

**UNMASKING WHITE DELUSION: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS FOR THE ORGANIZATION****Stacey L. Morin,**  **ORCID:** <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2935-8332>

Doctoral Candidate, Marymount University, Business Innovation Leadership and Technology, USA

**Jennifer R. Bishop,**  **ORCID:** <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2323-2942>

PhD, Case Western Reserve University, USA

**Corresponding author:** Stacey L. Morin, E-mail: [s0m76756@marymount.edu](mailto:s0m76756@marymount.edu)**Type of manuscript:** review article

**Abstract:** *The article summarizes the arguments of the social debate regarding white delusion in the organization. This article delves into the phenomenon of white delusion, a term coined by the author, Stacey Morin, which signifies a lack of awareness and denial of systemic racial disparities in marginalized communities. The analysis focuses on Morin's and Bishop's conceptualization of white delusion in the organization and the subsequent development of the Unmasking White Delusion: DEI model. This model, grounded in the framework of critical race theory, explores the denial, evaluation, and implementation phases, which aim to address and eliminate white delusion within organizations. The research contributes to the ongoing dialogue surrounding diversity and inclusion and addresses a gap in knowledge. The systematization of literary sources and approaches to solving the problem indicates that the white delusion is harmful to the organization. The urgency of addressing this problem stems from the absence of an inclusive and diverse culture, leading to diminished productivity and innovation. Our research methodology followed a logical sequence, beginning with a systematic literature review that critically analyzed the issue of white delusion within the organizational context. The objective was to unravel its complexities and comprehend how it impedes progress toward a more inclusive and equitable culture. The literature was critically analyzed based on concepts aligned with each phase of the Unmasking White Delusion: DEI model within the overarching framework of critical race theory. We contend that adopting the Unmasking White Delusion DEI model will play a pivotal role in mitigating the adverse effects of white delusion within the organization. The results from our thorough analysis of the literature review spurred the development of the Unmasking White Delusion: DEI model. This model serves as a visual guide and strategic tool for organizations seeking to eradicate white delusion and cultivate a culture of psychological safety for minority employees. By applying this model and integrating the Critical Race Theory framework, organizations can effectively confront white delusion through a comprehensive three-phase approach—denial, evaluation, and implementation. This entails organizations recognizing, assessing, and translating insights into actionable strategies, fostering a more inclusive and equitable workplace. The main conclusions of the research highlight the multifaceted process of eliminating white delusion in the organization.*

**Keywords:** denial, evaluation, implementation (DEI model), bias, colorblindness, critical race theory, diversity, equity, inclusion, racism, white delusion.

**JEL Classification:** D63, J15, J71, M14.**Received:** 22.10.2023**Accepted:** 12.12.2023**Published:** 31.12.2023**Funding:** There is no funding for this research.**Publisher:** Academic Research and Publishing UG, Germany.**Founder:** Academic Research and Publishing UG, Germany; Sumy State University, Ukraine.**Cite as:** Morin, S.L. & Bishop J.R. (2023). Unmasking White Delusion: A Critical Analysis for the Organization. *SocioEconomic Challenges*, 7(4), 156-174. [https://doi.org/10.61093/sec.7\(4\).156-174.2023](https://doi.org/10.61093/sec.7(4).156-174.2023).

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## Introduction

The article aims to address and eliminate white delusion within the organization. As a result, the research will examine the consequences of white delusion by reviewing the relevant literature. The objective is to unravel the complexities and comprehend how white delusion impedes progress toward a more inclusive and equitable culture (Ray, 2019). The research objective is to identify the concepts that align with each phase of the Unmasking White Delusion: DEI model and apply the overarching framework of critical race theory.

The white race dominates organizations in the United States. According to Ray (2019), organizations are not race-neutral. Scholars, managers, journalists, and many others routinely recognize black capitalism, black banks, and ethnic restaurants, yet we think of banks that are run by and serve whites simply as banks and white corporations simply as businesses. This way of thinking reinforces the fallacy that only people of color have race and obscures the broad, everyday dynamics of white racial power within organizations (Ray, 2019).

The history of racism in America is intricate and deeply rooted, shaping the social, economic, and political fabric of the nation (Horowitz et al., 2019). A prevalent lack of diversity in many organizations often manifests in a largely white composition, and a significant obstacle lies in widespread ignorance or denial that this is a problem. Some firms may fail to see the problem because they believe their existing makeup is only a reflection of the available talent pool (Horowitz et al., 2019). Understanding this context is vital for recognizing organizations for what they are: long-standing social structures designed and controlled to promote whiteness (Gassam Asare, 2023). Only then can leaders begin to look at race differently, not as a temporary problem to address or a box to check but as a fundamental aspect of what it means to be a firm in America.

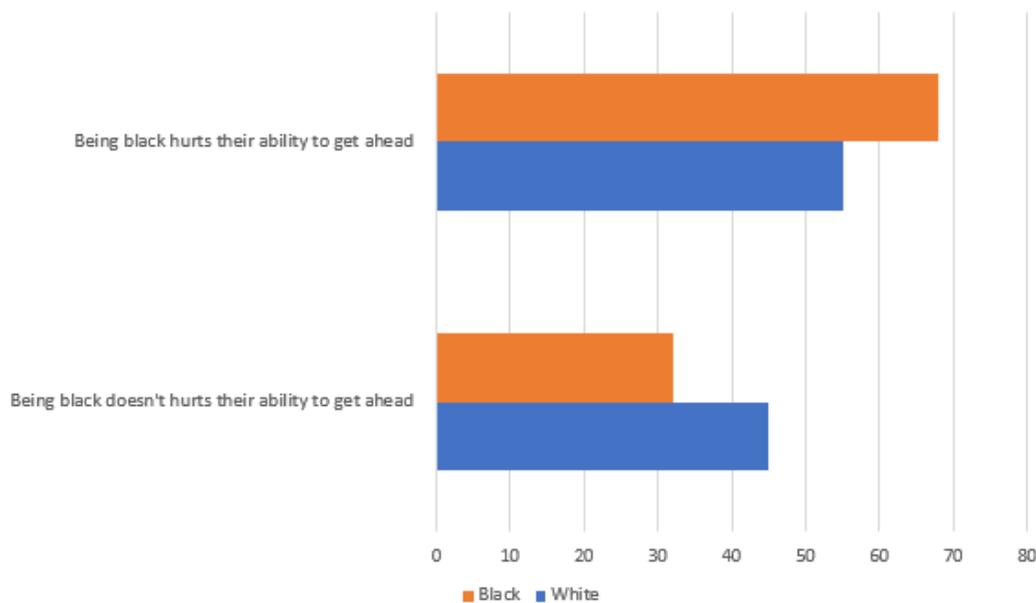
Racism has been entrenched in the country's foundation since the establishment of slavery, which served as a catalyst for racial prejudice (Gordon-Reed, 2020). A persistent challenge remains in acknowledging and addressing more systemic manifestations of racism (Doane & Bonilla-Silva, 2003). In the book *Stamped from the Beginning* by Kendi (2017), the notion of blackness in relation to race has been in existence since 1444, marking the beginning of the Portuguese importation of African slaves. Prince Henry of Portugal turned to enslaving Africans over Slavic people from Eastern Europe because it was harder for black people to blend in and flee once they left Africa (Kendi, 2023). Prince Henry didn't want to admit that he was violently and brutally enslaving African people to make money, so he dispatched a royal chronicler by the name of Gomes Zurara to write his story (Kendi, 2017). Gomes Zurara justified his slave trading by stating that Prince Henry was doing it to save souls and that these people in Africa were inferior and were beastlike (Sweet, 1997). According to Sweet (1997), African slaves became associated with blackness, which equaled ugliness and servitude. The concept of blackness has historically and continues to have negative connotations. The notion of whiteness in relation to race was not introduced until the 1600s and was commonly linked to positive attributes, beauty, and superiority. The consequences of this phenomenon entail the denial of the existence of individuals of African descent. Since the initial introduction of enslaved Africans during the early 17th century, racism has become deeply embedded throughout American society, serving as a rationale for the cruel exploitation and dehumanization of those of black descent (Doane & Bonilla-Silva, 2003). Even with the passage of the Constitution in 1787, it resulted in the perpetuation of racism through the implementation of the Three-Fifths Compromise, which entailed the counting of enslaved individuals as three-fifths of a person for the purpose of representation, reinforcing their marginalized position within society (Gordon-Reed, 2020). Despite the official abolition of slavery in 1865, the legacy of racism persisted through the era of Jim Crow laws, which enforced racial segregation and denied basic civil rights to black Americans (Doane & Bonilla-Silva, 2003).

