RACIAL RECKONING IN RURAL, PA:

UNCOVERING CULTURAL MODELS OF RACISM, EQUITY, & INCLUSION

BY CASEY COVER

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In partial fullfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in Leadership and Learning in Organizations

Department of Leadership, Policy, and Organizations, Vanderbilt Peabody College

Advisor: Dr. Michael Neel

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since the spring of 2020, the Responders, a local grassroots organization comprised of volunteers, has been trying to address racism and equity in their rural community located in Pennsylvania. Addressing racism and equity in the US is a complex challenge no matter where it is undertaken. Doing that work in a predominantly white, rural community has presented unique complexities for the Responders. They hope to create a participatory partnership with leaders in the business community who are in positions of power and have leverage to drive change.

AREA OF INQUIRY

An incident that took place during the summer of 2020 highlighted the urgent need for the community of Liddleville to engage in conversations on racism. The Responders are seeking out partnerships with various groups in the community to help promote racial justice and equity in Liddleville, and to help make it a more inclusive community. One group they would like to partner with is the Liddleville business community. To aide in their efforts to address these complex challenges in partnership with the business community, the Responders hope to learn more about the perceptions and assumptions business leaders have about racism, equity, and inclusion, their willingness to address these issues in the local community, and their perceptions on what (if any) efforts might promote an environment where community members are willing to discuss how these issues play out in Liddleville.

Using Jim Gee's cultural models as my guiding framework, this quality improvement project aims to explore the perceptions of racism, equity, and inclusion amongst business leaders in Liddleville*, PA and consider how these perceptions can inform the efforts of the Responders.

*Liddleville is a psuedonym for the name of a real community in Pennsylvania.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS & FINDINGS

RQ 1: What are the cultural models being used by Liddleville Business leaders around racism?

    Finding: Liddleville business leaders draw on a 'lack of diversity' cultural model and 'politeness protocol' cultural model when talking about racism.
    Liddleville business leaders consistently pointed to a lack of diversity in the community as both the reason for racism and the reason for failure to address issues of racial inequities, and was offered as a reason for why leaders and other community members did not feel a want or need to address issues of racism. Additionally, when the Liddleville business leaders described having conversations about racism, most of the interviewees explained that they were afraid of saying the wrong thing, and felt that it is better to say nothing than say something offensive.

RQ 2: What are the cultural models being used by Liddleville Business leaders around equity?

    Finding: Liddleville business leaders draw on a 'Equal Opportunity' cultural model and a 'Meritocracy' cultural model when talking about equity.
    When discussing equity, the Liddleville business leaders spoke often about equal opportunity, with an emphasis on outcome, and struggled differentiating between equality and equity. Additionally, the Liddleville business leaders emphasized not judging people based on race or ethnicity, but on how hard they work and their professional credentials, referencing colorblindness.

RQ 3: What are the cultural models being used by Liddleville Business leaders around inclusion?

    Finding: The cultural model being used by Liddleville business leaders around inclusion is being an 'insider' vs. an 'outsider,' meaning that the community correlates belonging with how well an individual has accepted and taken on the community's norms.
    The business leaders in Liddleville relied heavily on the idea that being an 'insider' in any community, organization, or group is the only way to belong. They emphasized the importance of being a member of the community, and that outsiders are often not trusted or welcomed by community members.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on these findings, four recommendations were offered to the Responders.

1. Internal discussions with the Responders organization to identify and establish specific and measurable goals for what they hope to accomplish in partnership with the leaders of the Liddleville business community.

2. Identify key stakeholders within the Liddleville business community with whom to take next steps, to help establish trust and 'insider' status within the community.

3. Maintain a stance of collective responsibility, rather than simply blame, to keep the Liddleville business leaders more engaged.

4. Offer learning opportunities designed to disrupt unconscious theories the business leaders hold on racism, equity, and inclusion.

Introduction

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly." - MLK, Jr., Letter from a Birmingham Jail, 1963

Thousands of small-town communities are spread out across our country, with millions of Americans calling these communities home. But what makes them so desirable for the residents, and are they truly a place where everybody feels a sense of belonging? In one small town in Pennsylvania, a local grassroots movement has formed to address injustice in their community to make their rural small town a place that celebrates diversity, is inclusive of all people, and is a place where all can be successful and thrive.

The Responders, a grassroots organization in Liddleville, Pennsylvania, are working to promote fairness, equality, and transparency in the rural community and are planning outreach to leaders in the business community to offer ways to collaborate to address racial justice and other diversity initiatives. In the past, the business community has failed to show leadership on racism, diversity, justice, and equality. Before entering this sector of the community, the Responders would like to know and understand the perceptions and assumptions held by business community leaders on racism and equity.

Organizational Context

The Responders first formed in the late spring of 2020, in the wake of the rising national consciousness around issues of race and racism. As groups around the country were actively engaging in efforts to bring awareness to racial injustice, a group of individuals in the community of Liddleville, PA, decided they wanted to do more than talk about these issues, they wanted to become responders. The group quickly formed into a grassroots organization that works to bring awareness to different groups and organizations within the community.

The Responders have approximately twenty members who are either Liddleville natives or current residents. The group has no formal governance structure but is led by one individual who organizes all meetings and correspondences. They meet as a larger group, up to two times a month, primarily by Zoom. Smaller 'subcommittees' may meet between meetings to work on letters, presentations, correspondence, and legal documentation. All members are volunteers, with many individuals bringing experience and expertise from their own work and education.

The Responders are trying to address racial justice in their community by creating partnerships with leaders from various subcommunities. Their efforts include holding workshops and seminars to educate the community and provide opportunities for community members to share their stories and experiences.

Since late spring of 2020, members of the Responders have been facilitating workshops called 'Conversations for Change' with small groups throughout the community, including workshops with internal members. These conversations for change have been on topics of racism and microaggressions. The Responders aim to make Liddleville an equitable and inclusive community for residents and visitors by creating partnerships with leaders who are known to have influence within the community and who are in positions of power.

Context of the Challenge

Liddleville is a small, rural, predominantly white community in Pennsylvania with a rich history dating back to the mid-1700s. According to the latest U.S. Census Bureau statistics, the total population of Liddleville is under 50,000, with approximately 50% female and 98% white (2019). Downtown Liddleville has become a tourist attraction with many downtown shops, restaurants, and scenic opportunities. According to Pennsylvania voting and election

information, as of May 3, 2021, approximately 70% of Liddleville voters are registered as republicans (PA Dept of State, 2021). Liddleville is a traditional Chrisitan community, with no other places of worship for those of other faiths. With a very small minority population, Liddleville has avoided addressing racial inequities and other issues of equality because there is very little representation from marginalized groups in the community. The quiet, small-town life has afforded most community members the privilege to ignore the issues impacting minorities across the country because those issues were not happening openly in the community. However, an incident in August of 2020 brought those issues to the town square.

Following the murder of George Floyd in May 2020, racial inequalities and injustices were being discussed and disputed across our country. Protests were being held across the country by activist groups, including Black Lives Matter (hereafter referred to as BLM). On a warm summer night in late August, a group of BLM marchers gathered on the side of the road along a well-known route outside Liddleville, Pennsylvania. Beginning in Milwaukee, the group of approximately 30 activists was marching their way to Washington D.C. in response to the death of George Floyd. They were gathered along the side of the road at a place they thought to be an appropriate and safe location to pull their vehicles to switch out marchers and to prepare for an uphill ascent. Suddenly, they heard gunshots. According to the activists, two individuals approached the group from a home across the road with guns in hand.

The accounts of what happened next are unclear as local law enforcement's story on the incident changed three times in the following days. According to videos recorded by the activists, who were live on Facebook at the time of the incident, the homeowner and his son shot off warning shots and then started yelling at the activists that they were on private property. The activists could be heard saying back that they were peaceful and that they had children amongst

their group. Additional gunfire erupted, with police claiming there was an exchange of gunfire between the two groups. One member of the activist group was injured when he was hit in the face by buckshot. He was taken to a nearby hospital with non-life-threatening injuries.

The next day, the BLM group was placed by police at a hotel in Liddleville, PA, a few miles from the incident location, while they waited for their group member to be released from the hospital and while police continued to investigate the incident. As news of the incident began to spread both throughout the town and on social media, rumors also circulated that other protestors would be arriving in the area later that evening to cause destruction to the home of the alleged shooter and throughout the downtown square of Liddleville. The false belief that BLM activists were violent rioters and were affiliated with more extremist groups fueled this rumor. In response to these rumors, an unorganized group of residents began to make plans to come to the center of town heavily armed to face off against the possible threat to the town. They referred to themselves as 'patriots.' By 7:00 PM, around 100 heavily armed individuals filled the town square and lapped the blocks of the town's main streets. Additionally, they made laps passing by the hotel where the BLM activists were staying for the night, at one point even shooting off guns as they drove by (WJAC Staff, 2020).

Local law enforcement spent the night patrolling the town as the patriots awaited an outside threat that never arrived. The police also spent the night standing guard outside the hotel where the activists were staying. It is unclear if they intended to protect the activists from the locals or protect the locals from the activists. By morning, the town square had cleared out, but some lingering threats remained. The threats were not from outsiders but from local residents now directed toward minorities who live in Liddleville.

For several weeks following this event, local black residents received anonymous threats directed toward themselves, their homes, and businesses. Many of these minority residents lived in Liddleville their whole lives but were suddenly being accused of causing dismay in the community. Black residents no longer felt safe leaving their homes after dark and even had concerns that they would be mistaken for BLM marchers or an "outsider" if seen out during the day. The fears and concerns for safety held by minority residents and their friends and supporters were privately shared with members of the Responders.

The Responders reached out to local leadership, asking them to make public statements regarding the incidents. These leaders consisted of the county commissioners, local state representatives, local law enforcement leaders, and leaders from various subgroups, including the business community. These leaders have a great deal of power and influence in the community and a reputation for making positive things happen. The Responders shared two main concerns: first was the safety and acceptance of our minority population, which is about 2-3% of the population, and second was the reputation of our community, which relies heavily on tourism activity. Specifically, they were asked to condemn gun violence and to talk about the community's respect for diversity. Unfortunately, no one spoke out.

