienced in the hallway. This raises considerable concerns regarding what youth are taught about race in schools. Finally, one of the foundational goals of YPAR is to recognize that research matters and that research is to be shared. Students in S.R.E. knew that they would present their findings to staff and administrators, however they also knew

they had to share their findings with their peers. Yet, not only did they share this research in the school, but also invited members from the state legislation and a potential city council member to one of their presentations as well as present their research to the school board and superintendent.

Torre (2009) acknowledges that doing participatory action research with youth is a dynamic process that requires an "ongoing negotiation of conditions of collaboration." To involve youth-as-students in policy work, at local or district levels, requires a commitment that the process is dynamic, messy, and fraught with tensions. However, the possibilities that students can bring when involved in policy work, particularly racial equity in predominantly white schools, are invaluable. And it requires continuous collaboration between students, staff, and administrators.

Researching *with* Youth-as-Students

In "The Problem of Speaking for Others" Alcoff (1991) provides multiple opportunities to challenge the data I present in this research and the positionality of myself as a white woman doing racial equity work with predominantly students of color. Alcoff's concerns about the speaking practices of/in/though research and researchers are reflected in the following passage:

> Who is speaking to whom turns out to be as important for meaning and truth as what is said; in fact, what is said turns out to change according to who is speaking and who is listening. Following Foucault, I will call these 'rituals of speaking' to identify discursive practices of speaking or writing that involve not only the text or utterance but their position within a social space including the persons involved in, acting upon, and/or affected by the words. Two elements within these rituals will deserve our attention: the positionality or location of the speaker and the discursive context. (1991, p. 12).

Who is speaking was and remains a concern for me. While adhering to the requirements of scientific research for a dissertation, my original intentions was to do a YPAR project. While I partially accomplished this, I also recognize that my position as an insider intersected into many aspects in this research, in which I was never able to occupy a position of neutrality or objectivity in this project. Concepts of neutrality and objectivity are problematic when viewed from a poststructural lens; however, as the hallway climate project grew more contentious with some staff members and between myself and the principal, I had to make a decision about neutrality and objectivity in my research. As Howard Zinn once said, "you can't be neutral on a moving train." In hindsight, I suppose I never had any intention of being neutral.

Returning to Alcoff's concerns, I have tried to address some of these issues through being as transparent as possible in this dissertation; but, ultimately my relationships with the students are most important to me. This project and the students involved in the research, as well as the class have impacted my life in ways that I did not predict. Doing anti-racist work with students, especially in a predominantly white school, requires certain sacrifices by the researcher/teacher that often leads to tensions in relationships with adults, even in positions of authority over me. I certainly do not believe I made all the "right" choices, however I tried to stay centered on what students asked of me or required of me to develop and maintain my ethical guidelines as I could.

The Effects of "Equity Work" on S.R.E. Students

In one of the last focus groups, I wanted to explore a few questions that had come up after working with the students on their hallway project. These are the questions I would ask myself (and have) and of our equity team and entire staff and administrators at

least a few times each school year: How do you think of equity now, how do you think other people think about equity? Similar or different? What does equity look like between adults (staff and admin) and S.R.E.? Below, I include the conversation as it occurred during this part in our focus group. To add to the complexities of this dialogue, I also include how students self-identify: Kiki, self-identifies as a white female, and a senior; Chris, self-identifies as "mixed," Southeast Asian and white male, and a senior; Sydney, self-identifies as "mixed," black and white female, and a sophomore; Tina, self-identifies as "mixed," Asian and white female, and a senior. This focus group took place April 12, 2018.

> KIKI: I feel that we have a real commitment to it. I feel I have a moral commitment to it. It's more than activism because we should talk about this more daily, and not at certain times, like in meetings.
>
> Me: Did this shift for you?
>
> KIKI: I had to get to the point where I was thinking about race at every minute and how is race playing out in this situation? I don't think white people think about this, but this class we do think about this.
>
> Me: As a white person, do you feel like you have to think about race more and how it plays out in day to day interactions?
>
> KIKI: Yes, definitely, it's my responsibility to educate myself as it should be for other white people. And going back to HHS, when some staff says they don't see color, and there's segregation in our city, and ignorance is a problem at our school and it takes education and self-awareness is important for white people.
>
> SYDNEY: I noticed my freshman year I was learning a lot about equity, and I thought equity and equality are the same thing. I think a lot of students see that too, because they don't get taught that in their classes. A lot of people don't know what equity is and that's a problem because how do you get it if you don't know what it is?

