

**Redlining Voices: Perceptions of Suburban Public-School Black Parents on  
Racial Equity in Schools**

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## **Abstract**

The United States public school system aims to educate all students so that they may attend college, develop relevant jobs, and thrive to their full potential. Black American students enrolled in public schools often deal with systemic (institutional and structural) racism in education that often causes stress and traumatic experiences and creates barrier ( Harris, 2022). This study examined parents' critical experiences in their relationship with their child's schools, such as equity, curriculum, the culture and climate of the school, whether or not they feel that their voices are being heard when they have a concern. The segregation and racism historically practiced in the United States public schools have led to negative perceptions by Black parents (Howard, 2015). Black parent advocacy plays a crucial role in developing relational trust between schools, educators, and parents. Parent perceptions and experiences of critical moments their children experience in the schools were examined. Listening and centering Black parents' perspectives connects to the history of institutional racism and how it impedes the relationship between Black parents and their children's school districts and the professionals who work with their children. Based on the results of this study, it was concluded was the majority of parents feel their voices are not included or heard with regard to racial equity in schools. Some parents are left to feel that they have no influence on change due to feeling that they have to constantly "police" the professionals and advocate for their children. In conclusion, the parents in this study feel that they have no influence on school culture due to the disregard of incidents reported to the administration with no follow-up given. Highlighted in the study are the impact of

microaggressions, racial incidents, and disregard of feedback from parents shape these perceptions.

## **Dedication**

The dissertation is dedicated to my children, Cheyenne and Justin (JJ). Thank you so much for being patient throughout this doctoral process. I hope you both understand that the hours spent behind my laptop screen were meant to provide a better life for you and show you the value of perseverance and courage. This dissertation is dedicated to my parents who help support me emotionally, financially, and in every way a village supports. Thank you, MeMe, for cooking home-cooked meals for my children on class days and being a supportive grandmother. Thank you, PawPaw, for being emotionally supportive throughout the program and listening on those hard days. I graciously want to thank my uncles, Jackie Robinson and Dr. Ellis Robinson, for believing in me, financially investing in my doctoral education, and praying for me and my children. I want to thank the rest of the tribe, to all my siblings who kept my spirits lifted, and my family, the Browns, Aunt Judy, Uncle Ronnie, the Paynes, the Shepherds, Johnsons, Williams, and Manz, who have poured into my life and my children's lives and never allowed me to give up.

To my ancestors, I may never know your stories; thank you for your resilience and leading the way to breaking down barriers. Thank you for your strength to shine the light on the truth.

“The way to right wrongs is to turn the light of truth upon them.” Ida B. Wells

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To the six parents willing to participate in my study and share their stories with me about their experiences with their children's schools—both the challenges they faced and their children’s experiences—thank you. I feel privileged to have learned so much from you all.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

The lack of cultural responsiveness, pedagogy, and equitable approaches in the public school system continuously supports an environment that includes racial bias. This phenomenon affects educational outcomes and experiences for Black students in schools. Twenty-five years ago, Hammond (1998) concluded that educational experiences for minority students had remained substantially separate and unequal. As policymakers and education leaders at every government level have worked to advance racial equity in schools and other public institutions, it is unclear whose vision will guide this major social, significant, and political undertaking (Horsford, 2021). While K-12 public school leaders and policymakers focus on the quality of schools across the United States, school student populations continue to become more diverse in suburban public schools. Herold and Chen (2022) reported that suburban public schools in the country's largest population areas have significantly increased their non-White enrollment.

Changes in demographics have led to conversations about why changes need to be made in K-12 public school systems and why they need to be transformed. Transformation of how students are taught, what they are taught, and making sure that parents of historically underserved students are a part of decision-making has become more critical since schools are experiencing these demographic changes. Thompson (2003) concluded that parents must be involved in the educational process of their children. Horsford (2021) more recently concluded that the voices, experiences, and views of people of color about their children's education have historically been absent from the research, practice, and policy conversations that continue to determine their fate.

An ongoing issue is that the educational system has been structured from a White-dominant societal perspective. As a result, students who have gone through the American education system often have limited understanding and ignore the stories and knowledge of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities (Huff, 2022). As policymakers and education leaders at every level of government work to advance racial equity in schools and other public institutions across the country, it is not yet clear whose vision will guide this significant social, cultural, and political undertaking (Gordon, 1990). There is a misconception that the educational system is open to all and that there is an opportunity for feedback, vision, and input from all parents, students, and educators of color. Horsford (2021) questioned,

I wonder if it is possible to develop a shared vision of education in the United States. If so, who would create it? Who will lead it? Even the movement for racial equality and justice can be advanced through the use of research evidence focused on efficiency and effectiveness alone. What might we learn when we hear directly from Black students, parents, grandparents, teachers, counselors, psychologists, principals, coaches, and community leaders? (p. 1)

For the educational system to be transformed and improve educational experiences and outcomes for students of color in the school system, educators must first listen to the voices of parents and guardians of students of color.

For the educational experiences and outcomes for students of color to be transformed and for parents' voices to be heard, it is imperative to recognize and understand the racial history and trauma throughout the educational system toward students of color. The National Education Association (NEA, 2021) concluded that

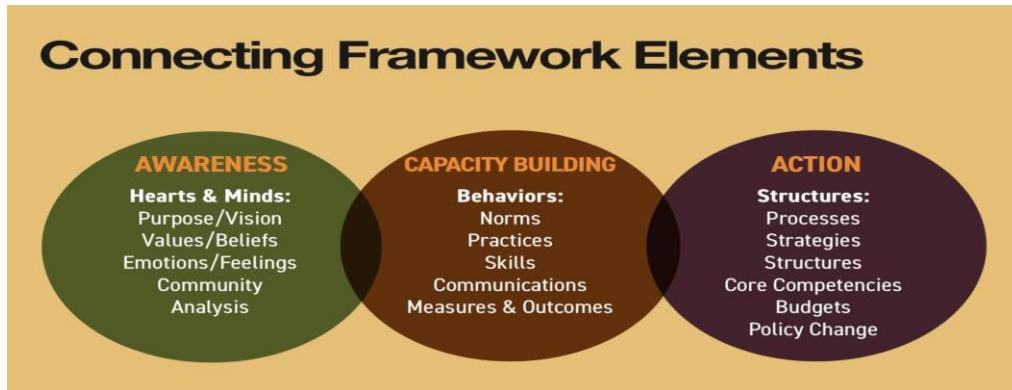
educators must have a deep understanding of racial history and the trauma caused across the centuries and can acknowledge its presence through systems, norms, practices, and policies. The Racial Justice in Education Framework (see Figure 1) centers and guides our Systems change work, which includes our behaviors and practices in organizational culture and strategies to impact the hearts and minds of people (NEA, 2021). This framework was designed to create transformational change and help people build more skilled racial analysis. This transformation helps build the foundation and commitment toward racial justice and equity. This framework has three elements, identified as “levers,” that must be recognized to create change. The three components of the framework are:

1. Awareness: Develop and strengthen collective awareness and the understanding of the causes and impacts of systemic (institutional and structural) racism in education, the necessity for racial justice, and the centrality of racial justice.
2. Capacity Building: Equip and prepare leaders with skills to use strategies to take action to advance racial justice.
3. Action: Engage members, leaders, and stakeholders to advocate, organize, and mobilize to combat institutional racism and advance racial justice in education.

(NEA, 2021, p. 3)

**Figure 1**

*NEA Framework for Racial Justice in Education*



*Note,* This figure demonstrates the components that are required to achieve racial justice. Adapted from National Education Center Association for Social Justice. (2021, January 1) retrieved on March 1, 2023. <https://www.nea.org/resource-library/racial-justice-education-framework>

### **Background of the Study**

This qualitative study examined the perceptions of six Black suburban public school parents whose children were enrolled in a large midwestern suburban county comprising six school districts. The study examined how Black suburban public school parents felt about their voices being heard regarding input about racial equity within their childrens school district and if they felt equitable practices were in place to support their students' educational success. The study examined how these Black suburban public school parents felt about their voices being heard regarding their student's educational experiences within the school district and if they believed that equitable practices were in place to support their student's educational success. According to the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE, 2022), 95,401 students were enrolled in six public school districts in a single county in 2021. Racial enrollment data shows the similarity of

enrollment percentages among these districts. Only parents from the six surrounding suburban school districts were involved in this study (See Table 1).

**Table 1**

*Racial Enrollment by Percentage and Total enrollment*

District	Black	White	Other	Total
A	7	63	30	26,762
B	7	63	30	25,851
C	8	63	30	22,532
D	7	63	30	7,233
E	7	63	30	5,814
F	7	63	30	4,206

*Note:* Adapted from *Profiles of USA Public Schools*, by Public School Review, 2023

(<https://www.publicschoolreview.com>).

### **Problem Statement**

Historically, the systems and structure of educational institutions have been shaped from a White European perspective, including how policies are reshaped and how the vision of what education looks like is guided. Horsford (2021) concluded that the voices, experiences, and views of people of color concerning their children's education have historically been absent from the research, practice, and policy conversations that must continue to determine their future. Thompson (2003) concluded that by examining involvement, researchers should seek to identify the presence of racial socialization.

Typically, suburban areas of larger metropolitan cities were filled with White families who chose to escape issues of the urban core. As housing restrictions were lifted, these suburban areas and their schools changed from predominantly White-only enrollments to a more diverse population. Due to the increase in diversity, there is a need to understand the additional resources and strategies needed to ensure equitable education. It is crucial for schools to create spaces for students with multiple identities. This involves first understanding that people's race, gender, ability, and ethnicity are interconnected and uniquely shape a person's experience (American University, 2023).

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study explored six Black suburban public school parents' perceptions regarding equity in their students' schools, including school support and whether schools encourage participation from the parents. Also investigated are parents' perceptions of their students' schools regarding opportunities for input related to equity issues.

### **Significance of the Study**

Black suburban public school parents' engagement and participation is vital to their children's school experience and academic success. The results of this qualitative study may raise awareness and offer evidence for Black suburban public school parents' voices to be heard and to offer schools equitable ways of engagement. The study may help improve relationships among the professionals who educate Black children and their parents.

