

**Opportunity Hoarding and the Maintenance of “White” Educational Space**

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## **Abstract**

In this paper, we discuss the fundamental whiteness of educational spaces and detail the historical and contemporary mechanisms through which these spaces are created and perpetuate. To do this, we draw on Charles Tilly's concept of opportunity hoarding to detail how white racial actors and white-dominated institutions create and defend "white" spaces within education. We expand current educational scholarship in this area by theorizing connections between opportunity hoarding and sociological work on racial boundaries, institutional theory, and organizational routine and point the way toward more nuanced examinations of opportunity hoarding in education.

In his 2015 article, “The White Space” Elijah Anderson discusses the persistence of “white space” in the post-Civil Rights era. He writes,

“The wider society is still replete with overwhelmingly white neighborhoods, restaurants, schools, universities, workplaces, churches and other associations, courthouses, and cemeteries, a situation that reinforces a normative sensibility in settings in which Black people are typically absent, not expected, or marginalized when present. In turn, Blacks often refer to such settings colloquially as ‘the white space’—a perceptual category—and they typically approach that space with care.”

Here, Anderson discusses both the demographics and symbolic violence of “overwhelmingly white” places – spaces that are demographically dominated by White bodies and in which Black folks must act “with care.” We agree with Anderson about the need to interrogate “white space” and the violence it does to minoritized bodies but seek to advance the discussion of white space in two ways. First, we offer a more expansive discussion of what makes a space “white” and push the conversation about “white spaces” beyond “overwhelmingly white” organizations to include those places that may be demographically diverse, or have very few white people in residence, but remain very “white” in other key ways. Second, we discuss the mechanisms and processes whereby white spaces get created, perpetuated, challenged, and protected. For instance, the Black Lives Matter Movement (BLM) has continued to mobilize efforts to eradicate white supremacy and end the state-sponsored murder of Black people by police officers. In this way, BLM is reclaiming Black freedom in public spaces by disrupting the violent mechanisms that perpetuate them as White spaces. To illustrate these dynamics, we focus specifically on the whiteness of educational spaces and explore how white spaces are created and protected in schools today – often in ways that appear to be “racially-neutral”.

In what follows, we examine the fundamental whiteness of educational spaces historically and then discuss the contemporary processes and mechanisms that perpetuate their whiteness today. We give attention to the historical trajectory of whiteness in education because while white supremacy in the U.S. has fundamentally centered white power throughout our history, it has not done so in a manner that is uniform or guaranteed. Racialized power is not static. It evolves over time and must continually adapt. It is then, centrally important to not just talk about what is the same about racism today (many patterns of racial hierarchy) but also, what is different. To this end, we focus in on Charles Tilly's concept of "opportunity hoarding" as a mechanism which white people use to create, protect and defend "white spaces" in educational organizations thus maximizing their hold on advantaged contexts within racially stratified academic hierarchies (O'Connor et al. 2011).

### **What is White Space?**

Educational institutions are often defined by their demographic composition. It is common practice in educational research, for example, for scholars to discuss students' racial demographics as core features of educational contexts (i.e. "This is a Black school/a White school/a Latinx school/a majority-minority school/a diverse school). However, in recent years scholars have reasserted the need to consider how an organization, school and or "space" might be racialized beyond demographics – to consider dimensions of power, resources, climate, and culture, etc. (Anderson 2015; Ray 2019; Brown, 2018; McKittrick, 2011; Hunter & Robinson, 2018; Moore, 2007). Thus, for example, while scholars might typically define a school as a "white" space as an indicator of the percentage of white students, teachers, or administrators, others have noted that whiteness powerfully shapes educational organizations even when the people inside them are not overwhelmingly white (Diamond, 2018; Diamond & Lewis, 2019; Morris, 2006; Ray, 2019). One obvious and glaring example would be Bureau of Indian Affairs

boarding schools and Canadian residential schools (Adams, 1995; Child, 2018), which were not demographically white but which had Whiteness, white racial projects and white supremacy at their core as they were tasked with the forcible assimilation toward whiteness and the simultaneous destruction of indigenous cultures (or what Fenelon (1998) calls *culturicide*).<sup>1</sup> Similarly, Carter G. Woodson and other historians writing about segregated Black schools in the south in the United States in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries highlighted the white racial projects of segregation and “mis-education” that shaped their organization and functioning even as everyone in the building was Black (Woodson, 1933; Litwack, 1998; Anderson, 1988).

