The Experiences of Transracial Families in PK-12 School Communities - A Narrative Inquiry from Adopted Parents about Identity, Bias, Microaggressions, and Systemic Racism

by

Carole M. Sutton

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

in the

Educational Leadership

Program

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

December, 2022

The Experiences of Transracial Families in PK-12 School Communities - A Narrative Inquiry from Adopted Parents about Identity, Bias, Microaggressions, and Systemic Racism

Carole M. Sutton

I hereby release this dissertation to the public. I understand that this dissertation will be made available from the OhioLINK ETD Center and the Maag Library Circulation Desk for public access. I also authorize the University or other individuals to make copies of this thesis as needed for scholarly research.

Signature:

Carole M. Sutton, Student Date

Approvals:

Jane A. Beese, EdD, Dissertation Chair Date

Rodney Rock, *EdD*, Committee Member Date

Patrick Spearman, *PhD*, Committee Member Date

Charles Vergon, *JD*, Committee Member Date

Salvatore A. Sanders, PhD, Dean, College of Graduate Studies Date

ABSTRACT

The number of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, also known as BIPOC, students in public schools has surpassed white student enrollment. This trend is projected to continue to increase as white student enrollment is projected to decrease. Students of color face challenges in the current school systems through their subjection to bias, microaggressions, and systemic racism. These negative experiences stay with the student long after the actual event and can lead to behavioral issues, social emotional issues, as well as mental and physical health implications. Students of color in transracial adoptive families are not immune to negative racial experiences even though their parents are white. This qualitative study focuses on the significant experiences of transracial families as they relate to racism, aiming to tell the stories of the families' experiences with racism within their public schools. Implicit Bias, Microaggressions, Systemic Racism, and Cultural Competency Theory provide the theoretical framework for this study.

The families who participated were referred through network sampling in two counties in Northeast Ohio. Data for the study was collected using demographic surveys and virtual interviews. The stories of the participating transracial families are compelling, highly personal, and extremely emotional. The results yielded the following nine significant findings: (1) Racial Identity Awareness, (2) Evidence of Racial Bias, (3) Microaggressions, (4) Significant Race Related Events, (5) Evidence of Strong Emotions, (6) Trauma Related to Racism, (7) Trauma Related to Adoption, (8) Systemic Racism is Still Evident in PK-12 Schools, (9) Cultural Competence Matters, and (10) Increased Parental Awareness. School administrators and teachers would benefit from the findings of this study to help inform and increase awareness of the significance of cultural competence in PK-12 school communities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my appreciation and gratitude to the Youngstown State University faculty members who saw potential in me long before I saw it in myself. Dr. Bob Beebe, may he rest in peace, demonstrated quiet strength through leadership. Dr. Kathy Nogay, who offered the example of leadership with grace and style that every female leader should hope to acquire. Dr. Chuck Vergon, who has been on this journey with me the longest, never allowing me to completely close the door on this goal. And most prominently, Dr. Jane Beese, my kindred spirit and my mentor, without you this work would not be possible. Words do not adequately express the gratitude I feel for your countless hours of feedback, steadfast guidance, high expectations, and never ending patience and belief in me.

To my committee members, Dr. Rodney Rock and Dr. Patrick Spearman, thank you for pushing me to dig deeper in the work of exposing racism, inequities, and the injustices that result. You have made this study richer because of your expertise. My Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging colleagues, Krista Allison, Colleen Kornish, and Patti Fetzer encourage and inspire me to walk the walk each day, even when it's hard and to improve our public schools to be a better place for all students. In the same spirit, I want to offer my thanks to Dr. Lindsay Slater and Dr. Rodney Harrelson. You are both my professional role models, who are unknown to each other, but were always there to offer encouragement, guidance, a reflective question, and mostly the presence of knowing you were cheering me along on this journey.

No strong woman is without a huddle of other strong women. To my friends, Micki, Katie, and Jeni, I am forever thankful for your constant encouragement, your crisis interventions, and most of all, the daily examples you provide for me on how to be an empowered woman. You make my life richer and more purposeful.

This study would not have been possible without the families who participated. Their stories were deeply personal, emotional, and heroic. To the Spencer family, the Jones Family, the Robbie Family, the Seals Family, and the Kanoochi Family, you are truly the example of commitment, absolute love, and unity. Your courage and determination in the face of adverse events and conditions is to be commended. Your shared experiences have inspired and humbled me. I thank you for allowing me the privilege of telling your stories in this dissertation.

To my brothers, Travis and Jonathan, you are my best friends. You make me proud beyond words to be your sister. I am forever thankful for your unyielding devotion and our unique connection that transcends geography and distance. Thank you for being the greatest gift our parents ever gave us, each other. I am also thankful for the example our mother set for us. Sara Kelley rose from poverty, single parenthood, and difficult conditions through hard work and the pursuit of education. We are better because of her.

To my Aunt Mary Lou and Uncle Lynden - you have been the grounding force, the foundation, and the ultimate example of devotion. You both have shown me unconditional love, support, and guidance through my entire life. Your support and encouragement to begin and continue my education has never wavered. I am eternally thankful for you both beyond written expression.

To my father, whom I miss every day. I wish you were here on this physical earth to see this goal reached, but nevertheless I know you are always with me. You provided me with the ultimate example of integrity, silent strength, and perseverance. You never allowed me to settle for less than my best, all the while displaying patience until I delivered. Your demonstrations of excellence in education, leadership, and life of service are guideposts for my own life. Your

support, love, and devotion make me so proud to forever be the daughter of Lt. Col. Richard M. Coppock USAFA '61 aka "the Colonel's daughter."

The Why of this study lies solely with Ashley, Brittany, Camryn, and David, my children. You are the reason I breathe. The four of you make me want to be a better mother and human being every day. You provide me with the motivation to improve educational settings, improve equity, and promote inclusion and belonging. I hope that you know you are loved and I aspire to be more like you; strong, compassionate, fearless, and passionate each day. My prayer is that someday, my grandchildren, Madison and Maverick will live in a world that is full of peace, hope, and inspiration.

Lastly, to my husband Sean, thank you. Thank you for the listening ear, the pages read, and the heartfelt hard conversations surrounding this research topic. Thank you for trying to keep our loud house quiet while I wrote. Thank you for cooking a year's worth of dinners, weekly grocery shopping, and dog sitting while I wrote. Thank you for your shoulder when I needed to cry and the hugs because this topic is so deeply personal for us as parents of a transracial family. Thank you for supporting me, always. Thank you for the family we've built. Thank you for choosing me twenty-five plus years ago.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

I am the researcher for this study and a white mother of two Black children. My Black children encountered negative racial experiences during their PK-12 school careers. We reside in a rural school district where my children were two of four Black children enrolled in the school of about 600 students. My Black son was bullied so intensely that once investigated, these bullying events met the threshold of *hate crime* according to the school's resource officer. These incidents were ongoing physical and verbal aggressions that included name calling, hitting, tripping, fist fighting, threats of lynching, and comments about returning to Africa.

My daughter was often met with racially driven insults, microaggressions, and repeated exclusions from her white peers and school adults. One of her best friends at the time once referred to "those people" when describing behaviors of Black people. My daughter, taken aback, questioned her friend's intent. The friend then back pedaled with, "not you, you don't really act Black." During her time in high school, my daughter had a teacher tell the class that Black people should not ever be president. Additionally, a white classmate repeatedly asked her if she was from Nigeria and then told her to go back to Africa where she belonged. These events caused unseen harm to my children that only manifested itself later in their adolescence and young adulthood.

PK-12 school communities are where many students learn life-long values, acquire most of their education, and develop socio-emotional skills that will shape their adulthood (Pertman, 2006). Schools should be safe, welcoming environments where students feel included and have a sense of belonging (Ali, 2010; Throng, 2020). Recent headlines, such as: "*For Black students in Kansas City's suburbs, attending school can mean regularly facing racist bullying*" (Martin, 2022, p. 1) and "*Melanin and Mental Health*" (Johnson & Bonsell, 2021, p. 1) are evidence of

racial issues occurring in our public schools. The article about students in Kansas City overviews constant racist behavior. “I went through a lot of trauma at a place that was supposed to be safe” (Martin, 2022, p. 2). Black male students often experience the highest levels of microaggressions (Smith et al., 2011). Black students were quoted in Johnson’s research with the following: “White students would make rude remarks in the hallways every single day and they would think of these insults as jokes” (Johnson & Bonsell, 2021, p. 3).

Both of my children have been diagnosed with mental and physical health issues that I believe relate to their racially charged experiences in school. They have been treated for depression, anxiety, and other more significant mental health diagnoses. My husband, our two older daughters, and I identify as white. We could not relate to their negative experiences in school or offer any substantive assistance to them as they endured this treatment. While our students were attending school, our family also encountered negative experiences attributed to racism. These events included microaggressions, negative racial comments, jokes, and vandalism to our home.

These experiences led me to this research topic. Our transracial family with white parents and Black children surely was not the only family that experienced issues with identity, bias, microaggressions, and systemic racism in the PK-12 school setting. I wanted to hear the experiences of other families that look like our family. I wanted to tell their stories framed within the current academic research to provide context and meaning to the families’ experiences so that I could contribute to the current research in this area.

Statement of the Problem

As of 2014, white students were outnumbered by students of color in the United States public school systems (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2013). The number of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, also known as BIPOC, students in public schools is projected to continue to increase as white student enrollment is projected to decrease (NCES, 2019). Students of color face challenges in the current school systems because they are subjected to bias, microaggressions, and systemic racism (Burleigh & Wilson, 2021). These negative experiences stay with the student long after the actual event and can lead to disengaged learners, behavioral issues, social and emotional issues, mental and physical health implications, as well as trauma (Steketee et al., 2021).

Students of color in transracial families are not immune to these negative experiences even though their parents are white (Smith et al., 2011). Families with Black parents foster the development of special skills for coping with bias and microaggressions. White parents are less equipped to foster these skills with their children (Smith et al., 2011). Schools should be safe places for all students where educators are culturally competent for all students. Instructional leaders found that their ability to be equitable and culturally responsive improved when school policies and professional development supported inclusivity and equity (Marshall & Khalifa, 2018). According to Lindsey (2016) "Educators have to be engaged in collaborative conversations and data dialogues as part of their district wide reform effort to support all students, parents, and community members" (p. 56).

Purpose of the Study

I determined that the focus of this qualitative research study was to share the experiences of transracial families within the PK-12 community regarding racial identity, bias,

microaggressions, and systemic racism. Facilitated questions within a structured interview format allowed the participants to share their experiences, which therefore determined the outcomes of this study in comparison to the current research. The findings of this study can contribute to the current academic literature and perpetuate understanding and acceptance of issues surrounding cultural competency in our school communities.

Research Questions

The focus of this research was defined during the discoveries made when conducting the literature review. The current research of racial identity, bias, microaggressions, and systemic racism within PK-12 schools did not tell the full story. This research focused on transracial families and how they were affected by their students' experiences as well as their family's experience in the PK-12 school community. I surmised that sometime during the students' school career the student and/or the family was supported by a culturally competent leader and/or transformative leader within the school community.

The research was driven by the following questions:

1. From white parents' perspective, did their adopted children of color experience significant events in PK-12 schools due to race?
2. What effects did these experiences have on transracial families?
3. What actions did white parents take when navigating school policies and practices in relation to their adopted students of color?
4. What did the white parents believe needed to change to make PK-12 school communities more inclusive and culturally competent for their adoptive children of color?

Overview of Methodology

I used narrative inquiry, the oldest and most organic way for participants to share their experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2014) through the stories of the student's encounters with identity, bias, microaggressions, and systemic racism in their PK-12 school setting. These first-person accounts of events and the impact on the family are critical to form the content of this research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2014). Merriam and Tisdell (2014) explained that "First person accounts of experience constitute the narrative" (p. 34) and will shape the research through interviews. The families at the center of this research engaged with me through online virtual interviews.

Significance of Study

The significance of this study resulted from the storytelling. The narrative analysis used the stories told by the families in this study to understand the meaning of their experiences with racial identity, bias, microaggressions, and systemic racism in our school communities (Merriam & Tisdell, 2014). The research technique used the stories of the family participants in the interviews. (Merriam & Tisdell, 2014). These first-person accounts of experiences provided the social context in relation to the constructs framing this study. The current research related to transracial families was limited, therefore this study perhaps will provide a preface to future larger scale studies of students of color in our PK-12 school communities from transracial families. The information gained from this study could provide comfort and solace to the participating families and bring about increased awareness to promote understanding to other families that have expanded their family through transracial adoption.

Role of the Researcher

Merriam and Tisdell (2014) describe the role of the researcher in a qualitative study "as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis" (p. 16). This qualitative study using structured interviews was no exception. By using a theoretical framework, my role as facilitator, researcher, and storyteller lessened the subjectiveness and potential bias that I may hold as I worked diligently to collect and interpret the data gathered (Merriam & Tisdell, 2014). Although some may consider me an insider to this study, I approached the role of researcher as an outsider using objectivity and neutrality during the completion of this study.

During the facilitation of interviews, I allowed for families to be organic in their recollection of events, but I adhered to the script of questions guiding the parents through the constructs of research questions developed as part of this study. Finally, this study had an inductive process defined by Merriam & Tisdell (2014) as "gathering data to build concepts, hypotheses, or theories rather than deductively testing hypotheses" (p. 17) because of the limited existing research surrounding transracial families. This qualitative researcher used the data collected to create themes and concepts not found in the current literature.

Researcher Assumptions

As the researcher of this study, I began with two major assumptions. The first major assumption was that transracial families have encountered similar negative, racially-based experiences in their school community as my family experienced. The second major assumption preceding this research was that each family somehow overcame their negative experience with the help and support of a teacher, principal, or other school administrator who demonstrated culturally competent leadership traits including "courage and daring leadership" (Brown, 2018).

In addition, I assumed that all the participants demonstrated genuine intent and honesty in their responses and description of their events. Good respondents understand the dynamic of the process and reflect and articulate for the researcher (Merriam & Tisdell, 2014). Lastly, I expected that all participants would be forthcoming, sincere, and descriptive with the information that they shared during our interviews.

Definition of Terms

Transracial Family: A family composed of racially different parents and children. In the United States, most transracial families are formed through domestic adoption of monoracial Black child(ren), and/or biracial child(ren) by white parents. *Domestic adoption* are those adoptions involving child(ren) born within the United States vs. international adoptions that occur beyond the United States borders (Smith et al., 2011).

Racial Identity: The APA Dictionary of Psychology (American Psychological Association, n.d.) defines racial identity as "an individual's sense of being defined, in part, by membership in a particular racial group. The strength of this sense depends on the extent to which an individual has processed and internalized the psychological, sociopolitical, cultural, and other contextual factors related to membership in the group. Given the socially constructed nature of racial categories, racial identifications can change over time in different contexts. For example, a mixed-race person might identify as mixed race in one context and Black in another."

Mix'd Race: Williams (2011) purposely selected the augmented *Mix'd* to define "White/Black Caribbean students" (pg. 29) that described the students who were the focus of the Multiple Heritage Project study in the UK.

Bias/Implicit Bias: The APA Dictionary of Psychology (American Psychological Association, n.d.) defines bias as "an inclination or predisposition for or against something".

Microaggression: The APA Dictionary of Psychology (American Psychological Association, n.d.) defines microaggression as "brief and commonplace verbal, behavioral, or situational indignities that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative slights or insults, especially toward members of minority or oppressed groups."

Systemic Racism: The Cambridge Dictionary (Cambridge University Press, n.d.) defines systemic racism as "policies and practices that exist throughout a whole society or organization, and that result in and support a continued unfair advantage to some people and unfair or harmful treatment of others based on race".

Cultural Competence Leadership: Leaders who display "critical self-reflection, community advocacy and engagement, school culture and climate, and instructional and transformational leadership" (Marshall & Khalifa, 2018, p. 533).

Belonging: The APA Dictionary of Psychology (American Psychological Association, n.d.) defines belonging as "the feeling of being accepted and approved by a group or by society as a whole." Williams (2011) adds to this definition by providing the synonym "groundedness" meaning that students feel secure in their identity and surroundings (p. 8).

Organization of Dissertation

This qualitative study focused on the PK-12 school experiences of transracial families centered around racial identity, bias, microaggressions, and systemic racism has been organized in four additional chapters. In chapter 2, current literature on racial identity and the effects of bias, microaggressions, and systemic racism on students of color and their negative effects has been reviewed. Transracial Adoption was defined and described using the current literature as it pertained to the focus of this research topic. The Literature Review also included relevant research on Cultural Competency Leadership Theory and Transformative Leadership Theory as

they related to leadership roles in educational settings. Two similar studies from the review of literature have been outlined in this chapter to provide the foundation for this study. In addition, a historical perspective of systemic racism in the United States, as well as the related benchmark legislation to disrupt racism, was discussed. Chapter 3 provides the research methodology in narrative design, the questions the facilitator will use, the research design, and overview of the participants. The data collection method and facilitation of evidence of validity and reliability is also outlined in the chapter. Chapter 4 covers the research results and analysis. Chapter 5 offers a summary of the results and discussion for future potential research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The news highlights events surrounding racism in our schools such as, *Parents Sue Minnesota Charter School Alleging Racist Behavior* (Simko-Bednarski & Brown, 2021, p. 1) and *A Teacher at a North Carolina Charter School Resigns After Claims of 'Field Slave' Comments To Black Students* (Riess, 2021, p. 1). These reports all depict negative, aggressive, and racially charged behavior in our U.S. schools. One does not have to look very far to see headlines, news clips, flags, signs, murals, or posters depicting diversity, equity, inclusion or the lack thereof. We have all seen multiple video playbacks of racial divide, violence, protests, pleading parents, and traumatized young people to know that racial injustice is front and center in American Culture once again. For those of us that thought racism died with the passage of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) or the Civil Rights Act (1964), we have been abruptly introduced to the concepts of white fragility, social injustice, systemic racism, microaggressions, and racial profiling all stemming from dormant racism that has been reawakened in the United States causing polarity and fear. How does all of this unrest shape our families, our students, and learning in our public PK-12 schools? Are families of mixed color experiencing acts of racism outwardly or covertly? Are students of color feeling included or excluded in the PK-12 school environment? Diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging are the underpinnings of students' ability to learn, a family's ability to prosper, and for our communities to feel safe and harmonious.

History of Race and Racism

Race is an evolving social idea that was created to legitimize racial inequality and protect white advantage. Historically, this is rooted in the colonization of America to create inherent

inferiority of the Indigenous people and the Africans that were brought to the colonies (Wilkerson, 2020). The suggestion of racial inferiority introduced by Thomas Jefferson was later commonly accepted as scientific *fact* (Wilkerson, 2020). The term *white* first appeared in colonial law in the late 1600s (DiAngelo, 2018). The system of racial slavery was born from policies that defined the white race as the ruling class with privileges passed along to European American laborers and indentured servants that were not enjoyed by Black slaves and servants (Allen, 2006). Therefore, a caste system of hierarchy and near impossible vertical mobility was created. Blacks who were considered chattel and free African Americans in the colonies were deprived their right to vote in order to categorize them along with slaves and servants (Allen, 2014). This action was deliberate and proposed to create a "plantation bourgeoisie" in the early American South, further separating the castes and devaluing people of darker skin color (Allen, 2006, p. 12).

By 1790, people were asked to claim their race on the census. From the 1800s through the early twentieth century, as waves of light-colored European immigrants entered the United States, the concept of a white race was solidified (Wilkerson, 2020). White Europeans were favored over Blacks in the labor force and therefore, were provided more opportunities for mobility within the newly forming American caste system. As whites moved upwards, opportunities for Blacks in industry, housing, and education decreased (DiAngelo, 2018; Wilkerson, 2020). Social structures, policies, and laws contributed to white prosperity and opportunities for growth and mobility (Myrdal, 1944; Wilkerson, 2020). When a racial group's collective prejudice is backed by the power of legal authority and institutional control, it is transformed into racism, a far-reaching system that functions independently from the intentions or self-images of individual actors (Wilkerson, 2020).