The consequences of this historical context are attributed to the current state and prevalence of white delusion in organizations today and their ineffectiveness in truly combating diversity, equity, and inclusion. White delusion is further exemplified and acknowledged through the idealized figure of Abraham Lincoln. Despite the fact that his motivation was primarily based on self-interest and economic considerations, he was romanticized for his role in abolishing slavery (Kendi, 2017). He asserted the superiority of whites and the inferiority of blacks, a mindset that persists today, contributing to the phenomenon of white delusion.

During the mid-20th century, the civil rights movement emerged as a force that confronted deeply ingrained

discriminatory practices, ultimately resulting in significant legal reforms (Delgado, 2013). Nevertheless, racism continues to manifest in various forms today, with systemic inequalities persisting in areas such as criminal justice, economic opportunities, education, healthcare, and organizations, highlighting the ongoing struggle to achieve racial equality in the United States (Horowitz et al., 2019).

The historical roots of racism, as exemplified by discriminatory ideologies and policies, continue to cast a long shadow into the present and serve as a crucial backdrop for current studies on the persistence and evolution of racial dynamics. The nationally representative survey of 6,637 adults was conducted online in 2019 using the Pew Research Center's American Trends Panel (Horowitz et al., 2019). According to the survey by the Pew Research Center, a significant proportion of individuals identifying as white, specifically 45%, hold the belief that an individual's race of being black does not have a detrimental impact on their prospects for advancement, as stated in Figure 1. According to Horowitz (2019), whites attribute family instability and a lack of a good role model as significant barriers faced by the African American community, as opposed to racism.



**Figure 1. Blacks and Whites differ in assessments of why it is harder for Blacks to get ahead**

Source: Compiled by the authors based on (Horowitz et al., 2019).

Telhami & Rouse (2022) conducted a nationwide poll at the University of Maryland, employing an internet survey administered to a sample of individuals selected from Nielsen Scarborough's probability-based panel. The sample was designed to be nationally representative. The national survey was undertaken with a sample size of 2,091 participants, and it had a margin of error of +/- 2.14%. Telhami and Rouse (2022) discovered that a significant proportion of white Americans hold the belief that there are no instances of discrimination against minority groups. This line of reasoning brings us to the topic of white delusion within the labor market.

In the ever-evolving landscape of contemporary organizations, the pursuit of diversity, equity, and inclusion has emerged as a cornerstone for organizational success (Roberson, 2019). As companies strive to create environments that foster collaboration, innovation, and productivity, it becomes imperative to scrutinize and address challenges that may hinder the realization of these aspirations (Jones et al., 2021). One such challenge is the phenomenon described as white delusion, which was derived from a qualitative research study conducted through focus group sessions (Morin, 2023a). Morin (2023a) coined the term white delusion, which is defined as the exhibit of a lack of awareness or denial of systemic disparities and their consequences based on race in marginalized communities. It often manifests as a reluctance to recognize the systemic advantages conferred by a history of racial dominance. This delusion leads individuals to deny the existence of racial inequalities and systemic racism, attributing disparities to individual merit rather than acknowledging the deeply rooted historical

and structural factors that contribute to such disparities. White delusion perpetuates a narrow and incomplete understanding of race, which hinders progress in the organization.

Our research embarks on a critical analysis of white delusion within the organizational context, aiming to unmask the complexities surrounding this phenomenon. As organizations increasingly recognize the importance of cultivating inclusive cultures, understanding and navigating the intricacies of white delusion becomes an essential step toward achieving genuine diversity and fostering an organization where all individuals feel valued and respected (Bell, 2020). Through a comprehensive examination of its manifestations within the organization, we will explore how these perceptions may manifest as biases, stereotypes, or systemic issues, hindering progress toward a more inclusive and equitable organizational culture (Doane & Bonilla-Silva, 2003).

As we move forward, the focus will shift to proactive measures and strategies for organizations to effectively address and eliminate white delusion. This research presents a comprehensive framework utilizing the unmasking white delusion: DEI model, integrating the principles of critical race theory (CRT) (Morin, 2023a, 2023c). The DEI model, an acronym for denial, evaluation, and implementation, refers to a framework used to address and analyze white delusion in the organization. By unmasking the intricacies of white delusion, we aim to contribute to the ongoing dialogue surrounding diversity and inclusion, fostering organizations that reflect the richness of human experiences and perspectives (SHRM, 2021). The research fits together in relation to the overall topic of unmasking white delusion in the organization.

### **Problem Statement**

Amid the collective push for more inclusive organizations, a pervasive challenge continues to obstruct progress: the phenomenon commonly known as white delusion (Morin, 2023a). This term encapsulates the presence of erroneous or unfounded beliefs held by individuals or groups, specifically pertaining to race, which, if left unaddressed, can undermine genuine efforts to create diverse and inclusive organizational cultures (Peretz et al., 2015). Findings from a 2020 survey by the Society for Human Resource Management reveal that a significant proportion of white American workers experienced discomfort discussing racial issues in the workplace, with workers reporting their organizations discouraged conversations on racism and social justice (Somers, 2020). The problem at hand lies in the potential adverse impact of white delusion on organizational dynamics. The existing literature underscores the urgent need to address this problem, as white delusion can impede the organization's ability to adapt and thrive in an increasingly diverse world, as it fosters an environment resistant to change and blind to the advantages that come with embracing diversity (Roberson, 2019). This article aims to close the gap between scholars and practitioners, with the research aligning cohesively within the broader theme of eradicating white delusion within organizational settings.