### **Delimitation**

Lunenburg and Irby (2008) stated that delimitations are "self-imposed boundaries set by the researcher on the purpose and scope of the study" (p. 134). This study includes



a sample of Black parents living in a suburban county during 2023. Only Black parents whose children are enrolled in one school district within the larger designated county were included.

### **Assumptions**

Assumptions are postulates, premises, and propositions accepted as operational for the research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 135). This qualitative study included the following assumptions: (a) the participants' perceptions come from their student's experiences with perceptions of racial bias within the school system, and (b) the participants reflected on their personal experiences regarding equity within the public school system.

### **Research Questions**

#### ***RQ1***

What are Black suburban public-school parents' perceptions regarding equity in schools?

#### ***RQ2***

What are Black suburban public school parents' perceptions of school support and encouragement of participation in their children's schools?

#### ***RQ3***

What are Black suburban public school parents' perceptions of their child's school regarding opportunities for input related to equity issues?

### **Definition of Terms**

This section provides terms and definitions used throughout the study to enable the reader clarity and understanding.

***Racial equity***

A process of eliminating racial disparities and improving outcomes for everyone (Harris, 2022).

***Racial justice***

The systematic fair treatment of people of all races results in equitable opportunities and outcomes for everyone (NEA, 2021).

***Whitewashed***

Preventing students from contextualizing and understanding all aspects of history. Whitewashed history hides the truth to make historical situations seem more palatable for teachers to teach (Erdman, 2021).

**Organization of the Study**

Chapter 1 introduced this qualitative research study. Chapter 2 provides an overview of Black suburban public school parents' experience in public education and reviews the literature, including court cases that changed the course of education in the United States. Chapter 3 details the research design, study setting, sampling procedures, instruments, data collection and analysis, reliability and trustworthiness, researcher's role, and limitations. The results of the qualitative analysis of the data collected in the study are reported in Chapter 4. The final chapter includes a summary of the study findings, findings related to the literature, implications for action, recommendations for future research, and a conclusion.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Review of the Literature**

Chapter 2 provides literature related to the research regarding parent perceptions of racial equity in K-12 public schools. Utilizing a social justice educational framework connects this topic and identifies with the perceptions of Black parents (whose children are enrolled in suburban school districts) and the educational system regarding systemic racial policies and muting Black parent voices. The social justice educational framework provides standards and is a road map for anti-bias education at every stage of K-12 instruction (NEA Center for Social Justice, 2021). These standards provide educators with a common language and organizational structure to facilitate curriculum development and make schools more equitable (NEA Center for Social Justice, 2021). Fairness, equality, equity, and human rights are connected to fair opportunities in all aspects of life, including education, and part of that is the right for parents to have a voice and advocate for their child's education. Historically, the U.S. educational system had not extended a welcome mat to disenfranchised groups. Inequality continues to exist and persist. Singleton (2013) discussed racial history in America and how it has affected marginalized students' education. He concluded that educators could help break down the walls of disproportionality, unfair practices, and racial practices by having an open and honest conversation. To understand why and how Black parents' perceptions are muted in the U.S. educational system, the historical background of laws that perpetuated the redlining of Black voices in public schools must be examined.

Horsford (2021) concluded that dominant racial groups control and White power structures continue to govern and administer education and social policy through the

research, evaluation, pedagogy, and evidence that serves as the basis of policy implementation. These truths impact and harm the freedom, rights, and concerns parents of color have concerning their children's education.

### **Legal Decisions**

Plessy v. Ferguson was the first Supreme Court landmark case in which racial segregation laws were ruled as not violating the U.S. Constitution as long as facilities were considered equal in quality; this legal decision is where the term “separate but equal” originated. On May 18, 1896, the U.S. Supreme Court Case Plessy v. Ferguson ruling legally justified segregation on trains, buses, and public facilities such as schools (Drexler, 2020). Five decades later, in 1954, Brown v. Board of Education reversed that decision; however, the historical impact of these Supreme Court cases and the decisions would create a system in which Black people’s educational rights and concerns would continuously be dismissed and minimized, and the Westernized culture would dominate the educational outcomes for Black students. Gordon (1990) explained that one of the greatest battles in the 21<sup>st</sup> century would be for control over the education of minority groups in dominant White societies. Gordon continued, asking, “How might education assist people of color in challenging societal structures that maintain and reproduce inequality?” (p. 91).

Brown v. Board of Education provided a catalyst in helping end racial segregation, but it was not enough to dismantle systemic issues and racial bias. Black parents continued to face prejudice toward their children in American public schools. In the 247-year history of America, people of color have only been able to participate in public education since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. With the Brown v. Board of Education

decision in 1954 at least legally ending segregation in schools, families of color were still not participating in decision-making processes at the school, district, state, or federal levels (Latta, 2019). As a result, Black public school children have become more racially isolated than in the past five decades (Legal Defense Fund, 2004). Before *Brown v. Board of Education*, historical cases were the catalyst for desegregation to emerge. Historically, several milestones marked the progress. As cited by Drexler (2020),

- In 1857, the *Dred Scott v. John F.A. Sanford* determined through the court that Blacks were second-class citizens and had no rights.
- In 1865, the Black Codes, also known as Jim Crow Laws, were passed by Southern states and enacted during Andrew Jackson's presidency. The significance of these laws is, most likely, the point at which segregation began. Public schools were segregated. Black people were barred from serving on juries and testifying against Whites.
- The 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* case ruled that segregation was not unconstitutional as long as public schools, public transportation, and facilities were equal.
- In 1899, *Cumming v. Board of Education Richmond, State of Georgia*, resulted in the Supreme Court upholding the closing of an all-Black school due to fiscal restraints. There were White schools with fiscal restraints, but they stayed open.
- In 1909, W.E. B. Dubois, Ida Wells-Barnett, Mary White Ovington, and others founded the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), becoming the primary organization for the legal attack on segregation and eventually bringing the *Brown v. Board of Education* case to the Supreme Court.

- In 1939, Thurgood Marshall was named the lead attorney for the NAACP to present *Brown v. Board of Education* to the Supreme Court.
- In 1951, *Brown v. Board of Education* was filed in a district court in Kansas.
- Between 1951-1954 several school segregation cases were fought, including *Edward County of District of Columbia*, *Delaware*, and *Virginia*, in which the argument that segregation was acceptable if it was equal; however, the NAACP argued it was not equal, and it was finally ruled in 1954 that separation was unconstitutional. Due to the vagueness of a clause in the Supreme Court decision, it was easy for Southern states to use stalling tactics in which desegregation was halted for a while. These practices essentially led to the civil rights movement. (Drexler, 2020)

*Brown v. Board of Education* was a collaboration of five lawsuits against school districts in Kansas, South Carolina, Delaware, Virginia, and the District of Columbia initiated in 1952. When the Court finally mandated the decision of desegregation, these practices continued, and factors did not bring equality in educational systems for Blacks. Black voices were not voices heard. Du Bois (1935) stated that Black students would face physical, emotional, and intellectual maltreatment if they attended desegregated schools rather than predominately Black schools.

### **Desegregation**

Black communities throughout the U.S. were optimistic about the gains they would make through integrating public schools (Kusimo, 1999). After centuries of forced enslavement followed by forced segregation, Black people held hope for gains in access to education. Given that schools reflect their communities, those hopes did not bring

about peaceful solutions to segregation. Gross (2008) concluded that hopes were soon tempered since, when schools were desegregating, many White teachers and administrators did not embrace Black students, believing they were inferior to their White peers.

As desegregation was intended to eradicate inequality and structural racism within public schools, many roadblocks were encountered. After the ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education*, integration of schools did not progress as much or as quickly as Black residents expected (Kusimo, 199). The Jim Crow era and White bias lingered, and Black schools remained segregated. Most viewed Black schools as inferior to White schools. Gross (2008) noted that many desegregation plans called for the closure of Black schools, which typically meant that Black teachers and principals, long considered community leaders, lost their jobs.

*Brown v. Board of Education* created a significant civil and human rights shift. At the same time, some scholars wondered if desegregation would harm Black students. Before *Brown*, a 1949 case, *Webb v. School District No 90*, paved the way for the *Brown* case. This case was brought regarding the only all-black elementary school in Johnson County, Kansas, a growing suburban community in the Kansas City metropolitan region. Walker Elementary served only Black students who could attend. The school was run down, contained only two rooms, and had poor plumbing. When the Black parents of Walker School demanded that their children be admitted to a nearby new school, the district trustees denied access, contending that enrollment was based on attendance areas drawn from each school. The NAACP chapter and a resident named Esther Webb supported the Black Parents' right to sue. The Kansas Supreme Court concluded that

equal facilities must be provided for all children with attendance based on geographic territory. Black children were admitted to the all-white elementary school. Thurgood Marshal, who was later instrumental in the Brown v. Board of Education case, was a part of this fight in Merriam, Kansas (Johnson County Museum, 2011). This Supreme Court ruling helped lay a foundation for civil rights in education for Black students. This brought about a shift in the practice of redlining.

### **Redlining**

Redlining was a more subtle but possibly more damaging tool for promoting racial segregation of individuals and families (Percy, 2020). Badger (2017) concluded that redlining was a systematic practice in the 1930s. Redlining increased rents in houses that might otherwise have been purchased by families of lower income and non-White backgrounds. This real estate practice effectively reduced or eliminated commercial development in these areas.

Historically, redlining was a practice that started and was strategically operated by the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC), a government-sponsored corporation created as part of the New Deal, established in 1933 by the Home Owners' Loan Corporation Act under the leadership of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Its purpose was to refinance home mortgages currently in default to prevent foreclosure and expand home-buying opportunities (Faber, 2020). Scholars have increasingly portrayed HOLC as a critical promoter of redlining and a driver of racial residential segregation and wealth inequality in the United States. This organization created policies and maps to segregated neighborhoods targeting Black residents. People of color could not purchase properties in newly developed suburbs or have sufficient access to credit to reinvest in neighborhoods



(Meier & Mitchell, 2022). HOLC created a system of persisting segregation and a systematic racial design to keep Black and Brown people away from housing, home ownership, and the ability for their children to go to suburban neighborhoods and attend schools. Bhutta et al. (2020) reported that homeownership rates continued exacerbating the wealth divide between White and minority households. Lending practices have been discriminatory, resulting in a pattern of structural racism in the United States, and are still a reality today. This reality reflects the persisting pattern of residential segregation in areas where redlining is concentrated in many cities and regions in the United States (Meier & Mitchell, 2022).