Racism became indoctrinated in the segregated South with Jim Crow. Jim Crow laws promoted racial segregation by creating laws that had severe economic, educational, and social penalties (Hswen et al., 2020). Economically, banks imposed terms for loans in defined neighborhoods targeted to Black families. This practice of redlining made it impossible for families of color to purchase homes outside of determined neighborhoods (Hswen et al., 2020).

The term redlining is first seen after the great depression to categorize the risk in home loans. The purpose of Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOCL), a lender the federal administration created in 1933 as part of Roosevelt's New Deal, was to rescue homeowners that were in danger of defaulting on their mortgage after the depression. This agency purchased mortgages facing foreclosure and refinanced the mortgages for longer terms in order to avoid a national housing crisis. Maps of suburban areas were physically created and outlined in green, yellow, or red. Green neighborhoods were outlined in green marker, deeming them the safest risk, while red marker outlined the neighborhoods that were perceived as the highest risk.

Rothstein (2017) wrote in his book *The Color of Law, A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* that in the 1940's an appraiser colored the map of a white middle-class suburb of Ladue, Missouri in green because it had "not a single foreigner or negro" (p. 64). Rothstein (2017) provided a second example of a similar middle-class suburban area of Lincoln Terrace that was colored red because it had "little or no value today...due to the colored element now controlling the district" (p. 64). Redlined neighborhoods were deemed higher risk to finance and homes in those areas were promoted mostly to people of color. The practice of redlining was not challenged until 1961, when the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights challenged regulators about complicity to lenders concerning redlining practices (Rothstein, 2017).

Legislatively, the practice of housing discrimination would not be made illegal until the passage of the Fair Housing Act (*Civil Rights Act, 1968*) under President Lyndon Johnson. The 1968 Act expanded previous anti-discrimination laws and specifically "prohibited discrimination concerning the sale, rental, and financing of housing based on race, religion, national origin, sex, (and as amended) handicap and family status" (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, n.d.). This legislation was a bold step to deter housing discrimination. Unfortunately, prior to 1968, the government's systemic policies directly impacted segregation of housing in the United States.

Jim Crow laws defined segregated schools in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries under the United States Constitutional legal doctrine *"separate but equal"* clause of the Fourteenth Amendment (Wilkerson, 2020, p. 117). The Supreme Court decision under *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) upheld racial segregation that permeated division in communities based on race. Dividing public spaces like restrooms, parks, playgrounds, and community swimming pools became commonplace. White amenities were modern and in good working order, while amenities designated for Blacks were not (Hswen et al., 2020; Wilkerson, 2020). The obvious message was that Blacks held lesser value than their white counterparts.

The Supreme Court's decision to uphold the state's position of separate but equal solidified race isolation and exclusion not only in schools, but throughout all institutions and settings, creating a caste system in the United States for over half a century (Wilkerson, 2020). Again, reinforcing the sociopolitical context of systemic racism. Only after *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) was the standard of "*separate but equal"* found unconstitutional (McCoy, 2020). It would take another decade to pass civil rights legislation through the Civil Rights Act

(1964). The state and federal lawmakers, majority of who were white, were slow to initiate change that would lead to more diversity, equity, and inclusion in all aspects of American life.

Caste Versus Culture

Caste and culture have been two powerful concepts seen within our communities, schools, and classrooms via Sociopolitical Context (Hammond, 2015). These terms are used to describe the series of mutually reinforcing policies and practices across social, economic, and political domains that contribute to disparities and unequal opportunities for people of color in housing, transportation, education, and health care. These unequal opportunities result in unequal outcomes along racial and class lines (Hammond, 2015).

Unlike caste, culture is made up of the following layers: surface, shallow, and deep. Culture is the way that every brain makes sense of the world in which we live (Hofstede, 2011). All layers create some level of emotional charge, rules, expectations, and beliefs (Hammond, 2015). Surface culture is all the observable and concrete elements within a community, such as food, dress, music, and holidays (Hammond, 2015; Hofstede, 2011). Shallow culture is made up of the unspoken rules around everyday social interactions and norms, such as courtesy, attitudes towards elders, nature of friendship, concepts of time, personal space between people, nonverbal communication, rules about eye contact, or appropriate touching (Hammond, 2015; Hofstede, 2011). Deep culture is made up of indirect knowledge and unconscious assumptions that govern our cosmology (view of good or bad) that guide ethics, spirituality, health, and theories of group harmony (i.e., competition or cooperation) (Hammond, 2015). Challenges to cultural values at the deep culture level produce culture shock or trigger the brain's fight or flight response (Hammond, 2015; Hofstede, 2011).

Structural Racialization

Structural racializations are demonstrated through complex systems of organizations, institutions, individuals, processes and policies such as, housing, education, and health. All of which are harmful to people of color and to our society as a whole. Structural racialization is deeply connected to the relationship between where one lives and how location and geography affect one's access to education and job opportunities, as well as other quality of life factors (Hammond, 2015).

Over time, because of structural racialization in education, we have seen a new type of intellectual apartheid happening in schools, creating dependent learners who cannot access the curriculum and independent learners who had the opportunity to build cognitive skills to do deep learning on their own (Hammond, 2015). Structural racialization in education coupled with microaggressions, microinsults, and microinvalidations can lead to traumatized students. Trauma can slow down or completely stop the ability to learn. Students experiencing trauma are more likely to fall behind in class or have negative behaviors leading to increased discipline (Crosby, 2015).

Students who are continually on the receiving end of race-related behaviors feel insecure and unsafe, which therefore, interrupts their basic human needs. (Bremner & Narayan, 1998; Cole et al., 2005). Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs is the five-tier hierarchical model that depicts food, clothing, and safety as the foundational tiers of every human's needs. The next tier is love and belonging. The top tiers are esteem and self-actualization (Maslow, 1943). Engaged learning is simply not possible if the basic needs of safety and belonging are not fulfilled and it will remain frozen until those needs are met. Trauma can impede cognitive, social, and emotional development in childhood, which can impair youth academic achievement, behavior

and interpersonal skills, and general success in schools (Bremner & Narayan, 1998; Cole et al., 2005). Therefore, if students are feeling unsafe and insecure in the classroom, they may begin to struggle with racial identity.

Legislative Initiatives to Address Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Schools

Historical Summary of Twentieth Century Legislation

Brown v. Board of Education (1954) started the legislative journey of the United States Federal Government to undo harmful and divisive laws like, *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896). The landmark Civil Rights Act (1964) "prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex or national origin. Provisions of this civil rights act forbade discrimination on the basis of sex, as well as race in hiring, promoting, and firing. The Act prohibited discrimination in public accommodations and federally funded programs. It also strengthened the enforcement of voting rights and the desegregation of schools" (Office of the Assistant Secretary for Administration & Management, n.d.). This legislation strengthened the ability of Congress to enforce fundamental rights through the distribution of federal funds.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965) was passed to address equal access to education, close achievement gaps, and initiate federally funded educational programs. The legislation focused on children of low-income, rural, Native-American, neglected, migrant, homeless, and/or English language limited students. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965) began to pave the way for equity in education for all minority students and was reauthorized many times, recently in the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015).

The Federal Government passed three additional anti-discriminatory education acts that promoted equity in the twentieth century: The Bilingual Education Act (1968), Title IX of the Education Amendments (1972), and The Rehabilitation Act (1973), specifically Section 504. The

Bilingual Education Act (1968) also known as Title VII, addressed the need for students with limited English proficiency by establishing educational programs that support English language development and provide access to school curriculum. Title IX of the Education Amendments (1972) prohibited sex-based discrimination in any school or educational setting that receives federal funding. Most notably, Title IX established gender equity in athletics and other educational programming. Recent proposed changes to Title IX of the Education Amendments (1972) would include discrimination on sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity on a broader scale (U.S. Department of Education, 2022). Finally, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (1973) denies discrimination and/or the denial of benefits to any program or activity that benefits from federal funding.

President Biden's Executive Order

President Biden's Executive Order (see Appendix A) on June 25, 2021 made the advancement of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in the Federal Government a national priority (Exec. Order No. 14035, 2021). "This Executive Order reaffirms that the United States is at its strongest when our Nation's public servants reflect the full diversity of the American people" (White House, 2021).

Summary of the Executive Order:

- Establishes a government-wide initiative to advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in all parts of the federal workforce.
- Charges all agencies with assessing the current state of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility within their workforces, and developing strategic plans to eliminate any barriers to success faced by underserved employees.

- Directs agencies to seek opportunities to establish or elevate chief diversity officers within their organizations.
- Expands diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility training throughout the federal workforce.
- Addresses workplace harassment, including sexual harassment.
- Reduces the Federal Government's reliance on unpaid internships, which can create barriers for low-income students and first-generation professionals.
- Advances pay equity to ensure that all public servants are fairly compensated for their work and their talents.
- Advances equity in the workplace for individuals with disabilities.
- Advances equity in the workplace for LGBTQ+ public servants.
- Builds a more diverse pipeline into public service through new recruitment partnerships.
- Expands federal employment opportunities for formerly incarcerated individuals.
- Advances equity in professional development.
- Improves the collection of demographic data about the federal workforces.

Although the wording in Biden's Executive Order highlights members of the LGBTQ+ community in the federal workforce, the connection to people of color is made clear in many of the statements throughout the context of the document for example, "Even with decades of progress building a federal workforce that looks like American, the enduring legacies of employment discrimination, systemic racism, and gender inequality are still felt today. Too many underserved communities remain under-represented in the Federal workforce, especially in positions of leadership" (White House, 2021). Most importantly, this Executive Order called

upon independent agencies to "comply with the provisions of this order" (Exec. Order No. 14035, 2021), which therefore, provided the backbone needed for state and local initiatives around the issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

State Initiatives to Address Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Ohio

In July of 2020, the Ohio State Board of Education adopted *Resolution 20. Resolution to Condemn Racism and to Advance Equity and Opportunity for Black Students, Indigenous Students and Students of Color* (State Board of Education of Ohio, 2020). This resolution (see Appendix B) by the State Board of Education of Ohio (2020), coupled with the previous *Ohio Strategic Plan for Education: 2019-2024 Each Child, Our Future* adopted in June 2018, which

> created a vision that in Ohio, each child is challenged to discover and learn, prepare to pursue a fulfilling post-high school path, and empowered to become a resilient, lifelong learner who contributes to society; Equity is our plan's greatest imperative and number one principle; and profound disparities between Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) students and their white peers exist in all parts of the Ohio education system

were state initiatives.

This document also outlined the Board's belief that diversity, equity, and inclusion matter and should be prioritized in our school communities. It should be noted that the State Board of Education rescinded *Resolution 20* on October 14, 2021, in a political environment that also resulted in the requested resignations or retirements of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Deputy Superintendent, the Board President, and one other senior member of the Board.

Although rescinded, the Ohio Department of Education furthered this effort through The Human Capital Resource Center (HCRC). The HCRC defined culturally responsive practice as an "approach that encompasses and recognizes both students' and educators' lived experiences,

culture, and linguistic capital." (Ohio Department of Education, The Human Capital Resource Center, n.d.). The HCRC designed a four-course program using the Ohio Department of Education's learning management system for content delivery and participant interaction. The HCRC teamed up with Ohio Leadership Advisory Council (OLAC) to facilitate learning through professional learning communities and train-the-trainer models with the following four courses: *Introduction to Culturally Responsive Practice, Cultural Responsiveness, Socio-Political Awareness and Academic Achievement* (Ohio Department of Education, The Human Capital Resource Center, n.d.).

Local Efforts to Address Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Education

Community partners are also engaged in this work. The Dismantling Racism Coalition of Stark County is a collaboration between fifteen organizations in and around Stark County, Ohio (Dismantling Racism Stark County, n.d.). This collaboration created an eight- and/or fifteen-day challenge to participants that included activities like podcasts, reading published articles, and participating in community dialogue around race and inequity (Dismantling Racism Stark County, n.d.). The originator, Dr. Eddie Moore, developed a 21-day challenge on the national level, to do "one action per day to further the participants' understanding of power, privilege, supremacy, oppression, and equity" (Moore, 2021). This challenge engages participants in a discovery on how racial and social injustice impacts their community, thus promoting awareness and understanding.

Theoretical Framework

Implicit Racial Bias

According to the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity (2013), there are two key components of sociopolitical context: *implicit racial bias and structural racialization*.

Together, they are reinforced like bookends and hold a system of inequality in place that does not require overt racism or any racist actors at all to maintain it (Hammond, 2015).

Implicit bias refers to the unconscious attitudes and stereotypes that shape our responses to certain groups, which operates involuntarily, often without one's awareness or intentional control that is different from explicit racism (Hammond, 2015). Educators are not excluded from holding implicit bias. Students in their care may experience comments and attitudes stemming from the hidden beliefs of the adult's experiences with culture, age, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, and disability status (Harrison-Bernard et al., 2020). The adult educators are not isolated in expressing their implicit bias. Students also hold beliefs that are transferred to their peers through comments and behaviors, and therefore create situations whereby students of color experience social or peer exclusion and microaggressions (Burleigh & Wilson, 2021; Forrest-Bank & Jenson, 2015).

Microaggressions

Microaggressions are not overt but small nonverbal snubs, dismissive looks, exclusions, condescending tones, or gestures that send powerful messages to the recipients (Kohli & Solórzano, 2012). The human brain has "what is called *negativity bias*, meaning it remembers and responds to negative experiences up to three times more than positive experiences" (Hammond, 2015, p. 113). Hammond (2015) states "The human brain reads these negative microaggressions as feedback from our environment and codes them" (p. 113) providing reinforcement to a developing negative mindset. Additionally, microaggressions can take several forms in schools: microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations (Hammond, 2015).

Microassaults involve misusing power and privilege in subtle ways to marginalize students and create different outcomes based on race or class (Hammond, 2015). One example

would be excluding younger children of color from fun activities like recess or parties as consequence for minor discipline issues. Microinsults involve being insensitive to culturally and linguistically diverse students and trivializing their racial and cultural identity, such as not learning to pronounce their name properly or giving them an anglicized name to make it easier on the adult educator (Hammond, 2015). Finally, microinvalidation actions nullify or negate an experience or reality of a person of color, which includes trivializing students' experiences, telling them they are being too sensitive, accusing them of "playing the race card" (Hammond p. 113), or dismissing them altogether.

Racial microaggressions, nativist microaggressions, and immigrant-origin microaggressions are three types of microaggressions that appear in the research of Steketee et al. (2021) on school environment. Racial microaggressions are a form of oppression that reinforce traditional power differentials between groups and are often linked to stereotypes (Steketee et al., 2021). Marginalized students are often the receivers of this type of microaggression and evidenced by expression of surprise when students of color get answers correct followed by excessive praise. These actions send the message that students of color were not expected to know the answer because they are not as smart as their white peers (Steketee et al., 2021; Williams, 2011). Steketee et al. (2021) tell us, "Racial microaggressions in schools may emerge as messages conveying insensitivity to students of color" (p. 7).

Subtle acts of racism, in the form of microaggressions, show up in the classroom as insults, slights, intimidations, and statements against students of color (Posey-Maddox, 2017; Steketee et al., 2021) affecting their mental health, self-esteem, and learning outcomes, negatively. Microaggressions are straining on the recipient, while Asian, Black, Hispanic, and Native Americans are more negatively affected by microaggressions than their White American

counterparts (Clark et al., 2014; Johnston-Goostar & Roholt, 2017; Lui & Quezada, 2019; Steketee et al., 2021).

Transracial Family

The Transracial Family is defined as white parents who have adopted children of color. In the United States, most transracial families are formed through domestic adoption of monoracial Black child(ren), and/or biracial child(ren) by white parents. *Domestic adoption* are those adoptions involving child(ren) born within the United States vs. International Adoptions that occur beyond the United States borders (Smith et al., 2011).

Zill reported in his 2017 article, *The Changing Faces of Adoption in the United States*, data from the National Center for Education Statistics, The United States Department of Education on the ethnic distribution of adoptive mothers of kindergartners from the United States Census of 2011. The data stated that 77% of all mothers of incoming kindergarten students were white, while 61% of all the adopted kindergartners are students of color (Zill, 2017). This article pointed out that the number of transracial families had increased by 50% (Zill, 2017). Census data became the largest national sample of data about families that have adopted transracially and highlighted about 2.5% of the total children in the United States were adopted (Smith et al., 2011). Smith et al. (2011) also shared that 13% of Black children in the United States were living with their biological parents compared to 16% of Black children living with adoptive parents. This data shapes the need to address transracial families and their experiences in the PK-12 school community.

Melissa Guida-Richards (2021) explains "adoption can be a wonderful choice you can make to expand your family, but it is not simply the selfless act that many people assume it to be. The reasons couples choose adoption are multifaceted and each is deeply personal" (p. 22). The

complex reasons families choose to adopt could be the focus of many diverse research studies along with the multitude of topics surrounding adopted families. Nonetheless, the focus of this literature review was narrowed to the research surrounding experiences of the children in their school settings with racial identity, bias, microaggressions, and systemic racism within the school community.

Transracial families often enter the adoption process with the thought that love will conquer any and all issues related to their children's racial identity development, which is often a disservice to their children of color (Guida-Richards, 2021). The white privilege that adoptive parents hold in transracial families will not "protect their children of color indefinitely" (Guida-Richards, 2021, p. 16) from bias, microaggression, and racism. Guida-Richards (2021) warns us that "white adoptive parents need to be willing to do the work and learn how to prepare children for a world that does not see color" (p. 16).

Black children in transracial families experience challenges in coming to terms with their racial identity (Wright, 1998). Children of white adopted parents may tend to lessen their blackness that is played out in behaviors like preference of white dolls or being overly embarrassed of their racial differences in either themselves or their parents (Guida-Richards, 2021; Wright, 1998). The children in transracial families are also more likely to encounter invasive questions and uncomfortable stares when out in public (Wright, 1998). This only adds to their feelings of not fitting in, when the outward appearance of family likeness is visibly different (Guida-Richards, 2021; Wright, 1998).

Fifty transracial adoptees reported in an anonymous survey that their first experience with racism occurred as children (Guida-Richards, 2021). These BIPOC children are often raised in mostly white communities and rarely encounter other people that look like them, "making them

highly aware of their different status as a person of color." (Guida-Richards, 2021, p. 40). Racial-ethnic socialization means to socialize children within their own race or ethnicity and is developmentally healthier for children learning how to cope with acts of racism (Guida-Richards, 2021). In transracial families where race is openly discussed, parents are purposeful about creating a multi-racial community of friends and family, supporting their child's racial identity and seeking out racially mixed schools, which will increase the likelihood that their adopted child(ren) of color will reach adulthood having positive feelings about themselves and their adoptive parents (Tatum, 1997).

Leadership

When studying leadership theory, I found that Cultural Competency Leadership Theory and Transformative Leadership Theory were the most relevant to underpin the theoretical framework for exploring the impact of bias, microaggressions, and systemic racism on transracial families in our PK-12 school communities. The intersection of these two theories examines the values and behaviors that guide educational practices for students of all backgrounds while motivating the educational leader to examine how students and communities are underserved and what the leader can do to serve them differently (Terrell et al., 2018).

Tillman et al. (2006) argue that leadership is transformative, moral, and driven by social justice. According to Terrell et al. (2018) a culturally competent leader engages in three practices closely tied to transformative leadership: "cultural pre competence, cultural competence, and cultural proficiency" (p. 31). Leaders who are reflective and engage in continuous learning will move through this continuum and transform into a mentor and advocate for equity "holding a vision that [the leader] and school are instruments for creating a socially just democracy" (Terrell et al., 2018, p. 32).