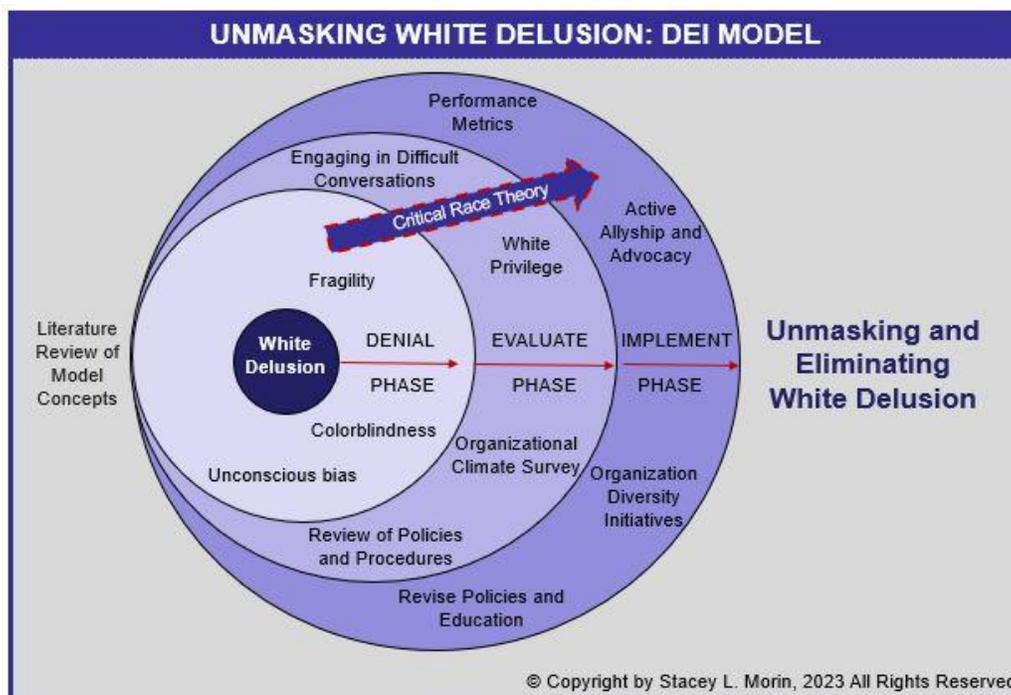
### **Significance of the Article**

The significance of the article lies in its capacity to address a pervasive yet understudied challenge that threatens the foundations of genuine inclusivity within the organization. It emphasizes the need for a paradigm shift in how we think about race (Horowitz et al., 2019). The research conducted on unmasking white delusion helps to promote equity and inclusion in the organization, holding considerable importance as it illuminates the potential reinforcement of biases, particularly those related to race. The insights derived from this article are not only important for researchers and practitioners in the field but also hold profound implications for organizations committed to cultivating diverse, equitable, and inclusive organizations.

### **Research Methodology**

As its primary aim, the methodology applies a literature review strategy and an overarching theory to the DEI model in Figure 2 (Morin, 2023c). Morin (2023c) developed the unmasking white delusion: DEI model. The overarching theory that aligns with the unmasking white delusion: DEI model is CRT, which is rooted in white individuals' refusal to acknowledge the existence of race and racism within the organization. We chose CRT as an overarching theory because it offers a comprehensive lens to analyze how race intersects with various socio-legal structures, providing a robust foundation for understanding and addressing systemic inequalities in the organization (Delgado et al., 2017). This article explores those dynamics within the framework of existing social

science literature (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Our literature review strategy included a comprehensive analysis of existing literature that aligned with the concepts that led to the development of the unmasking white delusion: DEI model (Morin, 2023a, 2023c; Snyder, 2019). We employed a thorough research strategy to guarantee that the literature acquired is relevant to the study. The strategy includes utilizing search engines from Marymount University and Case Western Reserve University Library. The strategy includes utilizing databases from ABI/INFORM Collection, Business Source Complete (EBSCO Host), Google Scholar, JSTOR, and ProQuest Research Library. The keywords used were bias, colorblindness, critical race theory, diversity, equity, inclusion, and racism. The articles played a pivotal role in synthesizing and critically evaluating the current body of knowledge, identifying gaps, controversies, and areas in need of further exploration (Creswell, 2012). This article will bridge the gap in rhetoric about organizational diversity by making it a tangible reality by applying the unmasking white delusion: DEI model (Morin, 2023a, 2023c). The research fits together in relation to the overall topic of unmasking and eliminating white delusion in the organization. The review is both critical and constructive, providing a nuanced understanding of the subject matter and offering valuable recommendations for future research directions (Snyder, 2019). Our literature review analysis approach provided the ability to guide us toward fruitful areas of investigation and offered a holistic perspective on the state of knowledge, cultivating a deeper understanding of the complexity of inequities in organizations based on race. A literature review provides a usable example that others can emulate as a learning resource (Creswell, 2012). This article provides a road map for management to review and evaluate the existing body of research pertaining to white delusion.



**Figure 2. Unmasking White Delusion: DEI Model**

Source Developed by Morin (2023c).

### Critical Race Theory

Legal scholars and civil rights advocates, including figures like Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, Kimberlé Crenshaw, and Richard Delgado, assert that CRT emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s, a period marked by the waning influence of civil rights movements (Delgado et al., 2017). As an interdisciplinary scholarly movement, CRT seeks to critically scrutinize the legal system's role in racial matters while challenging prevailing approaches to achieving racial equity (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). CRT proponents argue against attributing racism solely to

individual prejudice, emphasizing its deep-seated presence in legal systems, policies, and governmental regulations (Delgado, 2013). They contend that the legal system lacks neutrality, exhibiting a bias that favors individuals from white racial backgrounds while concurrently placing those from racial minority groups at a disadvantage (Yosso & Solorzano, 2007). Furthermore, CRT scholars argue that legislation has proven ineffective in safeguarding the rights of individuals belonging to racial minority groups.

### **Application of CRT**

Our research introduces a comprehensive framework that leverages the unmasking white delusion: DEI model in conjunction with CRT to facilitate the transition across the three distinct phases: denial, evaluation, and implementation (Morin, 2023c).

#### **Phase I: Denial**

The denial phase of the unmasking white delusion: DEI model involves a refusal to acknowledge the existence and impact of systemic racism and racial inequalities associated with being white (Morin, 2023c). Individuals in this phase may dismiss or downplay the pervasive nature of racial discrimination in the organization (Cox, 2019). The denial phase of white delusion represents a significant barrier to encouraging meaningful dialogue and implementing effective solutions for achieving racial equity and justice.

Applying CRT to the denial phase of addressing white delusion involves an examination of how historical and institutional structures perpetuate racial inequalities (Solorzano, 1997). CRT asserts that racism is not merely an individual problem but a systemic issue embedded in organizational structures and policies (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). By employing CRT, individuals in the denial phase are encouraged to scrutinize the ways in which societal norms, laws, and institutions contribute to racial disparities (Lynn & Dixon, 2013). Moving from the denial phase of white delusion requires a willingness to engage in introspection, acknowledgement, understanding, and engagement with issues of race.

