

“TAKING CARE OF OUR OWN”: PAROCHIALISM, PRIDE OF PLACE, AND THE DRIVE TO DIVERSIFY TEACHING

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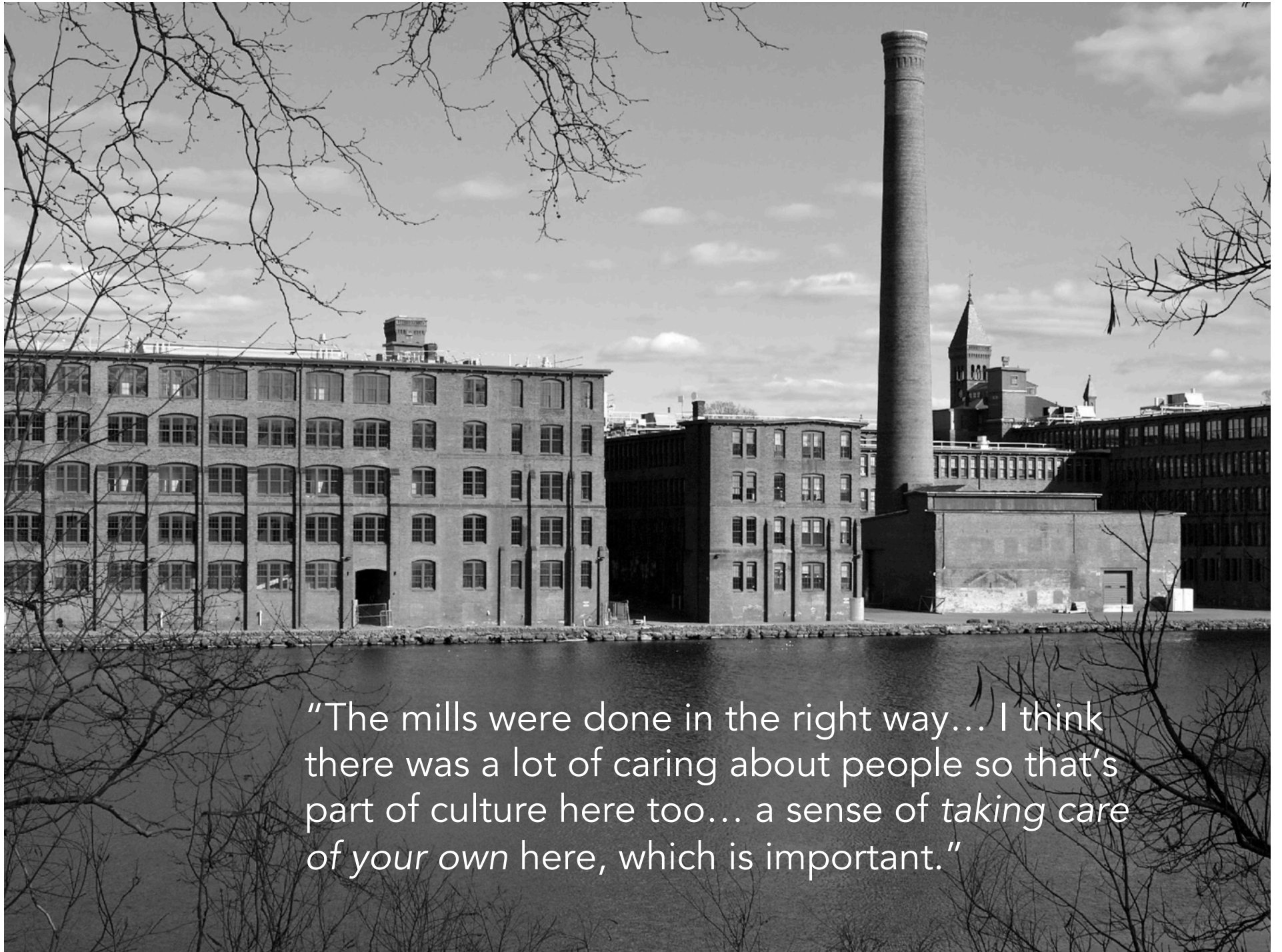
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American Educational Research Association — April 5, 2019

THE RESEARCH SITE

- ▶ Middlesex (a pseudonym)
 - ▶ Small urban community in the northeastern US
 - ▶ In 19th century, manufacturing hub with a sizable immigrant population (Irish, Italian, French Canadian)
 - ▶ Present day, emerging biotech hub with growing immigrant population (28% born outside US)
- ▶ Middlesex Public Schools
 - ▶ 1 HS, 2 MS, 6 ES, 1 preK-12 dual language program
 - ▶ 6,000 students (58.3 percent students of color)
 - ▶ 500 teachers (90.7 percent white)





"The mills were done in the right way... I think there was a lot of caring about people so that's part of culture here too... a sense of *taking care of your own* here, which is important."