Cultural Competency Leadership Theory

Leaders who display effectiveness across cross-cultural situations are culturally proficient with their students, their school communities, and with their staff and colleagues (Terrell et al., 2018). The journey to become a culturally competent leader starts with self and one's ability to recognize assumptions and biases. This paradigmatic shift in mindset moves the viewpoint of underperforming demographic groups as problematic to a commitment to creating diverse, equitable, and inclusionary learning environments in our school communities (Shields, 2010; Terrell et al., 2019). In other words, the leader starts with reflection and self-examination of bias, beliefs, and values.

Culturally competent leadership can be seen at all levels of a school community; the term is not exclusive to administration or faculty (Govan, 2011). Cultural Competence is not a destination but rather a continuous journey of learning and growth. Competent leaders, who are purposeful about developing their own cultural competence, practice daily with the support of colleagues, and continually learn from their mistakes (Govan, 2011). Leaders who are committed to leading our schools, educating students to high levels of achievement, and creating communities of equity, value and use students' cultural backgrounds, languages, and learning styles to enhance the school community (Terrell et al., 2018).

Ten qualities are often used to describe culturally competent leaders, whose membership includes any person at any level of the school community. The first of these qualities is learning. Continual learning and acknowledging one's own bias, stereotypes, privilege, and power along with sharing what they learn and seeking opportunities for growth are all examples of the learning characteristic (Govan, 2011; Terrell et al., 2018).

Culturally competent leaders are courageous and strategic. These educators are grounded by their values, they show courage over comfort, engage in courageous conversations, and speak truth to power (Brown, 2018; Govan, 2011; Terrell et al., 2018). These leaders are committed to social justice and advocate for students who are identified as underserved (Terrell et al., 2018). The mission and vision of the school community is clear and well-defined ensuring all action steps support a strategic plan that promotes inclusivity and equity (Govan, 2011).

Leaders who demonstrate cultural competence are data driven and transparent. Seeking input from all facets of the school community, using research and collaboration to address barriers to learning, holding people accountable, and using data to inform decisions are the means to a transparent, communication-rich learning community (Govan, 2011; Terrell et al., 2018).

The final characteristics that define a culturally competent leader are the following: inclusivity, sensitivity, connectedness, enthusiasm, and realism. These educators recognize that meaningful change is not going to occur overnight and are able to promote an atmosphere that encourages long-term engagement (Goven, 2011). The culturally competent leader seeks to work among a community of like-minded educators who are also committed to improving the educational environment to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion (Terrell et al., 2018). The progression to cultural competency does not happen in a vacuum, it requires a self-realization that there is a need for real change and the intentionality to make the transformation in the educational community.

Transformative Leadership Theory

Burns' initiated the work around Transformative Leadership in 1978. This work centered around the need for *real change*, differentiating between *simple or superficial change,* and

metamorphosis change in a structured ecosystem (Shields, 2020). These leadership behaviors are demonstrated through actions and interactions of idealized influence, inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation (Anderson, 2017). Developing goals that represent the values and motivations of both leaders and followers are encouraged by a transforming leader (Burns, 1978; Shields, 2020). Shields (2020) writes, "Transformative Leadership is leadership that begins by recognizing that the inequities that prevent our attainment of a deep democracy not only exist in every community but that these material inequities powerfully and detrimentally affect the possibility of equitable educational outcomes for all students" (p. 18).

Strong educational leaders within our school communities recognize the need for increased equity among educational resources and the strength in diversity among community members to promote inclusivity. These same leaders, Shields (2020) writes, "combine careful attention to authentic, personal leadership characteristics, a focus on more collaborative dialogic, and democratic processes of leadership; and at the same time, attend simultaneously to goals of individual development and goals of collective sustainability, social justice, and mutually beneficial civility society" (p. 18). Shield's (2020) text reinforces that leadership in our PK-12 educational system is also the leadership in our communities that uses diversity, equity, and inclusion as strengths and opportunities for all to grow and prosper.

Inspiration, motivation, vision, growth, change, and reform are the basic tenets of Transformational Leadership (Okçu, 2014). Educational leaders are responsible for transforming school cultures to promote inclusivity, equity, and diversity by establishing new norms, changing staff attitudes, creating a clear vision, and making fundamental change towards these goals (Anderson, 2017). Transformative leaders are also inspirational in the areas of social justice

education and are committed to pursue socially just education for all students (Tillman et al., 2006). Inspiring leaders improve morale among staff and engage in participatory decision-making, therefore increasing achievement and motivation of their followers (Litz & Blaik-Hourani, 2020).

Motivation is a collective effort led by the actions and vision of the educational leader and demonstrated by those who follow. The leader has the ability to positively transform attitudes, norms, institutions, behaviors, and actions that structure the educational setting. They motivate change in people as well as the organization (Litz & Blaik-Hourani, 2020).

Providing vision among school staff and inspiring educators, the transformational leaders become examples; they are careful listeners and demonstrate caring and appreciation to colleagues' emotions and thoughts (Cobanoglu, 2021; Kiris & Asian, 2019; Kwan, 2020; McCleskey, 2014).

Leadership, Vulnerability, and Courage

Brown's (2018) work on leadership and vulnerability offers a framework to challenge educators to embrace courage and become daring leaders. In her book, *Dare to Lead,* Brown (2018) writes, "Daring leaders who live into their values are never silent about hard things" (p. 184). One could argue that recognizing systemic racialization in our school communities is a hard thing and striving to interrupt it would be more difficult. Osta and Vasquex (n.d.) state, "In order for any of this to lead to meaningful change toward equity and justice, we must also dismantle the policies and practices in our organizations and communities that create and perpetuate inequities in the first place" (p. 8).

Brown (2018) tells us "Leaders must either invest a reasonable amount of time attending to fear and feelings or squander an unreasonable amount of time trying to manage ineffective and

unproductive behavior" (p. 70). Brown's outline of Daring Leadership vs. Armored Leadership is based on her theory that courage is coupled with vulnerability (Brown, 2018). In essence, she is saying that without vulnerability, there are no courageous acts. Interrupting systemic racism in our educational communities is a courageous act that requires educational leaders to examine their values and live into them (Brown, 2018). Brown's research concluded that those who practice courage and demonstrate vulnerability were grounded in one or two primary life values (Brown, 2018). Brown (2018) continues by providing sequenced steps to living into values which are: "*Step One: We Cannot Live into Values that We Cannot Name. Step Two: Taking Values from BS to Behavior. Step Three: Empathy and Self-Compassion*: The two Most Important Seats in the Arena (Brown, 2018)."

Brown's *Step One: Naming Values* is very clear in that there is "only one set of values" (Brown, 2018, p. 187) that a person carries. Educators would demonstrate those values in the classroom and would convey those values in their behaviors.

Brown's *Step Two: Taking Values from BS to Behavior* can be summarized in the following quote, "Choose courage over comfort" (Brown, 2018, p.193). This is a common behavior from the leaders in Brown's research. She calls them "Daring Leaders" who would rather embrace the minimal time of discomfort than miss the opportunity to say or do something that was impactful to their values (Brown, 2018).

Brown's *Step Three: "Empathy and Self-Compassion are the "two most important seats in the arena"* (Brown, 2018, p.194). Brown's depiction of "the arena" comes from the portion of President Theodore Roosevelt's speech *Citizenship in a Republic (1910)*:

> It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man

> who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat (para. 7). In this arena, the critics sit in and around the outside. The box seats are the privileged seats. They are filled with the people who built the arena. And they built the arena to benefit the people who look like them in terms of race, class, sexual orientation, ability and status. These people have already determined your odds based on stereotypes, misinformation, and fear. We have to acknowledge this and talk about it (Brown, 2018, p. 194).

Brown's reference to Roosevelt's speech is relevant to this study in the context of structural racialization of the PK-12 school settings. The arena represents the PK-12 school where the structure of school has been built around the majority who hold power and authority, those who built this structure sit in the box seats, the privileged seats. Those who are trying to change the structure are those who are metaphorically dirty, broken, and bloody. They are the leaders who do not remain complacent and silent in the midst of inequity. Brown says, "Silence is not brave leadership" (Brown, 2018, p. 195). Brave leadership requires listening, being open minded, and facilitating conversations about hard topics like racism in educational communities (Brown, 2018). "The most important seats in the arena - are reserved for empathy and self-compassion" (Brown, 2018, p. 195). These are critical for school leaders to build collaboration and prioritization around their values within their educational community. Educational leaders

take their lead and find support in national, state, and local initiatives supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion.

School Leaders

This work is most impactful when school leaders are engaged and promoting cultural competence (Khalifa et al., 2016; Marshall & Khalifa, 2018; Williams et al., 2013). Strong leaders demonstrate characteristics like positivity and intentionality in their methods to disrupt racism and increase achievements of students of color (Marshall & Khalifa, 2018; Williams, 2011). Culturally competent school leaders stay informed about race-related issues and engage in continued professional learning about these issues (Williams, 2011). Educators whose focus is to improve outcomes for students of color continue to challenge their own bias and assumptions about race and recognize that racial identity groundedness is beneficial to all (Marshall & Khalifa, 2018; Williams, 2011). Finally, strong leaders are courageous, inclusive, and advocates for students of color (Brown, 2018; Khalifa et al., 2016; Marshall & Khalifa, 2018; Williams, 2011).

One such leader, dedicated to improving outcomes for students of color through her study on identity and equity is Denise Williams. Williams led a research study in the UK focused on perceptions of students, teachers, and families in relation to the school community (Williams, 2011).

The participants in the Williams study were students of mixed race, teachers, families, and other education professionals who shared their perspectives on key-issues involving students of mixed-race in the school setting. The impact of PK-12 schools in America could be similar to William's study in the UK. The focus groups who supported the findings in the Multiple Heritage Project managed to find groundedness in spite of their negative school experiences

(Williams, 2011). The support of family and friends, finding confidence in their mixed-racial identity supported their achievements in school (Williams, 2011). "So, when schools take positive steps to tackle the underachievement of mixed-race pupils, the impact can be far-reaching" (Williams, 2011, p. 114).

Educator Perceptions

A significant finding from William's research is that educators have distinct perceptions about students of color, which was their belief that mixed-race students were underachievers, had low self-esteem, lower intellect, and generally were disengaged from school (Williams, 2011). The educators in William's study also demonstrated bias through their perception that mixed-race students were disproportionately identified as students in need of social and behavioral support because of educational disability, had higher rates of discipline that resulted in exclusion, and a lack of positive role models in career fields (Williams, 2011).

"The impositions, assumptions, and stereotypes that emerge from these ideas all seem that mixed-race pupils believe these perceptions" (Williams, 2011, p. 20) and as a result have an "adverse effect on their schooling and their abilities to achieve" (Williams, 2011, p. 29). Educational professionals of color expressed that students of mixed-race should identify as Black because that is how they, as adults, would be perceived by their peers and others in the community (Williams, 2011). For example, President Barack Obama was born to a white mother from Kansas and a black father from Kenya (Obama, 2020). He is clearly of mixed-race. However, he is consistently referenced as the first Black President of the United States.

One of the major impositions found in the research was that teachers believed that mixed-race students were confused about their racial identity and should therefore select Black as their singular identity (Williams, 2011). This was rebuked by students, "I don't feel confused about

my identity, so I'm a mixture? Who is not?" (Williams, 2011, p. 37). Similarly, when Tiger Woods was forced to choose a racial identity he coined the word, *Cablinasian*, to pay homage to all of his cultural heritages; Caucasian, Black, American Indian, and Asian (Williams, 2011). Although Woods was never confused by his cultural identity, his critics scolded him and thought he should refer to himself as simply, Black (Williams, 2011). The researcher made a salient point that identity confusion is not exclusive to mixed-race students and that achievement does not equal a singular racial identity (Williams, 2011). Many adolescents have identity issues separate from their cultural or racial heritage (Williams, 2011). The social and cultural assumptions held by education professionals discovered in the research were that students will agree on the appropriate terminology to describe their ethnicity, the growing population of mixed-race students means racial prejudice and stereotyping will no longer exist, mixed-race students will inevitably embrace and celebrate a singular culture, and all mixed-race students came from broken homes and single white mothers (Williams, 2011).

Implications on Students and Families

Over time and with repeated incidents, the exposure to microaggressions causes the student's mindset to shift and their self-perception begins to change (Hammond, 2015). These subtle daily insults support a racial and cultural hierarchy of inferiority for students of color and racial battle fatigue begins to emerge. The term racial battle fatigue is used to describe three major stress responses: physiological, psychological, and behavioral (Martin, 2015). Racial battle fatigue can also be described as the burden that results from regular exposure to prejudiced information, such as prodding and invalidating their experiences (Rogers, 2020).

Bailey-Fakhoury and Mitchell's (2018) study with suburban Detroit, middle-class mothers, examines the experiences of their daughters with racial microaggressions from their

mostly white peers in school settings. To reduce the negative effects of insults, slights, and indignities, these mothers would employ "the DuBois Veil" (Bailey-Fakhoury & Mitchell, 2018, p. 1) as a barrier to protect their psyches from harm. W.E.B. DuBois uses the concepts of *the veil and double-consciousness* to explain the peculiar conditions within which people of color find themselves and the tools they use to dismantle these conditions (Savory, 1972). *Double-consciousness* is a term used to describe the common experience of being Black in America and continuously being exposed to antiblack American policies and systems (Meer, 2018). "He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face" (DuBois, 1903, p. 5). One tool used is "code-switching" (Morton, 2014, p. 259), which is the ability to change one's behavior in response to the need for social conformity to one's surroundings. The Black mothers in this study maintained their engagement in their students' learning, were visibly present at school and school functions, and were deliberate when engaging with teachers and administrators (Bailey-Fakhoury & Mitchell, 2018).

Effects of Negative Mindset

Shifting to a negative mindset creates barriers to engagement in the classroom and school environment, puts students on the defensive, and therefore impedes learning. The deficits in academic progress only support the stereotypes of intellectual inferiority and the cycle continues for structural racialization in education (Hammond, 2015).

When students are constantly on the defensive, they are unable to regulate heightened levels of emotion associated with survival strategies, and therefore, engage in behaviors that block learning (Bremner & Narayan, 1998). These behaviors can manifest in many ways including: poor impulse control, aggression on self or others, trouble interpreting social-

emotional cues, and skepticism of others and their reliability (Shields & Cicchetti, 1998). The outcomes of racial microaggressions faced by students of color, including assumptions on limits of learning and negative behaviors, have been linked to the clinical definition of trauma (Nadal, 2018). These stressors can act as triggers for negative behaviors, disengagement, and prolonged interruptions in learning.

Trauma can slow down or completely stop our ability to learn. When our bodies sense a threat, energy rushes toward regions of our brain that focus on averting danger (Kaufman, n.d.). These basic instincts in our limbic brain keep us alive. However, it also means that there is no energy transferred to the areas of the brain that allow us to learn (Kaufman, n.d.).

Mental and Behavioral Issues

"Young adults who experience discrimination about their bodies, race, age, or sex have a greater risk of dealing with mental health problems than those who do not" (Rogers, 2021). Higher levels of stress, poor cognitive function, anxiety, and depressions have been linked to racial discrimination (Rogers, 2021). Those who frequently face discrimination, such as microaggressions in schools, are 25% more likely to be diagnosed with a mental health disorder and "twice as likely to develop severe psychological distress" (Rogers, 2021) than those who did not (Lei et al., 2021; Rogers, 2021).

In addition to increased mental health issues and disorders, systemic or institutional racism can be connected to increases in poverty, food insecurity, and poor overall health (mentalhealth.org.uk, 2021). Lei's findings suggest that discrimination has long-term and cumulative connections with mental and behavioral health and also imply that if acts of discrimination, microaggressions, and racism could be neutralized earlier, the negative outcomes

could be diminished (Lei, 2021). These negative outcomes and behaviors result in increased disciplines and exclusions that cause additional interruptions to student learning.

Student Disparity in Discipline and Implications

The unintended consequences of racial microaggressions in school may lead to severe outcomes for students of color. According to the Civil Rights Data Collection conducted by the Office of Civil Rights, students of color are three times as likely to be suspended or expelled as their white peers (Civil Rights Data Collection [CRDC], 2014). African American students represent 15% of the students in the 2014 data collections, making up 35% of the students disciplined with suspension with 44% of those students suspended more than once and 36% of those students were expelled. Students of color makeup over 50% of students who have school-related arrests or were referred to law enforcement (CRDC, 2014).

Chin and co-workers discussed in 2020 research that areas with increased levels of pro-white/anti-Black bias among teachers had disparities in test scores and suspensions for Black students. "Black mixed-race males also experience higher levels of permanent and fixed-term exclusions (or expulsion and suspension, respectively) than both the all-pupil and ethnic minority counterparts" (Joseph-Salisbury, 2017, p. 449). Additionally, schools that had "higher levels of implicit and explicit bias tended to have larger adjusted white/black suspension disparities" (Chin, 2020, p. 575).

Student suspensions and expulsions only exacerbate the disruptions to learning by increasing the time away from school. "Increasing use of disciplinary sanctions such as in-school and out-of-school suspensions, expulsions, or referrals to law enforcement authorities creates the potential for significant, negative educational, and long-term outcomes, and can contribute to what has been termed the school to prison pipeline" (CRDC, 2014, p. 8). The

CRDC report also references correlations between suspensions and expulsions to long term negative educational effects, such as economic and social struggles; school avoidance; decreased engagement in learning; lower academic achievement; increases in negative behaviors requiring discipline; and increases in drop-out, substance abuse, and involvement with the juvenile-justice system (CRDC, 2014).

Racial Identity

A 2011 study in the United Kingdom researched the connection of mixed-race students, schools, and their identities. William's research is grounded in the idea that developing racial identity is an individual journey and can be summarized in "positions of nowhereness, somewhereness, and groundedness," (Williams, 2011, p. 8) whereby schools and families provide foundational opportunities for students to navigate their personal journey towards groundedness (Williams, 2011). Tatum (1997) underpins this idea, "choosing a standpoint and an identity (or identities) is a lifelong process that manifests itself in different ways at different developmental periods" (p. 175). Similarly, in the work of Neville and Cross (2017), they found their participants demonstrated an "increased racial activism, racial pride, and possible-selves after the process of racial awakening and continued exploration" (p.1). Additionally, they (2021) provided us with the concept of *Nigrescence*, which "addresses the process of becoming black in one's thinking and consciousness, resulting in a state of being woke or awareness of racism" (p. 20). This process is similar to the journey toward groundedness that Williams described in her research within the UK (Williams, 2011).

William's study, developed from the Multiple Heritage Project, was a grant funded project to learn more about and give voice to the people of mixed-racial backgrounds. (Williams,

n.d.). The project developed the term *Mix'd* to provide an identity to those people to whom the project serves. The purpose of the project was to

- Remove awkward silence surrounding race and resolve the divisive politics
- Encourage young people to constructively engage with their identities
- Equip professionals with the understanding, terminology, and experience to interact confidently with the subject
- To develop parents' knowledge in all aspects of developing positive racial literacy for their child
- To share expertise as widely as possible through speaking, teaching, listening, and developing materials
- To return discussion back to its owners (Williams, 2011)

The initial focus groups in William's study were interactive participants who spoke candidly about their interactions with peers, professional educators, and policy makers about their school experiences (Williams, 2011). The participants included students, teachers, families, and other education professionals about key issues involving students of mixed race. Teachers reported "that mixed-race students have a conflict in identity and no sense of belonging, a lack of positive role models, low expectations, low self-esteem, and demonstrate racism" (Williams, 2011, p. 29).

Student Perspective

Students interviewed in the Williams' study indicated that they still encountered educators and family members that used hurtful, outdated, and inappropriate language to refer to themselves and mixed-race members of the family (Williams, 2011). A student was quoted, "I don't think that people who aren't mixed-race should be able to decide what is and is not

acceptable to say. You should ask mixed-race kids what they want to be called" (Williams, 2011, p. 59). Another student said, "My mum gets called [names] all the time and it makes me angry! If you don't have inner strength, it's hard...racism can crush you" (Williams, 2011, p. 63).