Residential segregation did not happen through some automatic human instinct or by chance (Johnson County Library, 2022). As suburban housing costs increased, many communities established agreements with restrictive covenants that prohibited owning land within the community or housing development. These intentionally restrictive covenants were strategically enforced until the Supreme Court ruled against them; however, private parties, primarily through homeowners' associations, would continue enforcing covenants and redlining (Rothstein, 2017).

Suburban public schools have become the predominant form of American education in the past fifty years (Rury, 2015). Furthermore, suburban neighborhoods were attractive to Blacks as well as to Whites. Suburban schools were attractive, especially in the post-World War II era. During this time, what began as smaller school districts serving a limited number of families consolidated in many states. Unified school districts became common. Rury (2015) noted that many residents resisted the district's consolidation as a unified school system in the 1960s. Many "White suburbanites" were

concerned with the shift and change. Rury (2015) reiterated that residents wished to distinguish their suburban communities through their public schools and to continue the local control they held over them.

### **The Absence of Equity in Schools**

Attempts to reform schools took many forms across the county and the Midwest. Pressures increased as the need to demonstrate equity became even more urgent. Change took on direction, especially in bringing about equity in schools. Busing, closing schools, and magnet and charter schools all seemed to tinker at the system's edges, leaving unfinished the work of ensuring that all generations of students receive an equal education (Smith, 2021). Smith( 2021) contended that these changes only furthered the marginalization of Blacks and other students of color. Policymakers, state decision-makers, and districts have continued to discuss equitable practices. Some districts struggle with having conversations at all. Smith (2021) recognized that in some places, educational leaders have failed to come to a consensus about the need for a deliberate, substantive focus on equity and a process for clarifying what equity means and how it is different from equality—or even whether equity is a worthy goal or a crucial part of the mission of a school district.

Ensuring and advocating for equitable practices in public schools requires looking through a social justice lens and deconstructing systemic racist practices. Engaging students and families and partnering with them helps ensure equitable school practices. Duchesneau (2021) noted that students' and families' experiences should lead conversations on what changes and improvements are needed to support student well-being best.

Equitable practices involve processes in how the curriculum is developed. When offering a broad diverse curriculum, all students benefit from it. Books that allow students to see themselves in the characters can help them feel like an essential part of their classroom and that their story is worth telling (Samuel, 2019).

Equitable practices demand consistent and ongoing hiring of teachers of color. The U.S. Department of Education (2018) stated that recruiting, hiring, and retaining diverse teachers is possible when schools and districts use data-driven, targeted strategies to inform their outreach efforts. The U.S. Department of Education (2018) reiterated that teachers of color may also be more able to engage diverse students.

In the past nearly 70 years since *Brown v. Board of Education* was decided, segregation was ended in schools, and families of color were not ensured participation in decision-making at the school, district, state, and federal levels (Latta, 2019). Historically, the public school system did not provide or support a multicultural curriculum and pedagogy. Demands for structural change can support Black parent voices in initiating policy changes and public-school decision-making, but that change has been slow. Ladson-Billings (1994) has suggested that using students' cultures helps improve the academic achievement of all students, especially students of color, whose cultures have traditionally been left outside the curriculum and pedagogy.

Culturally responsive teaching should be implemented and represented in the classroom and the curriculum within public education. Armstrong (2022) suggested that teaching and learning experts emphasize the importance of cultural responsiveness in fostering student learning experiences. When educators implement this approach, it helps cultivate connections for students, helps integrate students into their cultural

environment, and enhances their skill sets, and students are more intrigued to learn when they can connect to the lesson. Armstrong (2022) reiterated that the representation of social groups in educational materials shares things teachers can do to ensure that all students are reflected in class resources. Schools should ensure that students are exposed to diverse perspectives, and the curriculum should include books by writers of different races (Shafer, 2017).

Equity can be impacted through training. When racial bias training is implemented in school districts to train and support administrators and teachers, there are often notable differences in how Black students are treated (Weir, 2016). Weir (2016) continued that some disparities arise from cultural misunderstandings or unintentional implicit biases that unknowingly affect Black students' thoughts and behaviors.

Policies and programs intended to increase the racial diversity of the U.S. teaching population have failed to make meaningful inroads in an overwhelmingly White profession despite extensive research demonstrating the need for more teachers of color (Thomas, 2020). The National Council on Teacher Quality (2022) suggested that compelling and ample evidence demonstrates that students of color benefit in both the short term (such as through fewer absences and suspensions and higher academic achievement) and the long term (such as through more increased high school graduation and college matriculation rates) when they have a same-race teacher. Students of color benefit from a more diverse teacher workforce, and all students benefit (Morrison & Webb-Porter, 2019).

Black indigenous people of color (BIPOC) teachers comprise just 19% of the nation's public teaching force (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). Recruiting

and retaining BIPOC teachers is imperative to BIPOC students' education and success and other student success. Increasing BIPOC professionals in schools will help students see educators who look like them, which can help students connect and feel empowered. Gist et al. (2021) concluded that there is substantial research evidence that, in the aggregate, the presence of BIPOC teachers has a positive impact on student achievement, engagement, and other outcomes, especially for BIPOC students, and it will help lead to educational equity. The presence of BIPOC teachers instills trust in some Black parents that their students will be emotionally safe at school.

### **Parent Engagement in Schools**

Schools were established in the United States to meet the needs of a growing industrialized nation. The upper class and growing middle class created schools that catered to the social class (Hiatt-Michael, 1994). Until legislation such as the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, children in lower-class families infrequently attended so that they could work to help support the family. Even with these changes and increased numbers of children attending school, parent engagement was usually limited to helping with homework, joining parent associations such as PTA, participating in parent-teacher conferences, and attending open house events. Once schools expanded and attempted to serve all children, models of parent involvement were often based on generalized conceptions that did not account for culturally distinct parenting techniques (El Nokali et al., 2010).

Trotman (2001) defined parental involvement as a partnership between home, school, and community to support a child's education. What that support looks like can differ among homes; however, historical literature has suggested that successful parent

engagement generally leads to higher test scores, better grades, and overall academic success. Wigfield et al. (2015) purposed that positive academic beliefs and behaviors are essential to an individual's motivation to succeed. When parent involvement is addressed, Wong & Rowley (2001) found that academic outcomes tend to move away from test scores and grades. Further, when Black parents are considered, little or no regard is given to cultural aspects of a student's life. Black parents often encourage academic success by transmitting messages to their children through the lens of race and ethnicity (Brown & Krishnakumar, 2007). Diamond et al. (2006) suggested that race can play an essential role in the degree to which Black parents are involved, although schools have tended to maintain negative perceptions of Black parents' behavior, thus underestimating the capacity of Black parents to support their children's learning. Roberts (2022) noted,

Unfortunately, culturally distinct behaviors of Black parents are not represented in the current parental involvement [engagement] literature. As a result, the current literature may suggest that Black parents are less involved in their children's academic lives than they are. The purpose is to shed light on a more culturally sensitive conceptualization of parental involvement by further understanding how Black parents may seek to promote their children's academic achievement. (p. 2)

Roberts (2022) concluded that Black children are often exposed to multiple contextual hindrances that impair their academic achievement, and in response to those hindrances, Black parents may become involved as a protective factor.

Brown v. Board of Education of 1954 was a gateway through which Black parents searched for communities with good public schools where their children could receive a quality education. Although the landmark case gave Black parents the green light to join

public education in predominately White communities, it did not stop the ongoing racial experiences that Black parents and students endured by educational professionals within the school environment (Vereen, 2020) who further suggested that racist school leaders and teachers too often display blatant refusal to acknowledge concerns related to racism that adversely impact Black and Brown parents and their children as it relates to their educational experience once they are shared. This response from schools often contributes to racism, invisibility, and silencing of voices as Black parents refrain from involvement completely.

Lee (2019) wrote that it is hard to deny that silencing minority parents in schools is actually about exercising racial privilege. Decades of racial bias based chiefly on skin color and all the racial nuance that comes with it continue to shape the parent-school relationship. Lee (2019) continued, whether school personnel admit it or not, silencing minority parents is about the habits of racism and the racial apparatus inherent in the everyday working of schools. Silencing Black voices contributes to less engagement and the inability for Black parents to build trust with school leadership, educators, and other professionals in the public school arena. Black parents are often viewed or characterized as not being involved. Parent engagement focuses on meaningful engagement activities and systems between schools and families and does not characterize or treat specific parent groups as deficient in their engagement or approach to education (Day, 2013). From the school's perspective, family engagement is intended to foster communication with parents about student performance and collaboratively support learning. Equitable family engagement describes conditions where all families are positively involved in their children's education. This often means ensuring that family engagement describes

conditions where all types of families are positively involved in their children's education.

Schools that emphasize and promote parent engagement in different ways provide equitable, inclusive, accessible, and culturally competent practices. Jacques and Villegas (2018) noted that equitable parent engagement is essential in ensuring parents have a voice to express concerns or feedback while ensuring equitable practices for their student's success in the school. Teachers and professionals are responsible for building relationships that help with communication regarding student success. High levels of trust correlate with parental involvement and engagement, better parent-teacher communication, stronger relationships, more positive teacher beliefs and attitudes about students and their parents, and more teacher outreach (Adams & Christenson, 2008). Black parents need to be able to trust school professionals when engaging with them and their children. Cherng (2016), based on feedback from 10,000 teachers in the U.S., found that teachers were more likely to reach out to Black and Latinx families if their children misbehaved, but they were less likely to tell them about their children's accomplishments than when informing White families. Data suggest that, therefore, BIPOC parents feel marginalized and do not feel comfortable engaging with teachers or administrators. Negative engagement and interactions can reduce parents' trust and contribute to Black parents harboring feelings that White educators do not care about their children and want to protect them. Brown (2022) reported that part of a parent's responsibility is to protect their children from harm; a teacher's negative judgment may lead the parent to question the accuracy of that teacher's beliefs about their child. Schools should support and train educators to cultivate and support Black parents. Brown (2022) suggested that Black



parents wonder if their child's teacher, principal, or other school leaders are complicit.