Organization's Area of Inquiry

Addressing racism and equity in the US is a complex challenge no matter where it is undertaken. Doing that work in a predominantly white, rural community has presented unique complexities for the Responders. Additionally, words like 'diversity' and 'inclusion' carry many different meanings to different people and have become buzzwords leading to skepticism and resistance when used in the local community. Finally, the Responders feel that leaders in the

Liddleville business community have failed to show leadership on these issues in the past. The Responders hope to create a participatory partnership with business leaders since these leaders are in positions of power and have the leverage to drive change efforts. To aid in their efforts to address these complex challenges in partnership with the business community, the Responders hope to learn more about the perceptions and assumptions business leaders have about racism, equity, and inclusion, their willingness to address these issues in the local community, and their perceptions on what (if any) efforts might promote an environment where community members are willing to discuss how these issues play out in Liddleville.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions of racism, equity, and inclusion amongst business leaders in Liddleville, PA and consider how these perceptions can inform the efforts of the Responders.

Literature Review

Research on racism in small, predominantly white towns or rural business communities is mostly limited to projects that focus on education and healthcare communities/sectors. Expanding my focus outward, I found that research on rural communities focuses on demographic make-up and changes to demographics over time. Additionally, research on the perceptions held on racism, equity, and inclusion has focused on the perceptions held by people of color, with little attention paid to that of white people. This difference is notable since this research focuses on the perceptions held in a predominantly white community. To gain a deeper understanding of the context of my area of inquiry, I looked into research on racism, equity, and inclusion; and how these topics have been studied in rural areas.

What is Racism, Equity, and Inclusion?

Though race-based slavery in America is evident in history dating back to the 17th century, racism as a term was first cited in the Oxford English Dictionary in 1902 and was then used to describe U.S. policies towards Native Americans (Howard, 2016; Bowser, 2017). In the 1940s, books by Ruth Benedict and Edmund Soper discussed racism as incidents of animosity between groups "based on visible physical difference" (Bowser, 2017). It wasn't until the civil rights movement of the 60s and 70s that the modern concept of racism began to evolve (Bowser, 2017). James Jones, in the 70s, was the first to describe racism as three distinct levels: cultural-historic, institutional, and individual (Bowers, 2017).

These three levels operate in an interconnected fashion yet, since the 70s have been studied separately, culminating in what Bowers describes as the failure to develop a theory of racism (2017). The first level, cultural, represents how racism is transmitted through "norms, attitudes, beliefs, and values" and explains how racism is passed on intergenerationally (Bowser, 2017). The institutional level describes the direct and indirect systems in place to produce and maintain racial hierarchy (Bowers, 2017). Finally, the individual level represents acts of racism based on racial beliefs as justification for such actions (Bowers, 2017).

Bowers (2017) argues for a theory of racism based on these three levels as three legs of a stool that work in conjunction with each other. Furthermore, he argues that, in the past, researchers have been more focused on the institutional level for eliminating racism without giving as much consideration to the interdependencies between the three levels (2017).
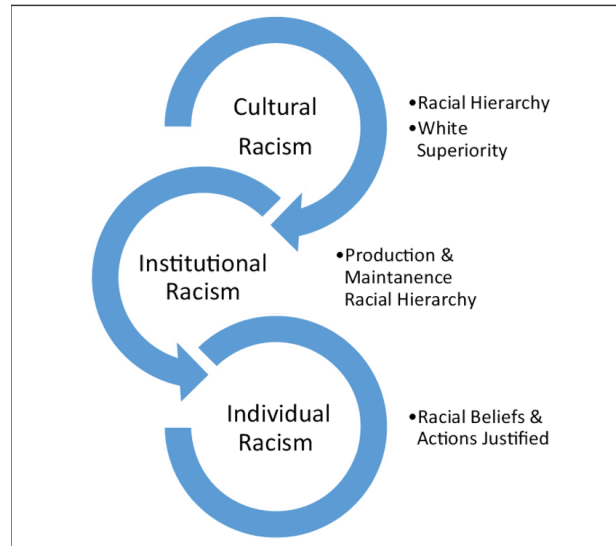
Activist Theory of Racism, Bowers, 2017.

The Center for Urban Education's Core Concepts of Racial Equity (2017) defines racism as more complex than personal prejudice. Racism exists and operates at micro, mezo, and macro levels, with micro levels including individual interactions, mezo group-level patterns, and macro levels including institutional and structural (Center for Urban Education, 2017; Martin, 2012). At the individual, internalized level, racism is the personal beliefs, basis, and prejudice towards a specific racial group (Center for Urban Education, 2017). Racism at the group, or mezos level, is when one's "private beliefs become public" upon interacting with others and when groups of people collaborate to reify racist ideas that can be both institutional and personal (Center for Urban Education, 2017; Martin, 2012). Racism at the macro level includes racial inequity in institutions and systems of power and racism at the structural level across institutions and society (Center for Urban Education, 2017). Similar to Jones' levels of racism, these levels create a system of racial inequality (Center for Urban Education, 2017).

Other scholars have explored concepts of racism that evolved around the time of the Civil Rights Movement. One concept is *white normativity*, which places 'whiteness' or being white as

the social norm that any person can achieve regardless of skin color (Bhandaru, 2013; Morris,

2016). White normativity emerged during the Civil Rights Movement when whiteness was

normalized by converting it "from an exclusive legal category to an inclusive social norm"

(Bhandaru, 2013). Here, we see the idea of inclusion. Whiteness as a legal category, whereas

whites were afforded more protection and opportunity under the law, was opened up to

non-whites to enjoy the same benefits instead of eliminating whiteness as a category (Bhandaru,

2013; Morris, 2016). White normativity operates as a form of subtle racism through its

fundamental principle that "white people are people, and the members of other racial groups are

people to the extent they resemble white people" (Morris, 2016). This "resemblance" can be in

behavior, talk, look, and beliefs. White normativity is only inclusive to those who "resemble"

white people.

Another concept that emerged following the Civil Rights Movement and is closely

intertwined with white normativity is *colorblindness*. Colorblindness is an ideology and belief

that "race does not matter" and that, in a perfect society, people will be judged on character and

not by the color of their skin (Sue, 2013; Bhandaru, 2013). Colorblindness has evolved into a

social norm for appearing unbiased (Apfelbaum et al., 2008; Sue, 2013). Strategic

colorblindness, "avoidance of talking about race -- or even acknowledging racial differences-- in

an effort to avoid appearance of bias," has been an adopted behavior of whites when confronted

with race (Apfelbaum et al., 2008; Sue, 2013). Sue describes strategic colorblindness as a

"pattern of behaviors used by whites toward people of color to minimize differences, to appear

unbiased, to appear friendly, to avoid interactions with people of color, to not acknowledge

race-related topics, and even to pretend to not see the person's race" (2013). Research on

colorblindness has found that organizations and individuals who claim to be colorblind actually

exhibit greater bias when compared with a multiculturalism approach (Apfelbaum et al., 2008; Plaut et al., 2009).

More recently, colorblindness has been described as a type of modern racism: colorblind racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). This form of racism has four central frames used by whites to explain racial issues in a non-racist way: abstract liberalism, naturalization, cultural racism, and minimization of racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). Abstract liberalism comes in the form of ideas of equal opportunity, merit-based arguments, and individualism. Naturalization is how whites describe exclusion as 'naturally occurring' or 'just the way it is' (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). Cultural racism is when cultural practices are presumed as "fixed features" (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). Finally, minimization of racism frames other issues as more pressing than race, such as class issues being a more significant obstacle for minorities than race (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). The frames of colorblind racism allow for flexibility and thus make it difficult to be "antiracist" (Bonilla-Silva, 2018).

Within discussion of the concept of racism are the terms equity and equality. The term 'equity' may seem elusive to some, yet its current use in our country's focus on racial justice is abundant. I would argue that many Americans are more familiar with the word 'equality' due to its use in our founding documents, but there is a clear distinction between the two words. Equity differs from equality in that it focuses on providing people with the things they, as individuals, need to thrive and be successful. In contrast, equality is about providing people with the exact same things without considering each individual's current circumstances (Bopaiah, 2021). Instead of providing equal tools and resources, equity focuses on what the individual needs. Equitable systems and institutions, such as schools, workplaces, and communities, are "designed so everyone in the system has an equal chance to thrive" (Bopaiah, 2021).

To further understand the term 'equity' and how it functions in societies and systems, we can look to the education system, which has been focusing on achieving equity for all for some time. In a school setting, all students do not begin their education journey on equal footing due to outside factors (Mann, 2014). Equality is providing each student with the exact same education opportunities. Equity is recognizing that those who are disadvantaged may remain disadvantaged even with equal opportunities. Low-income students and students of color generally need more resources to ensure a level playing field (Mann, 2014).

While research on equality and equity focuses on leveling the playing field, inclusion research is rooted in socio-psychological theories of human motivation and interpersonal belonging (Maslow, 1943; Schultz, 1958; Roberson & Perry, 2021). Inclusion is about feelings of belonging in groups (Schultz, 1958). Roberson and Perry (2021) argue that according to socio-psychological theories of inclusion, "the desire to form and maintain meaningful relationships with others is central to individuals' physical and psychological well-being as people use such relationships as a gauge of their acceptance by, or position within, social groups." However, individuality must also be maintained and balanced within the desire to be a part of the group (Roberson & Perry, 2021).

Throughout United States history, laws have been used to exclude people based on race until the Civil Rights Movement expanded the category of whiteness to be more inclusive to all races (Bhandaru, 2013). Yet American individualism, specifically concepts of self-discipline and merit, has been used against efforts to increase inclusivity and equity for non-whites. Bhandaru (2013) argues that the "deployment of the language of liberal individualism, white Americans have criticized and rejected non-whites' claims to equality," resulting in resentment of many of the gains achieved through the Civil Rights Movement, such as affirmative action and

desegregation of schools. With racism, equity, and inclusion interconnected, I move into a review

of the setting in which the Responders organization lives.

Race, Equity, & Inclusion in the Rural

Rural communities are often characterized as idyllic, neighborly, and problem-free areas.

For the purpose of this research, rural describes communities located outside of large urban and

suburban areas. Many such areas in the United States are predominantly white, viewing

minorities as 'others' in the picturesque landscape (Leitner, 2012). Demographics show that rural

America is less racially diverse than urban areas, with whites making up nearly 80 percent of

rural populations (Cromartie, 2018). The stories told about rural America often conjure familiar

images of white small-town life and include white social and moral values (Leitner, 2012). Yet,

the rural regions of America are continuing to diversify, with an increase in Hispanic populations

by about 2 percent per year since 2013 (Cromartie, 2018).