Students in the focus groups indicated that racial stereotyping was more harmful and distressing than the prejudice they experienced outside of school (Williams, 2011). The students stated that "school was a place where they needed to feel safe and cared for so they could perform well" (Williams, 2011, p. 75).

During interviews in William's study, families reported their belief that teachers assume all mixed-race students come from single parent households with little support. To combat that perception, the parents interviewed in the focus groups understood that being engaged in their student's education was beneficial and when home-school connections were strong and working in partnership, student achievement would increase (Williams, 2011).

The study concluded that teachers' perceptions matter. Teachers equated students of mixed-race to Black students and associated the negative stereotypes as a result, which then transferred to the students in the form of bias, microaggressions, and beliefs about performance (Williams, 2011). Overall, William's research provided some suggestions to improve upon the current educational system.

Suggestions for Improvement

William's research highlights that culturally competent schools showed respect for individuals and demonstrated systematic caring and consistent approaches to behaviors (Williams, 2011). School personnel also demonstrated courage and willingness to discuss difficult issues (Brown, 2018; Diem & Carpenter, 2012; Williams, 2011). Schools that supported

cultural competence also empowered students to take control of their lives and looked after each other while presenting diverse role models (Joseph-Salisbury, 2013; Williams, 2011).

In the Williams study, students reported teachers should demonstrate "higher expectations" and "respect people equally" (Williams, 2011, p. 80) as a need in their schools. Students also reported the desire to see more positive role models of mixed-race (Williams, 2011) and they "need more mixed race and Black teachers to relate to" (Williams, 2011, p. 81). Finally, students wanted more demonstrated respect and safe spaces to learn and speak about hard topics (Williams, 2011).

Culture

Attributes of School Culture

Developing and applying thorough, consistent, and effective anti-racist policies, and then administering swift and effective responses were ways that culturally competent schools efficaciously operate (Williams, 2011). Educators involved the whole school community to determine ways to meet the needs of mixed-race students and included accounts of mixed-races in the curriculum, while avoiding outdated or harmful language (Williams, 2011). The school culture created opportunities for courageous conversations around issues of racial identity (Brown, 2018; Williams, 2011). Finally, according to Williams (2011), "school staff should receive cultural competence training and employ those ideals" (p. 118) and have "culturally sensitive leaders" (p. 125).

Effects of Cultural Competency Professional Development

Cultural competency training begins with recognizing and acknowledging that the barriers to change lie within the adults in our PK-12 communities (Lindsey & Lindsey, 2016). The recent literature has been limited to focus on healthcare and inclusion training focused on

LGBT+ community members (Henderson et al., 2018). The overall findings suggested that as practitioners are more aware, and increase their knowledge and sensitivity, they will demonstrate behaviors related to cultural competency (Henderson et al., 2018). Additionally, the consequences were patient satisfaction with care, the perception of quality healthcare, increased commitment to treatments, improved interaction with patients and overall improved health outcomes (Brown, 2018; Henderson et al., 2018). The connection could be made from patients to students, treatments to lessons, satisfaction with care to student engagement, and overall improvement of health to overall improvement in learning. A finding of interest in the study was that the association of cultural competence may be a result of superficial levels of understanding that were indicated in the need for social acceptance (Henderson et al., 2018).

Therefore, it is critical that "Educators have to be engaged in collaborative conversations and data dialogues as part of their district wide reform efforts to support all students, parents, and community members" (Lindsey & Lindsey, 2016, p. 56). PK-12 communities must be purposeful and inclusive of families of color in the development, planning, and delivery of cultural competence professional development for the outcomes to be genuine and sustainable.

Understanding Versus Acceptance

"As time went on it was apparent how much bias was prevalent at the school and the absolute disregard for it", says a mother about her son's school in Minnesota in a prepared statement to reporters (Simko-Bednarski & Brown, 2021, p. 1). The school was accused of not preventing "racist, unfair, hurtful, and at times dangerous interactions from both students and staff". (Simko-Bednarski & Brown, 2021, p. 1).

This headline caused me to wonder if other families with children of color have encountered similar experiences in our local school communities. Have families in the greater

Northstar region met negativity cultivated from implicit bias from other students, teachers, or other school personnel? Have families in the region experienced structural racialization in the school community? If students have experienced negativity, what impact does it have on the family? What can be done to educate school personnel, teachers, and administrators? What can teachers, school personnel, and administrators do to create inclusive environments where students feel they belong?

The information gathered through interviews with transracial families, allowed me, the researcher, to thread together some common themes, promote awareness, and provide some insight to the community cultural behaviors that are intolerant of diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging.

Summary

Most of the literature surrounding microaggressions comes from psychological research and not educational research (Steketee et al., 2021). Teachers, administrators and other PK-12 staff must have the skills, awareness, and knowledge to interrupt a student's negative experience with microaggressions, in order to disrupt systemic racism in our school community (Steketee et al., 2021).

The current research suggests PK-12 schools move from surface level cultural experiences to deeper cultural awareness to increase engagement of parents in PK-12 communities (Steketee et al., 2021). A way to accomplish this is ensuring that students of color are able to benefit from educational opportunities and material resources offered to white students. Access should not only be offered, but there should be true inclusion. Inclusion in classrooms free from microaggressions and welcoming of the family's equal partnership in educational successes (Posey-Maddox, 2017).

Teachers, administrators, and other PK-12 staff need to recognize their own biases and how those biases contribute to the classroom community. Color conscious versus color blindness may be a way to understand the experiences of an increasingly diverse student population (Perry et al., 2019; Samuels, 2009; Steketee et al., 2021). Examples of microaggressions permeate the classroom daily and do real harm to students of color. However, teachers are the "centrifugal force" (Steketee et al., 2021, p. 1093) to disrupt this pattern of racism and transform the lives of PK-12 students (Joseph-Salisbury & Andrews, 2017; Posey-Maddox, 2017; Samuels, 2009; Steketee et al., 2021).

CHAPTER 3 - METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This qualitative study focused on telling the stories of the participants and their experiences with identity, implicit bias, microaggressions, and systemic racism in the PK-12 school setting. Merriam and Tisdell (2014) said, "Qualitative research is a basic interpretive study" (p. 23). I wanted to share the lived experiences of the participants in an effort to contribute to the research, as well as broaden the acceptance and understanding of all stakeholders in the school community. Headlines in news stories offer a depiction that schools are experiencing racial divides, disharmony, and often aggression as a result of the absence of diversity, equity, and inclusion in our schools. "Qualitative research is based on the belief that knowledge is constructed by people in an ongoing fashion as they engage in and make meaning of an activity" (Merriam, & Tisdell, 2014, p. 23). The lived experiences and perceptions of students of color is their reality, this study offered the opportunity within the framework of the research design to share their reality.

Statement of Positionality

I am a middle-aged white woman, mother, and professional educator who holds advanced degrees in educational leadership and curriculum and instruction. I reside in a rural area in the Midwest that includes the manufacturing middle class and agricultural demographic populous of mostly white residents. I have spent my career in rural, urban, and suburban school districts where there is a minority of Black students enrolled. I am a mother of both white and Black children. My family has grown through traditional birth and transracial adoption. All of my children have attended school systems that have majority white enrollment and white faculty. I recognize that all these factors contribute to bias that I may hold and limit my exposure to Black

culture and Black experiences in PK-12 school communities. I am limited to the experiences of my children and their effects on our family.

Research Design

Narrative Inquiry was used to form the design of this research study. Narrative Inquiry was determined to be the most natural way for participants to share their lived experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2014) through the retelling of their student's encounters with identity, implicit bias, microaggressions, and systemic racism in their school communities. The first-person accounts of impact on the families being interviewed are critical in forming the content of this research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2014). Merriam and Tisdell (2014) explained that "First person accounts of experience constitute the narrative" (p. 34) and will shape the research through interviews.

The families at the center of this research engaged with me in an online format synchronously through Google Meet, a secure login method requiring a passcode to enter. I used an interview guide as described in Merriam and Tisdell's (2014) work, "an interview guide is a list of questions that I intend to ask during the interview" (p. 126). These questions were scripted and asked of each participant allowing for follow-up or extensions through probing, if needed. The questions used in the interview guide follow the constructs outlined in the literature review. Follow-up questions were derived from the content of the demographic surveys completed by the participants ahead of the actual interview and from any information shared during the interview that needed further explanation or expansion. Merriam and Tisdell (2014) stated, "probes can come in the form of asking for more details, clarification, or examples, and can range from silence, sounds, a single word, or a complete sentence" (p. 122). I used comprehensive questions to probe for follow-up, as outlined in Merriam and Tisdell (2014) like,

"What do you mean? Tell me more about that. Give me an example of that. Walk me through that experience. Would you explain that? And so on" (p. 123).

The following steps outline the protocol used during this study:

1. Invited potential family participants through a Family Support Specialist employed through the Northstar County Educational Service Center.
2. The participants who accepted the invitation completed the consent form (Appendix C) and demographic survey (Appendix D).
3. Established a convenient, mutually beneficial meeting time for online, recorded interviews of each interview participant.
4. Conducted and recorded the one-hour interviews separately, using the interview instrument and online meeting format.
5. Analyzed the data using the interview transcriptions and my field notes, finding themes based on the constructs outlined in this study and coding.
6. Honored or requested any needed follow-up interviews for clarification or extension of information from the research participants.
7. Employed member checking as a method to increase validity and verification of information.

Research Questions

Framing this study's design was critical so the dialogue with the interview participants encouraged openness about their experiences. I set the stage by having participants feel comfortable and safe to tell their stories. The questions posed were open-ended to allow the participants space to share their experiences and expand upon their stories.

The focus of this research was narrowed because of the discoveries made during the literature review. The research of racial identity, bias, microaggressions, and systemic racism within PK-12 schools did not tell the full story. The research focused on the families and how they were affected by their students' experiences as well as their family's experience in the PK-12 community. I proposed that students and families faced negative experiences related to cultural identity, bias, microaggressions, and systemic racism in their school setting. I also surmised that sometime during the students' school career the student or the family was supported by a culturally competent leader and/or transformative leader within the school community.

The research is driven by the following questions:

1. From white parent's perspective, do their adopted children of color experience significant events in PK-12 schools due to race?
2. What effects do these experiences have on transracial families?
3. What actions do white parents take when navigating school policies and practices in relation to their adopted students of color?
4. What do white parents believe needs to change to make PK-12 school communities more inclusive and culturally competent for their adoptive children of color?

Interview Questions

The parent participants were referred to me through Family Support Specialists employed through the Northstar County Educational Service Center. After the initial family referral, snowball, chain, or network sampling was also employed throughout the remainder of the study. Merriam and Tisdell (2014) outlined this strategy as "locating a few key participants who can

easily meet the criteria" (p. 98), which is white parents of school age children of color. The total participant target was five to ten parent sets for a total of ten to twenty participants.

Initial introduction to each parent set was through phone or email. I followed up each introduction with an email of the electronic survey to gather demographic information about the participants (Appendix D). This completed survey generated a spreadsheet of demographic information about each family, their preferred pseudonym, and additional information including the following: children's age, race, grade level, school district of attendance, and a place for parents to include any significant experiences with schools, school policies and/or school officials related to their children's race, gender, ethnicity, language, nationality or other area of distinction.

In the interview setting, the questions were structured to allow parents to feel at ease at the onset of the interviews. To begin, I introduced myself and my background, including that I am also a parent of children of color, as well as a doctoral candidate conducting research to complete my dissertation. Finally, I shared the purpose of our interview session, and that I planned to tell the participant's stories with the respect and dignity they deserve.

As the researcher, I took on the role of facilitator using structured and guiding questions to generate conversation and shared experiences of the participants. The guiding questions followed Patton's (2015) modeling of experience and behavior, opinion and values, feelings, knowledge, sensory, and background/demographic questions. The background/demographic questions were conducted in written/electronic survey format and guided the probing questions during the interview process. In addition, the survey information helped organize the participants responses during the analysis phase. The introductory email solicited basic contact information (email address), name of family, family members (number, race, gender). The survey included an

opportunity for the family to select a pseudonym of their choice to be used during the interview session and within this study. If the family chose not to select a pseudonym(s), pseudonyms were selected for them for the purpose of keeping their identity confidential.

I facilitated the following questions during the interview setting:

1. Can you describe a significant event, positive or negative, that your son/daughter experienced in their school setting that you associate with their race or is relevant to their race?
2. What were your feelings associated with this positive or negative experience?
    a. How did you respond to this experience in relationship to the school or school personnel?
    b. How did the school or school personnel respond?
3. (If a negative experience) How effective was your action in satisfying or resolving the concern?

    (If a positive experience) How effective was your action in acknowledging or replicating the event or experience if it was a positive one?
4. What was the impact of this experience on your child?
    a. How did they feel about themselves as a result?
    b. How did they feel about the school as a result?
5. What is the impact going forward with respect to engagement with the school? How has your relationship with the school been impacted by this experience?
6. (If a negative experience) Moving forward, what other actions could the school or school personnel have taken in response to this experience that demonstrate cultural responsiveness?

(If a positive experience) What additional actions could the school or school personnel have taken to replicate or expand their cultural responsiveness?

Setting

This research was conducted in Northstar and Summerstar Counties located in a Midwest state of the United States. According to Data USA (n.d.), the general demographic makeup of Northstar County's 370,606 total residents is composed of the following five ethnic groups: White (non-Hispanic) 86.1%, Black or African American (non-Hispanic) 7.58%, Two+/Multiracial (non-Hispanic) 3.02%, White (Hispanic) 1.26%, and Asian (non-Hispanic) 0.96%. The overall poverty rate is less than 14% and the median household income is $55,499 (Data USA, n.d.). Using school districts' report cards to capture school district demographics, we can compare the school district data of 60,743 total students enrolled with these ethnic groups: White (non-Hispanic) 79.2%, Black (non-Hispanic) 9%, Two+/Multiracial 7.4%, and Asian, American Indian, and Pacific Islander 9.2%. According to Data USA (n.d.), the general demographic makeup of Summerstar County's 540,810 total residents is composed of five predominant ethnic groups: White (non-Hispanic) 77.3%, Black or African American (non-Hispanic), 15.3%, Two+/Multiracial (non-Hispanic) 2.8%, White (Hispanic) 2.5% and Asian (non-Hispanic) 4.3%. The overall poverty rate is less than 13% and the median household income is $59,253 (Data USA, n.d.). Using school districts' report cards to capture school district demographics, we can compare the school district data of 62,486.21 total students enrolled with the three prominent ethnic groups being White (non-Hispanic) 62.6%, Black (non-Hispanic) 21.1%, Two+/Multiracial 6.6%, and Asian, American Indian, and Pacific Islander totaling 6.2%.

I used email to communicate, share login information about the online meeting, and follow up with the participants after the interview. I emailed an electronic survey to gather demographic information about the participants (Appendix D). The completed survey generated a spreadsheet of demographic information about each family, their preferred pseudonym, and children's age, race, grade level, school district of attendance, and a place for parents to include any significant experiences with schools, school policies and/or school officials related to their children's race, gender, ethnicity, language, nationality or other area of distinction. This survey information guided the interview but also helped organize the participants' responses during the analysis phase. The interview setting was held in a virtual online format using a secure method only accessible to the participants. The interview was initially limited to one hour with the option of hosting a follow-up meeting, if the participants had additional input for the research.

Participants

The participants were parents of transracial families living in Northstar and Summertstar Counties who had adopted school-aged children of color. The families targeted in this research were referred to me through a network of family support personnel in the Northstar Educational Service Center ensuring that the families met the criteria of being a transracial family with students currently enrolled in Northstar Schools. The families in Summerstar Schools were referred to me using the Network Method. I was introduced to the families of Summerstar Schools through a professional colleague.

I contacted all the referred families by phone and email after a brief introduction by the family support personnel or professional colleague. This introduction included a "permission to contact" form for families to complete prior to any communication from me. Families were sent

an informed-consent form, a brief electronic survey of demographic information, and an invitation to participate in a secure online interview.

The families studied ranged in size, age, and demographic. However, they shared similar experiences surrounding diversity, equity, and inclusion that were worthy of examination and contribution to the research.

Data Collection

After the families were contacted, consent forms completed and collected, the data from the survey and interviews were used for this research study. The protocols set forth by Youngstown State University and the Center for Disease Control were used to offset exposure to COVID-19. All participants met using electronic virtual meeting methods as required by the Institutional Review Board. The Institutional Review Board of Youngstown State University approved this study protocol (see Appendix E for approval letter).

Interviews

Interviews were conducted using a virtual format. The participants were provided with a secure login and asked to identify themselves only by their chosen pseudonym during the meeting. I addressed the following at the onset of the interview session: the purpose and intention of this study and the process used to protect the participants in the interview within the written and oral presentation of the data collected, including the use of pseudonyms (Merriam & Tisdell, 2014). I explained that the interview was to be recorded and transcribed for the purpose of accurately capturing the statements of the participants. Notations and/or field notes along the interview structure document were made to highlight areas of emphasis, emotion, or words of importance. These notations were for reference to the transcription and were used to help with the analysis process. The storage and destruction of the recording and transcription followed the

protocols set forth by Youngstown State University, Beeghly College of Education. Finally, I reviewed the logistics of the online interview, which included the time allowed of one hour, that I acted as facilitator, that the participants could offer as little or as much as they felt comfortable sharing, and that I offered genuine gratitude for their participation in this research. This process was repeated with all interview participants during their online interview setting.

Data Analysis

"The process of data collection and analysis is recursive and dynamic" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2014, p. 195). The organization and management of the data began at the onset of the research and continued throughout the study until patterns and themes emerged among the interviews and stories shared by the participants. The purpose of data analysis was to make sense of the data collected by consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what the participants shared during the interviews (Merriam & Tisdell, 2014). The process used to organize, consolidate, and reduce the data began by identifying segments of the data that were responsive to this research's questions and was essential in making sense of the data collected. (Creswell & Roth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2014). This segmenting and categorizing has been referred to as coding. My transcripts and notations were coded using a short list of descriptive words or phrases that were assigned to capture the essence of the experiences described by the families (Creswell & Roth, 2018).

I sorted the data and looked for themes that made up the coding words and phrases that organized the data by creating silos of similar evidence from the transcriptions and field notes. These silos were identity, bias, microaggressions, racism, and cultural competency. Once the coding was complete, the data was sorted and categorized into those silos that supported this

research's themes. Common themes and experiences among all participants were noted in the findings and described in a model format.

Validity

"To a large extent, the validity and reliability of a study depends upon the ethics of the investigator" (Merriam & Tisdell, p. 260). "Rather than prescribing what reliability and/or validity should look like, researchers should attend to the overall trustworthiness of qualitative research by more directly addressing issues associated with reliability and/or validity, as aligned with larger issues of ontological, epistemological, and paradigmatic affiliation" (Rose & Johnson, 2020, p. 432). This study was completed using a structured interview process with guiding questions. The questions were derived from the constructs found in the literature review. I recorded the interviews and transcribed the data using field notes to increase the accuracy of the narratives shared. I employed member checking, which provided an opportunity for the captured and recorded data to be reviewed by the participants for accuracy (Merriam & Tisdell, 2014).

Limitations

The limitations of this study included the small sample size of interviewed parents. Ten to twenty participants was a miniscule number of parents compared to the population of approximately 60,000 students enrolled in Northstar and Summerstar Counties. Another limitation to this study was the small geographical area of Northstar and Summerstar Counties compared to a study encompassing the entire United States, or a larger, more global study. Time constraints also offer a limitation to this study. The one-hour interview time did not allow the participants to become "invested in the interview" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2014, p. 125). Therefore, participants were not as forthcoming with their stories as I would have liked. Finally, my own

experiences as outlined in my Statement of Positionality may have offered some implicit bias and limitations to this study.