#### **Phase II: Evaluation**

The evaluation phase of the unmasking white delusion: DEI model involves an examination of the underlying beliefs and attitudes that contribute to the perpetuation of false or distorted perceptions among individuals within the white community (Morin, 2023c). It requires an introspective exploration of how these delusions may manifest in the organization (Cox, 2019). The evaluation phase of white delusion requires the organization to actively seek out diverse perspectives, recognize privilege and systemic inequalities, and understand the complexities surrounding race and identity.

Applying CRT to the evaluation phase of addressing white delusion involves a nuanced examination of how race intersects with various aspects of social, economic, and political structures (Solorzano, 1997). CRT encourages a comprehensive analysis of historical and institutional contexts in the organization that have perpetuated white delusion, emphasizing the interconnectedness of power and systemic racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Transitioning from the evaluation phase of white delusion to the next phase involves continuous assessment, addressing privilege, and challenging the distorted narratives that may have been internalized in the organization.

#### **Phase III: Implementation**

The implementation phase of the unmasking white delusion: DEI model encompasses the active execution of measures aimed at confronting racial beliefs that perpetuate systemic racism in the organization (Morin, 2023c). Initiatives promoting cultural awareness and sensitivity should be integrated into the organization. Organizational changes, such as diversity and inclusion policies, can address structural barriers and promote equitable opportunities.

Applying CRT to the implementation phase of fighting white delusion encompasses the active execution of measures aimed at confronting systemic racism in the organization (Solorzano, 1997). CRT encourages a proactive approach, urging leadership to incorporate anti-racist frameworks into the organization's policies and education (Lynn & Dixon, 2013).

## Unmasking and Eliminating White Delusion

Transitioning from the implementation phase to the final phase of unmasking and eliminating white delusion involves a continuous commitment to sustained change and evolution. The commitment to long-term cultural transformation, which promotes an inclusive and equitable environment that actively challenges and eliminates white delusion on organizational levels, marks the final phase.

### Literature Review

This section offers a comprehensive analysis and review of the literature and research on white delusion in organizations. The purpose of this literature review is to present an overview of the themes from each phase (Creswell, 2012). The themes identified in this research were developed based on the literature review. The themes in the denial phase: colorblindness, fragility, and unconscious bias; in the evaluation phase: engaging in difficult conversations, an organizational climate survey, a review of policy and procedures, and white privilege; and in the implementation phase: active allyship and advocacy, organization diversity initiatives, performance metrics, and revising policy and education. The following sections discuss the themes in each phase.

### Denial Phase

The issue of racism in the organization is a complex phenomenon that has been widely acknowledged (Crenshaw, 2019). A distinct area of concern within this broader context is the phenomenon of white individuals denying the existence of racism in professional settings (Doane & Bonilla-Silva, 2003). This literature review aims to synthesize existing research on the topic, exploring the underlying reasons, consequences, and potential strategies for addressing the denial of racism in the organization leading to white delusion. The next sections will provide a comprehensive overview of the aspects of the denial phase: colorblindness, fragility, and unconscious bias.

### Colorblindness

Colorblindness is defined as an individual who claims to ignore others' skin color completely and, therefore, believes they are treating all racial groups equally (McKay, 2019). However, colorblindness reinforces racism by ignoring the systemic and individual biases that disadvantage people of color (Lipsitz, 2019). It is a discriminatory practice by allowing people to ignore circumstances that cause racial disparities. The colorblind racism definition also implies that people who hold this view believe all racial groups enjoy the same treatment and opportunities within their society (Doane & Bonilla-Silva, 2003).

Colorblind ideology can be broken into two categories: color evasion and power evasion (Crenshaw, 2019). According to McKay (2019), individuals engage in the practice of color evasion when they deny racism by emphasizing similarities across racial groups. McKay (2019) further states that individuals who engage in power evasion ideology deny systemic racism and emphasize equal opportunities available to all racial groups. However, both of these forms of colorblind racism share one major commonality: they each allow colorblind racists to subscribe to the idea that social and economic disparities between racial groups exist as a result of a cultural deficiency in one group (Crenshaw, 2019). The literature focuses on colorblindness in the organization, and the statistical evidence presented in the following sections supports our argument that it negatively impacts the workplace.

Plaut et al. (2009) conducted a comprehensive analysis of the survey responses provided by 3,758 employees. The survey aimed to assess the diversity climate within a prominent healthcare institution, focusing on individuals' perceptions, emotions, and approaches towards diversity-related matters (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The researchers found that white employees' endorsement of color blindness predicted decreases in psychological engagement among minority employees and increases in minority employees' belief that the organizational climate was racially biased, as shown in Table 1 (Plaut et al., 2009).

**Table 1. Means and Correlations for Whites' and Minorities'**

Variable	Mean Score	Correlations			
		Whites' multiculturalism	Whites' color blindness	Minorities' psychological engagement	Minorities' perception of bias
Whites' multiculturalism	4.02 (0.22)	-	-.66***	-.57*	-.70**
Whites' color blindness	2.64 (0.28)		-	-.54*	.54*
Minorities' psychological engagement	4.56 (0.18)			-	-.76***
Minorities' perception of bias	2.23 (0.46)				-

\*p < .05, prep > .878. \*\*p < .01, prep > .950. \*\*\*p < .001, prep > .986. Standard deviations are given in parentheses.

Source: Analysis conducted for the organizations by Victoria Plaut and Kecia Thomas (Plaut et al., 2009).

Another experimental study by Harvard Business School's Michael I. Norton and colleagues illustrates that trying to overcome prejudice by ignoring race is an ineffective strategy and, in many cases, only serves to perpetuate racial bias (Nobel, 2013). Norton and several colleagues documented this phenomenon in a study that described color blindness. They conducted an experiment in which white participants engaged in a two-person guessing game designed, unbeknownst to them, to measure their tendencies toward attempted racial colorblindness (Nobel, 2013). According to Nobel (2013), every individual involved in the study received a collection of photographs, comprising a total of 32 distinct facial images, 50% each black and white, with a co-participant positioned in front of the participant, engaging in a visual examination of a photo. Two independent coders were used to observe films of the sessions with the sound muted. The white individuals who engaged in the experiment of simulating colorblindness exhibited a notable lack of friendliness and demonstrated a tendency to avoid making eye contact with their black counterparts (Nobel, 2013). Upon post-experiment interviews, it was shown that black partners reported a higher perception of racial bias among participants who deliberately refrained from mentioning race (Nobel, 2013).

We conclude that colorblindness, as an approach to race relations, can inadvertently contribute to white delusion by minimizing the significance of racial disparities and overlooking the historical and systemic factors that have perpetuated inequality (Crenshaw, 2019). The notion of colorblindness suggests that ignoring racial differences is the key to achieving equality, but it leads to the neglect of ongoing racial injustices and disparities (Nobel, 2013). By refusing to acknowledge the unique challenges faced by marginalized communities, particularly people of color, colorblindness contributes to a distorted perspective that can reinforce racism (McKay, 2019). White delusion prevents meaningful conversations about discrimination and the need for systemic change, ultimately hindering progress toward a more just and equitable society.