Because of the popular images about small towns, minorities are treated as the "ethnic

other" in rural sociology. They are treated as if they don't belong and that the rural setting is

whites-only.The cultural norm of rural communities is white and to be anything but white

represents the 'other'-- different and suspicious. These marginalized groups are often

underrepresented in rural communities, where their presence is treated with suspicion and often

hostility. Very little research has been done on how and why racism persists in predominantly

white rural communities. Rural sociological research has paid little attention to race relations

over the last half-century because they have been viewed as similar to race relations studied by

sociologists in urban settings (Snipp, 1996).

Yet, the idea that rural areas do not need to focus on race or matters of equality because they are predominantly white erases the minority populations' very existence in those areas. Leitner (2012) explains that "nostalgia for a white rural America renders invisible the thousands of immigrants of color from around the globe who recently have made these towns their new home, turning almost exclusively white towns occupied by residents of European ancestry into multicultural and multiracial places." Leitner researched the influence of space, specifically in rural communities, on the construction of whiteness as an identity (2012). Additionally, research on rural racism in the United States has examined how practices in rural communities have essentially policed the community's borders to maintain whiteness (Nelson, 2008).

In one particular research study, Han, Scull, and Harbour (2020) studied the experiences of faculty of color in a predominantly white, rural higher education institution. They highlighted how geographic location is an essential factor as "rural racism magnifies the Other-ing of (the faculty of color) in obscure rural communities often subsumed in red-state conservative politics" (Han et al., 2020). Additionally, when the majority population in a place is white, "the epistemological stance of residents tends to reflect conservative red-state politics," such as individualism (Han et al., 2020). At the microlevel, faculty of color in predominantly white rural institutions are shunned and oppressed by bias, "excluded and subjected to restrictive membership status (Han et al., 2020). At the mezo-macro levels, faculty of color experience "institutional bias, discriminatory distinctions, racial profiling, fear and loathing, presumptions of guilt and inadequate mentoring," in addition to treated with outsider status (Han et al., 2020).

Addressing issues of race and equality in rural America can be helpful for the majority white population who are struggling to come to terms with the changing demography of their communities. It can also help to create communities where the marginalized members have

voices and representation, fair treatment, and the opportunity to live the idyllic lifestyle we have

come to associate with these parts of the country.

Conceptual Framework

The operative conception in this project is what Gee calls Cultural Models. Cultural

models are the unconscious theories we hold about how the world works, which are shaped by

our experiences and normed by our social and cultural groups (Gee, 2004).

Research Questions

1. What are the cultural models being used by Liddleville Business leaders around racism?

2. What are the cultural models being used by Liddleville Business leaders around equity?

3. What are the cultural models being used by Liddleville Business leaders around
   inclusion?

Survey Design and Methodology

Study Design

In order to explore the cultural models that predominate in the Liddleville business

community, this study relied on interview data to answer the research questions above. While

other instruments, such as surveys, can be useful for gathering information on individual views,

they are limiting for examining perceptions. Perceptions are conveyed through the use of cultural

models, which are discovered through the analysis of communication produced by the individual.

Gee (2004) explains that cultural models are like videotapes in our minds, created and stored based on our experiences, that tell us what is "typical" or "normal." These videotapes are based on experiences we have had, seen, read about, or consumed through other forms of media and will vary based on our social class and sociocultural membership (Gee, 2004). Gee explains that we are "usually quite unaware we are using them and of their full implications, unless challenged by someone or by a new experience where our cultural models clearly don't 'fit'" (pg. 60, 2004). Discourse analysis is the study of various types of communications -- texts, conversations, media, etc., as a way of uncovering the cultural models one holds (Gee, 2004). I conducted semi-structured interviews with 22 business leaders in the Liddleville business community. In addition to the interviews, demographic information about the business owners and surrounding community was gathered and compiled to better understand the participants and their role within the community.

Since my guiding framework aimed to explore the discourse practices of Liddleville business leaders, I drew on an approach to discourse analysis used in ethnographic research (Smart, 2012). Discourse analysis in ethnographic research is used to explore the "discourse practices of a particular group of people with the goal of learning how members of the group perceive, function, and learn within their collectively created and maintained 'conceptual world' (Smart, 2012, pg. 149). This approach involves collecting data, analysis, and reflection on potential theories, resulting in instances of common perspectives through the investigation of discourse practices (Smart, 2012, pg. 150-151).

Data Collection

To aid in determining who I could interview, I created a sampling frame that first captured the number of Liddleville business establishments, organized by industry, with the

intent to interview representatives from various industries and a variety of business sizes. I began

my interviews with the local business-related associations: Liddleville Chamber of Commerce,

Downtown Liddleville Inc., and the Liddleville Development Association. These organizations

work directly with and represent the businesses in the Liddleville community. The leaders from

these organizations used the sampling frame and assisted in recruiting additional leaders

representing the various industries and business sizes. In total, I contacted 35 individuals to

participate in an interview. I emailed a form letter (appendix A) to all leaders identified as

interview targets. Twenty-two individuals agreed to participate.

The demographics for each participant were self-identified. Fourteen of the twenty-two

participants were female. Twenty participants identified themselves as caucasian. Two of the

participants identified themselves as persons of color. Eighteen of the participants have a

bachelor's degree or higher. The education attainment is notable because it is much lower when

looking at the broader community. According to the most recent census data, only 15% of the

community hold a bachelor's degree or higher (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). Sixteen of the

participants were over the age of 41 at the time of the interviews. Thirteen of the participants

identified themselves as native to the community, meaning they were either born in Liddleville

or have lived there most of their lifetime. Nineteen of the participants have lived in the

Liddleville community for over twenty years. Finally, the participants represent a variety of

industries, including education, hospitality, agriculture, manufacturing, economic development,

event planning, retail, life sciences, transportation, distribution, finance, real estate, health care,

and public utility.

Individuals were given a choice to interview via zoom or in-person. Five of the

twenty-two individuals who agreed to participate in interviews were interviewed via zoom. I

interview the remaining individuals in person at a location of their choosing. All participants

were asked the same questions (appendix B) in order to uncover their perceptions and

assumptions about racism, equity, and inclusion. The interview questions were designed to

encourage subjects to discuss their perceptions of specific topics without explicitly asking them

for a definition.

The interview questions were designed to elicit discussion from the participants on

racism, equity, and inclusion to uncover how the topics are perceived and how they function

within the community. The ordering of the questions was designed to ease into topics I thought

would be more challenging to answer based on the subject's sensitivity. I began each interview

with an opening statement introducing myself and the topic of research. I also explained that I

would be recording interview audio to aid in transcription and then delete it. I ensured anonymity

to all participants. Participants were then given the opportunity to ask questions. Next, each

participant was asked basic demographic questions: age, race, marital status, highest level of

education, years living in the community, industry in which they worked, years in business, and

number of employees.

The first interview question was, "Tell me about the average/typical leader (employee,

customer/client) of the Liddleville business community?" I asked this question to uncover how

the business leaders viewed the leaders in their community and whether or not they recognized

any differences or similarities. I asked the following questions to answer the first research

question on the cultural models on racism:

Question 2: I know that Liddleville can be a relatively homogenous community, do you

have experiences working with people who are different from you?

Question 3: Are there ways that you have tried to understand the perspectives of people

from backgrounds that are different from your own? For example, certain community

members, employees, and customers.

Question 6: Race is a topic that has been at the forefront of conversations in Liddleville

for the last year or so. Many people have told me that race is a challenging topic to talk

about. Is race something that the Liddleville business community should be talking about

explicitly? Tell me about the challenges you see in talking about race in Liddleville,

specifically in the business community.

Question 7: Have you ever experienced or witnessed racism? Tell me about it.

Question 8: Does your company/organization/business have problems recruiting diverse

candidates for jobs? What do you think the reason for this is?

I presented a picture prompt to participants to gather answers for the second research

question on cultural models on exclusion. First, participants were shown a picture depicting

equality and asked to describe what was happening in the picture.

(Picture 1)

Next, participants were shown a picture depicting equity and asked to describe what was

happening in the picture.

(Picture 2)

Finally, the participants were asked how they would define the term *equity*. Pictures such as these, often in a box graphic with the images side by side, are commonly used to make distinctions between equal and equitable. While using these types of pictures in equity training has come under criticism for being problematic because they may promote a dangerous narrative that people of color are "inherently and biologically deficient" (Schillinger, 2017), I was not using the pictures for training but to elicit thinking. By showing the images one at a time, I had hoped for the participants to describe equity more naturally, without first describing that something was inequitable in the first picture.

To gather answers for the third research question on cultural models on inclusion, I presented a prompt to participants. I described a fictional work situation where members of a diverse leadership team were being excluded.

> *The top leadership team in a mid-size organization consisted of 10 white men and four women, two white and two people of color. The president, a white male, noticed that the four women always grouped together, sat together during meetings, ate lunch together, collaborated together unless specifically assigned to work with a male. He was worried that the women felt excluded by the men on the team and decided to talk with the women about their experiences on the team. He discovered that the women felt as if they were more often paired to work together. For example, during their team meetings, the women were often paired up together to be responsible for organizing*

lunch for the day. Additionally, they felt as if the men often left them in traditional female roles. For example, they also noticed that when the food arrived, it was the women who got up to prepare the room for eating while the men just sat by and waited for it to be ready. They also shared that because they were outnumbered, they found it difficult to be heard in meetings and that the men naturally grouped themselves together too, and it was difficult for them to find a seat amongst them. To address this, the president decided to restructure team meetings to include breakout activities and specifically grouping the women with the men on the team. This required them to physically move their seats and mix up amongst each other. When assigning projects, he purposely built teams to include at least one, often two, women to encourage the men to collaborate more closely with the female leaders. And finally, when it came to the women being responsible for more traditional female roles, the president took it upon himself to participate in these activities, cleaning up after meetings, which set the tone for and encouraged the other male leaders to participate as well. After a few short months, the women reported feeling more included on the leadership team.

The prompt was designed to elicit thinking about how and why exclusion happens in the workplace. Participants were asked to comment on the prompt and were asked if they had ever experienced something like this themselves. Since the interviews were conducted in a predominantly white community, I chose to frame the prompt in terms of both gender and race differences to see if participants drew on personal experiences.