Summary

The narrative inquiry of this qualitative research used structured interview questions directed at transracial families made up of white parents and adopted Black children. The focus was to tell the families' stories of events and their effects within school communities that are associated with racial identity, bias, microaggressions, and systemic racism. The families selected for this study were referred through a third party and remained confidential throughout the process with the use of a self-selected pseudonym. Information shared during their online individual interview was categorized by themes based on the following constructs: racial identity, bias, microaggression, and systemic racism. Validity was maintained through member checking, recording, transcribing, and field notes taken during the interviews. Limitations of this study were discussed at the end of the chapter.

CHAPTER 4 - RESULTS

Introduction

This study was designed to capture the experiences of transracial families in PK-12 School Communities surrounding racial identity, bias, microaggressions, and systemic racism. The transracial families that participated in this study shared the experiences of their school-aged children enrolled in public schools and how their families were affected by those events.

This chapter outlines the results of the study based on the research questions framing the interview questions to the participants. The findings are organized by the constructs described in the literature review of racial identity, implicit bias, microaggressions, and systemic racism as well as any additional themes that emerged in the analysis of the findings. The families used graphic and emotional language to tell their stories during the course of this study.

Participation Process

Family Support Specialists and other educational professions referred transracial families to the researcher who extended invitations to participate in this study. The transracial families that elected to participate were residents of Northstar and Summerstar Counties in Ohio. All the family participants had children who attended PK-12 schools. All family participants were *transracial families* with adopted children of color. The families were contacted in person, email, or by phone. A brief introduction was made including a brief overview of the study and selection of a meeting time convenient to the family and me.

Following the introduction, three emails were sent to each participating family. The first email included the *Invitation to Participate* (Appendix F) and *Consent Form* (Appendix C). A second email was sent with the electronic demographic survey to be completed by the family

(Appendix D). Lastly, the third email provided a Google Meet invitation for a mutually agreed upon meeting time.

Confidentiality of Participants

Maintaining the confidentiality of participants was a priority of this study. I followed the protocols approved by the Youngstown State University Institutional Review Board and required each participant to sign and return the consent form. Additionally, participants were able to self-select a surname pseudonym and pseudonyms for each member of their family. These pseudonyms were used throughout the research data collection and analysis to protect the identity of the children and family. I also deidentified other data collected from the participants to further promote confidentiality. Names of schools, school districts, or school personnel, were also altered to provide an additional layer of anonymity and provide further protections from discovery.

County and District Profiles

Families in this study resided in one of two adjacent counties in Ohio identified as Northstar or Summerstar. The original study proposal included only Northstar County, but referral and recruitment through the network sampling method led me to two families living in Summerstar County. The school district and county resident data are outlined in Table 1. The notable difference, which is highlighted, was in student data, specifically Black (non-Hispanic) students who were 9% of the total student population in Northstar County but 21.1% of the total student population in Summerstar County (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). This demographic data also provided the context of predominance in white residents over residents of color. The same inference could be made to the schools in Northstar and Summerstar Counties with the schools'

enrollment mirroring the community makeup. Other demographic areas were generally comparable.

Table 1

Northstar and Summerstar Counties Full Time Equivalent (FTE) and Census Data from 2020-21

Public School FTE Data	Northstar County 2020-2021		Summerstar County 2020-21	
School District Data Subgroup	FTE	Percent	FTE	Percent
Total Students	60,743.6	100.0%	62,486.21	100.0%
Male Students	31,284.8	51.5%	30,479.87	48.8%
Female Students	29,458.8	48.5%	32,006.34	51.2%
Students with Disabilities	8,558.1	14.1%	10,244.57	16.4%
Students without Disabilities	52,185.5	85.9%	52,241.64	83.6%
Economically Disadvantaged	30,148.5	49.6%	32,790.7	52.5%
Non-Economically Disadvantaged	30,595.1	50.4%	29,695.51	47.5%
English Learners	679.9	1.1%	2,472.53	4.0%
Non-English Learners	60,063.7	98.9%	60,013.68	96.0%
American Indian	74.7	0.1%	60.97	0.1%
Asian	564.4	0.9%	3,727.31	6.0%
Black, Non-Hispanic	***5,457.1***	***9.0%***	***13,190.17***	***21.1%***
Multiracial	4,476.3	7.4%	4,153.48	6.6%
Pacific Islander	38.2	0.1%	64.66	0.1%
White, Non-Hispanic	48,080.7	79.2%	39,138.11	62.6%
Census Data				
Total Residents	370,606		540,810	
Poverty Rate	13.6%		12.80%	
Median Income	$55,499		$59,253	

Description and Demographics of the Participants

The family participants were asked to complete a brief electronic survey that collected the following information: family pseudonym, parent pseudonym, parent racial identity, age of children when they were adopted into the family, child pseudonym, child age, child race, and grade level. Finally, parents were asked to provide a description of any significant experiences(s) with the schools, school officials, and/or school policies as they related to the child(ren)'s race, gender, ethnicity, language, nationality, or other area of distinction. All of the parents completed the survey prior to the interview. The following profiles were derived from these surveys.

Profile #1: The Spencer Family

The five members of the Spencer Family included parents, Scout and Annie, along with their three children. Scout and Annie both identified as white. Their oldest daughter is Latea, a 15-18 year old high school student who identified as multi-racial. Their son, Jamel, a 12-15 year old middle school student, identified as multi-racial and their youngest child, Ksia, a 4-8 year old elementary student, identified as Black. All three children were adopted into the family as a sibling group and came into the family when the youngest child was between the ages of birth and two. All the children attended the same school district, which was the most diverse in Northstar County schools, but still enrolled a mostly white student population.

Profile #2: The Seals Family

The Seals Family consisted of mom, Penelope, dad, Ramon, and daughter, Dallas. Mom and dad both identified as white, whereas their daughter Dallas identified as multiracial. Dallas joined their family through adoption between the ages of 8-12. Dallas was a high school student in Northstar county. At the time of the incidents shared during the interview, Dallas attended a mostly white, rural school district in Northstar County.

Profile #3: The Kanoochi Family

Esmirelda and Edgar Kanoochi were the parents of this family group. Both parents identified as white. Their family consisted of three children. Their youngest child, Selina, joined their family through adoption as an infant. Mom shared with me during the interview that two older children were born into the family and were grown adults living outside of the home. Therefore, she had not included their information in the electronic survey. Their young adult daughter, Selina formally identified herself as white on all official documents and in this study. However, in actuality, she was of Latino heritage and as a result had a darker skin tone. The significance of this identification was disclosed during the description of the family's experiences. Selina attended a rural school in Northstar County with predominantly white makeup.

Profile #4 The Jones Family

This family unit of nine was parented by Jimmy and Suzie, who both identified as white. The children attended a largely white school in Summerstar County, Ohio. The oldest of five school age children was "Child Oldest" attended grades 5-8, was 12-15 years of age, and identified as white. The second school age child, "Oldest Son", identified as Black and was 8-12 years old in grades 5-8. "Second Oldest Son" was an 8-12 year-old boy who identified as biracial (white/black) presenting as Black, in grades 5-8. "Child 4" was an 8-12 year-old student enrolled in grades 2-4 who identified as white. "Child 5" was a PK-1 student, 4-8 years of age, and also identified as white. The youngest children in the family were a 6 year-old kindergartener and a 3 year-old preschooler. Their racial identities were not disclosed on the survey. The children in the Jones family attended schools in Summerstar County that had mostly white students.

Profile #5 The Robbiesfam Family

Robbie and Robbieswife identified as white and were the parents of two school-aged children, who attended Studson Schools in Summistar County, Ohio. Both school-aged boys were 12-15 years of age in grades 9-12. Both NRobbie and SRobbie identified as Black. These boys joined the Robbiesfam from an impoverished country on the continent of Africa. NRobbie was under 5 years of age and SRobbie was under 9 years of age when they joined the family through international adoption. The following table outlines the families' demographic information.

Table 2

Family Background and Demographic Information

Family Name	Parents	Children	School District
Spencer	Scout - white female Annie - white female	Latea - multiracial female, 12-15 years old Jamel - multiracial male, 12-15 years old Ksia - Black female, 4-8 years old	Northstar County 85.1% white 5.8% Black + multiracial
Seals	Ramon - white male Penelope - white female	Dallas – multiracial, identified as a Black female, 15-18 years old	Northstar County 90.3% white 2.0% Black
Kanoochi	Esmirelda - white female Edgar - white male	Selina – white, identified as a Hispanic female, 15-18 years old	Northstar County 93.5% white 2.3% Hispanic 0.0% Black
Jones	Suzie - white female Jimmy - white male	Child Oldest - white female, 12-15 years old Oldest Son - Black male, 8-12 years old Second Oldest Son – biracial, identified as a Black male, 8-12 years old	Summerstar County 85.7% white 6.1% Black

Family Name	Parents	Children	School District
		Child 4 – white, 8-12 years old Child 5 – white, 4-8 years old Child 6 – white, 4-8 years old Child 7 – white, not school-age	
Robbiesfam	Robbieswife - white female Robbie - white male	NRobbie - Black male, 12-15 years old SRobbie - Black male, 12-15 years old	Summerstar County 84.7% white 3.0% Black

Interviews

The following research questions provided the focus of the interview questions:

1. From white parents' perspective, did their adopted children of color experience significant events in PK-12 schools due to race?
2. What effects did these experiences have on transracial families?
3. What actions did white parents take when navigating school policies and practices in relation to their adopted students of color?
4. What did the white parents believe needed to change to make PK-12 school communities more inclusive and culturally competent for their adoptive children of color?

After the demographic surveys were received from each family, a scheduled online interview using Google Meet was conducted. Google Meet provided a secure infrastructure to protect and ensure privacy for the Google single sign on users (Google.com). The Google meeting was only accessible through a meeting invitation from the researcher that required a secure login for both the researcher and participant during a predetermined, mutually agreed upon day and time. Each interview lasted no longer than sixty minutes.

I also completed field notes as the interviews progressed. These notes were used to clarify and verify any information transcribed from the software. Additionally, the field notes were used to backfill the content shared during the interview, filling in gaps and noting the emotional language used by the parents. Handwritten notes were taken on pre-printed copies of the interview questions with large gaps in between the questions that allowed me to write impactful words or phrases that were shared by the parents. This method also allowed for a smooth transition between questions for a more even dialogue to occur between each question posed to the participant.

After each interview, the Google software automatically transcribed the interview and the field notes were combined with this transcription to provide dimension to the captured dialogue. These combined notes were critical in capturing the full effect of the interviews. These notes became critical when transcribing the Kanoochi and Jones family interviews because the software did not transcribe the entire interview, so I relied on the field notes for documentation of the interview.

The completed transcriptions were sent to each participant for review and opportunity for clarification in relation to the protocol for member checking. No participant offered opposition, clarifications, or additions to the transcriptions presented to them for review. The data was stored on my Google drive in Google Docs and Google Sheets formats, which require my personalized login and password, which I only know.

Coding and Construct Connection

Organizing and coding the data collected through the demographic survey and the actual interview was completed using the constructs and themes outlined in the literature review. Merriam & Tisdell (2014) described this process as *The Constant and Comparative Method*,

whereby the data analysis is mostly "inductive and comparative" (p 201). I used an open coding method to create categories supporting the constructs found in the literature that allowed for new categories to emerge as the qualitative data units were compared to each category (Merriam & Tisdell, 2014). The information provided from the family on the demographic survey was used as the catalyst for the interview questions. This shared information grounded the family's responses to the questions posed during the interview, which then provided a frame of reference or starting point for their interview responses.

I used color coding to organize the data by construct. Information shared that related to racial identity was color coded in purple. Events related to racial bias were colored coded orange. Blue highlighted experiences that reflected microaggressions. Any event that resonated with school policies or procedures were color coded green to reflect systemic racism. Cultural Competency and Emotional responses were color coded yellow and red, respectively.

Key Themes

The analysis of the interview field notes, transcriptions, and demographic surveys established the themes based on this study's research questions:

1. From white parents' perspective, did their adopted children of color experience significant events in PK-12 schools due to race?
2. What effects did these experiences have on transracial families?
3. What actions did the white parents take when navigating school policies and practices in relation to their adopted students of color?
4. What did the white parents believe needed to change to make PK-12 school communities more inclusive and culturally competent for their adoptive children of color?

The following apriori themes were supported through this investigation; racial identity, racial bias, incidents of microaggressions, and systemic racism. Themes that were not initially proposed in the review of literature emerged in the analysis of the data that included cultural competence, strong emotions, trauma related to race, trauma related to adoption, and increased awareness of parents. These unforeseen themes were teased out during the coding and analysis of the data which provided a deeper understanding of the significant experiences of the participant families.

The first of these themes was a demonstrated cultural competence (or lack of) from the school personnel or school system through policies or procedures. A second theme unearthed from this research was the intensely strong emotions that emerged with each families' storytelling. The parents used words like trauma, anger, guilt, shock, disbelief, and isolation. Each theme was supported by the families' stories of significant events related to race while their children attended school. Trauma from the events themselves and from the child(ren)'s adoption also emerged as themes during the analysis phase of this study. Several of the events that were shared by the parents could be categorized as traumatic because they were sudden and caused emotional or physical harm to the children. The notion of adoption trauma was a new concept that required some additional research and is explained further in Chapter 5.

The final theme that radiated throughout the study and shared experiences of the families was the parents' increased awareness to racial issues impacting their children and families, including navigating school processes and policies, experiencing family and community politicalization related to race, and very personal self-reflections of their bias and naivety. These last themes that surfaced during the interviews and analysis of the data were demonstrative of the

organic process of the narrative inquiry methodology used and decreased the potential bias of the study.

Key Theme #1 - Racial Identity

Three of the five families interviewed shared events that can be connected to racial identity, which is defined as an individual's sense of being a part of a racial group. The Spencer family described Ksia, their youngest child, as being acutely aware as a preschool student of her own skin color in comparison to her classmates and teachers. Mom reported that, "She's very, very drawn to the very few brown skin kids at the school. She wants to be their friend, she wants to have hair like they do. She wants to go to their house." Mom continued to share that one time while attending an after school event the children were gathered on the playground and mom pointed out some children playing and suggested that Ksia go play with them. Ksia replied, "Mommy, I have enough friends that have white skin, I need more brown skin friends." It was after this reply that mom noticed the children playing were mostly white. This experience highlighted Ksia 's keen sense of racial awareness and identity as well as her desire to connect with her peers of color. At the time of this incident, Ksia was a primary school student under the age of eight.

The Spencer Family's son, Jamel, "started to explore his identity as a multi-racial person through the clothes." He began wearing a durag on his head during a vacation to Philadelphia and Virginia Beach but would not continue wearing it after the family returned home. When asked about it, Jamal replied, "I don't think I can wear that anymore - to school." When the parents conferred later about the incident, they reflected on their trip and recalled that while in Virginia Beach and in Philadelphia they encountered "predominantly brown skin people." However, when they returned home and back to their home community, Jamal returned to his

mostly white school. Jamal's recognition of people of color while on the family vacation, most noticeably the headgear of black males, was noteworthy. He likely wanted to assimilate to the black males that he encountered on the family trip, but then abandoned this fashion choice when he returned to this mostly white school. This behavior could be categorized as code-switching, the ability to change one's behavior in response to the need for social conformity to one's surroundings (Morton, 2014).

The Spencer Family's oldest daughter, Letea, had a very diverse group of friends in her mostly white school. Mom reported that her friends are mostly Asian, Mexican, and Bi-racial. Mom states, "So, it's interesting to me that [our school] has lots and lots and lots of white kids, but the group of friends that she has chosen to engage with are not anything how most people would view our high School." Letea was an adolescent female student, multi-racial, and identified as multi-racial with a darker skin appearance.

The Kanoochi family shared that their daughter, Selina, who was white but identified as Hispanic, did not feel she fit into her school. Mom described the school as "very Caucasian with little diversity." As a result, mom shared that her "self-confidence was greatly affected." Selina had recently experienced a mostly Hispanic environment in her pursuit of higher education and mom reported, "she's found her people."

Robbieswife, mother of two black boys, took her maternal role very seriously. Mom was critically aware of the need to establish a clear and strong identity for her black sons and regularly conferred with black moms to seek advice. She states, "How do I help him develop, you know, him to see himself as a strong black man?"

Suzie Jones, mom of seven children, two who are Black, was often questioned when encountering strangers. She reported being often asked if the boys were twins because the

stranger believed that they looked alike. She emphatically told me that they did NOT look anything alike with the exception of their dark skin color.

Key Theme #2 - Racial Bias

The events shared through the interviews and demographic survey support the predetermined theme of Racial Bias. The Jones family who resided in Summerstar County and attended a predominantly white school district, shared a situation where a white classmate told her black son, "I can't play with you because you are black." This incident occurred while the children were in very early primary grades. On a separate occasion a different classmate told her son, "My dad says I'm not allowed to play with black kids." Mom shared that she inquired further with the child and the child responded that it's because "my dad ordered balloons once and it took the black lady too long to make them and it made my dad mad." These declarations made by the children about their restrictions to engage in common childhood play because of race were blatant examples of racial bias permeating the school setting.

Additional examples are shared by The Robbiesfam, who had two sons adopted from the continent of Africa and identify as Black. Their school was attended by mostly white students. Mom reported that she "went head to head with a lot of school playground aides" because if there would be a disruption or aggressive play during recess, her son, "was the first one called out, especially as he got taller." Her son, NRobbie, was much taller than his school age peers, "So, he stuck out even more." The perception of the playground aides was if there's a disruption, the Black boys should be the cause.

Racial Bias – Athleticism

Robbiesfam's mother shared that the perception was black students are all talented athletes and when they do not perform, there is a negative connotation that surrounds them. She

alluded to the pressure of failure in an athletic competition was daunting on her boys. The following incident supported the theme of racial bias and athleticism among students of color. The private school that NRobbie and SRobbie attended had a strong reputation for premiere basketball and her son was a player on the school team. During the basketball season, Mom told me,

> My son faced issues from the Black basketball coach because he had a white mom. The coach said that I, as a white mom, was making him too soft. This comment was in response to me bringing him a Gatorade and setting it by his chair. And his coach is like, "Yeah, there you white moms are making us black men, soft."

Mom replied, "I'm making him soft. I'm like, get away from me with that crap. I'm like that's just crap."Mom continued, "We noticed after that he wasn't getting playing time because he was considered soft."

Her final story was about her son, SRobbie, who was a baseball player for his school team and considered a good player. However, both parents shared worry because,

> Even yesterday, my husband said to me because he [SRobbie] had a bad game, he was really awful yesterday, and I'm like, What is your problem? And he's like, [Robbieswife], he said, "All those other boys, make errors left and right, left and right, and he's like but then SRobbies makes an error and it stands out you know, because he's the black kid, and he's the short black kid and he's like he's never allowed to not be on his game".

Mom continued, "So, and that's absolutely the pressure for my boys, to perform, and to stay in line. That pressure is put on not in our home, but outside, especially in school. Because they've primarily had to function in white spaces."

Not unlike, Robbiesfam's concern about athletic performance and the pressure those outside perceptions place on her children, the Seals family shared a time when their daughter, Dallas, was in elementary school. During a school choir concert, Dallas was seen talking to her little boyfriend after the concert and then she was introduced to the boy's father. Mom said,

> "Oh, and I'm standing there watching the dad, the dad looks her [Dallas] up and down and says hi and the next morning the little boy broke up with her." Dallas told mom that the boyfriend broke up with her. Mom thought," okay. yeah. yeah. It was because of your skin color. I could tell, this is like this. This isn't gonna change." She said, "You know why? I told her, It was because of your skin color. You wouldn't want him as a boyfriend, right? Right."

Mom shared with me that she could just tell as she was watching the boy's father's reaction when he was introduced to Dallas, "it was weird," she said.