Black parents need to feel and know that their students are valued.

On October 16, 1963, author James Baldwin delivered his well-known "A Talk to Teachers," in which he argued that the United States was "desperately menaced... from within" (p. 325) by centuries of "racialized cruelty" (p. 325). In his speech, Baldwin (1963) implored educators to "go for broke" (p. 325). Educators were urged to address the racism in their classrooms and the fabric of U.S. society (Morrison & Porter, 2019). Part of racialized cruelty could include who is in power to set standards for students in public education, including curriculum and how students learn. Erdman (2021) of the Badger Herald reported,

Often, the history taught in school leaves out essential events and underrepresented communities or paints an entirely different, whitewashed picture. Whitewashed history leaves out minority and marginalized communities or hides the truth to make historical situations seem more palatable for white teachers to teach. (p. 2)

According to a CBS investigation published in 2020, seven states do not mention slavery in their state history standards (Zimmerman, 2020). Perhaps, intentionally or not, the absence of such information from the standards that guide the development of curriculum may indicate a racist and systemic occurrence that creates yet another barrier for Black parents.

Copeland (2020) suggested there are countless reasons that Black parents may decide to avoid public school enrollment. Significant factors include school administrator attitudes, inadequate race-based curriculum, and lack of empathy toward students of

color. School representation is vital in student learning and social-emotional well-being, and Black parents feel that this is not happening in public schools. Black children learn about Christopher Columbus' explorations while, at the same time, a movement exists to remove the history of slavery from the curriculum. Ellis and McKendry (2021) have repeated that Black parents' calls for inclusion are drowned out by strong White suburban conservatives making national headlines to ban critical race theory from schools K-12. Ellis and McKendry (2021) asserted that many Black parents do not see their voices reflected in the national conversation.

Ray and Gibbons (2021) stated that Critical Race Theory has become the new bogeyman for people unwilling to acknowledge our country's racist history and how it impacts the present. Republican state lawmakers continued their crusade against CRT through the 2022 legislative session, passing new legislation to regulate further how the teachers of the nation can discuss racism, sexism, and issues of systematic inequality in the classroom. CRT emerged in the 1980s as an academic discipline commonly taught in colleges and law schools (Anderson, 2021). The theory teaches how institutions systematically structure racism and how this country's policies and laws were shaped under racism. This whirlwind trend has been an ongoing concern for Black parents. Walker (2022) concluded that over the past year, there had been a nationwide campaign to remove books by and about BIPOC from schools, and Black parents have been organizing, pushing back against challenges to books that deal with racism and racial identity by calling on schools to reinstate these books.

Black teachers also feel attacked when Black parents address policies that continue the support of "whitewashing" curricula and history. Anderson (2021)

concluded that Black teachers are asked to follow policies that treat them “like second-class citizens,” and school districts deny them their human rights. Anderson (2021) continued that Black teachers, like Black parents, are expected to avoid attending to a part of their identity at school. Furthermore, if historical facts of Black identity are taken out of schools, Anderson (2021) asked, “How would Black parents feel like their voice or their children's lives matter?” (p. 1).

Huang and Mason (2008) suggested that schools should provide opportunities for parents to meet and share thoughts, ideas, and concerns on how to educate their students best. It is essential to gauge parents and families to empower and encourage them to have a voice and sit at the table around education reform.

### **Events Impacting Black Students**

The hashtag #BlackLives Matter is an activist movement that began after George Zimmerman was acquitted in the shooting death of Trayvon Martin, an unarmed Black teenager killed in July 2013 (Anti-Defamation League, 2015). The movement escalated with the high-profile deaths of unarmed Blacks during police confrontations. (Erica Garner in Staten Island, New York, and Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri). The movement continued and spread into public schools intending to create support and safe spaces for Black students. The National Education Association (2022) reported,

Across race and place, educators, parents, and allies are coming together to ensure that every Black student and educator can live, grow, and thrive with support, love, and joy. The goal of Black Lives Matter at school is to spark an ongoing movement of critical reflection, honest conversation, and impactful actions in

school communities for people of all ages to engage with racial justice issues.

(p. 1)

Inclan (2022) concluded that public schools must empower their communities, but their strength depends on addressing the systemic inequities that our students and communities face. Nevertheless, empowering communities to include stakeholders such as parents' input and parent voices on the importance of conversations to incorporate policies and educational input for students' experiences and learning. Christianakis (2011) proposed that empowering parents to engage with schools can help influence policy and power structures within schools and create a more recognizable culture based on the needs of various communities. Friedersdorf (2021) stated that the BLM Movement around the country sparked millions to feel compelled to respond to police killings of Black Americans and the inequities that bring about these incidents. Friedersdorf continued that parents and educators are primarily united in believing that Black lives matter, and schools should encourage students to reject racism and remedy its injustices, as many previous generations of schoolchildren were empowered to do.

The history of segregation and racist practices in public education in America have consequently led to negative perceptions of Black parents. Schools lack cultural competency in curricula, effective teacher development and training, lack of appreciation of Black culture, and racial bias in educators and administrators. Bacon (2022) concluded,

For the past decade, social justice educators have decried the school-to-prison pipeline: a series of interlocking policies policies often scripted curriculum that neglects the contributions and struggles of people of color; zero tolerance and

racist suspension and expulsion policies; and high-stakes tests—that funnel kids from the classroom to the cellblock. (p. 3)

### **Summary**

Chapter 2 described how, historically, Black parents have been discriminated against, the historical legal cases that impacted education, and systems of racism. Literature that indicates the impact of current events was also included. Chapter 3 provides the study's research design, setting, sampling procedures, instruments, data collection procedures, data analysis and synthesis, trustworthiness, researcher's role, limitations, and a summary.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methods**

This study aimed to examine Black parents' perceptions regarding their voice and relationships with their children's schools. As a qualitative investigation, one-to-one interviews were conducted with parents living in one suburban school district in a large, metropolitan Midwest region. Chapter 3 presents the study's research design, setting, sampling procedures, instruments, data collection procedures, data analysis and synthesis, reliability, researcher's role, and limitations.

#### **Research Design**

This study involved a qualitative phenomenological design that involved in-depth interviews to explore the perceptions of Black suburban public-school parents about their student's school district to determine whether parents perceived the district's practices were racially equitable. These in-depth interviews were based on perceptions and whether Black suburban public school parents felt their voices were being heard. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) suggested that an in-depth interview study investigates how participants conceive their world and make sense of their environment. Through in-depth interviewing, the feedback and patterns of thought are received from Black parents. Phenomenology is a design of inquiry from philosophy and psychology in which the researcher investigates the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as described by the individuals (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This research followed an interview process that included six Black suburban public school parents whose children were enrolled in one suburban school district. The researcher utilized responsive interviewing as the tool to guide the data collection. Responsive interviewing is essential

for this research because it aims to collect parents' perceptions and experiences regarding racial equity in their children's school districts. Rubin and Rubin (2012) noted,

The researcher's role is to gather narratives, descriptions, and interpretations from an array of conversational partners and assemble them in a reasoned way that re-creates a culture or describes a process or set of events in a way that participants would recognize as accurate. (p. 7)

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), the advantages of face-to-face interviewing can be helpful because participants can be directly observed. Furthermore, Creswell and Creswell (2018) concluded that researchers have face-to-face interaction in the natural setting, often extending over a prolonged period.

### **Setting**

School Districts A-F are located in an affluent section of a suburban area in the Midwest. According to the 2023 Public School Review, the area served by the school district includes an enrollment of 26,762 students. The district's racial makeup is 63% White, 7% Black, and 31% Other, which is primarily Hispanic, 5.4% (USA public school review, 2023).

### **Sampling Procedures**

Purposive sampling was utilized in this qualitative study. Creswell and Creswell (2018) suggested that purposive sampling involves selecting a sample based on the researcher's experience or knowledge of the sample group. Participants were selected based on their racial identification as Black Americans, and children were enrolled in one of the six suburban midwestern school district areas. Snowball sampling was utilized to identify possible subjects within the participant population. Glen (2023) concluded that

snowball sampling occurs when participants recruit other participants for the study. These steps are repeated until the needed sample size is found.

### **Instrument**

The researcher developed an interview script that consisted of open-ended questions related to the topic. Creswell and Creswell (2018) described interviews as involving structured, open-ended questions to solicit participants' views and opinions. The script consisted of 10 interview questions that were prewritten and included in the script, some of which were followed up with additional questions and probes to ask for explanations of answers. Probes are generic prompts for further explanation and examples.

The research questions and in-depth interview questions included the following:

#### ***Research Question 1***

What are Black parents' perceptions regarding equity in schools?

1. What is your definition of equity?
2. How are you thinking and feeling about equity at your student's school?
3. How might some groups of students be experiencing school climate differently than others?
4. What experiences has your child shared with you? Any experiences of racial bias from staff (teachers, administrators) in their school? If so, describe the incident.
5. Does the school have a clear mission statement regarding equity? If so, do you feel they implement the tenets of this mission statement with fidelity? If not, how would you suggest they implement it?



6. Tell me if you feel your child's district utilizes textbooks and other instructional materials that reflect, as much as possible, the experiences and perspectives of diversity among racial and ethnic groups. If you answered yes, provide an example. If you answered no, what do you suggest?
7. Are you aware if staff members of different races, ethnicities, languages, and national origins are represented equitably across the various job classifications from administration to non-certified positions? If not, can you give me an example?
8. Why did you choose this district for your child's education?