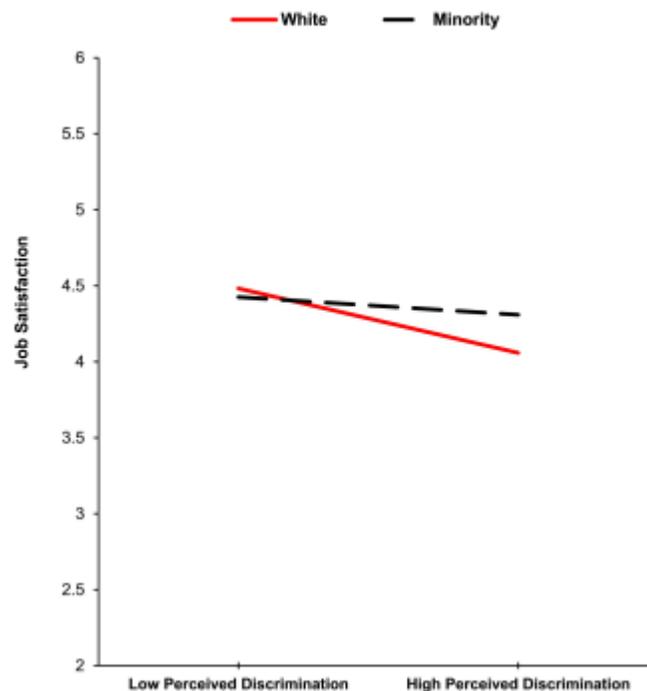
### **Fragility**

In today's increasingly interconnected world, conversations about race and racism have become more prevalent than ever before (DiAngelo, 2018). According to DiAngelo (2018), white fragility is defined as a condition wherein individuals of white racial background exhibit defensive reactions, anger, or emotional withdrawal when confronted with their own privilege or participation in racist behaviors. She argues that this fragility is a reaction to the discomfort of being challenged about one's identity and that it can prevent white people from engaging in meaningful conversations about race. These behaviors, in turn, function to reinstate white racial equilibrium (Resane, 2021). This discomfort stems from a phenomenon known as white fragility, a term coined by educator and anti-racism activist Robin DiAngelo (DiAngelo, 2018).

The underlying causes of fragility are deeply rooted in the history and societal norms of predominantly white societies, while individuals are often socialized to believe that they are inherently good and fair and that they do not have any racial biases (Resane, 2021). White fragility has a significant impact on our ability to have meaningful conversations about race, making it difficult for them to listen to the experiences of people of color (Walsh, 2018). This

can make it difficult to make progress on issues of racial inequality. Overcoming fragility requires a willingness to confront one's own privilege and racism and acknowledge uncomfortable truths (DiAngelo, 2018). The literature focuses on fragility in the organization, and the statistical evidence presented in the following section supports our argument that white individuals exhibit fragility when it comes to matters of race.

According to a study by Ng et al. (2021), which included a sample of 752 employed individuals from various American organizations, the majority (92%) of the 527 respondents provided complete responses and identified as white. The research findings indicated that white employees, who reported experiencing workplace discrimination less frequently than their minority counterparts, exhibited higher levels of work stress and lower job satisfaction when they perceived discrimination in their work environment, as displayed in Figure 3 (Ng et al., 2021). The authors suggest that white fragility may play a particularly influential role.



**Figure 3. Race as the moderator of perceived discrimination-job satisfaction relationship**

Source: Analysis by Ng et al. (2021).

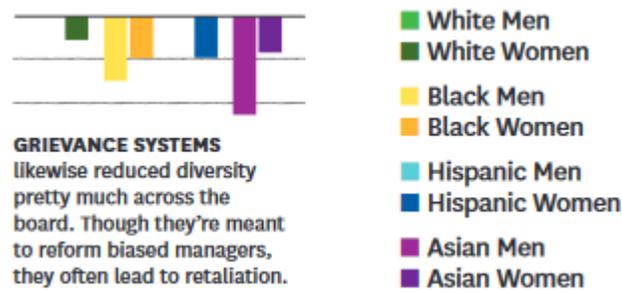
Fragility can contribute to white delusion by creating a defensive response to discussions about racism (DiAngelo, 2018). This defensive posture can lead to white delusion that denies the pervasive impact of racial inequality (Adu-Gyamfi et al., 2022). The reluctance to engage in uncomfortable discussions can perpetuate a distorted view of racial dynamics and hinder efforts to dismantle oppressive systems, ultimately contributing to the perpetuation of white delusion (DiAngelo, 2018).

### Unconscious Bias

Unconscious bias is social stereotypes about certain groups of people that individuals form outside their own conscious awareness (Janove, 2019; Morin, 2023b). Unconscious bias in the organization refers to the subtle and often unintentional prejudices that influence decision-making processes, interactions, and overall perceptions within a professional setting (Williams, 2018). These biases can stem from societal stereotypes and personal experiences, shaping an individual's judgments about colleagues, employees, or job applicants based on factors such as race or other protected characteristics (Janove, 2019). Unconscious bias can manifest in various ways, from hiring and promotion decisions to everyday company interactions. It can create barriers to equal opportunities and hinder diversity and inclusion efforts. Recognizing and addressing unconscious bias is critical

for promoting a more equitable work environment (Janove, 2019). The literature focuses on unconscious bias in the organization, and the statistical evidence presented in the following sections supports our argument that it has a detrimental effect on marginalized groups.

In the study by Dobbin & Kalev (2016), 829 midsize and large U.S. firms were analyzed to see how various diversity initiatives affected the proportion of minorities in management. Figure 4 highlights the phenomenon results in a decrease in overall diversity, and while the purpose of the diversity interventions was to address the biases of managers, they frequently resulted in instances of retaliatory behavior (Dobbin & Kalev, 2016).



**Figure 4. Which diversity efforts actually succeed**

Source: Analysis by Dobbin & Kalev (2016).

In another study by Deloitte, they surveyed 3,000 employees in large organizations about their experiences at work, their perceptions of the prevalence and manifestation of bias, and whether they agreed with the idea of being an ally (Cooper, 2019). The key findings in this study illustrated that 39% of the individuals experienced bias frequently, at least once a month; 83% categorized the bias(es) that they have witnessed or experienced in the organization as subtle or microaggressions; and 68% said that witnessing or experiencing bias had a negative impact on their productivity.

Unconscious bias significantly contributes to white delusion by perpetuating ingrained stereotypes and prejudices without individuals being consciously aware of them (Janove, 2019). These biases, which operate beneath the surface of conscious awareness, can shape perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors in ways that reinforce racial hierarchies (Being Black in Corporate America, 2019). Unconscious bias, when left unexamined, creates a form of white delusion that hinders genuine efforts to address and rectify systemic racism by allowing discriminatory patterns to persist unchallenged (Implicit Bias | SWD at NIH, n.d.).