> CHRIS: Equity has evolved over time. At first I had a white perception of it because that's all I've known all my life which is pretty normal, then realized how important it is to the work that people are doing, then turned into a scary thing like Kiki because I felt super lost and uneducated. But then I realized I belittled my experiences and (realized these helped frame how I think about equity). It's a way of knowing or way of thinking, an ideal concept that we're striving for – a wave of thought.
>
> TINA: The more I learn about race and how it affects this community. As an Asian American I grew up having issues about race, this has been more irritating but when coming to HHS and learning more about black and brown experiences has taught me more than I know and shaped my perceptions about race because I only knew my experience, but I've learned a lot about other experiences from students of color add to mine. I no longer have this single view of race of my own experiences, and I've learned more about students at HHS' experience which is good.

Equity has evolved over time. Chris's statement offers a profound, yet radical revelation about the evolution of what equity means to him. The *evolution* of equity. By understanding this concept in this way, he raises questions regarding the conflation of "racial equity work" from a district policy that was written over eight years ago.

Currently, there are no updates to this policy by the district or the school board. At the end of the 2018 school year, almost the entire equity team at Hamilton resigned, forcing the climate and equity team to merge. Speaking for myself, I resigned in opposition to the treatment of S.R.E. by the administration. At the end of the same school year, we learned that at the district level, equity funding was cut and appropriated by other departments for other resources, and the district's equity department was eliminated. To receive equity funding, schools were required to meet certain criteria based on the number of students receiving free and reduced lunch and self-reported racial demographics from a district survey. The survey completed by S.R.E. disrupted these conventional survey beliefs as well as raised critical questions regarding the methods

used to acquire racial demographics through self-reporting. Specifically, S.R.E. found by not identifying "mixed," biracial or multiracial, student identities, schools like Hamilton appear very white. It is still very white, but equity resources were cut for students of color attending predominantly white schools that have different needs based on such criteria thresholds. In other words, there is still a need to continue and fund resources to do racial equity work at Hamilton High School.

Conclusion

Following Dumas (et al., 2016), my intention was to examine "how power provides the context for policy formations" at localized sites of contact (p. 5). In this way, my study sought to ask different questions about educational policy practices. Rather than assert that the Racial Educational Equity Policy was "working" in Hamilton High School, I explored how power operated through divergent discourses about racial equity, the logics of hypervisibility and hyperinvisibility was produced through these discourses, and examined how effects of power moved between multiple positions in the school. The potential for youth-as-students doing participatory action research in their school and related to policy can produce positive differences in not only their lives but also the lives of others.

APPPENDIX A:

RESEARCH QUESTION MATRIX

Research Questions:	Data Source(s):	Analyzed for:
1. What tensions arise when S.R.E. students of color and white students become involved in racial equity work at a predominantly white high school? 2. How are S.R.E. students/youth positioned by staff and administration to be part of race and equity policy enactment (as recipients of policy and/or partners in enacting policy)? 3. How do S.R.E. students navigate racial equity discourses embedded in the Racial Educational Equity Policy and enacted by staff and administrators at a predominantly white high school? 4. What are the effects of power when S.R.E. students of color and white students become involved in racial equity work at a predominantly white school?	Participant observation of S.R.E. Leadership class Focus groups with students involved in club and/or class Participant observation at equity team meetings, equity staff meetings with S.R.E. students, and S.R.E. in equity/climate meetings District racial equity policy statement, explanation of policy, and external commitment(s) to racial equity to the general public	Cohesion and/or alignment of district's equity policy goals and what is happening in schools (particularly with Goals E and F) Discourses on race and equity; effects of power; conceptions of race equity in discursive practices between students, staff, administration and district Students' perceptions of racial equity and/or climate in school experiences; student race knowledge in their own experiences at school Students in relation to staff/admin as "becoming adults but not yet adults," patronizing, as children or youth
2. How is equity understood by students involved/been involved in "equity work"? (Background Q)	Participant observation with students in S.R.E Leadership class and students at/participating in staff/equity meetings Focus groups with students involved in racial equity work; club compared to class – what is different?	Student agency Student's perceptions of "equity work" compared to staff and district

Other Questions: What tensions arise when talking about race and equity in various spaces of the school (in "equity work," the classroom, at students for racial equity meetings, and with staff)? In what ways are students positioned in the school to acknowledge how they are included in racial equity work through concepts of student voice and as students, not yet adults?

How am I thinking about the effects of power? Student voice (see the literature about student voice and policy); As not yet adults, "as youth" becoming/still learning about race and equity (assumptions about S.R.E. students' race knowledge as well as "they have much to learn" comments by staff and admin; Students "need" the same equity training that staff and admin have to gain approval by admin; Student agency, identifying equity issues outside of equity and climate support.