***Research Question 2***

What are Black suburban public school parents' perceptions of school support and encouragement of participation in their children's schools?

9. In your opinion, does the school encourage the engagement of all families and community members in school planning and support? If so, how? If not, what would you like to see? If so, provide examples.

***Research Question 3***

What are Black suburban public school parents' perceptions of their child's school regarding opportunities for input related to equity issues?

10. How do you feel about discussing equity ideas, feedback, or concerns with the administration in your child's school?

Following the drafting of questions, validity was established using an expert panel to evaluate the questions. Creswell & Creswell (2018) discussed that establishing validity helps researchers identify an instrument is suitability. The expert panel consisted of

expert A, a Black district administrator who is a director of student and family services with 25 years of district leadership experience; expert B, a Black university professor of education with over 25 years of district leadership experience; and expert C, a Black diversity and equity director within a suburbia public school district with 20 years of experience in school leadership. Expert A suggested that questions address the terminology, for example, when asking about microaggressions, and that what it defined is clear. Expert B felt that most interview questions align with RQ 1, and none elicit perceptions of RQ3. Expert C suggested that to get more clarity in the interview and understanding of participants' answers, elaborate by asking, “If so, what evidence can you point to that supports their commitment to equity?”

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Prior to data collection, a request to conduct the study was submitted to the Baker University Institutional Review Board (IRB) on April 18, 2023. Permission was obtained on May 1, 2023 (Appendix A). Consent to participate can be found in Appendix B. Those participants who agreed to participate were scheduled for a face-to-face interview. Participants were given the options to return the consent forms in person or by email. The interview script can be found in Appendix C. The interview questions are included in Appendix D and the dedoose table of participant responses is in Appendix E.

The interviews were conducted in a setting in which participants were comfortable to meet: a library, a conference room, their home, or wherever the participant chose. Rubin and Rubin (2005) indicated that qualitative interviewing involves two critical elements—hearing data and establishing a partnership between the researcher and

the participant during the interview. The semi-structured interview facilitated openness, enhanced participation, and the ability to remain focus on the research topic.

To conduct a better interview, it is helpful for the researcher to memorize the questions so that the researcher does not appear to read the interview protocol( Creswell & Creswell, 2018). At the beginning of each interview, the researcher greeted each participant in the location of their choice. This courtesy was given to each participant because their availability and preference might differ, which helped them be comfortable in their setting. Upon entering the room, the researcher thanked the participant for taking the time to participate and communicated with the participant that their feedback was valuable to the research. The researcher confirmed that the participant signed an agreement to participate and reminded the participant that at any time, they could choose to withdraw from the study. The researcher reiterated that the interviews were audio recorded and note-taking was done.

Rubin and Rubin (2012) stated that starting an interview with a casual conversation sets the pace for the discussion to be determined. This allows the researcher to “form a relationship” with the participant (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Building rapport with the participant was fundamental to assuring the participant would fully engage and offer responses and details that were ensuring the participants would fully engage and offer responses details that assured rich and meaningful data.

The interview began with ten open-ended questions. Using audio recording and note-taking allowed the interviewer to obtain details, anecdotes, and observations about the participant for analysis. Creswell and Creswell (2018) discussed that digital audiovisual materials allow participants to share their reality directly. Participants were

reminded that they would be provided a copy of the transcripts to allow them to make corrections or clarifications to statements.

After each interview, the audio version was transcribed by the researcher and placed in the participant's folder. This allowed the researcher to keep each interview organized for data analysis. The researcher took special care to ensure that the audio and transcribed versions of the interviews were exact. This was completed by reviewing the transcribed version of the interview while listening to the audio version. Each participant was allowed to address and correct the content of their responses

### **Data Analysis and Synthesis**

Creswell and Creswell (2018) stated that the qualitative data analysis process should follow these three steps: (1) organizing and preparing data, (2) reading and looking at all data, and (3) coding all data. The researcher created a spreadsheet table and assigned pseudonyms to study participants to maintain anonymity during the reporting process. The researcher used folders to maintain an organizational system for typed notes and other documents related to the study. An electronic file was made on the researcher's computer for each participant. This password-protected file contained audio and written transcriptions.

The Dedoose Research Analysis software package was used to upload and analyze files that contained the interview transcripts. Dedoose is a cross-platform for analyzing qualitative research through text, photos, audio, videos, and spreadsheet data (Dedoose, 2022). Descriptors are a powerful tool. Descriptors allow the researcher to analyze qualitative work across demographics and other survey data for more significant insights (Dedoose, 2022). Categories were formed and coded for open-ended response

data and themes. After the transcripts were uploaded, descriptors were used to provide demographic data for each participant. Categories were formed and coded for the open-ended response data, and themes were developed for each research question. The open coding process allowed the researcher to analyze transcripts and generate questions about the responses. Gibbs (2008) stated that analyzing questions and their answers through open coding provides the researcher with a foundation for more developed themes within the study. Ryan and Bernard (2003) stated that both themes come from the data and the investigator's prior theoretical understanding of the phenomenon under study.

After the researcher transcribed the interviews, the transcripts were given to the participants to review for validity. The participants were allowed to review the transcripts of their responses. McMillian and Schumacher (2010) called this response participant review.

### **Trustworthiness and Reliability**

Trustworthiness in qualitative research indicates how well a study aligns with its purpose and design (Alvarez-Hernandez, 2021). Alvarez-Hernandez (2021) continued that this is especially important for qualitative research since the researcher is the data gathering and analysis tool. Member checking was used during this study to ensure the exactness of results. Member checking is a powerful validity tool—one of many that require thoughtfully considered integration within the research project (Motulsky, 2021).

### **Researcher's Role**

Creswell and Creswell (2018) concluded that inquirers reflect on how their role in the study and their background, culture, and experiences hold the potential to shape their interpretations, such as the themes they advance and the meaning they ascribe to the data.

First and foremost, the researcher must acknowledge and always be mindful of any personal bias. As a researcher of color and Black suburban public school parent who has experienced racism, discrimination, and microaggressions in life and professional settings, it is crucial that I remain as impartial as possible and practice reflexivity during the research. Researchers convey their background (experiences, cultural experiences, history), and how it informs their interpretation of the information in a study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher must know that remaining neutral during interviewing is necessary for the study to be authentic. During this study, it was crucial to understand that past experiences shape interpretations. Some experts report the value of reflexivity. A reason to engage in reflexivity is to ensure that the researcher is not perpetuating oppressive structures within the research study or toward the participants (Smith et al., 2009). Reflexivity can open the door to possibilities, theorizations, understandings, and meanings (Alvarez-Hernandez, 2021). Furthermore, Creswell and Creswell (2018) stated that the researcher must be explicit about how these experiences may shape the researcher's interpretations during the study.

### **Limitations**

Lunenburg and Irby (2008) stated that limitations are outside the researcher's control. There was a possibility that participants may not have been forthcoming in their responses to interview questions. Participants may decide not to answer a particular interview item for many reasons. Also, although the researcher was very cautious to remain unbiased, the nature of this type of analysis makes that a possibility.

### **Summary**

Chapter 3 is a detailed explanation of the use of qualitative research design that engaged participants in face-to-face semi-structured interviews. Ten research questions focused on Black parents' perceptions of racial equity in suburban public school districts. This chapter describes the study's methodology, including the research design, sampling procedures, instruments, data collection procedures, data analysis and synthesis, reliability and trustworthiness, the researchers' role, and the study's limitations. Chapter 4 contains an explanation of the results of the data analysis.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Results**

The findings of this study were developed through in-depth interviews with Black suburban parents. This qualitative study was designed to examine perceptions of their local school district, their perceptions regarding equity, perceptions regarding input for change related to equity issues, and perceptions of school support and encouragement of participation in their children's schools. The researcher aimed to learn practical components to support equitable ways of engagement and to help professionals within the school district improve relationships with parents that may help educate children by interviewing 6 Black parents within a public school district with children enrolled in Kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grades.

Interviews were analyzed and coded to reveal themes such as Black suburban parents' perceptions of their district. The analysis of the data consists of the interviews transcribed, transcripts of the interviews, and all parts of the interview material (Wengraf, 2001). In addition, further analysis and interpretation include coding to understand relevant information about the central research question.

### **Participant Information**

Each participant was chosen as a Black parent (including guardians and custodians) and had a child or children enrolled in the Midwest region suburban area in Kindergarten through twelfth grades. The participants were coded as Parent 1 through Parent 6 to ensure confidentiality. The following are descriptions of participants including gender, number of children, marital status, additional formation offered by participants.



Parent 1 is a Black female with three children enrolled in the school district. Parent 1 is active in terms of participating in her children's education and considers herself to be a "true advocate" in her children's education. She also stated that she is frustrated sometimes with the district. She has children at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. She remained engaged throughout the interview process and provided thoughtful, candid answers.

Participant 2 is a Black male, married with two children enrolled at the elementary and middle school level. He and his wife have full-time careers; however, they make time to be involved and available as much as possible. Parent 2 informed the interviewer that his schedule allowed him to do the interview schedule, but his wife had to work. Parent 2 was confident with his answers during the interview and fully engaged.

Parent 3 is a single Black male who is raising his three children. His children are at the elementary and middle school level. Parent 3 is an active parent who has changed his work schedule to be available during school hours for his children. In the past, he had a job that prohibited him from being available during the day, and through his experiences, he stated he realized how that impacted some things and decided to change his schedule. He meets with teachers and the administration regularly. He had much to say during the interview, offering thoughtful and candid feedback and answers. He stated he was appreciative of being a part of the study.

Parent 4 is a married Black male whose child's academic career was in the same district, K-12. She is currently a graduating high school senior. Parent 4 characterized himself and his wife as active parents and involved in their student's education and considered himself an advocate for other Black students in the district.

Parent 5 is a single Black female whose child is enrolled at the elementary level of her suburban district and characterizes herself as a loving and caring mom who works two jobs. She has realized over the years how imperative it is to be more involved than her working hours have allowed. She stated that the interview gave her more insight and outlook on things connected to her child's education.