Penelope Seals also described a time when she had to set a boundary with a school official over Dallas's biological mother, "my daughter has been adopted and she was to have no contact with her biological mom." The school official replied, "I knew you weren't one of those." Penelope went on to say, "I sort of stood there surprised and I didn't know what to say." The school official of the substantially white school went on to elaborate that she knew that Penelope was not a woman who was not married or "wasn't somebody that was with a black man." The events of racial bias described here demonstrate the hidden beliefs and perceptions held by the predominantly white PK-12 school community of both students and adults of color.

Key Theme #3 - Microaggressions

Microaggressions are the small slights, comments, slurs, gestures, omissions or jokes that send powerful messages to the racial group for which they are intended (Posey-Maddox, 2017;

Steketee et al., 2021). Microaggressions can be delivered three ways in schools: microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations. The following experiences are firsthand examples reported by the participant families.

Penelope Seals described an event where a fifth grade student wrote "KKK" on her daughter's school iPad. When Dallas got home and asked her mother about it, Penelope shared the meaning with Dallas, who replied, "That's mean." Ramon, dad, shared that during Halloween, the cheer team wanted to dress up like the *Adams Family* and Dallas wanted to be *Wednesday Adams*. The other girls on the all white cheer team said that Dallas couldn't be *Wednesday*, because she "had the wrong skin color." The final microinsult that the Seals family shared was extremely emotional for mom, Penelope. She said, "I think the one I didn't accept was when [Dallas] was a middle school and three boys kept calling her a n*****."

The Knoochi family shared that many comments were made to Selina about her "brown skin." The comments began in kindergarten and one memorable event was surrounding a Valentine's Day Box. The students were to make a Valentine's Box and mom made a box with a "white Barbie doll and a huge, decorated skirt made from a cereal box." Mom says, "it was beautiful." At the end of the day, the teacher phoned home to share that Selina had cried because the other students teased her by saying, "that Barbie is white and you are brown." The teacher downplayed the event as "jealous kids."

NRobbie of the Robbiefam was subjected to repeated comments from a white classmate that were along the lines of "you look like the sh** that comes from my a**" and "Why didn't you come as a turd for Halloween?" These microinsults and microassaults were made because NRobbie has dark skin. NRobbie's brother, SRobbie would be singled out by the teacher daily for behavior corrections like talking in class. When Mom asked him about it among his

classmates in the carpool, one of the white boys in the carpool said, “It's because he’s the only black kid in our class.”

The Spencer Family summed up Latea as “very much aware of any kind of slur” used in her mostly white school among her classmates or peers. Although Scout didn’t offer any specifics, she felt that Latea had experienced many microaggressions while in school.

Key Theme #4 - Systemic Racism

The evidence shared about systemic racism was the most pervasive of all the significant events during the interviews of this study. All five families interviewed shared at least one event or incident that could be categorized as a systems issue in the school setting, either by school district process or policy. All the events shared drew strong emotion and definitive action from the families interviewed.

The first event was from the Spencer family. Their preschool daughter, Ksia attended a predominately white pre-school and very early in the school year they noticed their daughter was becoming withdrawn and less confident. From all reports at school, she was “doing great” but they felt something was off. Finally, Ksia shared she didn’t want to go back to that school because there “weren’t any other kids that look like me there.” The family explored other pre-schools and found a school where the teacher had brown skin and many diverse students of color and background attended. They withdrew Ksia from her predominately white public preschool and enrolled her in the new more diverse school. Scout and Annie both reported a significant positive change in Ksia. She became more outgoing, happy, and talked more about her day at pre-school.

The Seals family shared the details surrounding the classmate writing “KKK” on Dallas’s school iPad. Mom immediately emailed the principal about the incident and the principal

acknowledged that Dallas was right. The principal talked to the girl who wrote "KKK" and talked to her parents but there was no discipline issued to the student who wrote "KKK." Penelope reported that she was not completely satisfied with this response, but if it happened again, mom told Dallas to tell the girl that "she's ignorant."

The principal believed that Dallas was lying about boys in class and during a phone call, asked the Seals parents, "What do you want me to do about it?" Penelope proceeded to tell him what she thought he should do, which was to call the boys' parents and impose some kind of discipline like a suspension from school. The principal responded with "she's a liar." Dad reported that he felt "like the school should have taken a hard line" with the boys. Because the school responded with no action, the parents withdrew Penelope from the school district and enrolled her in a more diverse neighboring school district. Penelope has thrived in the new school setting and not reported one issue related to race since enrolling.

Selina Kanoochi came home crying one day after school because the other students were commenting about her "brown skin" and the teacher was not addressing it. Mom called the principal to report the issue, only to have to leave a voicemail. The school counselor is the school official who returned the phone call. As a response, the counselor did a three week class lesson about "everyone is different." Esmirelda felt that this was "appropriate cultural sensitivity material." She told me that she felt the school always addressed any comments that were made [to Selina].

The Jones family shared several events that they believed were related to race. After analyzing the interview and referencing the literature, these events could also be categorized as systemic in nature. The first experience shared occurs while their sons were in elementary school at the end of the school year. The school official called the Jones parents to offer "six

compensatory Occupational Therapy sessions" because the 504 plan had not been followed all year and the school calculated the son was owed six sessions. Meanwhile the son was receiving Occupational Therapy from a Children's Hospital nearby, so the Jones parents were aware of their son's Occupational Therapy needs and progress. Mom shared that the school "dropped the ball after she went round and round" with them to provide their son with the proper Occupational Therapy. The event alone was not a direct connection to race, but because she and her husband spent a large portion of the year advocating for their son's 504 plan goals, only to have the therapy not provided, was a tantamount to the districts' lack of effective processes.

During this same week, the Jones family's first grade son was sent to the school counselor for drawing graphic pictures of himself being electrocuted and "setting himself on fire." This event occurred on a Thursday. The following day, a Friday, the counselor met with Child #2 again to discuss more drawings. Mom reported the following series of events: there was no contact from the counselor and only a message left on voicemail Friday afternoon, and there was no follow up from the counselor until Monday. Mom shared concern over having a child "in crisis" and being completely unaware of the drawings until Monday afternoon.

As a result, mom requested a copy of the school policy on counseling and notification of parents for these types of events. After two weeks had passed, the principal contacted the family to express that she was unaware of the school policy and would need to "get back to her." Two more weeks passed and then mom called the central office to schedule a meeting with central office administration. Finally, she was told there was no such policy in place. While the school remained reluctant to meet, mom forced the issue of a meeting. At the meeting, she did finally receive written documentation from the school counselor regarding the sessions with her student. Mom shared that the counselor's notes "reflect concern for her son."

This event was most alarming, because the potential for Child #2 to self-harm was evidenced by the graphic drawings and yet, no school official made timely contact with the family. Mom shared that she felt that the district would have been more attentive if this event involved white children.

Lastly, the Robbiefam shared two events that they found significant. The first being the event involving the playground aides discussed previously. As a result of aggressive play, their son NRobbie was suspended for fighting on the playground. The parents were asked to come pick up their son from school and on the way home they engaged in conversation with their son about the events leading to the fight. The son disclosed that on the playground a white boy was making racial remarks e.g., "you are sh** and comments about NRobbie looking like a turd. They asked NRobbie why he didn't get help from an adult, and he replied, "Mom AIDES don't do s***. Well last week when I would go tell them what he was saying they would make me stand against the wall for tattling."

NRobbie was being punished for reporting microinsults as a daily event on the playground. Mom reported that they returned to school and disputed the imposed suspension. The principal was citing the other parents as being upset for their son being harmed in the fight and said that the situation created a very challenging place for him.

Mom shared that the microaggressions and verbal comments continued through elementary school and NRobbie tolerated them because "he was so desperate for friends."

Key Theme #5 - Cultural Competency

The families interviewed reported inconsistently about the cultural competency of school officials in their respective schools. Both the Seals and Jones families revealed situations where the school administrators reacted with little or no cultural awareness to the situations presented to

them. For the event where middle school boys were calling Dallas "n*****", the principal claimed that Dallas was being untruthful, and she had in-school suspension while the boys received no consequences, even after a witness came forward to validate Dallas's story. After Dallas had already transferred to her new school, several teachers told Penelope privately that they believed Dallas was telling the truth about this incident.

Conversely, in the event shared by the Robbiefam, it was NRobbie's teacher that advocated on his behalf. The teacher confronted the principal, citing NRobbie had been racially bullied and should not be suspended for his retaliation (a punch in the face to the bully). It was only after this teacher, who had demonstrated cultural competency and courageous leadership, pleaded with the building principal that NRobbie's punishment was reduced to one day of out-of-school suspension.

Key Theme #6 - Strong Emotional Reaction (Trauma, Guilt, Anger, Disbelief, Isolation)

This theme of Strong Emotional Reaction was newly uncovered during the interviews and demographic survey of the families. Each family shared both strong emotional language and became visibly emotional during our interview time. The parents used the following words: trauma, guilt, anger, disbelief, isolation, and shock. All of these were supported in the interview transcripts. During the actual interviews, each family showed signs of strong emotion. Their actions included, needing to pause, tearful crying, exasperation, or complete avoidance of the actual interview.

During the Spencer family interview, Scout was the only parent who actively participated in the virtual interview, and she became teary during her retelling. Scout told me in a follow-up conversation that Annie (her spouse) was so upset by the thought of sharing these stories, so she did not get in front of the computer camera. During the interview, Scout used phrases like, "I

felt guilt, because we waited several months to do something" and "I have to pay more attention to this, like this is a thing" and "I screwed up that part, but I did move her and get her to the right place".

Penelope and Ramon were both emotional during the interview. I paused the virtual interview so Penelope could regain her composure. She became visibly upset by her recounting of events of racial insults and slurs to her daughter. Penelope used the following words and phrases: "honestly shocked, like it's a child," "then I was in shock that it happened in the classroom," "feeling sad for her," "it was an eye opener for me that racism is still there, still exists," and "I was really surprised." Both Ramon and Penelope felt that the events surrounding their daughter were race-related and "it was time to get her out of there." They made a bold decision to transfer her to a neighboring, more racially diverse district.

When describing her daughter's situation during her elementary school years, Esmeralda Kanoochi used phrases such as hurtful and painful. Furthermore, the Jones family shared that their children "were in therapy for a while." Mom also shared that they established a relationship with a counselor. Therefore, their family was prepared because they also had foster children. Mom believed that coming into or out of foster care was traumatic. Finally, Mom shared that her son was able to deal with the racial events better because he was genuinely more social, outgoing, "physically attractive," which made him more accepted among his peers

The most troubling retelling of all the research interviews was from the Robbiesfam. Robbiesfam's mom, like the Jones family mother, used the phrase "adoption trauma." As a result, Robbiesfam' mom said she was always more of an advocate for her Black sons. The most poignant example of this advocacy was the story of her son's overdose. She began by telling me that she picked up NRobbie from school and noticed how despondent he was,

> He got in the car, he couldn't hold his head up. We went to the doctor's office and the nurse checked his eyes and sent us immediately to the ER. He had absolutely overdosed on his meds for ADHD. We had several other issues with medications that would cause him to have suicidal thoughts, so we had gone through several suicide plans with him starting in third grade. This incident was purposeful because NRobbie, had been saving the pills to take all at once, because he enjoyed the feeling of not feeling anything. So he said, "I didn't want to die, I just didn't want to feel pain anymore."

NRobbie shared later that the pain he was avoiding was the constant microaggressions, racial slurs, insults, and assaults from his peers during school.

Mom shared other strong emotional words like: anger, feeling very isolated, and ugly. She also shared that the murder of Trayvon Martin was a defining moment in their family, "changed everything for us." She went one to share that the family left their church after Trump was elected because we watched "them embrace him and his rhetoric and I couldn't have my boys with people like that, I just couldn't, it wasn't right."

Key Theme #7 - Trauma and Adoption Trauma

The most riveting event shared in this study comes from the Robbie family. Mom's retelling of her son's NRobbie's suicide attempt was unexpected and shocking. The details captured in the previous section were indeed painful and caused harm. One parent shared the following about how traditional school practices do not always work for her son, "Charts were the worst thing in the whole world for my kids. Um, like typical disciplining, it just did not work for them because of adoption trauma."

The idea of trauma related to adoption was a new concept and shared by two of the participant families. The Jones family and the Robbie family both described the events leading

up to children being placed in foster care are often traumatic. As a result, the Jones family shared, “The children were in therapy for a while. We have established a relationship with a counselor so our family is prepared because we have foster/adopted children and coming into or out of foster care is ‘trauma’.”

Key Theme #8 - Increased Parental Awareness

Laszloffy and Hardy (2000) tell us that “becoming racially aware is a person's ability to recognize that race exists and that it shapes reality in inequitable and unjust ways” (p 36). Parents interviewed in this study demonstrated evidence of an increase in perceived self-awareness of racial issues. These issues included navigating school processes and policies, experiencing family and community politicalization related to race, and very personal self-reflections of their bias and naivety. Robbiesmom said, “A lot of my friends live in such a place of privilege, and if I had not been a mother to black children, I wouldn't have seen it either.” Penelope Seals shared, “It was an eye opener for me. That racist (racism) is still there and I can't believe that racism still exists.” The Spencer family shared, “So I did feel guilty and then when she got there (to the new school) and was happy and successful and more content, it was like a sense of relief, like okay, I did the right thing. I waited too long, I screwed up that part, but I did move her and get her to the right place.”

Conclusion of Findings

In this chapter, I shared the experiences of five transracial families living in Northstar and Summerstar Counties in Ohio. The events recounted by the parents described race related issues surrounding their school age children. The virtual interviews were conducted after the families completed a brief demographic survey. The data collected from the survey and during the transcribed interviews were coded and analyzed for related themes. Six themes emerged during

the analysis. Five of the themes were predetermined by the review of literature: racial identity, racial bias, microaggressions, systemic racism and cultural competency. The final themes of strong emotion, trauma including adoption trauma, and increased awareness of parents were only discovered after the data was collected and analyzed. The following table summarizes all findings and the data collected from the families to support each Finding.

Table 3

Research Findings

Theme	Literature	Evidence from Research Participants
Racial Identity Awareness	The research by Sullivan indicated that children as young as six months old can notice differences in skin color, but most children by age five begin to identify racial characteristics and form connections with people that look like them (Sullivan et al., 2021). Cross (2021) explained "double-consciousness is paramount to social identity development and general adjustment for human beings stigmatized by mainstream society" (p. 15). It's the unwritten rule that Black, Indegenous, People of Color (BIPOC) easily navigate between perceived cultural expectations of each race or the notion that "twoness is foundational to black	"Jamel is starting to explore his identity as a multi-racial person through the clothes he is choosing and the hats he is wearing. Jamel over Christmas; over spring break. He is 13. He started to grow a mustache. And while we were on vacation. He also wanted a do-rag to wear the whole time we were on vacation in Virginia Beach. While in Philadelphia we were around predominantly brown skin people that we encountered. So he went to Walmart and picked out this durag to wear. He wore it every day on vacation. Since he's gone back to school, he has not put it on his head. I picked it up out of the back seat of the car and I said, Jamel, you're not wearing this and he said, 'I don't think I can wear that to school anymore. It's okay on vacation, but I don't think I can wear it to school.' That was the first time he ever even asked for that kind of headgear." "Latea attends a school with very few other multi-racial students. Interestingly, her current friend group includes friends who are Asian, Mexican and Bi-racial." "Ksia noticing she was the only brown face in pre-school and feeling uncomfortable."

Theme	Literature	Evidence from Research Participants
	identity" (Cross, 2021, p 15). Tatum's analysis of the immersion/emersion racial identity stage is the child's interest in surrounding themselves with cultural symbols, peers of the same race, and opportunities to learn more about their racial history and culture (Tatum, 1997). Increasing your child's exposure to individuals that look like them is important (Guida-Richards, 2021). Guida-Richards (2021) explained racial mirroring is important for transracial families, especially providing opportunities for the children of color to see "people who share the same race and ethnicity" (p. 130) as them in positive productive roles.	"Selenia never felt as though she completely fit in," but when she moved to a predominantly Latino neighborhood mom reported that she "found her people." "Our church recently hired a pastor whose partner is Black and Ksia loves hanging out with her." She continues now in elementary school to talk about. She's very, very drawn to the very few brown skin kids at the school. She wants to be their friends she wants to have hair like they do. She wants to go to their house. One time after a school event on the school playground. I said, "There's a little girl, why don't you go talk to her? Ksia said to me, "Mommy I have enough friends that have white skin. I need more friends that have brown skin". "It was like a stab in my heart."
Evidence of Racial Bias	There may not be explicit messages about race, but students receive implicit messages often (Noguera, 2008). However, "Black students can distinguish themselves in sports because there are numerous examples of Black individuals who do" (Noguera, 2008, p. 12).	"During the basketball season, he faced issues from the Black basketball coach, because he had a white mom. In the coach's view, a white Mom was making him too soft. Because every basketball game, I would bring him a Gatorade and set it by his chair. And his coach is like, "Yeah, there you white moms are making us black men soft." "We see it with the baseball team. I mean baseball's a white man's sport, but [son] loves it and he's good. But even yesterday,

Theme	Literature	Evidence from Research Participants
		he was really awful. All those other boys make errors left and right but when [son] makes an error it stands out, because he's the black kid. And he's the short black kid and it's like he's never allowed to not be on his game. That's absolutely the pressure for my boys, to perform, and to stay in line. That pressure is put on them outside our home, especially in school. Because they've primarily had to function in white spaces." "I've gone to the cheer advisor myself and I have taken her to the side and told her my daughter had been adopted and that she was to have no contact with her biological mom. The advisor said, 'I knew you weren't one of those.' And I sort of stood there. surprised and I didn't know what to say, but she was stating that I knew you weren't married or weren't somebody that was with a black man." "...when a white classmate told my son, 'I can't play with you because you are black'."
Microag-gressions	Microaggressions are the small slights, comments, slurs, gestures, omissions or jokes that send powerful messages to the racial group for which they are intended (Posey-Maddox, 2017; Steketee et al., 2021). These comments have long-lasting effects on students resulting in negative health outcomes and trauma responses (Guida-Richards, 2021).	"As a high school girl, Latea is very much aware of any kind of slurs." "During cheerleading she wanted to dress up as Wednesday from The Addams Family and was told she couldn't. The other girls told her she couldn't because she was the wrong skin color." "There was this incident in 5th grade where a child wrote "KKK" on the ipad and showed it to my daughter. My child, Dallas, asked me when she got home what it meant. After I told her she replied, 'that's mean'." "Many comments were made about her

Theme	Literature	Evidence from Research Participants
		'brown skin.' This began in kindergarten." "The teacher called me at the end of the day to tell me that she cried because the kids said to her, 'that Barbie [on the Valentine box] is white you are brown'. The teacher downplayed the event as jealous kids." "In fifth grade, there was a boy constantly telling NRobbie, 'You look like the s**t that comes out of my ass and why didn't you come as a turd for Halloween'." "He said, 'You know, the whole class was talking today but the teacher called me out.' And I'm like, why do you think that is? [Son] goes, 'Mom I'm the only black kid in the class'.
Significant Race Related Events	All families engaged in some level of mental health counseling (Berry et al., 2021; McIntosh, 2018; Williams, 2021). Four of the families withdrew their children from the school and transferred them to a school with perceived cultural competence and more racial diversity/acceptance Berry et al., 2021; McIntosh, 2018; Williams, 2021).	"So I did feel guilty and then when she got there (to the new school) and was happy and successful and more content, it was like a sense of relief like okay I did the right thing. I waited too long; I screwed up that part but I did move her and get her to the right place." "I'll be honest with you, why we pulled her out of (our resident public) School District, we both thought it was a race thing. It was time to get her out of there." Transitioned to homeschooling… "I know how to do this and I can do a better job and we had a great school year, like I got to watch my kid become himself again. We had always known we were going to transfer him to Saint [private school] because they have an amazing IEP program."
Evidence of	Strong emotion described with words like guilt,	"Well, I would say one of my first feelings is guilt, because we waited several months