At the close of each interview, I asked participants if I could contact them if I had follow-up questions and if they would be willing to participate in a follow-up interview or focus group. They were also given the opportunity to ask me additional questions.

Data Analysis:

I recorded and transcribed all interviews using Otter.ai software. I reviewed each interview transcript in conjunction with the recording to ensure transcription accuracy. This first pass at the interview data allowed me to form impressions on possible themes. I wrote an analytic memo with these impressions. Next, I took each specific interview and analyzed it as its

own case study, identifying how I would answer each research question for each individual. I

aimed to identify what cultural models I noticed for each case study. A second coder who was

not involved in the interview process analyzed each interview separately, reviewing them as

separate case studies, identifying additional themes to answer each research question. It was

important to take each interview as an individual case study because only then could I begin the

analytical work of looking across the cases to recognize common themes.

Using the themes identified in each case study, I created a codebook to identify the most

common themes across all interviews (appendix C). I then uploaded the transcripts to Dedoose,

where I made a final pass over the data to apply the codes. Next, I analyzed how often codes

were used and if they appeared in each interview in order to identify what constituted a cultural

model commonly held within the community.
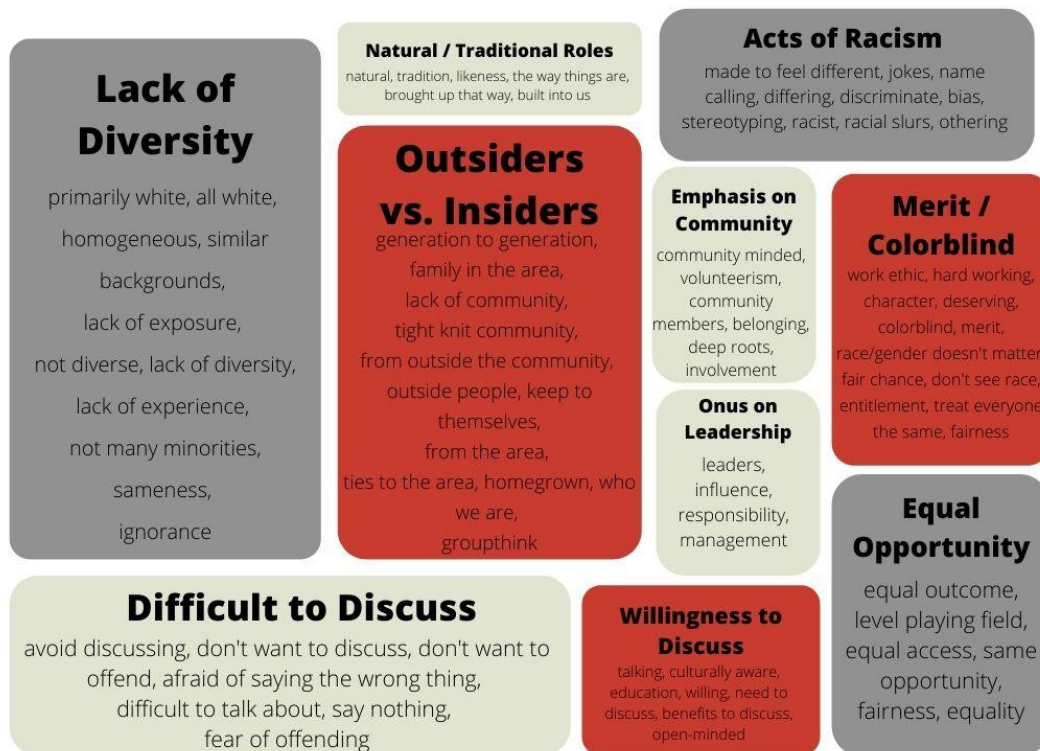
(Visual representation of codebook)

(Code cloud generated by Dedoose 2 software)

Delimitations

The boundaries of this study are the Liddleville business community. The Responders are interested in creating participatory partnerships with multiple communities in Liddleville. I chose to focus this study on the business community to help keep the project manageable and because this is not a community in which I currently work. I also chose to only utilize interviews as the means of data collection for understanding the perceptions and assumptions of the Liddleville business leaders. This decision was made because other data collection options, though useful for gathering information on individual views, are limited for examining perceptions.

Findings

Finding 1:
Liddleville business leaders draw on a 'lack of diversity' cultural model and 'politeness protocol' cultural model when talking about racism.

Lack of diversity. Liddleville business leaders consistently pointed to a lack of diversity in the community as both the reason for racism and the reason for failure to address issues of racial inequities. All interviewees seemed to share a belief that exposure to and experience with racial diversity leads to increased cultural awareness and sensitivity to issues of racism and discrimination. The business leaders drew upon the idea that respect and acceptance of diverse people come from interactions with people who are different from themselves. The business leaders reasoned that most community members lack the necessary knowledge to be anti-racist since Liddleville is a relatively homogeneous community when it comes to race. One interview subject considering other business leaders commented:

> *"I think they enjoy the status quo. I think some of them, especially not having been exposed to other races and other cultures very much, through their lives don't feel comfortable around them. You know, if you don't, if you don't understand something, or if you haven't experienced something, then it's natural to be uncomfortable sometimes."* (Interview 8).

Another leader referenced ignorance due to lack of exposure, saying, *"The challenge is ignorance. And I say that because I could even look at my parents. They only know what they know, they don't know what they don't know. They very rarely ever left the area."* (Interview 16). Another leader also referenced ignorance because of lack of exposure, saying, *"I think a lot of it is ignorance because we are, we don't have diversity."* (Interview 1).

Furthermore, the lack of racial diversity in the community was offered as a reason why leaders and other community members did not want or need to address issues of racism. Most interviewees explicitly or implicitly explained that because the community is 98% white, there was no necessity for addressing racial inequities and feelings of exclusion that might impact the

small population of non-white people. When considering why leaders do not address issues of

racism, the following sentiment was typical, *"I mainly think it's just because we aren't a diverse*

area. I mean, I think African Americans are like, what, 3% in Liddleville, so it's not an issue for

them (business leaders) to even consider talking about when we don't deal with it." (Interview

4).

This "lack of diversity" explanation of racism used by the Liddleville business leaders

sits at the level that Bowsers (2017) calls the cultural level of racism, where attitudes and beliefs

about racism are transmitted and where racial hierarchy is established and maintained. It is

similar to what Bhandaru (2013) has called 'white normativity,' which is the abandonment of

non-whites to "fend for themselves" while "white America reaps the benefits of justice, peace,

and security."

The community leaders did not recognize the place of privilege in being part of the

majority population when expressing the idea that the majority population does not experience

issues with racism, so therefore, it must not exist within the community. One leader commented,

"One is when you look around there the exposure is not there. So I think there's a piece where

there are people in the community who don't think it's relevant, or a real issue for us, because we

don't see it here." (Interview 19).

Politeness protocol. A second cultural model that was evident in most interviews was the

'politeness protocol.' The term 'politeness protocol' was termed in research on "ground rules"

that impede race talk (Sue, 2013). This model is a set of standards and expectations for

maintaining certain norms in interactions with other people. When the Liddleville business

leaders described having conversations about racism, most interviewees explained that they were

afraid of saying the wrong thing, which aligns with another consistent norm interviewees

described as shared in the community: that it is better to say nothing than say something

offensive. One business leader reflected on the common sentiment, saying, *"I would say that the*

Liddleville business community, including the business I work for, completely steers away from

the issue (i.e., race). Because it is unattractive to people in this area. It's not something they want

to discuss or talk about where they stand on." (Interview 1).

Another leader shared the following:

> *"It's challenging to talk about because I wasn't even sure saying 'people of color' was*
> *the right phrase to use without getting in. It's challenging to talk about because I like to*
> *think I really Don't care. And I and I can be friends or Converse or work with anyone.*
> *But I also know that there are things in my language or things my mannerisms you know,*
> *that may or may not be offensive to someone who's different and it's difficult to talk about*
> *because one I don't under fully understand where they come from and two, I don't want*
> *anybody to be mad at me."* (Interview 18).

The business leaders shared the discomfort they personally feel talking about race, with

one leader saying a common sentiment, *"But yeah because I, I wouldn't want anyone to feel like*

I said something that was inappropriate or hurtful." (Interview 20). Many leaders talked about

how this fear of offending someone has led them not to engage in conversations about race,

depending on who was in the room. This can be seen in the following excerpt: *"so I think it's all*

good to have conversations about it. The problem is, depending on who's there when you're

having the conversations. I know myself, I prefer not to make any comments because you don't

know how that person's going to take it, how it's going to be interpreted." (Interview 20). Finally,

leaders who want to have these conversations expressed reluctance because they do not want to

offend their family, friends, and neighbors.

> *"It is a very difficult topic to bring up because people immediately assume that you're*
> *calling them racist if you try to talk about race…. You know, it's hard because you're*
> *basically, you're basically putting people in a position that forces them to criticize their*
> *parents or their grandparents or people that they grew up learning from, or, you know,*
> *their own personal experiences."* (Interview 3)

The "politeness protocol" is similar to strategic colorblindness, which is the way that

whites "appear friendly" and "not acknowledge race-related topics" (Sue, 2013). Additionally,

Sue (2013) reflected on this 'politeness protocol,' saying, "it's better to remain silent out of fear

of saying the wrong thing, being judged or being labelled a racist, than to speak out in this

moment." Therefore, the politeness protocol becomes a set of rules that whites follow to avoid

appearing racist or biased but, in reality, has become a form of modern, yet subtle, racism. This

cultural model operates at the mezos level of racism, as people take up this model in interactions

with others and end up collaborating "to reify racist ideas" (Center for Urban Education, 2017).

Finding 2:
Liddleville business leaders draw on an 'Equal Opportunity' cultural model and a 'Meritocracy'

cultural model when talking about equity.

Equal Opportunity. As previously described, I presented business leaders with a prompt

to elicit a discussion on equity. First, I showed a picture depicting 'equality.' Twelve of the

twenty-two interviewees described seeing people picking apples. Ten of the twenty-two leaders

recognized inequity in the picture and pointed out that the taller individual had the advantage.