AGENDA

- ▶ Background
- ▶ Conceptual Framework
- ▶ Methods
- ▶ Findings
- ▶ Implications

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BACKGROUND

THE BENEFITS OF ETHNORACIAL TEACHER DIVERSITY

- ▶ Despite rapidly diversifying student body, teacher workforce in US is still overwhelmingly White (Jupp & Lensmire; Kohli, 2016; NCES, 2016)
- ▶ Benefits of teacher diversity for students:
 - ▶ For Black students, having a Black teacher associated with increased learning (Dee, 2004; Eddy & Easton-Brooks, 2011) and decreased exclusionary discipline (Lindsay & Hart, 2017)
 - ▶ For Latinx students, having a Latinx teacher increases learning (Lopez, 2016) & opportunities to learn in classrooms that attend to cultural and linguistic diversity (Lara & Fránquiz, 2014; Monzo & Rueda, 2001; Newcomer, 2017; Singh, 2018).
 - ▶ All students, including White students, prefer being taught by a teacher of color vs. a White teacher (Cherng & Halpin, 2016).
- ▶ Greater teacher diversity also benefits teachers of color by reducing isolation (Bristol & Shirrell, 2018)



BONDING AND BRIDGING SOCIAL CAPITAL

- ▶ *Social capital* defined the accumulation of resources (real or potential) linked to one's membership in a particular group (Bourdieu, 1986)
 - ▶ *Bridging social capital*, outward-looking and forging ties across groups
 - ▶ *Bonding social capital*, inward-looking and fortifying ties within groups
- ▶ Potentially corrosive effects of bonding social capital in pluralistic contexts (Hochschild, 2016; Putnam, 2000, 2007; Rhodes, 2012)



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are school administrators' and teacher leaders' beliefs about increasing the ethnoracial diversity of teachers in their building?
2. How, if at all, do these beliefs vary based on stakeholders' resident status (i.e., whether they attended the district schools as students)?



SINGLE CRITICAL CASE-STUDY

- ▶ Critical case studies tied to well-articulated theories seek to extend or challenge them in some way (Yin, 2004)
- ▶ Data Collection: semi-structured interviews with purposively constructed sample across three schools and central office (n=67), in person and over the phone
- ▶ Data Analysis: multiple rounds descriptive coding (Saldaña, 2013)

Ethnoracial Identity	Administrator	Teacher	Student
Person of Color (n=34)	3	15	16
White (n=33)	11	14	8



THE DRIVE TO DIVERSIFY TEACHING

- ▶ A widespread belief that a more diverse teaching force benefits students — a belief shared across grade levels, stakeholder groups

“Our school is so diverse and we -- these students do not have teachers that look like they do and I think it has to be one of our top priorities. It hasn't been for a long time and it needs to be.”

— HS Teacher (White)

“We owe it to our students to model that we think [diversity] is important and right now we send a very different message.”

— HS Teacher (POC)

“Kids... need to see ...somebody who either looks like them, sounds like them, has a shared experience to them or something. Because it's very strange if you are a poor student of color who may not know English and everybody in your school is white, Catholic and upper- middle class. I mean I don't know how that would be a good thing.”

— Elementary Administrator (White)



THE DRIVE TO DIVERSIFY TEACHING

- ▶ Resistance to efforts to diversify teaching tended to center on hiring “quality” over “quotas”

“When we make a hire of diversity, that candidate has to stand up against all the other candidates on their merit... We want the best teacher, period. I don’t care if they’re purple.”

-- Elementary Admin (White)

“There are some rules that a certain percentage of their new employees must be minority. I don’t agree on that, it really is like – I think it’s when you hire people it’s really you need to make a judgment on that person’s personality skills, by their experience, not on what he looks like, what race or which place he comes from.”

-- HS Teacher (POC)



PAROCHIALISM

- ▶ *Parochialism*, a narrow interest in one's local sphere, including a strong attachment to one's hometown or neighborhood
- ▶ "Townies" vs. "Breezers": a frame that merges attachment to place with an exclusion of outsiders

"Middlesex is a very parochial city. When I first started to work here, I went out for coffee with a guy who had just retired after 35 years ...And I actually know him, he was one of my wife's cousins... I remember looking across at him and I said, 'You know what, Walter, keep in mind that you're a *Breezer*, as I am, and always will be' ...Walter Miller, who moved and married a Middlesex girl, as I did, lived here – Walter lived here for 40-plus years, I lived here for 30 years -- but with all of those Middlesex roots we're really not Middlesex guys. And never will be. And that's kind of a constraining parameter in a city like Middlesex."

— District Administrator (White, Breezer)



PAROCHIALISM IN PRACTICE

- ▶ The power of social networks
 - ▶ Of 160 high school staff, an estimated 1/3 were alumni
 - ▶ Of 5 high school administrators, 4 were alumni

"I got out of college, I came back and met with my old history teacher who then had become a director... We had just an informal conversation in his office. I brought my resume and cover letter, you know fresh out of college, right, and all that kind of stuff and presented it to him and he said, 'Okay, this is great. There's no job that's here, no one's retiring. So go enjoy grad school and come back and see me in the spring when we have some retirees popping up,' so."