Here, then, we suggest that whiteness is not about demographics so much as about relations of power within a system of white supremacy. Whiteness is a set of ideas that attach meaning to human bodies, a status position that functions as a form of symbolic capital (Lewis, 2004; Lewis & Diamond, 2015), and a collection of structures that advantage those defined as white (Jung, 2015, Castagno, 2014). It powerfully shapes how groups are positioned within racialized social systems (Bonilla-Silva, 2017) and is a key stratifying feature that permeates the education field (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) from the symbolic and material hierarchical positioning of educational institutions (e.g. PWIs versus HBCUs) to the micro-level functioning of various daily organizational routines (Diamond & Lewis, 2019; Lewis & Diamond, 2015).

From its founding, the educational system in the United States was organized in a manner that supported and reinforced racial hierarchies and thus can be thought of as a white space with structures and practices that reinforce white supremacy (Diamond, 2018; Lewis & Manno, 2011; Takaki, 1993). This is true not only structurally in the way school systems have been organized,

<sup>1</sup> Colonial education served a similar function across the globe as Europeans sought to impose whiteness on indigenous populations.

funded, and operated but also in the daily functioning of schools and classroom organizational routines within the system.

Abundant research of the last several decades demonstrates how schools continue to differently value, reward, white history, white knowledge, and white bodies (Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Stovall, 2018; Carter, 2003; Diamond, et al. 2004). Important research has, for example, focused on how whiteness continues to permeate the formal and hidden curriculum of schools. For instance, white cultural styles (e.g. dress, speech, hairstyles) are valued while the cultural styles of other racialized groups are denigrated, white students experience a freedom of movement while Black, Latinx, and indigenous students experience hyper surveillance (Diamond & Lewis, 2019), teachers hold elevated expectations for white students academic abilities and behavioral characteristics compared to their Black and Latinx counterparts (Downey & Pribesh, 2004; Lindsey & Hart 2017), and Asian American students are viewed as overcommitted students and forced into the controlling image of the “model minority” which can lead to negative consequences and center whiteness as normative (Lee, 1996; 2005; Jiménez, 2017; Dhingra, 2020).

The symbolic power of whiteness (combined with the relationship between whiteness and structural positions) also enhances White parents’ ability to influence the educational environment while Black parents’ efforts are often resisted (Lewis & Diamond, 2015; Posey-Maddox, 2017). Across every facet of education, from the resources embedded in organizations populated by White students, to the ability of White people to shape what happens inside of them, whiteness functions as a form of capital (Lewis & Diamond, 2015), property (Harris, 1993; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) or as a credential (Ray, 2019). While the value of whiteness varies across White people based on other intersecting characteristics (e.g. class, language,

nationality, etc.), it generally advantages Whites relative to members of other racial groups (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1991).<sup>2</sup>

Thus, in defining what is “white” about schools and school systems, it remains important to attend to the fact that 84% of teachers in the United States (U.S.) are White (Condition of Education, 2019) and/or to the reality of geographic boundaries (e.g. city and suburbs boundaries, district fragmentation) that perpetuate segregation and shape both the demographic composition and resource base of school districts and buildings. However, it is also important to examine the myriad ways that white spaces manifest, including even when schools or districts are not demographically “overwhelmingly white.” When we ask ourselves whether schools (or other organizations) are “white spaces” the metrics should go far beyond demographics to examine questions of resource distribution, power, culture, climate, and mission (Chesler, Crowfoot & Lewis, 2005; Ray, 2019).

Moreover, in arguing for a more expansive understanding of “white spaces” it is important to understand the dynamics through which such places are created, defended, and perpetuated. Historically, white spaces were produced explicitly through law and rules of exclusion. Yet, they persist today long after the mechanisms that created them have been eliminated. How, then, are white spaces made and protected currently? In the next section, we answer this question by focusing on what scholars recently have described as “opportunity hoarding” (Tilly, 1998) as one example of a mechanism that sustains white advantage and reproduces “white spaces” in a system rooted in white supremacy (Diamond, 2018).