Next, the interviewees were shown a second picture depicting the same scenario but with

more equitable supports in place. Upon seeing the second picture, all the leaders realized an

adjustment had been made for the two shorter people to reach the apples. These pictures

prompted further discussion on the concept of equity. When discussing equity, the Liddleville

business leaders often spoke about equal opportunity, emphasizing outcomes. Leaders seemed to

draw on a belief that equity meant giving everyone the same opportunities to achieve their

desired outcome. Many interviewees mentioned a "level playing field," which some elaborated

to mean that everyone should have a fair shot at achieving their goals.

> *"equity is giving everybody the same fair opportunity and fair chance to enrich their lives or their goals. It's leveling the playing field and it's given people that necessarily would not have that opportunity, due to their social determinants that they face, that actually level the playing field."* (Interview 12)

It was during the discussion on equity that I noticed conflict emerge in many of the

leaders between the concepts of equality and equity, though they did not appear to notice the

conflict. For example, one leader commented, *"they've made the apples accessible for the kids,*

or person that's not as tall as the other." (Interview 8), demonstrating an understanding that the

people portrayed in the picture needed varying types of assistance to reach the apples. But then

the individual went on to say, *"to me equity means people having the same resources"* (Interview

8). This latter statement conflicts with the prior observation that 'equal' support did not allow the

people in the picture to reach the apples. This "equal opportunity" explanation of equity

demonstrates a misunderstanding of the concept of equity and how it differentiates from equality.

Other leaders struggled when attempting to articulate equity and its relationship to what

they referred to as 'fair' or 'fairness.' One individual said, *"So, I see them... putting maybe the*

person that needs the most help first, you know, putting them on a pedestal, to help them obtain,

you know, maybe the fruit of the tree or the fruit of life, what they really need. I see that

everybody's kind of taken care of, but who needs the most help is also, their being able to capture

their goals or their fruit without..." (Interview 14). The individual then went on to say, *"you*

know, what is equitable? What's fair to others, you know? What do others deserve? You know,

should equity be distributed, distributed evenly for people that maybe need help? People that

don't work, people that work harder. So I think there's a whole lot behind that word." The

business leader begins to question the 'fairness' of giving someone more resources than someone

else and brings in the notion of work ethic. This leads us to the next cultural model that relates to judgement based on merit.

Meritocracy. When discussing equity, specifically racial equity, fourteen of the twenty-two interviewees emphasized "work ethic" as a trait for which they judge the character of others. These leaders emphasized not judging people based on race or ethnicity but on how hard they work and their professional credentials. This well-known cultural model that the hardest working individuals are those who should be rewarded is commonly accepted in the community of Liddleville (Gee, 2004, pg. 66-68). Several of the business leaders attributed the success of the leaders in the community to their hard work, saying, *"I think sometimes the way that those people get to the positions they're in is because more of a willingness to go above and beyond. Sometimes, then what you get from maybe just a regular level employee. Just that willingness to go above, maybe to work a little bit harder, is why people get to those positions."* (Interview 21).

It became evident in this discussion of merit that many leaders in Liddleville believe themselves to be 'colorblind,' meaning that they believe themselves to not 'see' color and instead make judgements on people based on character and merit. Many of the leaders in Liddleville merged these two concepts (meritocracy and colorblindness) when talking about equity and hiring diverse candidates. For example, one leader said, *"And so, and again, me, what we want is the best candidates right, we want the best candidates to come in and to be (job role).. I don't care what you look like, I don't care."* (Interview 20). Many of the leaders struggled with the idea of giving a diverse candidate an advantage over a white candidate, seeing that as unfair to the white candidate. One leader spoke at length about this, saying,

> *"I want to talk to you the same as anybody I don't necessarily want to give you any advantage over another person other than based strictly on what you, what you're bringing to the table professionally if it's if it's education if it's experience if it's personality. So, you're probably, I would say yes, but I, I don't. But I also don't want to*

alienate any one person away from a group, whether it's the majority of the, of a group or if it's a minority. Just my opinion is, I don't know how to handle it, other than to just be as even minded, and for everybody. so, but how do I, as a business leader. I don't know, I wrestle with that, Casey, I really do because I'm not sure how, like, I don't want to give someone advantage just because they're in a minority, because that's not fair to another group of people," (Interview 16).

This "meritocracy-colorblindness" way of talking about equity exemplifies what Bonilla-Silva documented when researching colorblind racism and one of its central themes: abstract liberalism. Bonilla-Silva explains that "abstract liberalism involves using ideas associated with political liberalism (e.g., "equal opportunity," the idea that force should not be used to achieve social policy) and economic liberalism (e.g., choice, individualism) in an abstract manner to explain racial matters" (2018, pg. 56). It's accomplished by "framing race-related issues in the language of liberalism" and allows the Liddleville business leaders to appear "reasonable" and "moral" without actually addressing racial issues of inequity (Bonilla-Silva, 2018, pg. 56).

Finding 3:
The cultural model being used by Liddleville business leaders around inclusion is being an 'insider' vs. an 'outsider,' meaning that the community correlates belonging with how well an individual has accepted and taken on the community's norms.

Insiders vs. Outsiders. When responding to questions related to inclusion, the business leaders in Liddleville relied heavily on the idea that being an 'insider' in any community, organization, or group is the only way for an individual to feel they truly belong. This idea emerged through how the leaders talked about being a member of the local community, being "from the area" or living there your whole life, and how people from 'outside the community' do not have a community in which they belong. One leader remarked, *"sometimes you have to be*

in a group to feel like your voice is heard" (Interview 4). With this, there seemed to be an understanding that the Liddleville community, though very 'tight knit' was not necessarily welcoming to someone who might be different because community members place a lot of importance on being from Liddleville, and therefore, fitting a specific mold: white, Christian, heterosexual, and hardworking. One leader shared,

> *"I did have this conversation over the weekend, but someone, we were talking about being able to recruit (job role) into the (industry), and how I think we, it is hard sometimes because most of us have lived here all of our life. We're not necessarily open a lot of times to people coming in and understanding that word inclusive is very important in that you reach out to those people and help to build them into, you know, sort of the circle of the people that have lived here all their life."* (Interview 20).

This comment demonstrates the type of talk used by the business leaders around the idea of the community not being welcoming to someone who is from outside of the community. A common conception emerged in nearly every interview that if someone is from outside of the community, they will not understand the community and that the community, in turn, might not be accepting of the newcomer. One leader who is not originally from the area but has lived in Liddleville for over ten years commented, *"I was on the receiving end of the mentality of like, 'oh, you're not from here'. Well like, it's the longest I've lived anywhere, but if you're not born here, you're not from here, it doesn't matter what you look like, it doesn't matter, male, female, it doesn't matter what race, I think there's a, 'I haven't been exposed to it. I'm not going to welcome it in as much',"* (Interview 19).

      The Liddleville business leaders further talked about belonging in the community, with many describing insiders as community members with deep roots in the community. One leader said, *"They seem to be tied to this area through upbringing or family, and have spent a good part of their careers in this area."* (Interview 8). Another leader said, *" just because they don't have*

that family tie here it is hard to assimilate into such a tight knit community, regardless of your

race" (Interview 7). They went on to say, *"I don't think that anything coming from outside of the*

community comes over well" (Interview 7). The business leaders shared an understanding that

anything that is not local to the community would face challenges feeling accepted.

Within the 'insider' talk, the community's role plays in norming behavior and values is

emphasized. One leader shared, *"their (the community's) expectations are uniformity"* (Interview

1). Another leader referred to the community as "very groupthink" (Interview 7). Many leaders

described community members as holding very tightly to these shared beliefs and being

unwilling to change. One leader said, *"People were very firm in their beliefs, they hold strong to*

them, and they don't want to bend" (Interview 17). The idea of someone coming into the

community and criticizing it or trying to change it is threatening. One leader commented on the

idea of suggesting change in Liddleville, saying, *"I wanted to change from traditional red and*

green ornaments, to snowflakes. And you would have thought I was going to be crucified for it,

because that's a big deal to not do traditional, and try to change things and even suggest

something new. I mean, it's like trying to take the Christ out of Christmas. Something you can

never do in Liddleville" (Interview 4). Another leader commented, *"Usually they (community*

members) see the things as, you know, this is the way we do it. This is how we do it... resistant to

change," (Interview 11).

> *"It's just the type of community we are. It's part of the problem with creating diversity. We*
> *are tight, close community. There are really great things about that. But there are a few,*
> *but there are a few problems with it. One of that is allowing, allowing outside people in.*
> *It's hard. I mean, you can net it out, right. So like, people that come the manager springs*
> *and stuff are not part of our community. Do they end up on the inside? I don't think so. I*
> *mean, I could be wrong. I don't think they feel like an insider. You know, they're running*
> *the biggest business in the county."* (Interview 18)

Considering inclusion as feelings of belonging and as practices that support broad, rather than narrow participation turns attention to a given community's norms, values, and valued practices (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Whether a newcomer comes to belong depends, in large part, on the extent to which a given community creates opportunities to make values, norms, and valued practices explicit to newcomers and offer opportunities to participate in and negotiate those aspects of belonging (Greeno & Gresalfi, 2008). However, what happens when the values and norms of a community reinforce different types of racism. Considering white normativity, specifically establishing white norms as the standard norms, it becomes evident how this may promote 'othering' in the Liddleville community (Leitner, 2012, Han et al., 2020).

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. First, the data was collected exclusively from the Liddleville business community and should not represent other community groups in Liddleville or for all rural communities. Additionally, I had hoped to have received a more significant number of male participants. I had reached out to an equal number of female and male participants, which is more representative of the larger population in Liddleville. Unfortunately, more females agreed to participate.

Additionally, the setting for this research is in a community where I have my own history and membership. Many of the interviewees were people that I have known throughout my life as friends or professional acquaintances. Many of the interviewees recognize my membership in this community, which gave me the status of 'insider.' While this allowed me the access to conduct these interviews with many business leaders who otherwise would have declined such an interview request, it also could allow for bias. For this reason, I included a second coder during my data analysis. I also recognize that my history within the community means that many

of the cultural models I uncovered in my data collection are cultural models I have had to

grapple with on my path to become anti-racist. Finally, I acknowledge that I am working on

racism, equity, and inclusion as a white woman. My whiteness has afforded me the privilege to

raise questions in this community that I may not have been able to ask if I were a person of color.

Recommendations

The following are recommendations for the Responders in light of this investigation's

findings related to cultural models of racism, equity, and inclusion within the Liddleville

business community.