### Evaluation Phase

The evaluation phase of addressing white delusion is a comprehensive approach to combating this pervasive social and organizational issue (McKay, 2019). Identifying white delusion within an organization involves a systematic and introspective examination of prevailing attitudes, beliefs, and practices. Evaluating racial equity in the organization is a step towards creating a more inclusive work environment (Cox, 2019). The literature review aims to synthesize existing research on the topic, involving the assessment of effective strategies, identifying areas for improvement, collecting feedback from employees, recognizing privilege, and addressing the evaluation in the organization of white delusion. The following sections will provide a comprehensive overview of engaging in difficult conversations, an organizational climate survey, a review of policies and procedures, and the benefits of white privilege.

### Engage in Difficult Conversations

Engaging in difficult conversations about race in the organization is essential for advancing a truly inclusive and equitable environment (Gurchiek, 2020). While these discussions can be challenging, they are critical for addressing systemic issues, promoting understanding, and creating an organizational culture that values diversity (Crenshaw, 2019). To navigate these conversations effectively, it's important to approach them with sensitivity, openness, and a commitment to active listening.

One key aspect of engaging in difficult conversations about race is acknowledging the discomfort that may arise (Lipsitz, 2019). Recognizing that these discussions can be challenging for individuals with different racial backgrounds, lived experiences, and perspectives is an important first step. This promotes creating psychologically safe spaces where employees feel encouraged to share their thoughts and experiences without fear of judgment, which is essential (Gurchiek, 2020). This involves setting ground rules that promote respectful dialogue and emphasizing the importance of learning from each other.

Active listening plays a pivotal role in these conversations (Gurchiek, 2020). Managers and employees alike should strive to listen empathetically, seeking to understand others' viewpoints without immediately offering solutions or rebuttals (Thomas, 1990). This requires suspending judgment and creating an atmosphere where individuals can express themselves authentically (Telhami & Rouse, 2022).

Leadership plays a critical role in driving these conversations forward. When leaders actively participate in discussions on race, it signals a commitment to advancing a diverse and inclusive organization (Thomas, 1990). By leading with vulnerability, acknowledging their own learning journey, denialism, and demonstrating a willingness to address uncomfortable truths, leaders can inspire others to engage more openly in these conversations (Triana et al., 2021). Creating an organization where difficult conversations about race are not only possible but encouraged requires a sustained commitment to cultural change (Somers, 2020). The existing body of literature centers around the examination and difficulty of having these challenging dialogues within the organization. The subsequent section provides an overview of a survey conducted on this subject matter.

A significant percentage of American workers, regardless of their racial background, reported feeling uncomfortable when talking about racial issues in the workplace, according to a 2020 survey by the Society for Human Resource Management (Somers, 2020). Somers (2020) specifically states that the survey indicated that 37% of both white and black employees expressed unease in discussing racial issues in their professional settings. The survey also showed that 45% of black workers and 30% of white workers said their organizations discourage discussions on racism and social justice. According to Somers (2020), ownership and openness are at the heart of having uncomfortable but productive conversations at work about race and racism.

Engaging in difficult conversations can inadvertently contribute to white delusion when individuals, despite their good intentions, avoid addressing systemic issues and perpetuate a distorted narrative (Telhami & Rouse, 2022). White delusion can manifest when conversations skirt around uncomfortable truths, reinforcing a sense of comfort and innocence that deflects responsibility for historical injustices (Crenshaw, 2019). Instead of confronting the root causes of inequality, participants may unintentionally contribute to a narrative that downplays the impact of systemic racism, fostering a false sense of progress and equality (Lipsitz, 2019). There is a level of sensitivity that is required when having these difficult conversations to prevent having an adverse effect. To address white delusion, engaging in difficult conversations requires a commitment to self-reflection, active listening, and a willingness to confront uncomfortable truths (Telhami & Rouse, 2022). While navigating these discussions may be challenging, the potential for transformative change is significant, leading to a more inclusive and equitable society that actively confronts and eliminates the foundations of white delusion.

### **Organizational Climate Survey**

Conducting an organizational climate survey on race at work provides a structured and comprehensive way to assess the workplace environment in terms of racial equity and inclusion (de Waal, 2014). According to de Waal (2014), such surveys provide valuable insights into the experiences of employees, which help identify areas for improvement and ensure that organizational practices align with the values of fairness and equity. The survey can encompass a range of topics on hiring practices, promotion opportunities, organizational culture, and overall perceptions of inclusivity.

The process of designing and administering an organizational climate survey on race should prioritize confidentiality to encourage honest and candid responses (Wiley, 2012). This anonymity is important for employees to feel safe sharing their experiences and perspectives without fear of reprisal. Questions in the survey

can delve into issues such as microaggressions, unconscious biases, and perceptions of the organization's commitment to diversity and inclusion (Doane & Bonilla-Silva, 2003).

Analyzing the survey results requires a thoughtful and comprehensive approach (Wiley, 2012). Organizations should not only focus on numerical data but also pay attention to qualitative feedback (Creswell & Poth, 2016). This qualitative aspect helps capture the nuances and specific instances that quantitative data might not fully convey (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). This dual approach enables a more holistic understanding of the organizational climate (Johnson, 2021).

Once the survey results are compiled, organizations should communicate the findings to employees (Wiley, 2012). This transparency builds trust and reinforces the commitment to addressing any identified issues. Additionally, action plans should be developed to address the challenges highlighted in the survey. These plans may involve targeted training programs, changes to policies and procedures, or initiatives aimed at promoting a more inclusive organizational culture.

Regularly repeating the organizational climate survey allows organizations to track progress over time and assess the impact of implemented changes (Johnson, 2021). It serves as a feedback loop that informs ongoing efforts to create an environment where all employees, regardless of their racial background, feel valued and supported (Johnson, 2021).

Organizational climate surveys have the potential to reveal white delusion in the organization when designed with a genuine commitment to uncovering and addressing systemic issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (Andrevski et al., 2014). By incorporating targeted questions that explore the experiences of individuals from various backgrounds, these surveys can provide valuable insights into the dynamics within the organization (Johnson, 2021). When the results are communicated and used to inform concrete actions, organizational climate surveys can contribute to cultivating a culture of awareness, accountability, and unmasking white delusion.

### **Review of Policies and Procedures**

Reviewing policies and procedures regarding race within an organization ensures alignment with current legal and ethical standards, promotes compliance, and prevents discriminatory practices (Wilson, 2016). Organizations must systematically assess existing policies to identify and eliminate any potential biases or discriminatory practices that may disproportionately affect employees based on their racial background (Gurchiek, 2020). This process involves a comprehensive examination of hiring, promotion, performance evaluation, and other aspects of organizational culture.

In the review of hiring practices, organizations should scrutinize recruitment strategies to ensure they attract diverse talent (Morin, 2023b). This includes evaluating job descriptions for inclusive language, establishing diverse hiring panels, and implementing blind recruitment techniques to mitigate unconscious biases (Hewlett et al., 2013; Morin, 2023b; Singh et al., 2013). In the examination of promotion and career development policies, organizations should ensure that opportunities are accessible to all employees, irrespective of their racial background (Stets & Burke, 2000). Organizations should identify and dismantle any barriers that hinder the progression of underrepresented groups, such as mentorship and sponsorship programs to support career advancement (Hu et al., 2004). In the review of performance evaluation procedures, the organization should scrutinize for objectivity and fairness (SHRM, 2021). Biases in performance assessments can have a cascading effect on career progression and opportunities.