Theme	Literature	Evidence from Research Participants
Strong Emotions	anger, isolation, disbelief, shock and trauma (Brown, 2021) Brown (2021) described feelings of anger as an action emotion; guilt as the discomfort we feel when we evaluate what we've done or failed to do that goes against our values. Guida-Richards (2021) said that "despite love is love or love is enough as a dominant narrative in adoption, adopted children of color struggle."	to do something." … "Honestly shocked"…"really surprised"... "It was a lot of anger…Oh, it got so ugly. It was so ugly. I felt very isolated. I think that's another thing that I have felt. Because parenting black boys is totally different." "A lot of my friends live in such a place of privilege, and if I had not been a mother to black children, I wouldn't have seen it either. You know, I just wouldn't have. I mean Trayvon Martin, that changed everything for me. You know I saw myself as the good Christian white girl that adopted these black children and oh look at me, I was the White Savior and then, Trayvon was shot and killed, and I was like holy shit. I mean it changed everything. It changed everything for us. Socially, when Trump was elected, we left our church because we just watched them embrace him and his rhetoric and I couldn't have my boys with people like that. I just couldn't, it wasn't right." As a parent, "There such a fear of making a mistake. There such a fear of what a mistake will [cost the child]."
Trauma Related to Racism	These actions have long lasting effects on the students. Guida-Richards (2021) explains that "racism is often the stressor that elicits negative health outcomes, trauma responses, and internalized negative mental health outcomes" (p. 40)	"I went to the school to pick him up. He walked out to the car and I said, my God, what have you been taking? And he got in the car, he couldn't hold his head up. And I'm like, I think I called my husband right away, he was at work. and I said, I think [son] is taking some kind of a drug and he can barely hold his head up. And I said, what do I do? And he said, 'Just go right to the doctor's office and then let them decide

Theme	Literature	Evidence from Research Participants
	"Traumatic events is a shocking, scary, or dangerous experience that can affect someone emotionally and physically" (NIMH, 2022)	what to do from there.' We got there, the nurse came in and [son], I just couldn't hold his head up. He kept falling over and she checked his eyes and she's like, you got to get him to the ER right away. So, we got to the ER and he had absolutely overdosed on his meds for ADHD…he took the meds because he enjoyed the feeling of not feeling anything."
Trauma Related to Adoption	Adoption Trauma for children who have been adopted are likely to have early adversity, separation, or psychological harm that resulted in their entrance into the system of care, which in itself may contribute to the child's trauma and psychological harm while trying to protect the child (Feder, 1974; McSherry & McAnee, 2022).	"The children were in therapy for a while. We have established a relationship with a counselor, so our family is prepared because we have foster/adopted children and coming into or out of foster care is "trauma." "Charts were the worst thing in the whole world for my kids. Um, like typical disciplining, it just did not work for them because of adoption trauma."
Systemic Racism still Evident in PK-12 Schools	Williams (2021) shares a body of research that indicated "discrimination was positively associated with increased risk of major mental disorders and inversely related to positive mental health outcomes such as life satisfaction and self esteem" (p. 195). Additionally, recent literature supports the adverse impact of racism on child development both behaviorally and socio-emotionally (Berry et al.,	"It was an eye opener for me. That racist (racism) is still there and I can't believe that racism still exists." In response to being called a "N*****, "the fact that there was no discipline. I mean, I feel like they (the three boys) should have gotten something. I shouldn't have to tell him [the principal] how to do this job. I felt like he was almost pissed off and he's coming after my child. Now, he's going to find any kind of mistake or anything my child's gonna do, she became a target."

Theme	Literature	Evidence from Research Participants
	2021; McIntosh, 2018; Williams, 2021). Crutchfield et al. (2020) explain that Black students are more likely to be "expelled or suspended than their white counterparts" (p. 187).	
Cultural Competence Matters	Current research supports teacher preparation in culturally responsive practices and its importance in grounding the teaching profession to increase outcomes for all students (White, 2022).	"We fought to have a DE&I Committee brought into [the resident] school system. I spoke at every board meeting. I was in the newspaper about it." "The teacher went to the principal and said NRobbie shouldn't have a three day suspension because of the bullying, he was only fighting back." "The school counselor did a three week lesson (1 lesson/week for 3 weeks) on *Everyone is different, no one is perfect*. She taught appropriate cultural sensitivity material."
Increased Parental Awareness		"It was an eye opener for me. That racist (racism) is still there and I can't believe that racism still exists." "I'm standing out in the hallway, waiting for my daughter and she's talking to her little boyfriend. Now, the little boy introduces his dad to Penelope. I'm standing there watching the dad, who looks her up and down and says hi. And the next morning he broke up with her. It was because she was black, I just knew it." "A lot of my friends live in such a place of privilege, and if I had not been a mother to

Theme	Literature	Evidence from Research Participants
		black children, I wouldn't have seen it either. You know, I just wouldn't have. I mean Trayvon Martin, that changed everything for me. You know I saw myself as the good Christian white girl that adopted these black children and oh look at me, I was the White Savior and then, Trayvon was shot and killed, and I was like holy shit. I mean it changed everything. It changed everything for us. Socially, when Trump was elected, we left our church because we just watched them embrace him and his rhetoric and I couldn't have my boys with people like that. I just couldn't, it wasn't right." As a parent, 'They're such a fear of making a mistake They're such a fear of what a mistake will [cost the child]." One time after a school event on the school playground. I said, "There's a little girl, why don't you go talk to her? Ksia said to me, 'Mommy I have enough friends that have white skin. I need more friends that have brown skin'. It was like a stab in my heart" "So I did feel guilty and then when she got there (to the new school) and was happy and successful and more content, it was like a sense of relief like okay I did the right thing. I waited too long; I screwed up that part but I did move her and get her to the right place"

All the participants in this study were families of two parent households of transracial makeup. The families interviewed ranged in size from three members to nine members. All the

children of color in this study joined the families through adoption. The families resided in two adjacent counties in Midwest United States. Both counties, Northstar and Summerstar have similar schools and census data in relation to population and demographics. I did not place focus on the individual school districts to ensure anonymity of the families and retained focus on the similarities of the families' experiences. The families' identities remained confidential and were referred to only by their self-selected pseudonym. Table 4 provides the families' reported events and themes illustrated in a concise manner.

Table 4

Family Reported Events and Themes (✓ = reported during interview)

Theme	Racial Identity	Racial Bias	Micro-aggressions	Systemic Racism	Cultural Competency (demonstrated)	Strong Emotional Response	Trauma Adoption Trauma	Increased Parental Awareness	Advice
Family									
Spencer Scout & Annie Latea Jamel Ksia	✓		✓	✓	no	guilt avoidance of interview		✓	diverse books with diverse characters
Seals Ramon & Penelope Dallas	✓	✓	✓	✓	no	sad, surprise, shock, anger, crying, pausing		✓	mentoring/ support group
Kanoochi Esmirelda & Edgar Selina	✓	✓	✓	✓	yes	✓		✓	mentoring/ support group
Jones Suzie & Jimmy Child Oldest Oldest Son Second		✓	✓	✓	no	adoption trauma, failure, frustration	✓	✓	mentoring/ support group, parental advocacy

Theme	Racial Identity	Racial Bias	Micro-aggressions	Systemic Racism	Cultural Competency (demonstrated)	Strong Emotional Response	Trauma Adoption Trauma	Increased Parental Awareness	Advice
Oldest Son Child 4 Child 5 Child 6 Child 7									
Robbiesfam Robbieswife & Robbie NRobbie SRobbie	✓	✓	✓	✓	yes/no	adoption trauma, suicide	✓	✓	mentoring/ support group, cultural training

Of the themes teased out during the analysis, Racial Identity emerged as a commonality among three families. These parents cited the importance of raising secure black men. Three participants cited events related to Racial Bias. Interestingly, the bias was not exclusive to negativity towards people of color. The Robbiefam experienced racial bias directed at white moms and their perceived coddling of black boys making them "soft." This incident was challenged by the parent directly and immediately. This parent had a history of strong advocacy for her children.

All five of the families described events related to microaggressions and systemic racism. Four of the families all reacted similarly to the events resulting in the parents voluntarily removing the children from the school district where the negative experiences occurred. The collective reactions to transfer their child(ren) to other school districts was decisive, bold, and desperate. The parents made these courageous decisions because they felt they had no other avenues to address the racial events directed at their child(ren).

Strong emotions and emotional language were discovered as the final conceptual theme during this study. The participants used vocabulary such as guilt, isolation, disbelief, shock, anger, and trauma to describe their events and how these events affected the family as a whole. I witnessed that each parent became visibly emotional during the recanting of their events, some tearing up, some needing a moment to compose oneself, some using strong language, and even profanity. All of the parents expressed unconditional love for their children, an undying willingness to advocate for them, and a strong desire to do whatever it took to help each child be successful. In the following chapter, I will offer a discussion of the research study, a summary of the findings, and the implications as related to the current literature, in addition to the recommendations for future research on this and related topics.

CHAPTER 5 – DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This research study examined the experiences of transracial families in PK-12 school communities using a narrative inquiry method to interview white parents of adopted children of color. The focus of the study examined the experiences of the children, parents, and family with issues of race occurring within their school community. The data was collected and analyzed using semi-structured interviews and demographic surveys (Merriam & Tisdell, 2014). Five parents with school age children in two similar counties in a Midwest state were interviewed using a secure online platform. The families were referred by Family Support Specialists, Educational Professionals, or through direct reference from a participating family using network sampling. Merriam & Tisdell (2014) says "Snowball, chain, or network sampling is perhaps the most common form of purposeful sampling" (p. 98). This type of referral was appropriate for this study as it allowed an introduction of the study's purpose and structure by a participating family, which in turn promoted trust between the interviewed families and me.

Through this study, I heard accounts of the children's experiences, the parents' experiences, and the overall impact of these events on their family. The parents' comfort and trust in the researcher was evidenced by the displays of emotion, use of strong emotional language, and a sense of acknowledgment through feeling heard. All the families shared similar experiences and similar feelings as a result of their child(ren) or family's experiences with race.

Four research questions, cultivated from the literature review, guided the analysis of the collected data and were all related to the impact of race on the transracial family. For the purpose of this study, Transracial Family was defined as the following: white parents who have adopted a child(ren) of color. All of the families participating in this study met that definition. Although in two of the families, the child's race was categorized as white for official documents, such as

on birth certificates, however, the child identified as either Mixed (identifying as Black), Black, or Hispanic.

The first of the four research questions focused on the significant events during the school years that were related to race. The analysis of the interviews showed that all five families shared at least one consequential event related to race that occurred within the school or school community. Pedro Noguera (2008) offers the analogy that we should "view those who are racially marginalized like the miner's canary; vulnerable populations whose hardships alert us to the dangers confronting our society" (p. xxv). Four of the five families described two or more events related to race that occurred while their children attended school. Piper, et al. (2022) states that in their recent research the "Results indicated that families of ACE-impacted students of color commonly experienced racism including microaggressions and stereotypes from the school community, which deterred engagement and prevented trusting relationships between families and school staff" (p. 125). Although there is no quantitative data to account for the number of microaggressions experienced, this research supported the experiences of the families in this study.

The second research question driving this study examined the effects of these experiences on the children and the family. All of the families in the study were strongly affected by the events they described during their interviews. This was evidenced by detailed recounts, strong language, displays of emotion, and emotional language used by the parents. The Spencer family specifically used guilt to describe feelings associated with their experience. Brown (2021) describes guilt as a "psychologically uncomfortable feeling…the discomfort of cognitive dissonance" that drives change (p. 147). In contrast, the anger that parents expressed followed

the research of Brown on Anger. Brown, (2021) writes, “narratives of anger unfolded into stories of betrayal, fear, grief, injustice, shame, vulnerability, and other emotions” (p. 221).

The third question investigated the parents’ actions to the events as they related to school policies and practices. All of the families interviewed had interactions with the building counselors, principals, and or district level administrators as a result of their experiences. Four of the five families were so upset by the school event they withdrew and/or removed their child(ren) from the district. Schools should be safe and nurturing environments for students. Noguera (2008) writes, “for many parents and students, the fact that schools are relatively safe provides little solace, given the expectation that schools should be absolutely safe” (p. 85). The parents in this study expressed that the only way to keep their children safe was to transfer them to another school.

The final research question addressed the need for change in order to create a more inclusive or culturally competent school environment. All of the families offered suggestions or comments related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Two of the families stressed the need for more cultural competency training for school personnel and four of the families expressed an interest in some kind of mentoring program for transracial families.

This chapter is organized with the following structure: summary of findings, discussion, suggestions for future research, and final thoughts. Six of the findings are connected to the literature review and previous research. However, I outline the findings to new research and apply the impact to individuals as educators, educational leaders, and a larger system of education. The chapter concludes with recommendations for continued study on this and related topics in addition to a summary of this research.

Summary of Findings

In this section the shared experiences could be categorized into nine important findings that emerged during the analysis of the data from this study. Six of the findings were connected to the constructs outlined in the literature review. However, the three findings strong emotions, trauma, and adoption trauma were new findings.

Finding One: Racial Identity Awareness

Analysis of the data showed that awareness of racial identity was reported by four of the five families in this study. As a preschooler, Ksia was acutely aware of her racial identity and the lack of peers in her pre-school that looked like her. The research by Sullivan and colleagues (2021) indicates that children as young as six months old can notice differences in skin color, but most children by age five begin to identify racial characteristics and form connections with people that look like them. Wright's (1998) work outlines that "schools with a sense of strong white orientation pose a special challenge for black students because without a secure sense of identity, black students at these schools can easily succumb to feelings of alienation" (p. 219).

Jamel Spencer, connected with his racial identity through clothing items, specifically, wearing a do-rag during a time when the family was traveling to a more racially diverse area and notably populated with many Black males. Jamel's behavior could be likened to code-switching or the "phenomenon called double-consciousness" (Cross, 2021, p. 15). Cross (2021) explains "double-consciousness is paramount to social identity development and general adjustment for human beings stigmatized by mainstream society" (p. 15). It is the unwritten rule that Black, Indegenous, People of Color (BIPOC) easily navigate between perceived cultural expectations of each race or the notion that "twoness is foundational to black identity" (Cross, 2021, p 15).

Selina Kanoochi shared that she never really fit in at her school, because the student population was mostly Caucasian. After graduation, Selina moved to a region of the country that is heavily Hispanic and her mother reported that "she found her people." Cross (2021) describes the third stage of racial identity development as a state of "in-betweenness, where a person is attempting to loosen if not destroy, the grip of identity to be abandoned, at the same time that exploration of the new identity has begun in earnest" (p. 26). Tatum's analysis of the immersion/emersion racial identity stage is the child's interest in surrounding themselves with cultural symbols, peers of the same race, and opportunities to learn more about their racial history and culture (Tatum, 1997). Increasing your child's exposure to individuals that look like them is important (Guida-Richards, 2021). Guida-Richards (2021) explains racial mirroring is important for transracial families, especially providing opportunities for the children of color to see "people who share the same race and ethnicity" (p. 130) as them in positive productive roles.

Finding Two: Evidence of Racial Bias

Racial Bias was a supported finding in this study among four of the families interviewed. The school-age children in this study were met with negative comments from their peers, and adults that articulated a predetermined prejudice. Wright (1998) shares in her research "if we focus on children's perception of how blacks differ from whites, we see the emergence of several stereotypes" (p. 185). Children will absorb biases of race that include language, dress, social interactions, intelligence, and behavior (Wright, 1998). A classmate told the Jones child that he could not play with him because he was black. Dallas and Selina were told they could not be *Wednesday Addams* for Halloween or have a white *Barbie* birthday cake because they were dark skinned. These may not be explicit messages about race, but students receive implicit messages often (Noguera, 2008). In this case, the messages sent were indeed explicit and clearly

articulated to the students in this study; there were negative expectations placed upon them solely because of their skin color.

Robbie's family experienced implicit bias through their son's participation in school sponsored athletics. Noguera (2008) "Black students may assume that because there are no Black students in advanced or honors courses they cannot excel academically" (p 12). However, "Black students can distinguish themselves in sports because there are numerous examples of Black individuals who do" (Noguera, 2008, p. 12). Mrs. Robbie felt this pressure for her Black sons to be successful in athletic competition. Her family felt the pressure to not fail on any athletic level.

Finding Three: Microaggressions

"The traditional thought process is that racism involves overt acts of hate against BIPOC, but the truth is that racism often appears in more nuanced ways" (Guida-Richards, 2021, p. 39). These more subtle acts of racism are commonly referred to as microaggressions. Four of the families in this study described hurtful and memorable events that could be described as microaggressions, or microinsults. These events were Dallas's encounter with a student writing "KKK" on her school issued iPad, the comments made to Selina about her brown skin tone, the Jones boys being continually confused as twins, and the most alarming comments made to NRobbie about his black skin color. These actions have long lasting effects on the students. Guida-Richards (2021) explains that "racism is often the stressor that elicits negative health outcomes, trauma responses, and internalized negative mental health outcomes" (p. 40). BIPOC children in transracial families are often raised in areas that are predominately white and therefore have little interaction with other people of color, making them hyper aware of their differences (Guida-Richards, 2021). Transracial adoptees may hear their parents, family members, or neighbors say something racially insensitive (Guida-Richards, 2021). These

comments or slights may leave the child feeling confused and hurt but will often be inconsequential for the white parents who do not realize their comments are microaggressions (Guida-Richards, 2021).

Finding Four: Significant Race Related Events

Each family in this study experienced at least one significant event related to race, many had multiple events that they shared during their interview and all these events had lasting effects on the family. All five families were engaged in some level of professional mental health counseling either past, present, or ongoing. Four of the families made the decision to withdraw their child(ren) out of the school building or district where the racial event occurred. The children were either homeschooled or transferred to another school/district that had a reputation for cultural acceptance. Two of the families experienced suicide or near suicide attempts of their child(ren) after the child's experience with racial bullying. Williams (2021) shared a body of research that indicated "discrimination was positively associated with increased risk of major mental disorders and inversely related to positive mental health outcomes such as life satisfaction and self-esteem" (p. 195). Additionally, recent literature supported the adverse impact of racism on child development both behaviorally and socio-emotionally (Berry et al., 2021; McIntosh, 2018; Williams, 2021).

Finding Five: Evidence of Strong Emotions

All the families in this study used strong language when describing their significant events and the feelings associated with those events. They used words that included guilt, anger, isolation, disbelief, shock, and trauma to describe their feelings. Although there were displays of emotion, each family was reminded of the terms of the consent, which were the ability to skip over questions, revisit questions, and opt out at any time before, during, or after the interview.

Brown (2021) described feelings of anger as "an action emotion and a full contact emotion" (p. 220). In her new book, *Atlas of the Heart*, Brown (2021) outlines a detailed description of anger.

> Anger is an emotion that we feel when something gets in the way of a desired outcome or when we believe there's a violation of the way things should be. When we feel anger, we believe that someone or something else is to blame for an unfair or unjust situation, and that something can be done to resolve the problem (p. 220).

In the situations reported by the families in this study, each family felt their event was related to race and the event was unjust and/or discriminatory in nature. In NRobbies' situation, his suspension was felt to be an unfair consequence to his actions of self-defense. Dallas also faced a situation where she was called a liar and had in-school suspension for reporting the bullying and racial remarks she endured while in contrast, the bullies received no punishment. The parents of Dallas and NRobbie used the term *anger* to describe their feelings associated with their events.

Guilt was another strong feeling that was described by the families. Brown (2021) described guilt as "the discomfort we feel when we evaluate what we've done or failed to do against our values, it can drive positive change and behavior" (p. 134). All of the interviewed parents described feeling they were not completely prepared for the events that occurred to their children. Some of the parents used the term *guilt* to describe the totality of their feelings in reaction to the event they shared during the interview. Brown (2021) described *guilt* in this way:

> Like shame, *guilt* is an emotion that we experience when we fall short of our own expectations or standards. However, with guilt, our focus is on having done something wrong and on doing something to set things right, like apologizing or changing behavior.