Recommendation 1

If members of the Responders hold internal discussions to identify and establish specific and measurable goals for their organization, they will be better prepared to address their intentions with the Liddleville business leaders.

The Responders have sought out the perspectives of Liddleville business leaders through

this research. The findings of this research present an opportunity for the Responders to engage

with business leaders to promote change in the local community. Yet how will the Responders

know if their efforts are successful? I recommend the organization's members discuss and

establish what impact they hope to have on the community and discuss how they will assess

when and how that's happening in the business community.

This recommendation is rooted in my experiences conducting these interviews. My

interviews served as a pilot for having these conversations within the business community, and

one question I was repeatedly asked following the interviews was, "what do you hope to

accomplish with this work in the community?" The Responders organization should be prepared to answer this question as well. The Responders should discuss this internally so that the organization's volunteers have a shared vision for what they hope to accomplish by entering into these conversations and the community.

The organization's members are all volunteers who feel the same desire for racial justice in Liddleville, Pennsylvania. This research has identified ways the Responders can collaborate with the Liddleville business community to address the issues the Responders have deemed most important. But before they begin reaching out to business leaders who can champion their cause, they need to be prepared to answer questions about what role the Responders play in promoting social justice and equity in the community. If the findings from this research are to be used to create a participatory partnership with the Liddleville business leaders to address issues of racism, and to promote equity and inclusion in the community, then the Responders will likely be asked what they hope to achieve through their efforts.

> **Recommendation 2**
>
> If the Responders identify stakeholders from within the Liddleville business community to help bolster their cause, they will gain credibility amongst business leaders who place a great value and trust on insiders.

The Liddleville business leaders expressed the importance of being an 'insider' within the community, even going so far as to say that people would 'distrust' someone from outside the community. They also shared the accepted influence business leaders have within the community. Additionally, many Liddleville business leaders shared the belief that race, equity, and inclusion are conversations that should be taking place in the Liddleville business community and that the business community would benefit from being more inclusive. By

identifying leaders within the Liddleville business community who will help champion justice

and equity, the Responders will have identified business leaders with the influence necessary to

help drive change and help other people in the business community become active participants in

conversations on racism, equity, and inclusion. The business leaders who will be advocates for

promoting equity and inclusion will use their influence and power to create connections and

provide legitimacy for conversations on racism and equity with other leaders in the business

community.

Recommendation 3
If the Responders can maintain a stance of collective responsibility rather than simply blame, business leaders are more likely to remain engaged.

The Liddleville business leaders spoke about the importance of their community

and the value of being community-oriented. Therefore, I propose the Responders carry this

sentiment in the way they approach the Liddleville business community. I recommend they

approach the Liddleville business community as partners in the community. Make it a

community endeavor. Use 'we' language when talking about what the Liddleville business

community can do to address racism, equity, and inclusion issues. The Responders are also

a part of the local community and care about it just as much as the business leaders who

volunteer their time and give back to the local community. No one is off the hook in terms

of responsibility for the work of Justice in the community, not even the Responders. I

recommend the Responders move out of the frame that focuses on "fixing" the individual

or specific situation and instead focus on taking action as a community with a prospective

orientation for collective action. From that point, the Responders should maintain a

prospective, forward-looking direction. The framing should be 'what can we do,' not who

is at fault for the current circumstances. Instead of asking the Liddleville business leaders

to only look back at where the community has failed, an orientation toward learning from

the past in order to reconstruct a better future will support broader engagement and

productive dialogue. The Liddleville business leaders shared how they felt it was the

responsibility of the leaders to help create and maintain inclusivity. Use this as an

opportunity to take collective responsibility for driving change in the community. During

the interview, one business leader said about community members and their lack of

cultural awareness, *"it's no one's fault. It's only your fault if you don't try to expand"*

(Interview 16). This recommendation is about the community taking responsibility without

blame, looking towards what they can do next.

Recommendation 4

If the Responders offer learning opportunities designed to disrupt unconscious theories the business leaders hold about racism, equity, and inclusion, opportunities for both education and communication could emerge.

The findings suggest several cultural models are prevalent amongst this community that

are linked to more subtle and cultural forms of racism. These unconscious theories may explain

why business leaders in the community have failed to show leadership when discussing racism,

equity, and inclusion. The findings present an opportunity for how the Responders can

effectively engage the Liddleville business leaders by proposing strategically designed activities

aimed at disrupting cultural models that may contribute to racism and inequity in the community.

Such learning opportunities can take the form of informal or formal learning sessions,

presentations, book reads, workshops, or seminars.

I recommend book reads with business leaders, with titles such as *How to be an Antiracist* by Kendi Ibram; *White Like Me: Race, Racism, & White Privilege in America* by Tim Wise; *The Conversation: How Talking Honestly About Race Can Transform Individuals and Organizations* by Robert Livingston; and *White Fragility* by Robin DiAngelo. I recommend partnering with nearby universities for opportunities to enroll in certification programs on understanding diversity and inclusion, specifically the barriers to understanding. These educational opportunities should be attended by both the Responders and the local business leaders. The Responders can even curate and facilitate their own training and workshops utilizing frameworks by Barbara J. Love (Liberatory Consciousness), William Smith (Racial Battle Fatigue), and Claude Steele (stereotypes and microaggressions). Finally, I recommend the Responders continue developing their Conversations for Change workshops, inviting business leaders to take part and explicitly address colorblind racism. It will be necessary for the Responders to keep in mind when scheduling workshops the business leaders' time constraints.

The Responders can use workshops and training to encourage the predominantly white community to develop unique ways to address injustice in the absence of representatives from marginalized communities. This is not to say that marginalized individuals should not have a voice in the process, should they desire to participate, but that it is not the responsibility of the marginalized to start or lead these conversations (also known as epistemic exploitation), and it does not excuse a community from having to address related issues (Berenstain, 2016).

Education and training will also allow community members to examine unconscious assumptions and consider alternative approaches to community building. By promoting cultural awareness, the Responders can help the business leaders learn appropriate ways to engage in discussions about race, equipping the leaders with the appropriate language and terminology to

enter into conversations for change. By addressing their fears of saying the wrong things when talking about race, the Responders will also be targeting deeper goals to promote justice, equity, and inclusion in the community.

Conclusion

This project was conducted in order to inform the Responders of Liddleville, PA, with recommendations and strategies for working specifically with the leaders of the Liddleville business community. The significance of the findings influences the recommendations aimed at guiding the efforts of the Responders in' achieving their goals in the community. The findings revealed several critical cultural models that hinder equity and inclusivity in the community. The findings also revealed cultural models for which the Responders could capitalize on when creating a participatory partnership. The cultural model findings reveal the Liddleville business leaders' perceptions of racism, equity, and inclusion. The Responders should use the information to strategically target their next steps.

Ultimately, this research revealed a willingness by the Liddleville business leaders to engage in meaningful conversations for change in the hopes of making the community of Liddleville, PA, a more welcoming and inclusive place to both residents and visitors.

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Appendix A: Form Interview Recruitment Letter

Recruitment Email:

Dear [Name],

I am contacting you on behalf of Vanderbilt University to ask if you would agree to be interviewed about diversity in our small town business community. I am contacting you because you are a leader in the Liddleville business community, which is where my study will be focused.

Should you agree to participate; I will contact you to set up an interview at a time of your convenience. During the interview, I will be asking you questions to better understand your experiences and understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Participant's identity will be kept confidential. Interviews are anticipated to take approximately 45 minutes to an hour of your time.

I hope you will choose to participate in this important study. If you are willing, please email back confirmation and let me know your preferred means for meeting (i.e. In-person or virtually). I will follow up to schedule a time to meet with you.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you,
Casey Cover, *MHRM*
Vanderbilt University, Ed.D Candidate
814-285-7357

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Introduction: "Thank you for your willingness to participate in this interview. As a reminder, I'm a doctorate student at Vanderbilt University and I'm working on my capstone project, which is the culminating project for the doctorate program. The purpose of this interview is to gain a deeper understanding of how business communities in small, predominantly white, towns consider issues of diversity. The data collected from all of my interviews will never be made public in raw form and your identity will always be made anonymous. Do you have any questions for me before we begin?

I have a few basic demographic questions before we begin. Age, marital status, highest level of education, years living in Liddleville, industry, years in business, number of employees.

Research Questions	Interview Questions
What are the discourses of Liddleville Business leaders around racism?	Q.2. I know that Liddleville can be a relatively homogenous community, do you have experiences working with people who are different from you? (meaning different gender, race, beliefs, etc.) Tell me about the experience? Did you ever talk about your differences? Tell me about a time when you had an experience where you noticed that most of the people, practices, or ideas were different from your own? Tell me what made this experience so different for you, how did you feel, do you feel you learned or gained anything from the experience?
	Q.3. Are there ways that you have tried to understand the perspectives of people from backgrounds that are different from your own? For example, certain community members, employees, and customers.
	Q.6. Race is a topic that has been at the forefront of conversations in Liddleville for the last year or so. Many people have told me that race is a challenging topic to talk about. Is race something that the Liddleville business community should be talking about explicitly? Tell me about the challenges you see in talking about race in Liddleville, specifically in the business community.
	Q.7. Have you ever experienced or witnessed racism? Tell me about it. What made this incident racist in nature? How did you feel about this? What about more subtle forms of racism?
	Q.8. Does your company/organization/business have problems recruiting diverse candidates for jobs? What do you think the reason for this is?
What are the discourses of Liddleville Business leaders around equity?	Q.4. Equity Picture Prompt. Have you heard the term equity? How would you define that term? What do you think of when you think of the concept of equity?
What are the discourses of Liddleville Business leaders around inclusion?	Q.5. Inclusion Prompt:. What do you think about this? Have you ever done/experienced something like that yourself? Have you ever seen an example of inclusive practices?
Other:	Q.1. Tell me about the average/typical leader (employee, customer/client) of the Liddleville business community? What experiences does this person have, what is their background, what do they look like, what are their expectations for work?