<sup>2</sup> Even in situations where members of other racial groups outperform them (e.g. Asian American students) whites can still define their achievement as normative and achievement of Asian American students as extraordinary (Jiménez, 2018; Dhingra, 2020).

## **Opportunity Hoarding**

A growing body of research in sociology and education draws on Charles Tilly's concept of opportunity hoarding to explain one mechanism in the perpetuation of durable inequality across social groups and in education (Tilly, 1998; Massey, 2007; Rury & Saarcioğlu, 2011; Lewis-McCoy, 2014; Lewis & Diamond, 2015; Domina, Penner & Penner, 2016; Sattin-Bajaj & Roda, 2018, Darby and Rury, 2018). In his work, Tilly (1998) sought to delineate fundamental processes of stratification that moved beyond the focus on individual social mobility which he argued missed the relational foundation of social stratification. Instead, he detailed "the social structure of inequality" (Tilly, 1998: 24), seeking to describe the mechanisms through which durable patterns of unequal social relations emerge and are sustained. He identified four processes used to establish and spread categorical inequality – exploitation, opportunity hoarding, emulation, and adaptation. Exploitation, rooted in Marx and Engels labor theory of value, exists when those in power draw resources from members of excluded groups and then prevent them from accessing the value of their efforts (think surplus labor producing surplus value).

In contrast to exploitation, opportunity hoarding occurs when "members of a categorically bounded network acquire access to a resource that is valuable, renewable, subject to monopoly" and exclude other groups from access to it. While exploitation is the purview of elite actors, opportunity hoarding is typically practiced by a wide range of actors who attempt to secure their relatively privileged social position through monopolizing scarce resources. Here one can see the Weberian imprint of social closure on Tilly's work. In fact, he argues that his work "builds a bridge from Max Weber's on social closure to Karl Marx on exploitation, and back" (Tilly, 1998: 7). A core distinction between exploitation and opportunity hoarding for Tilly is that in exploitation, resources that benefit elites are extracted from non-elites whereas in

opportunity hoarding groups try to monopolize access to resources and deny other people access to them (Rury & Rife, 2017) – though this argument has been challenged by other scholars who suggest that opportunity hoarding and exploitation are not as distinct as Tilly suggests (Morris, 2000).<sup>3</sup>

Since the original publication of Tilly’s work, scholars have used opportunity hoarding in multiple ways. Massey (2007) is perhaps the sociologist whose work was most responsible for accelerating the use of the concept among social stratification scholars (Voss, 2010). In *Categorically Unequal*, Massey uses Tilly’s work (along with scholarship from social psychology) as a foundation for his arguments about the origins, foundations, and perpetuation of stratification systems. Massey focused on the cognitive processes that form the foundation of categorical thinking (Massey, 2007; Voss, 2010). Further, arguing that inequality does not “just happen” Massey asserts the need to understand the “social mechanisms to reserve certain resources for in-group members.”

### **Opportunity Hoarding in Education**

While Tilly focuses on categorical inequality in general, we are most interested here in the mechanisms through which opportunity hoarding is used by white racial actors to perpetuate white supremacy in education. As we have argued, the U.S. education system is, at least partially, a white space. Here we explore how white supremacy is perpetuated in this space through multiple processes/forms of opportunity hoarding. These mechanisms range from broad structural processes (the creation of white suburbs) to micro-level interactions (parents'

<sup>3</sup> Tilly identifies two other processes that spread and help sustain durable patterns of inequality – emulation and adaptation. Emulation occurs when organizational models proliferate in ways that allow stratified social relations to spread across time and space. Here he borrows from institutional theory, building on the ideas of institutional isomorphism across organizations (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Finally, adaptation results when people essentially accept the rules of the game and struggle over access to resources within emulated organizational forms.

interventions in course placement decisions), to the recent creation of “pandemic pods” in response to many schools moving to virtual learning in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (Hanna & Graham, 2020). These processes have evolved in response to patterns of resistance, social movements (Morris, 1988), and opportunity prying (Lyken-Segosebe & Hinz, 2015).