APPENDIX B:

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Focus group protocol for students involved in the S.R.E. (Students for Racial Equity) "club" 2016-2017 and/or in the S.R.E. Leadership class:

Anticipated time for focus group is approximately 1 - 1.5 hours.

Explanation of our focus group (me) (I will introduce my dissertation project before describing the explanation/purpose of the focus group, as well as my interests in their work and the inclusion of student voices in racial equity at Hamilton.) The purpose of the focus groups is to collectively discuss and share your involvement and participation in S.R.E. Club/Leadership. This has been a collaborative group since its conception at our school, and because of this, I want to have an open dialogue with you all to talk about the impact(s) of S.R.E. at Hamilton. Focus groups allow participants to openly discuss their shared experiences as well as build on similar ideas and/or perceptions of these experiences. The focus group will be recorded on my smartphone only to allow me to complete my notes about the sessions. The recording will not be transcribed and will be deleted after the project is completed.

Introductions: Name, year in school, and involvement in S.R.E. club (a little, some, a lot)

1. Tell me why you created/joined the S.R.E. club last year. What led you to get involved in racial equity work?

2. In what ways would you describe S.R.E. club's success last year? In what ways would you describe their challenges?

3. What does racial equity (at school) mean to you?
    a. From your experiences and/or observations, why is racial equity important to you?
    b. How does race matter when addressing equity for students at our school?
    c. How do you self-identify? In what ways and to what extent does your racial identity play a part in your involvement in S.R.E.?

4. What are racial equity issues that you are concerned about (at our school)? Why?

5. How do you think students can address racial equity issues at our school in ways that teachers, staff and/or administrators cannot?

6. (Me: Distribute the district racial equity policy and the goals established by the school board. Read out loud)
    a. Do you know about the district's racial equity policy and its goals?
    b. What do you think about the district's policy and/or its goals concerning racial equity?

c. Given that this is a predominantly white school, how are these goals being met or addressed in our school? In other words, does/has this policy help create and/or address any change in racial equity at our school? Please explain.

7. What are some of the challenges when working with students, staff and/or administrators about racial equity work?

7a. What are challenges when working with students who are also involved in racial equity work?

8. Tell me why you enrolled/chose not to enroll in the S.R.E. Leadership class this year.

APPENDIX C:

PPS RACIAL EDUCATIONAL EQUITY POLICY

BOARD POLICY **2.10.010-P**

Portland Public Schools
Racial Educational Equity Policy

The Board of Education for Portland Public Schools is committed to the success of every student in each of our schools. The mission of Portland Public Schools is that by the end of elementary, middle, and high school, every student by name will meet or exceed academic standards and will be fully prepared to make productive life decisions. We believe that every student has the potential to achieve, and it is the responsibility of our school district to give each student the opportunity and support to meet his or her highest potential.

In light of this mission and our beliefs, Portland Public Schools' historic, persistent achievement gap between White students and students of color is unacceptable. While efforts have been made to address the inequities between White students and students of color, these efforts have been largely unsuccessful. Recognizing that there are other student groups that have not reached their achievement potential, this policy focuses on the most historically persistent achievement gap, which is that between White students and students of color. Closing this achievement gap while raising achievement for all students is the top priority of the Board of Education, the Superintendent and all district staff. Race must cease to be a predictor of student achievement and success.[1]

In Portland Public Schools, for every year that we have data, White students have clearly outperformed Black, Hispanic and Native American students on state assessments in every subject at every grade level. White students consistently graduate at higher percentages than students of color, while students of color are disciplined far more frequently than White students. These disparities are unacceptable and are directly at odds with our belief that all students can achieve.

The responsibility for the disparities among our young people rests with adults, not the children. We are aware that student achievement data from school districts across the country reveal similar patterns, and that complex societal and historical factors contribute to the inequities our students face. Nonetheless, rather than perpetuating disparities, Portland Public Schools must address and overcome this inequity and institutional racism, providing all students with the support and opportunity to succeed.

[1] For the purposes of this policy, "race" is defined as "A social construct that artificially divides people into distinct groups based on characteristics such as physical appearance (particularly color), ancestral heritage, cultural affiliation, cultural history, ethnic classification, and the social, economic, and political needs of a society at a given period of time. Racial categories subsume ethnic groups." Maurianne Adams, Lee Anne Bell, and Pat Griffin, editors. *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice: A Sourcebook.* (2007).