Appendix C: Code Book

Code	Occurrence	Interview Appearances	Description	Supporting Quotes
Lack of Diversity	104	21	Liddleville has very little racial diversity, which is used as a reason not to discuss race, as a reason for racism, and used to highlight the absence of non-whites within the community.	• "I think they enjoy the status quo. I think some of them, especially not having been exposed to other races and other cultures very much, through their lives don't feel comfortable around them. You know, if you don't, if you don't understand something, or if you haven't experienced something, then it's natural to be uncomfortable sometimes." (Interview 8). • "Moving back to the area to see how much something that had nothing to do with this man got him so rattled and so uncomfortable, and I just think it's a sense of discomfort that people have because they have no idea. And it's scary for them to experience"- Interview 7 • "I think that's why you see people show up on the squares with their guns is wasn't because they hate black people. It's because they didn't like feeling threatened. They don't like feeling. They didn't like feeling threatened." - Interview 3 • "Just, you know, like, there really isn't much to focus on, you can't look at equality, when you don't have black business owners in this town. You can't talk about ways to make events that are culturally diverse, when you don't have that type of crowd that's going to come to it. So part of our struggles is that's where we're being pushed as an organization through our national accreditation, to have diverse events and address these issues. But it's not representative of the community that we live in." - Interview 4 • "They just didn't know what they didn't know. so I think, ignorance is probably our biggest problem, and I don't say that offensively. I only say that is just don't know what you don't know. And anyone who does create that or have that awareness, generally doesn't feel that way anymore."- Interview 16 • "Because we don't have that, we don't have a lot of diversity here. So for us it would always be like pointing it out."- Interview 13 • "What are you going to talk about and the fact that I mean we don't have a lot of diversity in the community I think that that the, the, typically we have blacks, and you know we, there are some Hispanic but not maybe we don't have that huge diversity that's the thing so do you… I'm sure it's a very hard thing for businesses to like do you point it out, you don't point it out somebody black comes in your business." - Interview 13 • "It wasn't that we felt one way or another, because there really isn't a way to feel about

				something that didn't happen in this area in this town."- Interview 5
				• "So, I would think that some of the challenges I'm may see is individuals that hadn't never had experience to other cultures, or, you know, people of color. That's could be the challenge, right? Yo you if you sit there and see on the news about a certain, you know, race, of, you know, that's all you know and so when individuals of that race come here. Then you know people already are already have pre judgments set up about that race, for instance like black lives matters. You know it was a group of black people and you know a lot of people thought they were just terrorists. You know, some, some, some, some may be, some may be but, you know, some of them were just trying to get the word out too. And so if you give prejudgment on somebody that you never had no experience with, I think that's probably one of the most dangerous thing that any are could face." - Interview 12
				• "There are a lot of people who live in Liddleville who've never been to another country. They've never even been to a city, the biggest city maybe they've ever been to is Cumberland or Altoona. It's not much better when it comes to diversity." - Interview 3
				• "for me personally, I do think it's a topic of discussion that people should talk more about. I just think it's, it's a lack of culture and experiences, and the people that may have the racial intentions are the ones that are never going out and really truly understanding so I think it all starts with conversations and I think it should be more of a topic of discussion." - Interview 14
				• "I believe so, but they're ignorant. And by that I mean, they don't know... They don't see the lack of race as an issue… They don't understand what they don't understand." - Interview 8
Difficult to Discuss	58	20	Hesitant to and/or resistant to discuss the topic of race and racism, an opposition to discuss racism.	• "I think we also have to hear from the people who live here. It's just you don't want you don't want anybody to be put in in a bad position. And you don't want anybody to have repercussions for sharing how they feel." - Interview 3
				• "We run into the same struggles too, because so many people say if you don't say something, then that is saying something. And I think that I am better off not to form an opinion one way or another. So I often won't speak towards it. But I'm afraid that that also looks like I'm taking a stand" - Interview 4
				• "I don't know, you know, it's always something with people, I think people don't want to be classified as racist but at the same time they don't want to give their full opinion on the matter, I think reading between the lines a lot of

				people do not like the Black Lives Matter protests, because some of them find it disrespectful because, you know, people kneel during the national anthem, and that I think really resonates with a lot of people in a community because a lot of people serve the military, and I agree with how they view it at that same point, but I feel like, again that's kind of going from one extreme viewpoint to the other extreme viewpoint, where it's like now I viewed on the Black Lives Matter for people who say they're against that, are necessarily classifying them as racist and so then you're getting into this conflict in which you're really, really classifying two groups of entities the Wrong way. And one way that one doesn't view themselves or that way and the other doesn't view themselves the other way. So I think it's a really touchy subject because mainstream media also too has really provided to the two parties." - Interview 11 • "I feel as though people might want to bury their head in the sand to say, that's not a conversation that needs to be had. 'Why is that necessary' is what I think would be." - Interview 7 • "And they are hard conversations. And I think the biggest reason that's harder here is because none of us are diverse. or, few of us. So I'm not sure what we that we would know what to talk about." - Interview 18 • "then the reason I said it was difficult is because like I said, I just feel like you have to tiptoe because you don't know what insults certain people may not insult other people you're, you know you're just so afraid."- Interview 20
Equal Opportunity	35	21	Equal opportunity, even/level playing field, mentions of fairness, acceptance.	• "The way the world should be. Acceptance of diversity, acceptance of adjusting how different people have different needs to all get an equal outcome." (Interview 2) • "helping everybody to achieve the same thing, building people up so that they can achieve the same thing. So this would probably mean there's some kind of discrepancy in, in abilities or opportunities" (Interview 3) • "well if I adjust the pedestals that they're standing on we can make more equality. So sometimes it's just a background adjustment that needs to be made in the management of things in order to put everybody on that same level where everybody can gain some fruit." (Interview 15) • "no one is hindered from possibilities, or no one is hindered from opportunities in any way is equity to me that everyone has the same chances and the same chance for success and the same payout once they get there." (Interview 1)

				"Whereas, it looks like some challenges were identified, and they made the right adjustments for everyone to have the same opportunity." (Interview 16) "So it's giving people the opportunity to have a similar experience regardless of what their situation is." (Interview 19)
Meritocracy	33	15	Judging people based on work ethic, how hard they work and their skills. Merit- the hardest worker should be rewarded, against affirmative action, and claims of colorblindness.	"Let my merits of what I do speak for themselves." (interview 16) "And so, and again, me, what we want is the best candidates right, we want the best candidates to come in and to be (job role).. I don't care what you look like, I don't care." (Interview 20) "accept people on their own merit." (Interview 10) "everybody's the same, you know, in my opinion if you can do a task just as well, male or female, no matter what that task is, that's the person that should be doing it" Interview 14) "You're not only getting a chance to because you're black, or, or Asian or you're getting a chance because you're the best candidate in the room. I want to take all that everything else off the table, equal is equal, and it doesn't." (Interview 16) "I don't care who you are, what color you are male, female, whatever" (interview 14) "you know, I think that what we are on the inside. Eventually, you'll get used to it and that will be what shines through." (Interview 15) "I wouldn't say male or female, or really any color you know I don't look at it that way," (interview 21) "that's really difficult for me to answer because I don't sit and look at you as a white, brown, black, yellow, red person. I look at you as Casey. So maybe I don't have enough awareness for that because it wouldn't wouldn't matter to me." (Interview 16) "moreso to my mom than anyone that really taught us tolerance, and wanting to you know, treat everybody the same and so I didn't really notice differences," (Interview 19)
Outsiders vs. Insiders	101	21	References to community membership, insiders, acceptance in the community. References to outsiders, others, those who are not members of the community.	"But I have been in other positions where I felt that you weren't heard unless you were part of, you know, flock together." (Interview 5) " the majority, majority of them seem to be from this general area." (interview 8) "difficult to immerse your children and your family and your spouse, into a community that is all the same and you're the one that's different. Difference in just skin color, not saying anything else." (Interview 7) "It's been primarily white people in this area. You know, oftentimes it's because there's when, when people that aren't white don't see people that look like them, then they don't feel welcomed. It's when I've tried to recruit people of non white origin. It's been more difficult, because they look around and they don't see anybody that looks like them." (Interview 8) "I think understanding the majority is probably the most important thing you can do, because if

				you can't, then you're always going to stick out like a sore thumb." (Interview 11) ● "they very much keep to themselves... the fact that they keep themselves so segregated," (Interview 1)- Talking about minorities ● "I think it needs to be locally led. I think somebody from outside the community, people would would distrust in general." (interview 3) ● "Just what I know where we're this community is very tight and the trust I think is comes from within. Again, I don't know that that's always the best case, but I from my experiences and serving in the roles I've served in, people we tend to listen first to the inside." (Interview 16) ● "not a lot of outside people coming in" (Interview 2) ● "So, here in Liddleville. It was a small knit community. And so sometimes you'll face a term called groupthink." (Interview 12) ● "So, they were very well welcomed into, into the Liddleville community. They, they enjoyed the people they enjoyed the rural atmosphere. It just didn't feel the the culture that they were looking for, for their families were there, and this, This was, you know, actually we do an exit interview process. And this was openly discussed at the exit interviews" (Interview 10) ● "their expectations are uniformity" (Interview 1) ● "I do believe we're very groupthink." (Interview 7) ● "Because it's it's been a system that they've lived in for a long time. And so, it would make a change, cause a little change in their thinking and so when you grown up a certain way with a certain culture. And it's been generations like that. It's really hard to make that change, to see someone different." (Interview 22) ● "Yeah, you're living in a small town, where everybody knows you and you need to approach the community now completely what what are the community actually supports you were having a good relationship with the locals is actually more important sometimes" (Interview 9)
Emphasis on Community	31	15	Community-minded, tight knit community, community-oriented, volunteerism in the community.	● "I always say that I'm always amazed how passionate people are about the communities they serve and how connected they are to really making a difference in their communities." (Interview 20) ● "More importantly, they they have some kind of a deep connection to this town." (Interview 1) ● "I also think a lot of those people have been in this town for a long time, and if they have their business here, They obviously are directly interacting with all the community members on a daily basis, taking care of their own business, which makes their heart grow stronger for the community, of course, you know, though, those are the people at the top and…" (Interview 15) ● "Definitely, business leaders, family owned businesses and probably a prior life before insurance I was in a family was family owned also, but I'm not family now but same dynamic where they were very active in the community because the idea is your community gave to