— HS Administrator (White, Townie)

"My old soccer coach was the principal... He knew me since I was 10-years-old. So he knew, you know, the kind of person that I was so you know. And he was a mentor to me so I was like, 'Anything I can do to help, you know give back to the city, I will,' because I grew up here."

— HS Staff (POC, Townie)



PAROCHIALISM AS A BARRIER

- ▶ POC (and Breezers) identified the Townie social network as hiring capital, which further contributed to the homogeneous workforce and attitudes towards diversity hiring.

"I do think that for a while this was a school [that] at one point a large percentage of the faculty had gone to the school and grown up in the city. And I think that over the years different administrations like depending on the superintendent have sort of tried to steer a clear of ...hiring Middlesex graduates, because I think a lot of the Middlesex high graduates who are coming back to teach here were primarily white."

-- HS Teacher (POC, Breezer)

"It used to be that like being from Middlesex was like an asset to you if you wanted to work in the school district. And there is still plenty of Middlesex graduates who come back and work in the district, like I think any place would want that, that would want their own to come back like home. But I think that there might have also been this realization that it may -- for, like, a certain uniform type of person or mindset within the teaching faculty was no longer reflective of a very quickly changing student body over the past like decade or so."

— HS Teacher (POC, Breezer)



FINDINGS

OUR DISTRICT IS VERY, VERY WHITE IN TERMS OF STAFF. AND IT MAKES ME WONDER LIKE, YOU KNOW, WHEN I GOT MY JOB WAS, DID SOMEBODY OF COLOR GET PASSED OVER? WERE THERE APPLICANTS FOR MY JOB 12 YEARS AGO THAT WERE OF COLOR? BECAUSE I GREW UP IN MIDDLESEX, BECAUSE I'M A TOWNIE, I WONDER THAT.

High School Administrator (White, Townie)

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PRIDE OF PLACE

- ▶ Justification for the bonding social capital advantaging Townies in hiring came across as a sense of obligation, “giving back”
- ▶ But the sense of responsibility differed by ethnoracial lines: responsibility to the town vs. to students of color

“I think it was more of a pride of having people that went to school here who want to come back and to continue to be a part of this community. I mean, that was something I was very prideful about. I mean the staff in here, yeah, we’re all white and no one thought much, I guess, about it, but the fact that the majority of the staff had been graduates here was something that people were very proud of.

— HS Administrator (White, Townie)

“I graduated here in ‘85. And when I was here, there was like sprinkles of people of color – sprinkles, you see what I mean? ...And when I came back I was like, ‘Oh my gosh.’ I was like my jaw went clang, I said is this really the same? ...I hated high school, you know, and so when I came back in... it was amazing the diversity... And it actually made me say I made the right choice, because I said I can work with these kids.”

— HS Staff (POC, Townie)



PRIDE OF PLACE

- ▶ Among some White Townies, in addition to their attachment to place, an acknowledgment of the changing community and its implications for the future

“Some people are thinking well, we’re hiring minority people who are unqualified and uncertified... [But] if they don't like these efforts to educate the teachers about diversity, about culture, then it might be time to move on, because we’re not going back as a school. We’re going to be a diverse school. And if that's not what you signed up for... it just might be time for you to go, because that's who we are... We’re not going to be back to the 1980s, we’re not that anymore.”

— HS Principal (White, Townie)



THE DRIVE TO DIVERSIFY TEACHING

▶ Hiring

- ▶ Equity Team at high school, emerging consensus within that group that diverse hiring is a priority
- ▶ Gradual progress toward hiring more diverse staff

▶ Support

- ▶ Building awareness about cultural proficiency through district- and school-based PD
- ▶ Creating informal and formal “affinity spaces” for POC



GATEKEEPERS

- ▶ Progress remained tethered to (and filtered through) gatekeepers
- ▶ As a result, concern — especially among POC — that progress was precarious

“We’re going to hire a high school principal next year... I will bet that we will have more candidates from Middlesex for that position than we have candidates from any other community. And I will assure you that [the superintendent’s] phone will be ringing off the hook from ‘real Middlesex people’ giving him their impression”

— District Administrator (Breezer, White)

“The only person who ever gave [the Equity Team] any clout is the outgoing principal.”

— HS Teacher (Breezer, POC)



THE DRIVE TO DIVERSIFY TEACHING

- ▶ For Research
 - ▶ More research on White teachers and administrators who act as gatekeepers for teacher diversity
- ▶ For Policy
 - ▶ Use of a community agreed-upon rubric for hiring that accounts for diverse perspectives and can reduce bias
- ▶ For Practice
 - ▶ Expansion of affinity group supports for current and future teachers of color



THANK YOU

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