Drawing on multiple empirical examples from education research, we attempt to bring more conceptual clarity to opportunity hoarding and suggest it is a key mechanism of white power. In considering the theoretical terrain, we highlight some of the key processes that support opportunity hoarding. First, we discuss how the creation of racial boundaries and the institutionalization of unequal resources across these boundaries support opportunity hoarding (Lamont & Lonar, 2002; Massey, 2007). Second, we discuss the proliferation of opportunity hoarding through organizational emulation processes (Tilly, 1999). In particular, concerning how opportunity hoarding looks different today than it has in the past, we draw specific links between work on opportunity hoarding, institutional isomorphism, and the practice of organizational routines to demonstrate how taken-for-granted organizational processes can support and legitimize opportunity hoarding and reproduce “white spaces.” Finally, we briefly highlight the educational policy mechanisms that enable opportunity hoarding processes.

### **Opportunity Hoarding, Racial Boundaries, and Separate and Unequal Spaces**

An essential component of opportunity hoarding is the creation and institutionalization of group boundaries in ways that create social boundaries (Lamont and Molnár 2002). As Massey (2007) argues, stratification systems rely on two fundamental processes “the allocation of people to social categories” and “the institutionalization of practices that allocate resources unequally across these categories” (Massey, 2007, 5–6). Opportunity hoarding in education is an example of the latter, representing practices that result in the unequal allocation of resources across group lines. In fact, whites’ hoarding of educational opportunities is arguably one of the central themes

in the history of U.S. educational systems and the history of U.S. race relations. A key lever in the production and protection of white supremacy, the controlling of access to education, the use of education to explicitly promote white supremacy, and the denial of access to quality education have persisted from the earliest days of the republic. Educational Philosopher Elizabeth Anderson (2010) and historians Rury and Saarcioğlu (2011) were among the first to draw on opportunity hoarding explicitly as a frame to analyze white racial projects in educational spaces (Winant, 2001).<sup>4</sup>

Anderson emphasizes the historical pattern of opportunity hoarding writing that “U.S. whites have long hoarded opportunities, by establishing school systems that provide no, or an inferior, education to Blacks, Latinos, and Native Americans” (Anderson, 2010: 8). She also highlights the key role of legitimizing narratives (i.e. racial ideology) in sustaining opportunity hoarding and its outcomes. For instance, race-based cultural belief systems (e.g. the idea that Black and Latinx students and families lack investment in education) are key in rationalizing the denial of equal educational opportunities and in the resulting inequity. Race-based opportunity hoarding simultaneously deploys categorical distinctions as it (re)produces racial boundaries and distributes resources unequally across groups based on those categories and boundaries (Massey, 2007). In this way, race-based opportunity hoarding represents a classic example of what Omi and Winant (1994) define as racial projects -- something that links, “representations of race with social structural manifestations of racial hierarchy or dominance.” (Winant, 2001, p. 100).

The creation and maintenance of demographically white space is a critical area of analysis in its own right and a core feature of opportunity hoarding. For example, Rury and

<sup>4</sup> In his chapter, "White Racial Projects" Howard Winant draws on his work with Michael Omi to define a racial project as something that links, "representations of race with social structural manifestations of racial hierarchy or dominance." (p. 100). Winant, Howard. 2001. "White racial projects" in *The Making and Unmaking of Whiteness* edited by Birgit Brander Rasmussen, Eric Klinenberg, Irene J. Nexica, Matt Wray: pp 97-112. Durham, NC: Duke University Press

Saarcioğlu (2011; 2012) write about how opportunity hoarding is manifest in suburbanization processes and the reproduction of educational inequality across cities and suburbs. They highlight the drawing of district boundaries as an example of how whites have sought to create protected educational spaces and to maintain educational (and economic) advantages for themselves within suburbs (Rury & Saarcioğlu 2012; Darby & Rury, 2018; Rury & Rife 2018; Gardner & Rury, 2014).

The history of the creation of these demographically white spaces itself is a history of intentional actions by individuals, communities, and the state to create separate neighborhoods, schools, and towns (Jackson, 1995; Segrue, 1996; Rothstein, 2016). Suburbanization and segregation were processes that unfolded over decades with the support of the government, financial institutions, the real estate industry, and members of local communities. Thus, opportunity hoarding specifies more than the social closure among whites in local communities or the establishments of separate schools. It is more deeply embedded in the political, economic, and legal structures that are used to establish, support, and maintain white supremacy.