In addition to reviewing specific policies, organizations should assess the overall organizational culture and environment (Jones et al., 2021). The review process should be collaborative, involving input from employees at all levels, especially those from underrepresented groups (Peretz et al., 2015). This inclusivity ensures a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities for improvement. Moreover, organizations should commit to ongoing reviews, recognizing that policies and procedures may need to evolve to meet changing needs and expectations.

A thorough review of organizational policies can be a powerful tool in identifying white delusion by actively addressing systemic inequities and fostering a more inclusive environment (Janove, 2019). A comprehensive policy review, coupled with a commitment to ongoing evaluation and adaptation, serves as a tangible step towards advancing an organizational culture that is genuinely equitable and supportive (Gurchiek, 2020).

### **White Privilege**

White privilege refers to the unearned advantages and benefits that individuals with white skin experience in society, often unconsciously and at the expense of people of color (Sullivan, 2019). Acknowledging and addressing white privilege is essential for promoting genuine diversity, equity, and inclusion within the organization (Lipsitz, 2019). Recognizing white privilege involves acknowledging that certain individuals may have inherent advantages in areas such as hiring, promotions, and career advancement solely based on their racial background (Lipsitz, 2019). It's important for employees and senior leaders to engage in self-reflection to understand how systemic advantages may have played a role in their professional journeys (Sullivan, 2019).

Senior leadership plays an important role in addressing white privilege. These key stakeholders should actively model inclusive behaviors and be willing to confront biases within themselves and the organization (Janove, 2019). Accountability that can be measured and validated for these leaders to create an equitable workplace is an essential step toward addressing white privilege at an institutional level (Sullivan, 2019). By cultivating a culture of understanding, organizations can begin to dismantle the barriers that perpetuate white privilege (Nair, 2022). Ultimately, by dismantling the structures that uphold white privilege, organizations can move towards a more just and equitable future for all employees (Nair, 2022).

A research study was conducted of 10 studies with more than 5,000 white men from across the U.S. and the UK to explore what it takes to promote greater recognition of racial privilege (A. Ma et al., 2022). White men were selected due to their disproportionate representation in positions of power. Through these studies, it was found that increasing white men's awareness of the ways in which they had themselves experienced disadvantages made them more likely to acknowledge the areas in which they were privileged.

White privilege, when unacknowledged, can contribute significantly to white delusion by perpetuating a distorted worldview that obscures systemic inequalities (Adu-Gyamfi et al., 2022). White individuals, consciously or unconsciously, enjoy societal advantages simply because of their racial identity, often remaining oblivious to the challenges faced by people of color (Sullivan, 2019). This lack of awareness provides a false sense of meritocracy, where personal achievements are attributed solely to individual effort rather than recognizing the inherent advantages afforded by one's racial background (Nair, 2022). White privilege therefore contributes to a delusory belief that everyone operates on an equal playing field, ignoring the systemic barriers that disproportionately affect marginalized communities (Nair, 2022).

### **Implementation Phase**

The implementation phase of addressing white delusion is a dynamic and ongoing process that requires sustained commitment from senior leadership and active participation from employees at all levels (McKay, 2019). Eliminating white delusion within an organization is transformative and demands a comprehensive strategy that includes accountability that can be measured (Nair, 2022). It is not a one-time event but a continuous process of embedding anti-discriminatory practices into the organizational fabric (*Seeing Race Again*, 2019). The literature review aims to synthesize existing research on the topic, involving creating a comprehensive strategy that integrates education, awareness-building, and cultural change initiatives to address, unmask, and eliminate white delusion in the organization. The following sections focus on active allyship and advocacy, performance metrics, revised policies and education, and organizational diversity initiatives.

### **Active Allyship and Advocacy**

Allyship is the active and consistent support of marginalized groups by individuals who are not members of those groups (Luthra, 2022). It involves learning about and understanding the experiences of marginalized people,

speaking out against injustice, and using one's privilege to create more inclusive and equitable spaces (Atcheson, 2021). Allyship is a lifelong journey of learning and action, and it requires ongoing commitment and humility.

Active allyship and advocacy are key components in cultivating an organizational culture that addresses issues of race and promotes diversity, equity, and inclusion (Georgiadou et al., 2019). The development of more inclusive workplaces that promote interaction between the varied talent groups of an enterprise is vital for business leaders and managers. Marginalized employees must be able to participate fully in the workplace and thus be fully involved, with the opportunity to access and build influence networks that will lead to continued job satisfaction and career advancement in the organization (Bishop, 2021). Active allyship goes beyond passive support and involves taking intentional, sustained actions to stand in solidarity with marginalized groups, including people of color (Melaku et al., 2020). In the context of race at work, active allies educate themselves on issues related to racial equity, challenge discriminatory behavior, advocate for policies that advance racial equity, and amplify the voices of those who are often marginalized (Georgiadou et al., 2019). The literature focuses on allyship and advocacy in the organization. We will present statistical evidence from a study by Roepe (2023) that substantiates our claim that while allies have a positive influence on the workplace, their absence has the opposite effect.

The study, which surveyed more than 2,700 women in Australia, Canada, South Africa, the U.K., and the U.S., found that when leaders display allyship and advocacy, they can boost diversity in their organizations, making it less likely that women from marginalized racial and ethnic groups will experience racism (Roepe, 2023). According to the study, 49% of survey respondents say senior leaders at their workplaces do not engage in allyship.

Allies committed to eliminating white delusion in the organization recognize the need to confront the historical and systemic structures that perpetuate racial inequalities (Roepe, 2023). Eliminating white delusion involves actively challenging false beliefs and misconceptions about race and white privilege (Nair, 2022). It requires white allies to amplify the voices of people of color. By cultivating a culture of accountability, self-reflection, and a genuine commitment to dismantling the myths of superiority, allyship contributes to breaking down the illusions that sustain white delusion, promoting a more inclusive and equitable organization (Melaku et al., 2020).

### **Organizational Diversity Initiatives**

Organizational diversity initiatives involve setting clear diversity and inclusion goals that explicitly address racial disparities within the workforce (Georgiadou et al., 2019). Organizations are increasingly recognizing the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace. Diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives aim to create a more inclusive and equitable environment for all employees, regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability status, or other personal characteristics (Wilson, 2016).

Organizations that have employee resource groups (ERGs) focus on racial diversity and provide a platform for marginalized employees to share experiences, offer support, and collaborate on initiatives that promote understanding and inclusivity (Ma, n.d.). ERGs contribute to a sense of community within the workplace and empower employees to actively engage in shaping a more inclusive organizational culture.