				- you it's time to give back to your community.” (Interview 16) “People that volunteer a lot of their time, they really care about the community… people that have worked hard at their own businesses that then want to give back to our community. Those are, those are the heads of our town.” (Interview 15) “Yeah, you're living in a small town, where everybody knows you and you need to approach the community now completely what what are the community actually supports you were having a good relationship with the locals is actually more important sometimes.” (Interview 9) “I think just leadership experience, you know, willingness, hard worker, somebody that is there, volunteers a lot within the community, is willing to give, is willing to mentor. You know, and I just think someone who is very connected to the community. You know, just different people that I can think of, You know, and I won't give specific names but just the qualities you know caring about the community being a leader, you know, strong work ethic, how they're viewed by the community.” (Interview 21) “Somebody who I would describe as hardworking community minded cares about the community wants to give back.” (Interview 3) “(Leaders are) very community minded, which is nice to see in in a in a smaller town.” (Interview 19)
Onus on Leader	23	10	Leaders responsibility to ensure inclusion.	“I think it should be addressed by the community leaders because they are leaders in this community... I think they should take a leadership role and talk about inclusion or we are going to be a very hostile environment.” (Interview 1) “as the President's role I think is to try to make everyone feel included and not that anyone is set off different.” (Interview 21) “being in any community that has a multifaceted type approach, you have to really be mindful of being a leader of inclusion of groups, and be very careful not to be excluded, to be a leader of exclusion,” (Interview 12) “you know, the management is the backbone to every progress moving forward,” (Interview 15) “the community leaders saying that Liddleville needs this and selling it to their peers.” (Interview 17) “Liddleville business, the Liddleville Business Bureau could do, you know, a really huge, you know, service to themselves for the community to say, you know, how do we solve these things and then kind of say, well, we believe in the equality of all humans and so we believe that one group shouldn't feel left out.” (Interview 11) “Personally I think it starts with the community leaders and businesses.” (Interview 14)
Difference	13	8	Dealing with people	“My son has expressed to me that he believes he's, you know, bisexual and he's quite young,

			who are different than us, understanding difference.	• and I don't know what that means, but raising a son, you know, in Liddleville that, that even could consider that makes him makes our family so much different than a lot of other families here." (Interview 2) • "I don't take it as a put down or put back because we're all different. We're all different, And we come from different backgrounds and different lifestyles. And so I don't think sometimes people recognize that we really are different." (Interview 22) • "It must be a very, very difficult area to raise children that are different." (Interview 1) • "I tried purposely hard to integrate differing perspectives, and when I say different perspectives. I mean, ethnicity, orientation, gender, because if we don't have that type of representation on the leadership team," (Interview 8)
Natural/Cultural Grouping/ Traditional Roles	22	13	It is in ones nature to group with those who are similar to them, it's a part of our culture. Women and Men have certain traditional roles that are in our DNA.	• "it's absolutely true that women are natural caretakers," (Interview 3) • "that's the nature of workplaces. " (Interview 1) • "A lot of the older generation of men you know, if there's a meeting and you know, notes need to be taken, they'll look to the woman to take those notes or something like that." (Interview 2) • "It's a difficult thing to do I think that, I mean, women, I shouldn't say this maybe but at nature we are the nurturers, and so we maybe think on the forefront okay how can I take care of everybody can I clean all this up to somebody needs something like that is just, in my opinion built into us as human beings as a woman. We carry the child, the man will never carry the child, you know, we are the nurturers, and I think that as long as everybody is happy, then I think it's okay." (Interview 15) • "heck yeah so every woman that I mean I think that's I think that's inbred sometimes you can just do stuff you just do it to get it done because you know sometimes it's really not going to get done unless you do it as a woman" (Interview 13) • "I think it's sometimes just natural to flock together." (Interview 4) • "We're not all the same. So. And we just by nature, don't necessarily have the same skill set." (Interview 17) • "You either you can have such a, you can have such a I want to say violent reaction but you can have such a unreasonable reaction not knowing the other person because you're literally judging them for how they look then, really, what kind of person they are. And I think human nature, in that is, you know how we evolve from over time and I think I just understood, I understand that more, more than, like it's it's not, it's just not one culture or one it's every culture you go into there's racist tendencies. And I've learned that living in different countries and so I think I've not accepted it, but understand that, You know it's not necessarily one group of people, you know when countries, you know, just kind of, I don't wanna say in our DNA, but how we how human nature is." (Interview 11)

| Communication | 11 | 6 | Communication is key to addressing issues of racism, inequity, and exclusion. Using communication as a leadership tool to address these issues. | • "I've learned to ask. I've learned to ask questions and if you don't know something, ask. And I found that typically people prefer you to ask, and, and be more educated, rather than continuing ignorance of, uneducation." (Interview 8)
• "I think it's hard to have a conversation, unless you're part of the conversation." (Interview 7)
• "I have a very good relationship with (person's name). So we we like to talk about that. Because I can learn a lot from him and me, I think his family's events, who likes to invite us Tuesday have big celebration. So it's a lot of fun. So I like to learn from from them. Yes." (Interview 17)
• "In other words, we might call exciting conversations going, you know, really get people thinking outside their comfort zone, outside their, you know their normal safe, and this creates a lot of a lot of excitement in different ways, and it helps people to think in platforms that they haven't thought of before and sometimes you know I'm saying they're actually thinking on three different tiers, you know, there's the, the I factor, there's the team factor." (Interview 10) |
| Acts of Racism | 33 | 16 | Subtle and overt acts of racism. | • "It's constant comments about being Hispanic or being black, because he's the closest thing they have to black. So all the jokes apply to him." (Interview 1)
• "asking, like me if something was like a lesbian thing to do, or something like that," (Interview 2)
• "They wouldn't give a lesbian an opportunity to host a student." (Interview 3)
• "For example I, people always assume I'm good at math. I am good at math but you know that I'm also really good at other things." (Interview 11)
• "We had an individual who ended up losing their position because they made the comment, a very very racist joke. It was two white people having a conversation about what's the difference between this and that. And it was, it was really it was just inappropriate and almost shocking that somebody would think that way and think it's okay." (Interview 19)
• "I've witnessed racism. Many times, and I've experienced racism, many of times me growing up all you know, pretty much one of the only white kids in the projects, growing up to Detroit, Michigan. So, you know, racism, you know, is different from bigotry right. I've seen bigotry a lot and you know, Archie Bunker and, you know, Mr. Jefferson that one, you know, show I don't know if you ever seen that. But, there there is that wasn't racism that was bigotry, between a white guy and a black guy, they learn how to live together right. But true racism is the 'hate people', the people that hate you, no matter what, the people that are going to harm you, the people that are gonna go out of their way to hurt you, and that right there, I've seen it in Liddleville, I've seen it in Cleveland. I've seen it in Florida, I've seen in Detroit, Michigan, it's out there and exist but you know it's not as big as we think it is oh, |

				either. It is there. Um. I do see it. However, I see more bigotry, being misrepresented as racism these days." (Interview 12)
				• "I took someone's a different ethnic background to a dance, and first responses don't bring her around here." (Interview 16) • "A member of one of the local municipal offices, I won't say which one actually called (person's name). And then she forwarded to me, called (person's name) said she had heard that the springs is bussing in Mexicans, and she wants to, You know, be assured that they're documented properly. And I, I believe that comes from the fact that, first of all, finding employees is, is a huge issue right now. Nationally, Let alone in this area, this area it's even more difficult I believe because we just don't have the population base. And so about a year ago we started using a temp agency that employs a lot of foreign workers, and they're here on visas. They are documented, they're predominantly from Colombia, but there are some other countries I didn't even know if any of them have been from Mexico. And because we weren't as busy over the last year, we put them in hotel rooms. And, I mean they're coming here from out of town, and we have to find a place for them to live. So we put them in hotel rooms so the community largely, you know were was unaware. Well now, because we're getting busier and we need hotel rooms plus we're using more of them, because it's even harder to find employees than it was a year ago, we rented some apartments in town. So now it appears that now that they're out amongst to town people that, that there's that there's a concern." (Interview 8) • "So I think they'd be but if you told them that you were moving in the apple pickers to this development, do you think you'd get the same response of lower income housing, as you would like a senior development complex? Yeah, no." (Interview 4) • "Personally, years ago, we had somebody at our house for dinner from the south, he used the N word and I, and I just said, that, you know, you aren't welcome in my house, if you're going to use that." (Interview 6) • "I've been approached in the past by a general manager, the (business name), saying, we really need to educate our community, because there are people of all walks of life, there are people who do not have English as a first language coming to stay there, and they come into town and, and they're not necessarily treated the way that they should be." (Interview 3)
Willingness to Discuss	37	14	Who is willing to discuss these topics, traits of those willing to discuss, benefits engaging in conversations about racism, equity, and	• "And what can we do to make Liddleville more welcoming. I think it helps from a community standpoint, it definitely helps from a business standpoint, to bring you know be welcoming to anybody, but I think as a human being you just learn more and you appreciate more when you talk about it and you learn about it, it's uncomfortable though." (Interview 19) • "I believe that we, you know, in terms of workforce, anything that can help us train and

				inclusion.	- have an available workforce, for employers is important." (Interview 6) "I do think so, because we're only becoming more diverse as a country, and it's going to be a matter of time. When your organization or someone's organization hire someone who's of a different ethnicity. And if you don't talk about those things then you know you can have like workplace issues in which people say things that are not appropriate." (Interview 11) "for me personally, I do think it's a topic of discussion that people should talk more about. I just think it's, it's a lack of culture and experiences, and the people that may have the racial intentions are the ones that are never going out and really truly understanding so I think it all starts with conversations and I think it should be more of a topic of discussion." (Interview 14) "Whereas I try to, I wish people would educate themselves more on other people and other beliefs. And by educating even just like listening to them talk and, and not saying you have to agree with them." (Interview 2) "I know we do in our business, because it's critical. I would think that as a downtown, as you know, we want to grow our tourism, which is our biggest, we need to be cognizant of it. So I would hope that they would be willing to engage in that if nothing else, just to encourage people to come visit our community and maybe say.." (Interview 17) "I think that, you know, America is about different ethnic backgrounds, and that's what really enriches the community, and you know the talk about making us to be more welcome to people of different races, is just a beautiful thing." (Interview 12) "You know you have to have a conversation if you don't talk about it, nothing will change." (Interview 14) "I've learned to ask. I've learned to ask questions and if you don't know something, ask. And I found that typically people prefer you to ask, and, and be more educated, rather than continuing ignorance of, uneducation." (Interview 8) "So I think maybe it is important to talk about that. One of the reasons to talk about it is that diversity in the workforce brings strength to a workforce. If we don't talk about it, I'm not sure how we create it." (Interview 18)