Historically, the formation of white political powerbases in suburban communities helped create a foundation for the appointment of county, state and federal judges who supported decisions that rolled back the Civil Rights gains of the 1960s (Frankenberg & Orfield, 2012), maintained community and school segregation across cities and suburbs (Milliken v. Bradley, 1977), and supported local funding mechanisms that concentrated economic resources in majority-white communities. Within these communities, whites used restrictive covenants and terroristic violence to keep people of color out (Quinn, 1979). Here, we see that opportunity hoarding is built into patterns of social closure, reinforced through mechanisms that help link geographic boundaries and structural inequalities, and legitimized through narratives that justify domination. Research on the creation of white suburbs also attends to how these segregation

processes played out over time in ways that led to cumulative advantages and disadvantages. Opportunity hoarding then is a process and not a discrete moment of strategic intervention.

Recent work demonstrates that opportunity hoarding of this type is not just a historic phenomenon. The creation of separate communities and school systems continues in the persistent efforts by white communities to secede and become separate political entities through school district fragmentation (Frankenberg, Siegel-Hawley, & Diem, 2017). Social closure, racial boundaries, and opportunity hoarding are perhaps most obvious in the formation and defense of “overwhelmingly white” spaces but operate in a range of other spaces also.

### **Opportunity Hoarding and Boundaries in “Diverse” School Spaces**

Building on this scholarship, recent work has shifted to understanding how opportunity hoarding functions not just in controlling or limiting access to schools or access to school districts, but also in access to advantaged educational spaces within otherwise demographically diverse educational schools (Murray, et al 2018; Sattin-Bajaj & Roda, 2018; Lewis & Diamond, 2015). In this work, scholars have documented examples of desegregated or “diverse” schools that still function in key ways as “white spaces” (Carter, 2003; Lewis-McCoy; Lewis & Diamond 2015; Tyson, 2010; Carter, 2012).

For instance, Lewis-McCoy (2014) writes about a demographically diverse suburban district where opportunity hoarding among White families was widespread. He draws important connections between what are often characterized as racially-neutral middle-class parenting practices, e.g., concerted cultivation (Lareau, 2003), and opportunity hoarding and demonstrates that the work privileged parents do to maximize their own children’s advantages, simultaneously limits others’ access. In a similar vein, Lewis & Diamond (2015) demonstrate how White parents use the symbolic capital of whiteness and their social class position to establish and sustain academic advantages for their children in Riverview High School (another school district

in the Midwest United States). These parents simultaneously actively advocate for their students' access to the advantaged educational tracks (honors and advance placement classes) and work to block proposed educational reforms that seek to equalize access and to dismantle racially stratified academic hierarchies (O'Connor, et. al. 2011). They also flee de-tracked spaces once they are created in a form of “internal” white flight, create majority White enclaves within de-tracked classes (Lewis & Diamond, 2015; Lewis, Diamond, & Forman, 2015), and manipulate school discipline procedures to protect their children from accountability in ways that they anticipate will enhance their college access and long term social position (Lewis & Diamond, 2015; Diamond & Lewis, 2019).

Moving beyond the practices of individual parents, Murray et al. (2019) demonstrate how White families work collectively to institutionalize advantages for their children inside schools. The authors use IRS non-profit tax records data to demonstrate how opportunity hoarding works through parent-teacher associations (PTAs) in North Carolina. They find that the highest revenue PTAs are located in affluent, mostly White school districts and that the achievement gains associated with these high revenue PTAs flow mostly to non-poor students. In another example, Posey-Maddox (2014) demonstrates how a group of White middle-class parents in a Northern California community decided collectively to send their children to a local neighborhood school which they had historically avoided because of its low-income African American student population. Over time, they changed the character of the school in ways that brought in new resources but also marginalized the working-class African American students and families who had long attended the school. Those resources ultimately flowed to the middle-class White families who were new arrivals to the school community.