The strategic goals of organizational diversity initiatives play a pivotal role in addressing race at work. These initiatives not only contribute to a more equitable workplace but also enhance creativity, innovation, and overall organizational success (Hewlett et al., 2013). Diversity drives innovation based on different thoughts and perspectives that have been confirmed in a study. A study by Tynes found that diverse companies had 19% higher innovation revenue and outperformed non-diverse companies by 35% (Tynes, 2022).

Organizational diversity initiatives are instrumental in contributing to the elimination of white delusion by actively challenging it and advancing a culture of inclusivity (Wilson, 2016). By exposing white employees to diverse perspectives and experiences, these initiatives help to break down racial stereotypes and challenge false beliefs about white superiority (Crenshaw, 2019). Diversity initiatives encourage open dialogue about race and racism, creating a space for white employees to confront their own biases and complicity in perpetuating white privilege (Sullivan, 2019). This process of self-reflection and learning is essential for dismantling the deeply ingrained systems of racial inequality that perpetuate white delusion (Nair, 2022).

## Performance Metrics

Performance metrics are vital tools for organizations seeking to address race within the organization (Jourdan, 2023). One key metric is representation data, which involves tracking the racial composition of the workforce at various levels, from entry-level positions to leadership roles (Jourdan, 2023). This data helps identify disparities and areas for improvement in hiring, retention, and promotion practices. Pay equity metrics are important for ensuring that employees of all races receive fair compensation for their work (Bornstein, 2022). Analyzing salary data across racial lines can highlight disparities and help organizations address potential biases in their compensation structures (Bornstein, 2022). Furthermore, tracking advancement and promotion rates for employees from different racial backgrounds provides insights into the inclusivity of career development opportunities (Zheng, 2023).

By establishing and regularly reviewing these performance metrics, organizations can take a proactive approach to addressing racism at work (Zheng, 2023). This data-driven strategy enables them to identify areas for improvement, track progress over time, and demonstrate a genuine commitment to building an inclusive workplace where employees of all races are valued and supported in their professional growth (Jourdan, 2023).

Implementing performance metrics that explicitly address diversity, equity, and inclusion is a necessary strategy for eliminating white delusion within organizational structures (Ferreira & Santos, 2022). By measuring and evaluating factors such as representation at various levels of the hierarchy, pay equity, and the success of diversity and inclusion initiatives, organizations can move beyond meritocracy (Bornstein, 2022). These metrics provide tangible evidence of disparities and areas for improvement, contributing to a more transparent and accountable environment.

## Revise Policies and Education

Revising workplace policies and investing in educational programs is necessary to address race and promote equity within an organization (Wilson, 2016). Policy revisions that address racial equity send a clear message about the organization's commitment to eliminate white delusion and foster a fair workplace (Wilson, 2016). By implementing strategies such as blind resume reviews and ensuring diverse hiring panels, organizations can champion a more inclusive workforce (Morin, 2023b). Educational programs should focus on raising awareness, building cultural competency, and promoting dialogue around racial issues.

All policies are reflected and created to include diversity, equity, and inclusion as a standard and revised to ensure fairness and equality. Organizations can develop clear and transparent criteria for providing guidelines that are free from biases and that account for diverse skill sets and working styles (Implicit Bias | SWD at NIH, n.d.). Organizations that implement mandatory diversity, equity, and inclusion training programs for all employees will raise awareness and build cultural competency (Singh et al., 2013). Organizations can establish policies that encourage ongoing education on racial issues, promoting a continuous learning environment.

The revision of policies and implementation of comprehensive education programs are essential strategies for addressing and eliminating white delusion within organizational structures. Policy revisions that prioritize racial equity in the organization build a foundation of transparency and strengthen the culture of inclusivity (Cox, 2019). Educational initiatives must go beyond surface-level diversity training, delving into the historical context of systemic racism, unconscious biases, and the societal implications of white privilege (Sullivan, 2019). By embedding anti-racist principles into policies with continuous education that challenges preconceived notions, organizations can challenge and eliminate white delusion at its core (Bell, 2020; Morin, 2023a).

## Results and Recommendations

This review article has led to the development of a model that incorporates findings from the literature synthesis. Morin (2023c) developed the unmasking white delusion: DEI model in Figure 2. This model will provide a visual depiction of the actions that organizations should engage in within each phase to help eliminate white delusion and create a culture of psychological safety for their minority employees.

We recommend that organizations apply the unmasking white delusion: DEI model and employ the framework of CRT to unmask and eliminate white delusion (Morin, 2023c). To effectively address and eliminate white delusion within organizations, a comprehensive approach is essential, encompassing three phases: denial, evaluation, and implementation. In the denial phase, organizations must first acknowledge the existence of white delusion and confront any resistance to recognizing its impact (Morin, 2023a, 2023c). Next is the evaluation phase, which involves a thorough examination of existing organizational structures, policies, and practices to identify areas where white delusion may be perpetuated (Morin, 2023a, 2023c). In the implementation phase, organizations translate insights from the evaluation stage into actionable strategies and initiatives. By approaching the elimination of white delusion through these interconnected phases, organizations can proselytize a more inclusive and equitable workplace for all employees.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the journey to eliminate white delusion within organizations is a multifaceted process that demands commitment, self-reflection, and tangible actions across distinct phases (Morin, 2023a, 2023c). The denial phase serves as a critical starting point, emphasizing the importance of acknowledging and dismantling any resistance to recognizing the existence and impact of white delusion. Applying CRT to this context requires examining how race and power dynamics are intertwined in shaping perspectives and perpetuating denial (Delgado et al., 2017). The evaluation phase refers to the process through which organizations assess certain racial beliefs or practices. Applying CRT involves critically examining how racial ideologies are assessed and validated within systems, institutions, and individual beliefs (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Moving into the implementation phase signifies the translation of insights into tangible initiatives aimed at putting strategies into action to challenge and dismantle racial ideologies that contribute to systemic racism and bias (Georgiadou et al., 2019). The application of CRT advocates for a proactive stance, emphasizing the importance of integrating anti-racist frameworks into policies, processes, and educational systems (Yosso & Solorzano, 2007). By embracing a holistic approach that spans denial, evaluation, and implementation and employing the framework of CRT, organizations not only address white delusion but also advance a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion that benefits every member of the organization. In doing so, organizations contribute to broader societal efforts to create workplaces that reflect the richness of human diversity. The results are characterized by a dedication to enduring cultural change that aggressively confronts and unmasks white delusion at the organizational level.

**Author Contributions:** Conceptualisation: S.L.M. and J.R.B.; methodology: S.L.M. and J.R.B.; project administration: S.L.M. and J.R.B.; software: S.L.M. and J.R.B.; investigation: Stacey L. Morin and Jennifer R. Bishop; data curation: S.L.M. and J.R.B.; formal analysis: S.L.M. and J.R.B.; validation: S.L.M. and J.R.B.; visualization: S.L.M. and J.R.B.; writing-original draft preparation: S.L.M. and J.R.B.; writing - review & editing: S.L.M. and J.R.B.

**Conflicts of Interest:** Authors declare no conflict of interest.

**Data Availability Statement:** Not applicable.

**Informed Consent Statement:** Not applicable as no human subjects used in this inquiry.

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