Parent 6 is a married Black father whose child has attended the same suburban school district K-10<sup>th</sup> grade and continues to be enrolled. He is a stay-at-home father who considers himself an active parent in the district and has been a part of the PTA. He considers himself one of the best fundraisers of the PTA at his child's school when she was in elementary. He has taken an active role in trying to connect with other parents, becoming a leader among parents with children enrolled in this school. During the interview, he had a tear in his eye while answering some of the questions.

### **Findings**

The three research questions organize the findings in this section. The findings under Research Question 1 addressed parents' perceptions regarding equity in their child's school under the umbrella of identified experiences of school climate, what equity means to them, and experiences with teachers and administrators. Most Parents, 1,3,4,5, and 6, reported a shared experience of dismissiveness when advocating for their children, including dealing with inequitable discipline protocol from administrators when their students were called racial slurs by other students. Parent 2 concluded that he did not have as much experience with equity issues; however, they had some situations that affected other Black students more than his child.

#### ***Interview Question 1: What is your definition of equity?***

The responses to the interview question revealed that Parents 1-6 all concluded that equity

meant equal access to education and treatment. Parent 3 elaborated on his answer,

Equity is having an equal part and an equal say, or in this country, around a school district; I noticed it looks different depending on what building you are at in this district. Some buildings in this district do not follow this. Some school schools are heavily White. I mean, some schools are heavily white, right? One White site is some schools in a district that is more than Hispanic. Right? Nevertheless, when it comes to African-Americans or black children, there is nothing like that. Right. It's not like one school is predominantly Black in this district or anything like that. So I see it as they cater to most of the races in their school, so I feel we do not have a voice.

***Interview Question 2: How are you thinking and feeling about equity at your student's school?***

Parent 1 specifically discussed inequities toward Black students during the pandemic with online virtual learning. Parent 1 stated,

At the elementary level, mainly when the kids went into the from-home learning, remote learning. It gave me a glimpse inside the classroom without actually being there. And I noticed that many of the children of color did not get called on a lot unless they seemed off task. A young lady needed help with whatever was going on in the math class, and I could hear her continue to try to chime in. The teacher never even acknowledged the student. It was to the point where I got my daughter's computer and was like, Hey, Mrs. So-and-so, you know, this student is

asking you a question. She has been waiting to ask you this question for at least 10 minutes, and you moved on.

Parent 2 had a concern regarding inequitable practices in his student's school. He regularly inquires about several things. He stated the following,

I think that one thing that I had a problem with the district this year is the 80% assessment slash test was weighted for their grades and 20% with homework, which, you know, I inquired heavily throughout the beginning of the school year with the administration at the middle school level inquiring why was it like who won made this decision, which was someone like this was over the curriculum and the district made that decision. However, I wanted to inquire to see if they had any engagement from stakeholders in the community, mainly, you know, the black and brown, you know, parents and different people. And it kind of just got pushed around, kind of more like, you know, this is what they have identified is the best method, you know, because I want it research to prove that this method was the best. Because, you know, as we all know, taking tests and assessments does not define one's overall, you know, performance, you know, their skill sets.

Parent 4 stated that his student never had any issues; however, his student came home and reported an incident about a a classmate's expereince. He stated,

We have never really had any problems while our daughter was in school K-12; however, I did ask the administration about an incident that she told me of a teacher getting angry at a student who wrote a paper about a particular historical topic, and apparently the student stated facts different then what the teacher was teaching, however, the student was right. The teacher's comment and how the

student was treated in front of the class was inappropriate and unprofessional. It was a Hispanic student. I brought it to the administration's attention and they took care of it.

Parent 5 raised numerous concerns regarding equity. This parent's student had been identified as a special needs student.

My child has an IEP and had some behavioral concerns, but it was connected to his diagnosis. They continuously kept calling me for every little thing, and I had him in counseling, and they knew his struggles. They started questioning him about my parenting while he was at school without my knowledge, and I was doing my best as a mom; they hotline me, and I genuinely believe it was because I was a Black mother. Why are you hotlinning me when you know my child has an IEP, you know his struggles, and I am involved in the IEP? When they did that, it rattled me.

Parent 6 discussed chronic instances where he had to advocate, and his concerns were not taken seriously. He stated, "The administrators are non-responsive, and they make it seem like they will handle situations just to get you to go away, but there are never follow-ups."

***Interview Question 3: How might some groups of students be experiencing school climate differently than others?***

Parents 1, 3, and 6 discussed that school climate looks different at different levels of schools and how teachers and administrators handle those school climate situations are different. Parent 1 expressed concerns about the school climate with her children from elementary to high school. She specifically discussed an incident.

My daughter was going out for cheerleading in middle school, and we went to the informational about fees and the cheerleading information. We were the only Black family there, and I believe there was also a Hispanic mom. When they got to the fee part, they started discussing financial help, and if there were some financial struggles, there was a program to help. When she got to this part, she specifically approached my daughter and me, which was embarrassing. Why would she assume I would need financial help?

Parents 2 and 4 stated that they had not had any incidents and had no reporting on this question. Parent 2 did state an incident that happened out loud in front of the class. He said: “A kid had said in the classroom out loud that Black people were gay. When I learned about it, I addressed it, and it was handled.” He concluded that if his child had any climate concerns, he and his wife would be up at the school following up on it. Parents 3 has children in elementary and middle school, and he stated, “If there is an incident in which someone is bullying my children, I address it, and they try and blow it off, but when I tell my children to defend themselves against the bully they go the extreme and cannot wait to suspend my child immediately.” Most parents concluded that disciplinary actions were not handled equitably concerning the school climate. Parent 5 discussed being discouraged when she gets phone calls regarding her student. She stated, “They call me for every little thing and make it so big but never call me when he is having a good day. I try to collaborate with them on some of his behaviors, but yet again, he has an IEP, and they told me they can not provide the level of service he needs. They eventually sent him to an alternative elementary school,

and I felt like no matter what I tried to do to ensure his success, they never looked at that.

Parent 6 discussed a fight incident at the school. He stated,

There was a fight at the elementary school, and a group of Black kids were in the fight. My daughter had nothing to do with the fight, has never been in trouble, and is a straight-A student. She was called into the office because it was assumed she was a part of it. After all, she was Black.

***Interview Question 4: Has your child shared with you any experiences of racial bias from staff (teacher or administrators) in their school? If so, describe the incident.***

Parents 1, 3, 5, and 6 discussed incidents of microaggressions and racial incidents.

Parent 1 discussed an incident with her children at the high school level. She stated,

I have a high school student who has Autism, and they do a pretty good job of looking out for him. and I like the unique education program he is in. My other children, his siblings, go to the same school, and he also has cousins. They all look out for each other. During the day, they check on him in the hallway and sit with him at lunch. One day, I got a strange phone call, and a teacher said she wanted to bring something to my attention. She stated that other kids were going up to him daily and she did not know if they were trying to recruit him in a gang. I was shocked. She was assuming. I told her my son has siblings and cousins in the same school and just wanted to check in on him. I was irritated that that was the first thing they went to.

Participant 3 had more than one incident but discussed his student's racial experiences. He explained, "My son had an experience of being called the n-word, and

when I addressed the administration, they blew it off and said that the other child, who was White, was just being a kid.” Participant 6 discussed how his student was called the n-word several times, and when he reported it, the administration never got back to him, he stated, “Administration never got back to me about my daughter being bullied and being called a derogatory word, so when I tell my daughter to defend herself, they are ready to suspend her.” Most parents report several incidents of microaggressions and racial slurs toward their children. They reported that they often have to advocate and explain to the administration that this is not okay and that blowing things off because they feel this is normal in elementary or middle school is not okay. The majority of the parent discussed how exhausting it is to have to advocate to get their point across constantly.

***Interview question 5: Does the school have a clear mission statement regarding equity? If so, do you feel they implement the tenants of this mission statement with fidelity? If not, how would you suggest they implement it?***

Parents 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6 had not known of any mission statement within the school district. Parent 6 expressed, “If they do have one, it is not presented or discussed; they do not advertise it. Maybe it is somewhere, but I am unaware of it. If they do, they need to do a better job of implementing it.”

When asked this question, the majority of parents could not recall if they knew if their district had a mission statement regarding equity. Parent 2 stated,

Well, from what I know, the school district, under the former leadership of the former superintendent, he implemented some diversity requirements for the district in its entirety to go through. I know the school board approved it, and even



though he is no longer with the district, they are still required to go through that.

***Interview Question 6: Tell me if you feel your child's district utilizes textbooks and other instructional materials that reflect, as much as possible, the experiences and perspectives of diversity among racial and ethnic groups. If you answered yes, provide an example. If you answered no, what do you suggest?***

Parent 1, a big advocate for her children, discussed experiences her children had encountered with textbooks and instructional materials. She discussed teachers needing to teach “facts” to her children. She reported that she believed that teachers did not use racially or ethnically appropriate textbooks or materials. She stated,

No, they do not. I would suggest they stick to the actual history books and do not tell my child that her ancestors were immigrants. No, they were not. Do not tell my child that her ancestors and everybody in America were immigrants or indentured enslaved people, or they wanted to work in somebody's house because that is not how it happened. That is not how my daughter came home with a paper. And it said, Where did your family migrate to the Americas from? So what I wonder is a Yeah. She is just going off of what they are teaching her. Oh, yeah, Yeah. Where did our family come from? How did we get here? I do not think we had a choice to get here. Like, I do not think my great, great, great grandma wanted to leave her country.

Parent 4 discussed his child's experience, a person he labeled to be an “old school teacher,” and the experience was positive. He reported,

Well, I can say for the most part, there are no textbooks. Nevertheless, the work one of my students or child had to do was several assignments in our world

geography class that did cover much different information on different regions like Africa. You know, just the whole learning about different people of color, not just like doing Black History Month, but more so just different projects where they were introduced to things more in line with our culture, which I thought was good. The teacher was the old school teacher, so he did many assignments that were just worksheet-related.

All six parents agreed that the curriculum should be more diverse.