Demographically “diverse” places, in these examples, might well be understood as desegregated but not integrated (Carter 2012; 2019; Lewis, Diamond & Forman 2015) – often

hostile to Black and brown bodies (Dumas, 2015; Wun, 2016), even as they are not obviously “white.” The presence of school resource officers in racially diverse schools has been critiqued by activists because these officers fuel the school-to-prison pipeline through disproportionate arrests of Black youth (Turner & Beneke, 2020). Recent calls to remove SROs for school districts across the country have accelerated as a result of protests following the killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor by police officers (Goldstein, 2020). In these cases, the demographic diversity can be quite disconcerting as it does not immediately signal the likelihood of symbolic violence in the way that Anderson describes of typically “overwhelmingly white” spaces but their effects are similar (Du Bois, 1935).

### **The Proliferation of Opportunity Hoarding in Educational Organizations**

Tilly (1998) discusses emulation as a central process in sustaining durable inequality. Emulation occurs when organizational models proliferate in ways that allow stratified social relations to spread across time and space. Here his work brings to mind institutional theory (Voss, 2010), building on the ideas of institutional isomorphism across organizations (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Schools across the country have common structures that are accepted as legitimate and help sustain educational institutions and protect them from external scrutiny (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). For instance, the organization of schools into age-based grade-level classrooms, led by teachers with specific educational attainment, who determine students' letter grades are common elements of educational organizations that are as much about signaling their legitimacy to those outside the organization as they are about technical efficiency. In other words, the power of these organizational forms is that they legitimize educational institutions, but they can also institutionalize categorical inequality at the same time through emulation (Tilly, 1998). Multiple organizational forms institutionalize white

advantage and can function as forms of opportunity hoarding. We discuss several of these organizational practices below.

### ***Ability Grouping and Educational Tracking***

Ability grouping or tracking is one common mechanism that ingrains inequality in schools (Lewis & Diamond, 2015; Lewis-McCoy, 2014; Oakes 1985; Lucas, 1999). Most U.S. schools create differentiation across course levels beginning early in students' educational trajectories. Beginning with selective private preschools and gifted and talented programs in the early years; and extending to honors, advanced placement, and International Baccalaureate programs in high schools, such differentiation has proliferated. These distinct educational contexts have become imbued with legitimacy as an accepted (and protected) organizational features of schools.

These course levels also create boundaries between students based on race and other demographic characteristics. This differentiation has increased as the percentage of young people who graduate from high school has increased, largely to create more valuable high school diplomas for middle and upper-class whites and some other ancillary beneficiaries. Through emulation, organizations across the country have copied these organizational structures. As such, they are useful tools for opportunity hoarding groups and individuals who work to protect these spaces for their own students and restrict access to a wider range of students. The combination of their structural legitimacy, and the symbolic and structural power of whiteness, makes challenging or flattening educational tracks extremely difficult because the spaces tend to benefit White students (Lewis & Diamond, 2015) and more recently select members of other groups (Jiménez, 2017). In fact, struggles for educational access are often waged through advocacy for access to these spaces rather than challenging their existence (Lyken-Segosebe & Hinz, 2015) in line with adaptation in Tilly's (1998) framework.

Absent from most discussions of tracking today is any acknowledgment of its racist history. Social Darwinism and the eugenics movement provided the early scientific justification for offering children from different racial/ethnic groups different kinds of educational experiences (Oakes 2006). Legitimized further through the deployment of the new science of IQ testing, placement of some children in low/vocational tracks was seen as merely reflecting underlying differences rather than producing them. Proponents of IQ testing suggested that "Indians, Mexicans and negroes" were destined for manual labor, and should be given instruction that was appropriate for them – "concrete and practical" (Terman, 1916). It was in this period in the decades after the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that the intellectual foundation for the creation of special classes, academic tracks, and separate schools became firmly entrenched in U.S. public school systems.

### ***Standardized Testing***

As suggested in the discussion of IQ tests above, testing is another institutionalized practice that is a key mechanism of opportunity hoarding in its own right. Standardized tests are everywhere in education and have become an increasingly central feature in the educational landscape over the past 20-30 years with the proliferation of accountability-based and neoliberal education reforms (Lipman, 2004). Rooted in racist social Darwinism, these tests have a sorted history with direct ties to white supremacy (Kendi, 2016). Presently, educational tests are key mechanisms that reproduce categorical inequality and facilitate opportunity hoarding. These tests help determine who has access to preferred educational spaces from preschools through post-secondary education. They exist at the boundaries of access to educational spaces across school institutions (e.g. access to magnet programs and higher education) and within them (e.g. access to honors and advanced placement classes in specific schools).