	BOARD POLICY **Portland Public Schools** **Racial Educational Equity Policy**	**2.10.010-P**

Portland Public Schools will significantly change its practices in order to achieve and maintain racial equity in education. Educational equity means raising the achievement of all students while (1) narrowing the gaps between the lowest and highest performing students and (2) eliminating the racial predictability and disproportionality of which student groups occupy the highest and lowest achievement categories.[2] The concept of educational equity goes beyond formal equality – where all students are treated the same – to fostering a barrier-free environment where all students, regardless of their race, have the opportunity to benefit equally. Educational equity benefits all students, and our entire community. Students of all races shall graduate from PPS ready to succeed in a racially and culturally diverse local, national and global community. To achieve educational equity, PPS will provide additional and differentiated resources to support the success of all students, including students of color.

In order to achieve racial equity for our students, the Board establishes the following goals:

A. The District shall provide every student with equitable access to high quality and culturally relevant instruction, curriculum, support, facilities and other educational resources, even when this means differentiating resources to accomplish this goal.
B. The District shall create multiple pathways to success in order to meet the needs of our diverse students, and shall actively encourage, support and expect high academic achievement for students from all racial groups.
C. The District shall recruit, employ, support and retain racially and linguistically diverse and culturally competent administrative, instructional and support personnel, and shall provide professional development to strengthen employees' knowledge and skills for eliminating racial and ethnic disparities in achievement. Additionally, in alignment with the Oregon Minority Teacher Act, the District shall actively strive to have our teacher and administrator workforce reflect the diversity of our student body.
D. The District shall remedy the practices, including assessment, that lead to the over-representation of students of color in areas such as special education and discipline, and the under-representation in programs such as talented and gifted and Advanced Placement.
E. All staff and students shall be given the opportunity to understand racial identity, and the impact of their own racial identity on themselves and others.

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[2] Glenn Singleton and Curtis Linton *Courageous Conversations About Race*, p. 46 (2006)

F. The District shall welcome and empower students and families, including underrepresented families of color (including those whose first language may not be English) as essential partners in their student's education, school planning and District decision-making. The District shall create welcoming environments that reflect and support the racial and ethnic diversity of the student population and community. In addition, the District will include other partners who have demonstrated culturally-specific expertise – including government agencies, non-profit organizations, businesses, and the community in general – in meeting our educational outcomes.

The Board will hold the Superintendent and central and school leadership staff accountable for making measurable progress in meeting the goals. Every Portland Public Schools employee is responsible for the success and achievement of all students. The Board recognizes that these are long term goals that require significant work and resources to implement across all schools. As such, the Board directs the Superintendent to develop action plans with clear accountability and metrics, and including prioritizing staffing and budget allocations, which will result in measurable results on a yearly basis towards achieving the above goals. Such action plans shall identify specific staff leads on all key work, and include clear procedures for district schools and staff. The Superintendent will present the Board with a plan to implement goals A through F within three months of adoption of this policy. Thereafter, the Superintendent will report on progress towards these goals at least twice a year, and will provide the Board with updated action plans each year.

References: "The State of Black Oregon" (The Urban League of Portland 2009); "Communities of Color in Multnomah County: An Unsettling Report" (Coalition of Communities of Color/Portland State University 2010); "The Economic Cost of the Achievement Gap" (Chalkboard Project 2010); "The Hispanic/White Achievement Gap in Oregon" (Chalkboard Project 2009); "A Deeper Look at the Black-White Achievement Gap in Multnomah County" (Chalkboard Project 2009); ORS 342.433.

History: Adopted by Resolution No. 4459, 6-13-11

APPENDIX D:

STUDENTS FOR RACIAL EQUITY HALLWAY CLIMATE SURVEY

Hallway Environment at Hamilton High School
S.R.E. (Students for Racial Equity) wants to understand how students are affected by the current hallway and pass policy. This survey is anonymous.

*Required

1. **I identify with the following race(s)/ethnicity(ies). Please describe yourself as you feel comfortable.***
   Check all that apply.
   - ❑ Asian
   - ❑ Black/African American/African
   - ❑ Hispanic/Latinx
   - ❑ Native American/Alaska Native
   - ❑ Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander/Polynesian
   - ❑ White
   - ❑ _____

2. **I take the hall-pass when I leave class.***
   Mark only one option.
   - ❑ Never
   - ❑ Sometimes
   - ❑ Most of the time
   - ❑ Always

3. **I have been stopped or followed by a Hamilton staff member (teacher, security guard, and/or administrator) in the hallway.***
   Mark only one option.
   - ❑ Never
   - ❑ Sometimes
   - ❑ Most of the time
   - ❑ Always

4. **Why do you believe that you are stopped or followed?***
   Mark only one option.
   - ❑ Because of my race or ethnicity
   - ❑ Because of my gender
   - ❑ Because of my appearance
   - ❑ Because I am walking with a group of students
   - ❑ Other: _____
   - □ Because I don't have a pass**

5. **Additional comments or experiences?**

**Asked to be added by administration

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