***Interview Question 7: Are you aware if staff members of different races, ethnicities, languages, and national origins are represented equitably across the various job classifications from administration to non-certified positions? If not, can you give me an example?***

There were frequent comments from participants in this area that there were not enough staff of color in their children's school, from administration to non-certified positions, and that they would like to see more leadership. Parent 1 discussed how she wishes for Black leadership at the middle and high school levels. Parent 3 discussed experiencing a Black principal and made a powerful statement about the experience. He stated,

My kids had a Black principal, Ms....our black principal, who I adore. She is wonderful. Furthermore, when I brought things to her attention, she tried to take care of it; however, she shared with me that she was having a problem with the teachers in the building when holding them accountable and getting the district to back her up because she believes it was because she was a Black principal and they did not take her seriously.

Parent 4 discussed that at the elementary level, there were Black teachers and one administrator; however, at the middle school level, there were no Black administrators, teachers, or support staff.

***Interview Question 8: Why did you choose this district for your child's education?***

Half the parents reported that they chose the district because it was the community they lived in, and the other half reported that they chose to move into the community they were in because the community had great schools. Parent 1 discussed in detail why she made the decision. She reported,

So I said, okay, let me get my kids into one of the best school districts in the country. Furthermore, when I told their school in the state I moved from, Hey, we are going to Kansas; we will show me the school district. A couple of them knew, Oh, that is where you are going. Is not that one of the top schools? Moreover, I guess something like that. I knew they took pride in their students and their education. And I heard from word of mouth that their unique needs are because my 19-year-old has autism. Moreover, I heard they were, you know, they were really good with them.

The findings under Research Question 2 addressed parents' perception of school support and encouragement of participation in their student's school. More than half of parents reported shared perceptions that their involvement was not taken seriously, nor did teachers reach out for their participation in their student's academics only when the teacher wanted to report something negative about the student.

***Interview Question 9: In your opinion, does the school encourage the engagement of all families and community members in school planning and support? If so, how? If not, what would you like to see? If so, provide examples..***

Four of the parents reported encouragement and engagement were not happening, and Parent 1 felt like it happened with one of her children. Parent 1 felt that her child's district special education department communicates well; however, she stated: "I feel like they do a good job keeping me posted; they know I know my rights." She described that when her children reached middle and high school, the communication stopped, and they only contacted her if something negative happened. Parent 2 said he felt that he and his wife are so heavily involved that they initiated a lot and never felt like there needed to be any encouragement. Parent 4 expressed that he and his wife are automatically involved and do not need encouragement or collaboration. Parents 3, 5, and 6 discussed being contacted if there were incidents. Parent 3 elaborated by discussing how the only time the district reached out heavily was when they had to get a lawyer involved with an incident he had to advocate for his son about. He reported,

There was an incident regarding a teacher isolating my son inappropriately, and she was ignoring my son in class; he was one of the smartest kids. When I addressed it, he was the only Black kid in class. The teacher had lied about the incident, and I went up to the school and saw my son's desk isolated; the following day, I got a call from the district attorney wanting to question my son. Before that, I was going to parent-teacher conferences, and the teacher was not reporting anything all semester, then when this incident came about, she said he was a constant problem, and I was shocked.

All parents expressed that they were involved parents, and most stated that they had to constantly advocate and stay involved to protect their children from any future incidents from staff or peers.

The findings under Research Question 3 addressed parents' perceptions of their child's school for opportunities for change and change in equity issues within the school. Four participants expressed concerns that they are not taken seriously when addressing concerns and issues, or administrators or teachers target them after addressing them. In addition to parents' perceptions of constantly advocating for their students, a common advocacy theme was noticed due to the dismissive experiences when raising awareness of equity among teachers or administrators.

***Interview Question 10: How do you feel about discussing equity ideas, feedback, or concerns with the administration in your child's school?***

Four of parents said parents would be influenced when they constantly have to advocate for their students to have an equitable environment. Parent 1 discussed advocating and raising awareness with teachers, and when her students would go back to school, they would report that the teacher was targeting them. She reported that her children keep information from her because they do not want retaliation. She expressed to her children that she is their most prominent advocate. Parent 2 felt like there were no incidents, and when he spoke up about incidents towards other kids, he felt like they were heard. Parent 3's voice became shaky, and his eyes were became glossed over with tears while describing an incident. He reported,

There was an incident at my children's school, and when I tried to address it, I kept getting the run around from the teacher, and the administration did not feel

like they had any power. I went to the district office to try and get some answers.

When I expressed to the district secretary what I was there for, I told her why and the steps I was taking. I told her I wanted to discuss the concern of being dismissed and getting the run-around. I turned around, and she called security on me. I was professional and calm; however, I know why she called security on me.

It was because I was Black.

Parent 5 expressed that she feels like things will not be taken seriously or heard if she were to have the opportunity to speak with professionals about equity concerns.

Another conversation with parents was about how accessible school staff and administrators were, even if they wanted to speak with them regarding feedback on equity, ideas, or other concerns. While discussing their stories and incidents, most parents felt like they did express their concerns and told administrators or teachers how the incidents affected them and their children and what needed to be done, but there were no follow-ups. Two parents discussed that they did not encounter incidents; however, when incidents happened to other children, and their child witnessed it, they brought it to the district's attention and felt like their feedback was heard.

## **Summary**

Chapter 4 presented an analysis of research data gathered from the interviews of six Black suburban parents with students enrolled in six midwestern region school districts from Kindergarten through twelfth grades. The parents' ability to candidly communicate their perceptions about equity and their children's individual experiences within their school districts enriches the data. A summary of the findings from the analysis of the data received is provided in Chapter 5.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Interpretation and Recommendations**

This chapter begins with a study summary, an overview of the problem, a purpose statement, research questions, and significant findings. The final two sections of the chapter are findings related to the literature and conclusions. The conclusion includes implications for action and recommendations for future research.

#### **Study Summary**

This qualitative, phenomenological study was designed to explore the perceptions of Equity among black suburban public school parents of their children's school district and their experiences. The findings of this study were based on responses of 6 Black suburban parents during individual interview sessions. In-depth interview sessions with each parent were used to gain insight into perceptions of equity in the public school districts their children attend. Perceptions of school support, encouragement, and perceptions of parent input regarding equity. Participating parent responses were analyzed to identify patterns and themes.

#### ***Overview of the Problem***

Black parents' voices, experiences, and perspectives concerning their children's education have been historically left out of educational institutions. The historical presence of racial bias and equitable practices within public schools has been an ongoing issue. Thompson (2003) concluded that researchers should seek to identify the presence of racial socialization. As suburban schools continue to be diversified, it is essential to look into how inequitable public school practices affect Black children and how imperative it is to listen to Black parents' voices and experiences to address these issues

for Black students to have equitable access to education. Jackson & Andrews (2001) concluded that Black children experience racial discrimination in educational environments that actively depletes their self-worth.

### **Purpose Statement and Research Questions**

This qualitative study was designed to explore Black parents' perceptions regarding equity in their student's school, including support and whether schools encourage participation and input related to equity from parents. Data were collected through one-on-one interviews with six participants. Each interview included ten structured interview questions. Three research questions guided the study.

#### ***RQ1***

What are Black suburban public-school parents' perceptions regarding equity in schools?

#### ***RQ2***

What are Black suburban public school parents' perceptions of school support and encouragement of participation in their children's schools?

#### ***RQ3***

What are Black suburban public school parents' perceptions of their child's school regarding opportunities for input related to equity issues?

### **Review of the Methodology**

This qualitative, phenomenological study was designed around the research questions listed above. A solicitation email was sent to all potential participants (Appendix B). The six parents who responded to the solicitation email fit the criteria for



the study. Parents who chose to participate were provided details regarding informed consent and provided an opportunity to ask questions of the researcher. The six parents responded by email, and each was scheduled for a one-on-one interview. Interviews were held in person at a location that was comfortable for participants. The participants chose a study room at the public library or via Zoom through a semi-structured interview format. Ten interview questions were used ( see Appendix D).

After the interview, the researcher checked the each transcript against the studio recording to ensure the accuracy of the transcription. The transcripts were then sent to the participants to check for accuracy. After the six interviews were concluded and all participants completed viewing, the transcripts were uploaded to the qualitative data analysis program Dedoose. Transcripts, audio recordings, and the Dedoose program were used and stored on a password-protected personal computer that only the researcher could access. The researcher used Dedoose as an aid in coding data and organizing similar themes.

### **Major Findings**

The first significant finding of the study relates to the research question about parents' perception regarding equity in schools. The parents' perceptions differed based on their children's experiences across different school types. Most experiences and incidents were addressed differently based on whether their child was in elementary, middle, or high school. Some Black parents expressed that it was dismissed when addressing racial situations and advocating for their student at the elementary level; for example, if an elementary child made a racial comment, it was dismissed as something that children do instead of being addressed from a disciplinary perspective. Two of the

parents in the study said they felt that their concerns were addressed as they advocated for other students in the environment. Most parents explained that when dealing with equity issues, whether it was their student or another child, they have to advocate and approach the professionals and situations with a protective stance, making distrust towards school teachers or administrators. The second significant finding relates to the second research question on Black parents' perception of school encouragement and participation. There were differences among parents regarding the encouragement of participation. Two parents remarked that there was no encouragement; however, they felt they were rigorously involved, and it did not matter if the professional encouraged participation. The majority stated that professional encouragement for parents to participate was not happening, but professionals would reach out if something negative happened or if they were being notified of a situation. Some parents said they would like contact outside of the school setting so that their perceptions about communication only occurring when their child does something wrong are dispelled. The last significant finding relates to the third research question on Black parents' perception regarding equity-related opportunities for change. While two parents felt like their voices were heard as they brought equity concerns to the administration, most parents felt that their voices were not heard when discussing concerns within the school environment and culture. Two parents' reported retaliation from the administration or teachers when voicing their concerns. One parent said that her children were too scared to tell her about incidents because they knew she would advocate, and they were concerned about going back to school because of the behaviors of staff towards them when their mother was

advocating. There is a perception that it is a cycle in which they feel like it is a systemic cycle that makes Black kids feel like they must be silent.