As with educational tracks as organizational forms, testing and test scores have become key measures of individual and organizational legitimacy.<sup>5</sup> Because scores on these exams are correlated with race and class, however, they also often serve as a tool for the reproducing white advantage. We know that the centrality of standardized tests in educational decision-making supports opportunity hoarding through creating a quantifiable rationale for the disproportionate representation of White students in gifted programs, upper-level classes, and competitive colleges and universities. Certification tests are also a tool for excluding teachers of color from the profession helping White teachers monopolize teaching positions in ways that are viewed as legitimate. Cracks in the utility of these tests to maintain white advantage have begun to emerge, with students from some Asian American groups challenging the test score supremacy of White students and gaining access to spaces that whites once monopolized. As this has happened, we have begun to see a backlash by White racial actors who accuse Asian American students of academic bullying (Dhingra, 2020) and claim that Asian American students and their families are engaged in and an unhealthy level of commitment to education (Jiménez, 2017, Dhingra, 2020).

### ***Institutional Legitimacy, Decoupling and Organization Routines***

In the post-Civil Rights Era, dominated by color-blind racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2017), schools and other organizations maintain their legitimacy by appearing to function in race-neutral ways. It is not uncommon, for example, for anti-discrimination statements to accompany job announcements (e.g. we are an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer) or for schools to include equity statements on their district websites. These kinds of organizational practices are important to the perpetuation of white spaces because they provide institutional legitimacy by suggesting that the organization is functioning in fair, race-neutral fashion even as it produces

<sup>5</sup> And, of course, in racialized societies legitimacy is driven (at least in part) by who can confer legitimacy to institutional forms. Here again whiteness as a structural and symbolic position within racial hierarchies has the potential to help perpetuate organizational forms that help sustain white supremacy.

racially disparate hiring practices or educational outcomes (Pager et al. 2009, Quillian et al. 2017).

One way of capturing this dynamic, that cuts across organizational processes, is the decoupling of the stated *purpose* of organizational routines from the *practice* of those routines (Lewis & Diamond, 2015; Diamond & Lewis, 2019). Organizational routines are at the core of how organizations function. For instance, everything from regular class periods and morning announcements to track placement and testing procedures are organizational routines. However, these routines can be usefully divided into two aspects – the ostensive aspect (the ideal of the routine) and the performative aspect or (the practice of the routine) (Feldman & Pentland, 2003; Sherer, 2007). For example, Lewis and Diamond (2015) show the major divergence between the ostensive aspect of disciplinary routines (e.g. the rules as laid out in the school handbook) and their actual enactment in schools' daily functioning. The official or ideal version of the routine legitimizes discipline practices because its requirements are stated in race-neutral terms and tied to universal principles of fairness and equity. However, the practice of discipline reproduces inequality because of the status asymmetries embedded in social interaction. Moreover, this decoupling provides a point of entry through which White parents leverage their structural positions and the symbolic capital of whiteness in ways that protect their children from harsh discipline (Diamond & Lewis, 2019). Similar decoupling manifests in the process of the sorting of students into academic tracks (Lewis, Diamond, & Forman, 2015). This is similar to what Ray (2019: 42) argues in discussing racialized organizations: “Racialized organizations often decouple formal commitments to equity, access, and inclusion from policies and practices that reinforce, or at least do not challenge, existing racial hierarchies.” This decoupling between formal commitments to equity (which become a taken for granted understanding of how school’s function), and actual practices which reproduce disparities, provide cover for opportunity

hoarding through making its outcomes seem fair rather than as an enactment of institutional or categorical power.

Similar processes can be seen in the establishment of diversity offices on college campuses that are void of institutional power and the creation of workplace anti-discrimination legal structures that ultimately reinforce rather than challenge discrimination in practice (Berrey, Nelson, & Nielson, 2017). For instance, in education, Pollock (2008) documents the legal and rhetorical strategies used to deny remedies in hundreds of racial discrimination cases brought before the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights between 1999-2001. The office, which was charged with protecting citizens against racial discrimination, was actually quite adept at denying those claims. In all these cases, decoupling allows for organizational practices that facilitate or enable opportunity hoarding to be seen as fair and legitimate, while also legitimizing the organizations themselves.

### **Opportunity Hoarding and Educational Policy**

Research on opportunity hoarding has begun to examine how educational policy may facilitate opportunity hoarding. While work emerging from educational historians has attended to how various forms of policy contribute to opportunity hoarding (e.g. the formation of suburbs and the creation of district boundaries) there has been a tendency in recent scholarship to focus on the more local and private interest and actions of parents (Lewis-McCoy, 2014; Lewis & Diamond, 2015). Sattin-Bajaj & Roda (2018) provide an important counterpoint to this trend. They argue that there is an interplay between policy design and opportunity hoarding in which the former facilitates the latter. They detail how school choice policy in New York City was designed in ways that facilitate parents' opportunity hoarding behaviors. As they write "ultimately, this research points to the importance of considering how the design of school choice policies may create conditions for racially and economically privileged parents to act in

ways that exacerbate already pervasive disparities in educational access and opportunity by race and class” (Sattin-Bajaj & Roda, 2018: 33).

Similar processes exist inside school districts when attendance maps are drawn and when new school siting decisions are made. In these processes, whites often utilize their structural and symbolic power to create boundaries that establish majority White and more highly resourced spaces with disproportionate concentrations of financial and other resources (Condrón & Roscigno, 2003). Within racially diverse districts, whites often work to get new schools built near where they live and block the construction of schools in predominantly minoritized areas, creating additional burdens of attendance for minoritized youth. Likewise, there is evidence that even when specific school programs are designed to serve students other than White students (e.g. dual language immersion programs) White parents exert inordinate influence on where these programs are located within school districts thus influencing who has access to and benefits from them (Dorner, 2011).

### **Conclusion**

In this paper, we have explored racial dynamics in educational contexts to deepen clarity around two concepts we believe are useful for understanding the functioning of white supremacy historically and today. Building on previous work (Anderson 2015; Moore, 2007), we suggest that a wide range of organizations should be considered “white spaces” and understood as places that serve the interests of White racial subjects and protect white power. Moreover, we argue that opportunity hoarding is an important mechanism for understanding the construction, defense, and expansion of "white spaces" and the durability of racial stratification. Research on opportunity hoarding has effectively highlighted how White racial actors individually and collectively work to maintain their private, and sometimes group, interests. We argue that while this work is helpful, opportunity hoarding in education encompasses (and is aided by) structural

processes beyond schools and taken-for-granted educational practices that are supported and sustained through active and passive mechanisms.

To be more specific, we have argued that the racial opportunity hoarding that exists today has deep historical roots tied to the creation of distinct urban and suburban districts, fragmented attendance boundaries, and differential resource allocations across those boundaries. These processes required the participation of local, state, and federal government, the court system, the real estate industry, and neighborhood associations that used restrictive covenants and terroristic violence to maintain group boundaries and hoard opportunities. Therefore, historic examples highlight that opportunity hoarding functions at multiple levels. We have further demonstrated that as this multilevel process continues, opportunity hoarding is also supported by educational policies that institutionalize white advantage and legitimized by taken-for-granted educational policies and practices that further cement white supremacy in educational organizations.

While we have focused on educational organizations here, we agree with Tilly (1998) that opportunity hoarding continues functions outside schools (in fact, opportunity hoarding inside educational institutions benefits from its practice in other organizational spaces). For instance, in electoral politics, the suppression of minoritized voters' participation has been a common mode of white opportunity hoarding and has become a key focus of the Republican Party. We have also seen how the tools of antidiscrimination, in a broad range of organizations, have been turned on their heads to undermine rather than facilitate racial justice (Berrey, Nelson, & Nielson, 2017). Future research should incorporate the interplay between these multiple levels through close examination of the mechanisms that support historic and contemporary opportunity hoarding. Expecting these practices, rather than being surprised by them, should help us build more theoretically and empirically robust studies, disrupt white supremacy and opportunity hoarding, and work for racial justice in more proactive and effective ways.



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