### **Findings Related to the Literature**

The literature review in Chapter 2 includes a history of the United States educational system, focusing on the systemic structures of racism in education. The review also includes the historical background of how Black voices were muted in the public school arena. Horsford (2021) stated that White power structures govern and administer educational policy, research, evaluation, and pedagogy. These harmful structures continue to impact the retention of BIPOC educators and policies. These harmful realities have left an open door for biases to be overlooked and impact the rights of Black parents to have a voice regarding their children's education and a say on what is best for their children.

Historically, legal rulings have been implemented to mandate educational rights for Black children; however, those rulings have not made the educational system equitable. The findings of the current study supported what Horsford (2022) concluded. Most participants felt that equitable practices were not being implemented in the schools and that their policies, structures, and curriculum were not equitable to their children. The qualitative data showed that most parents reported that the school climate was not equitable for their children, and when raising concerns of racist experiences and microaggressions towards them or their children, school administrators or staff did not take their concerns seriously. National Association of Secondary School Principals (2021) noted that many school leaders had made some strides to ensure educational equity for each student, the educational system has perpetuated systemic racism for

decades through both overt aggressive racism and microaggressions- such as words and language used by educators and students that integrate students and staff of color, and tolerance actions.

Findings in this study align with those of Rury (2015) who found that suburban schools were originally attractive to White parents and that, for similar reasons, are attractive to Black parents. This study found, as did Rury (2015), that Black parents wished to have the same voice in schools as did White parents. Additionally, this study's findings seemed to parallel those of Smith (2021) that establishing equity is not, at least from the perception of Black parents, a focus of their children's schools. Because of these perceptions, it may be concluded that suburban schools, regardless of the extensive legal efforts that have taken place across several decades, have resulted in little change.

## **Conclusions**

Recognizing, understanding, and acknowledging the racial history and trauma in the United States through the educational system toward children of color across the centuries is imperative. It is imperative to acknowledge that racial trauma and discrimination are present through systems norms, practices, and policies that have continued despite the legal decisions that have been decided since *Brown v. Board of Education*. These truths harm Black parents' freedom rights and their children's educational success. The experiences and perceptions provided by the participants in this study are a starting place for collecting such data. This section includes implications for action, recommendations for future research, and concluding remarks.

## ***Implications for Action***

The implications of this study, while involving participants from one suburban school district, may relate to the other 5 districts in the suburban county. The participants shared their perceptions and experiences with the understanding that their voices are influential and deserve to be heard. While some of the experiences were positive, some negative experiences were harmful and impactful on them and on their children's lives. All 5 suburban districts in the county could use the data to reflect on their schools' educational practices, policies, and structures. Most importantly, these districts could significantly enhance their knowledge to engage in dialogue for parents to express their input or concerns, such as a survey and opportunity for parents to discuss their concerns and grievances regarding harmful practices that affect their children.

These findings may be helpful for districts to initiate programs that strengthen and cultivate better relationships with Black parents. To strengthen the relationship between families and educators, schools can work to positively engage parents to ensure that they feel welcomed, that their concerns are addressed, and that their voices matter (United Negro College Fund Institute, 2012).

***Recommendations for Future Research*** Recommendations for future studies relating to Black suburban public school parents' perceptions of equity are listed below:

1. A mixed-methods study measuring perceptions and institutional trust: A survey can be developed to measure if Black parents trust their schools and interview them to discuss their perceptions of the trust level. This could be combined in a study with further interviews of parents.

2. This study should be replicated in a different community setting, specifically within an urban district: A comparison can be made regarding climate and culture within the schools can be made concerning equity.
3. This study should be replicated at different school levels: A comparison could be made to determine if equity differs between elementary, middle, and high school levels. In this study, the parents continuously mentioned that equity issues vary at different levels.
4. A study that measures the impact of stress at school for Black students: An investigation in a district that is not addressing inequitable practices and how that affects educational outcomes may yield further information.

***Concluding Remarks*** The decision to desegregate schools to address the racial inequities in the American public school system essentially began with *Brown v. Board of Education*. Sixty-nine years later, those racial inequities still exist; in the school culture, student discipline, policies, and silencing of Black parents' voices by utilizing dismissive tactics from teachers or administrators. Furthermore, it is a perception that Black parents feel that school officials' only effort to reach out is when something negative happens with their student, dealing with microaggressions and a lack of active participation and partnership.

All 5 suburban districts in the county could use the data to reflect on their schools' educational practices, policies, and structures. Most importantly, these districts could significantly enhance their knowledge to engage in dialogue for parents to express their input or concerns, such as a survey and an opportunity for parents to discuss their concerns and grievances regarding harmful practices that affect their children.

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## Appendices

**Appendix A. Baker University IRB Approval Letter**



*Baker University Institutional Review Board*

May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023

Dear Roslyn Christopher and Harold Frye,

The Baker University IRB has reviewed your project application and approved this project under Expedited Status Review. As described, the project complies with all the requirements and policies established by the University for protection of human subjects in research. Unless renewed, approval lapses one year after approval date.

Please be aware of the following:

1. Any significant change in the research protocol as described should be reviewed by this Committee prior to altering the project.
2. Notify the IRB about any new investigators not named in original application.
3. When signed consent documents are required, the primary investigator must retain the signed consent documents of the research activity.
4. If this is a funded project, keep a copy of this approval letter with your proposal/grant file.
5. If the results of the research are used to prepare papers for publication or oral presentation at professional conferences, manuscripts or abstracts are requested for IRB as part of the project record.
6. If this project is not completed within a year, you must renew IRB approval.

If you have any questions, please contact me at [npoell@bakeru.edu](mailto:npoell@bakeru.edu) or 785.594.4582.

Sincerely,

*Nathan Poell*, MLS  
Chair, Baker University IRB

Baker University IRB Committee  
Tim Buzzell, PhD  
Nick Harris, MS  
Scott Kimball, PhD  
Susan Rogers, PhD

## **Appendix B. Solicitation to Participate**

Hello,

My name is Roslyn Christopher, and I am a doctoral student at Baker University and a School Social Worker and Mental Health Professional in Kansas City, Missouri. I am working on my dissertation focusing on Black parents' perceptions of racial equity whose students are in the Johnson County, Kansas School districts.

This email is an invitation to participate in the study. As a participant, you will be asked to participate in an in-person interview and ten questions regarding your perceptions and opinion on racial equity in schools regarding policies, academics, discipline, and relationships with staff and administrators. You will have the option to pick a location, day, and time that fits best with your comfort and schedule. The interview will be audio recorded and transcribed, and all informational and personal identification will be kept confidential. During the interview, there may be questions that may ask you to recount instances of perceived racial bias or microaggressions that may be stress-inducing. Your participation is voluntary, and you may decline to answer any questions.

Please respond through e-mail if you are willing to participate in the study.

Thank you for your consideration

Respectfully,

Roslyn Christopher  
Baker University Doctoral candidate  
School Social Worker, Mental Health Professional  
[roslynchristopher@stu.bakeru.edu](mailto:roslynchristopher@stu.bakeru.edu)

## **Appendix C. Script for Beginning Interview**

## Interview Script

Thank you for your willing participation in my research study about Black parents' perceptions of racial equity in their children's school district. The interview will be comprised of ten questions and prompts. I will ask follow-up and clarifying questions as appropriate throughout the interview. Your name or identifying characteristics will not be revealed to anyone.

I'd like to thank you for taking the time to speak with me. Your feedback is valuable. Just to confirm, we'd like to keep this interview to 30 minutes. Does that still work for you? Please let me know if you need a break or stop anytime.

Please be aware that there are no wrong answers — you're the expert!

This interview will be recorded and will only be used to help me in my research and won't be shared with anyone. I will provide you with a copy of the transcript within two weeks. At that point, you will be given a copy of the transcript and an opportunity to make any corrections or clarifications to any statements.

Finally, I want to confirm that you've received a participant agreement and signed it— is that correct?

You may end your participation at any time for any reason.

Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin?

Questions



## **Appendix D. Interview Questions**

### Interview Questions

1. What is your definition of equity?
2. How are you thinking and feeling about equity at your student's school?
3. How might some groups of students be experiencing school climate differently than others?
4. What experiences has your child shared with you any experiences of racial bias from staff (teacher, administrators) in their school? If so, describe the incident.
5. Does the school have a clear mission statement regarding equity? If so, do you feel they implement the tenants of this mission statement with fidelity? If not, how would you suggest they implement it?
6. Tell me if you feel your child's district utilizes textbooks and other instructional materials that reflect, as much as possible, the experiences and perspectives of diversity among racial and ethnic groups. If you answered yes, provide an example. If you answered no, what do you suggest?
7. Are you aware if staff members of different races, ethnicities, languages, and national origins are represented equitably across the various job classifications from administration to non-certified positions? If not, can you give me an example?
8. Why did you choose this district for your child's education?
9. In your opinion, does the school encourage the engagement of all families and community members in school planning and support? If so, how? If not, what would you like to see? If so, provide examples.
10. How do you feel about discussing equity ideas, feedback, or concerns with the administration in your child's school?

**Appendix E. Dedoose Table of Participant Responses**

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	Totals
Equity meaning	1	1	2	1	1	1	7
Inequitable	2	1	3		3	3	12
Elementary climate	2		3		3	3	11
Middldle School climate	1		1			1	3
Highschool climate	2		1	1		1	5
Unfairness of Discipline	2		3		2	2	9
Microagressions	2		2		2	1	7
Racial incidents	2	1	4		2	2	11
No diverse curriculum	2	1	1		1	1	12
Equity mission statement		1					1
No Diversity of Staff	2	1	2	1	2	2	10
Teacher parent Collaboration	1	1		1			3
Encourage involvement	1						1
No encouragement	2	1	2	1	2	1	9
Wont acknowledge racism	2		3		1	2	9
Targeting from staff	2		2		2		6
Change is implemented		1		1			2
Follow through		1		1			2
Input is supported	1	1		1			3
Input not supported	1		3		2	2	8
Advocacy	3	1	3		2	2	13
Total							