Guida-Richards (2021) said that "despite *love is love* or *love is enough* as a dominant narrative in adoption, many adopted children of color struggle" (p. 16). She explained that children of color will face discrimination and racism and white parents need to be prepared and in turn prepare their children for a world that doesn't recognize color equality (Guida-Richards, 2021).

Finding Six: Trauma Related to Racism

The stories shared by the Seals, Robbie, and Jones families are categorized as traumatic. However, all the stories shared in this study could be categorized as traumatic to some degree. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Resources, National Institute of Mental Health, "a traumatic event is a shocking, scary, or dangerous experience that can affect someone emotionally and physically" (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2022). Trauma can manifest itself in many ways and appears differently in children than adults. Symptoms of trauma in children can present in physical responses like headaches and digestive issues or behaviorally like aggressive play or bedwetting (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2022).

Childhood trauma can have lasting impacts on many areas of a child's development. The Impact of Childhood Trauma graphic (Appendix G) outlines seven areas that are negatively affected by trauma. According to Child Trends (2022), these areas are described as follows:

- *Mental Health* issues that may manifest include depression, anxiety, negative self-image, low self-esteem, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and Suicidality.
- *Behavior Issues* include poor self-regulation, social withdrawal, aggression, poor impulse control, risk-taking, illegal activity, promiscuity, adolescent pregnancy, and drug/alcohol use.

- *Brain Development* can be impeded through smaller brain size, less efficient processing, impaired stress response, and changes in gene expression.
- *Cognition* can be impaired including readiness to learn, difficulty problem-solving, language delays, having problems with concentration, and poor academic achievement.
- *Physical Health* symptoms could include sleep disorders, eating disorders, poor immune system functioning, cardiovascular disease, and a shorter life span.
- *Emotions* can be affected by difficulty controlling emotions, trouble recognizing emotions, limited coping skills, increased sensitivity to stress, excessive shame or guilt, excessive worry or hopelessness and feelings of helplessness or lack or self-efficacy.
- *Relationships* can suffer because of attachment problems or disorders, poor understanding of social interactions, difficulty forming relationships with peers, problems in romantic relationships and intergenerational cycles of abuse and neglect (Bartlett & Steber, 2022)

Finding Seven: Trauma Related to Adoption

Two families in this study specifically used the term *trauma* to describe their child(ren)'s events in addition to the *adoption trauma* that their children experienced. This term, *adoption trauma* was new to me and therefore needed further exploration. The term *adoption trauma* first appeared around 1974 in the research by Feder and continues through 2022 with the work of McSherry and McAnee (2022). This topic, *adoption trauma*, was a theme to be studied in itself, but for this study was referenced in relation to the lived experiences of the families in this study related to race. McSherry and McAnee (2022) defines *adoption trauma* as:

> Children who have been adopted from care are very likely to have experienced early adversity that may result in psychological trauma. A current debate in the field is whether adoption provides a pathway to healing for traumatized children, helping them to recover from past psychological harm, or creates trauma for children through the very nature of being an adopted child (p. i)

The relation of this theme to our families would be the compounding of racial events in their schools to their traumatic events prior to adoption. This provided a foundational frame of reference for the emotional impact to the children in this study, who have perceived probable experiences with trauma prior to joining their adopted families.

The Robbie and Jones Family were explicit in their retelling of the dramatic effect these events had on their children. The Jones Family received consistent and regular counseling for their children and family. All of the families in this study reported strong emotions related to their experiences as a common response to the interactions with school leadership, policies, and procedures. Research question three was developed to explore the systems, policies, and procedures that help or hinder families of students of color navigate the school community in pursuit of a public education and uncovered that the structure of systemic racism was still an occurrence in the schools in this study.

Finding Eight: Systemic Racism is Still Evident in PK-12 Schools

Public schools have been a vehicle for systemic racism in the United States since the Constitutional Amendments in the 1860s, known as the Reconstruction Amendments through the mid-20th century and the attempt of desegregation with the Little Rock Nine (Han et al., 2022). Funding still proves to be an area where inequities occur. Discrepancies in state and local

funding is on average 13% less in funding if the district has a large population of Black, Latinx, or Indigenous students (Han et al., 2022).

Crutchfield et al. (2020) explained that Black students are more likely to be "expelled or suspended than their white counterparts" (p. 187). This statistic played out with NRobbie and Dallas. Both were suspended for their infractions while the white students involved received no punishment.

Students of color are three times as likely to be referred to special education compared to their white peers and more likely to be put on track for alternative high school pathways (Crutchfield et al., 2020). The Jones family and the Robbie family have encountered resistance with support services their children were to receive in school, most specifically the Jones' son was denied therapy through the school year and only notified of the lapse during the last days of the school year. The Robbie sons excelled in their schoolwork once they were transferred to a school with a reputation for a strong special education program.

Finally, in the pre-school setting Ksia was able to identify the lack of diversity in her school, including that of her teachers. As a result, she never felt completely comfortable there. The white educator workforce and the presence of other discriminatory practices in schools and school districts, creates an environment in schools where favorable interactions with white students is more commonplace than interactions with students of color (Crutchfield et al., 2020). All five families in this study discussed in great detail their negative interactions with school personnel which supports the research of Crutchfield et al. (2020).

The final research question was designed to influence further study, future action, or highlight areas of opportunity for schools and school personnel to focus on professional development, revisions of school policies, and overall school climate.

Finding Nine: Cultural Competence Matters

All of the families in this research study articulated the presence or absence of cultural awareness and cultural competency among their school personnel. The Spencer family reported that there appeared to be a lack of diversity in instructional materials, staff, and students at their daughter's pre-school, which led to Ksia's discomfort. On the other hand, Esmirelda explained that she felt supported by her daughter's school counselor and administrators because they demonstrated cultural competency in their professionalism. Selina's Mom said, "The school counselor did a three week lesson (1lesson/week for 3 weeks) on *Everyone is different, no one is perfect*. She taught appropriate cultural sensitivity material."

Conversely, the Robbie, Seals, and Jones families felt that the school personnel in their schools were lacking cultural competency. Current research supported teacher preparation in culturally responsive practices and its importance in grounding the teaching profession to increase outcomes for all students (White, 2022). Penelope Seals reported that she experienced little to no cultural awareness or competency from the school administrator during the racial bullying incident of her daughter, Dallas. In this case, the principal refused to respond to the racial comments, even asking mom, "What do you want me to do?"

Similarly, the administrator handling NRobbie's fight with the bully expressed that he was under pressure from the other parents to impose a punishment because the student fighting with NRobbie had been injured. It was the intervention specialist who intervened and advocated for NRobbie to receive a lesser consequence because she recognized the situation as racially motivated. Her cultural awareness brought sensitivity and logic to the situation.

As with the Robbie family, the Jones Family's situation was not surrounding violence but instead failed to complete the prescribed therapy determined by the student's IEP Team. Suzie

Jones reported that the school failed to meet the terms and conditions of her student's IEP because it would have meant adjusting the therapist and school schedules.

All of the families in this study shared at least one lived experience related to race. The recounting shared were vivid recollections, deeply personal, emotional and eerily similar to each other. The stories of discovering racial identity, encountering racial bias, facing microaggressions and microinsults, and navigating school systemic racism were strongly worded, sometimes graphic, and on two occasions traumatic to the children and family.

The families shared similar encounters with racist remarks and exclusions from peers. The frequent and perverse racial comments from classmates and adults were also similar among four of the families. The intensity of the racism, either through action or words, varied among the family's encounters, but this could be a result of the event that families selected to share during the interview.

Finding Ten: Increased Parental Awareness

Awareness in Cultural Competency

The parents in this study all shared some level of personal growth in cultural competency from the time they first became a family that included BIPOC children, to the time of the interview with me. Laszloffy and Hardy (2000) stated that "becoming racially aware is a person's ability to recognize that race exists and that it shapes reality in inequitable and unjust ways" (p 36). The Spencer family shared "So I did feel guilty and then when she got there (to the new school) and was happy and successful and more content, it was like a sense of relief, like okay, I did the right thing. I waited too long; I screwed up that part but I did move her and get her to the right place." This reflective statement showed a change in her viewpoint over the course of her parenting.

The Robbie family quote is a poignant example of increased racial awareness that may have not come if her adoption of two black children had not occurred. She said, "A lot of my friends live in such a place of privilege, and if I had not been a mother to black children, I wouldn't have seen it either." She goes on to share that community events changed her,

> I mean Trayvon Martin, that changed everything for me. You know I saw myself as the good Christian white girl that adopted these black children and oh look at me I was the White Savior and then, Trayvon was shot and killed, and I was like holy shit. I mean it changed everything. It changed everything for us. Socially, when Trump was elected, we left our church because we just watched them embrace him and his rhetoric and I couldn't have my boys with people like that. I just couldn't, it wasn't right.

Penelope Seals shared, "It was an eye opener for me. That racist (racism) is still there and I can't believe that racism still exists." She and her husband now have a different perspective on their community's view of race.

Family/Community Politicalization of Race

Penelope Seals described the situation where her daughter was being introduced by her friend to the friend's father. Penelope stood in the background "watching the dad, who looks her up and down and says hi. And the next morning. He broke up with her. It was because she was black, I just knew it." This event exemplified the racial bias that occurs on a micro-community level. The school district is a direct reflection of the community it served including the beliefs and values the community holds. Another example of this shared in the data is the following statement, "We fought to have a DE&I Committee brought into [the resident] school system. I spoke at every board meeting. I was in the newspaper about it." The idea that parents were met with such resistance over the request to have a team of experts in the school setting address

diversity, equity, and inclusion was a direct reflection of the values of the community. From the parent perspective, the school communities in this study lacked instructional practices surrounding Trauma Informed Care or the value in creating psychological safe learning environments.

Navigation of School Policies

Four of the five families in this study made the decision to transfer their students from their residential district schools to either neighboring public or non-public/parochial schools that were perceived to have a more diverse or culturally responsive climate. These decisions were made as a last straw effort to protect their children from further harm. These families were unsuccessful in navigating the school policies with a mutual satisfactory outcome for both the family and the school district. The families collective experiences with school administration was dismissive, confrontational, and adversarial. The Jones family was ignored by the administration for an extended period of time, only to be told that the requested information did not exist. Dallas and NRobbie received school suspensions as punishments for defending racial micro insults, while the aggressors received little or no punishments. These inequities only made the decision to stay enrolled in their residential district impossible if they were to expect fair and equal treatment.

Discussion

The research providing the foundation for this study outlined the historical and continued existence of racism in our communities and schools through beliefs, actions, and policies. This narrative inquiry served to support that existing research that racially motivated events do indeed still occur whether intended or not. What seemed interesting in this study was that the families' experiences were indeed similar, even though all five of the families were not known to each

other, nor did they have children exactly the same ages, nor did they attend the same schools. The similarity of being a transracial family through adoption appeared to provide a framework for shared experiences with racism in varying forms.

Strong Emotions

The transracial families in this study all responded with strong emotion during the interviews. They used emotional words to describe their feelings, their children's feelings, and the impact of these events on their children and the family as a whole. The racial events had significant and lasting effects on the children and families. All the families were engaged in mental health counseling either previously, currently, or ongoing.

The Child Welfare Information Gateway (2018) created a publication addressing the importance of adoptive families working with therapists who understand the complex and ever changing needs over time (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2018, p. 2). This agency also outlined post adoption services that are available for families including counseling at every stage of child development, life events, trauma, and making sense of feelings and emotional responses to life's challenges (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2018, p. 2). The strengths of the families in this study were their active participation in mental health counseling.

The most shocking was the level of intensity that surrounded the racial bullying including remarks and physical contact. The powerful impact of those hate filled words that were repeated day after day must have been excruciating to the students. I liken this to *death by a thousand cuts*. Little by little the words, actions, and exclusions of the student's peers took its toll, especially to NRobbie, who chose to overdose on prescription medication to numb his pain. He tolerated the racial slurs, gross comments, and jokes at his expense just to maintain what he

considered friendships. Recounting this event caused Robbieswife to become teary and use profanity to express her anger.

Schools that are psychologically safe engage learners, allow students and staff to feel safe, and foster positive learning environments. Improving the environment in school settings to promote psychological safety starts with the leaders. Leaders who create safe spaces for learners are culturally competent, compassionate, and prioritize building positive relationships (Terrell et al., 2018). This was evidenced in only two examples during this study, NRobbie's reduced suspension and Selena's counselor providing in class lessons. In those situations, the outcomes were satisfactory or palatable to the parents. This study demonstrated that when there was a distinct lack of psychological safety, there were negative outcomes for the students and families.

Navigating School Policies

Within the school systems, all the parents encountered racial bias and/or obstacles related to policy and procedures at schools. The blatant disregard of school personnel to follow prescribed therapy, refusal to punish students who engage in racial bullying, and employing consequences to these students simply based on the color of their skin was deplorable.

The parents in this study were faced with incredible challenges when advocating for their children. They were refused or ignored when they requested meetings to address policies and practices that had affected their children. They were dismissed or refuted when they called the actions of school personnel into question. Penelope Seals was told that her daughter was a liar and then Dallas, her daughter, was punished because the school failed to implement cultural sensitivity to her racial bullying.

Parents in this study felt compelled to take matters into their own hands and remove their children from the buildings where these racial events were causing such stress. The families in

this study selected both private and other public schools that had strong reputations for diversity and inclusionary practices. The racial composition of their new schools was not disclosed during the interviews, but the families felt strongly that the transfers were positive for their children.

The Robbie family felt that the shutdown of schools during the COVID pandemic was almost a blessing for their family. The shutdown forced the family to homeschool which afforded NRobbie to be free from racial bullying and microassaults. Mom reported that, during homeschooling, "I know how to do this and I can do a better job and we had a great school year, like I got to watch my kid become himself again.".

Providing clear avenues for parents to access and educate themselves on school policies only provided transparency and clarity. There is a potential benefit in expanding the roles of parent advisory groups to include addressing substantive policies on diversity and equity issues to promote awareness and understanding among the members of the school community.

Cultural Competence Matters

The commonality in the parents' actions as a result of the racial events did not end with strong emotional displays. Four of the families withdrew their children from the school where the racial event occurred and transferred them to a school where the reputation for cultural competence was strong. These families made bold decisions to stop the racial bullying, microaggressions, microinsults, violations of prescribed therapy, or racial bias their children were encountering since the schools were not acting to improve their situations.

We can conclude from the students' experiences in this study that without demonstrated cultural competency their education was interrupted or delayed because of the lack of support and understanding from the school staff, teachers, and administrators. If the principal at NRobbie's school had been trained in Culturally Responsive Teaching, the playground incident

could have had a much different outcome. He, perhaps, would have recognized that NRobbie was reacting to racial bullying and because of his previous adoption trauma, he reacted with physical aggression as a final attempt to stop the cruel racial remarks. Hammond (2015) described Culturally Responsive Teaching as "the process of using familiar cultural information and processes to scaffold learning, emphasizing communal orientation, relationships, cognitive scaffolding, and critical social awareness" (p. 156).

Similarly, the school did not place importance on changing the schedule to accommodate Jones's son as a mid-year addition to the therapist's schedule. If the school personnel were demonstrating cultural competency, they would have understood the need for therapy to close achievement gaps and created space in the current schedule to accommodate the Jones student.

Cultural competency is a critical area in the training and development of all qualified educators and administrators. It can no longer be viewed as an ala carte professional learning option, but rather a staple to the development and training of all educators. Hammond (2015) said the "ultimate goal as culturally responsive teachers is to help dependent learners learn how to learn" (p. 123). The way to do this is to create safe, equitable learning spaces where students feel welcome, a sense of belonging.

Support Groups/Mentoring for Families and Students

Each family in this study expressed the need for mentoring, support groups, or facilitated discussions on how to increase awareness, provide support to other diverse families, or adopted families. Could school communities be the hub for such an undertaking? Would a mentoring program for parents and students of color work to improve coping skills, increase awareness, or disrupt acts of unintended or intended racism?

In the February 2020 podcast *Teacher's Inspired*, the interview had several suggestions when attempting to create an equitable community for families and students (Leavay, 2020). The suggestions were to create sincere connections, invest their time in the emotional lives of the students, dedicate time to understanding the neighborhood and community, take the time to learn about the families and their cultures, and finally connect the curriculum to the students' home and school lives (Leavay, 2020). "When honest connections are made, schools become nurturing communities for students to grow and thrive" (Leavay, 2020). The parents interviewed in this study all wanted to provide their children with a solid upbringing in a family setting where love could overcome all. This has proven to be more of a challenge than they anticipated. All of the families interviewed for this study shared extremely personal and emotionally charged experiences related to the race of their adopted children of color. The experiences of all five families supported the research in the literature reviewed that were categorized into the following four themes: racial identity, racial bias, microaggressions, and systemic racism. All five families shared at least one event supporting one or more of these themes.

What School Administrators and Teachers Should Take Away from this Study

School districts and their buildings are mirrors of the community they serve, which include the values and priorities of the community residents' belief systems. Schools can become victims of politicalization, as we have seen in recent news. School Board meetings are becoming venues for groups to publicly advocate for book banning, parent involvement in curriculum decisions, demands on gender identification, and of course the hottest topic - critical race theory. School Boards are becoming polarized just like the communities they serve. School administrators and teachers would be wise to tune out this rhetoric and rely on the research and best practices that advocate for all children to learn and grow in psychology safe spaces where

everyone is included and valued. Cultural Competency training is foundational and critical to promote psychological safe learning spaces where teachers and staff members feel valued and trusted. When the adults in the school feel this, it will transfer to the students. (Khalifa et al., 2016).

Limitations

This qualitative study set out to capture the lived experiences of transracial families with racism in the PK-12 school setting. The narrative inquiry method lended itself to the idea of storytelling, however the participants in this study shared mostly negative events. Perhaps their participation was somehow intrinsically motivated in an effort to feel heard and less isolated. Furthermore, the family participants in this study were limited to parent interviews only, which omitted the opportunity for firsthand accounts from the children. The children's perceptions and recollections may have added more depth and detail to the shared events.

Additionally, this study may have benefited from the interviews of the school personnel involved in the events described by the families. Interviews with the school leadership could have provided more detail to the events, highlighting the perspective of the administrators, teachers, and support staff. Moreover, the school policies and practices were not accounted for during the interview from the perspective of the school personnel. The study results did not represent all transracial families in the state, region, or county. The small sample size restricted the ability to generalize this study to all transracial families attending PK-12 schools.

Suggestions for Future Research

This study served to tell the stories of transracial families of adopted children of color and their experiences with racism in the PK-12 school setting. While these stories are powerful and emotional, they only touched on a small demographic of families in a small region of the

Midwest. This study could serve as the starting point for a more in depth study on diverse families across the nation or in other countries where transracial adoption occurs. It would be intriguing to continue with this research using the same snowballing or chain referral process. Collecting this data would only serve to strengthen the findings of this study. There are many opportunities to expand this study by broadening the parameters of participants.

Review of the Transfer Schools

The families in this study that opted to transfer their students to other schools that have perceived increased racial diversity and more inclusionary practices was noteworthy and definitely deserves further attention. A more thorough examination of the schools selected would be an interesting extension to this study. Were the new schools predominantly private or public? Does the data hold true to the parents' perceptions of ethnicity in student enrollment? It would also be interesting to investigate the level of parental involvement of BIPOC families and if that contributes to the increased feeling of inclusion and belonging of the students enrolled in these schools.

Other Types of Diverse Families

There certainly is a basis to explore similar research with the following family variations: multiracial families by birth or marriage, nuclear families of color specifically, Black families, Asian families, Hispanic families, or other BIPOC families. All the families in this study attended schools with less than 10% black population. As a result, it provides the argument to explore a similar study focused on nuclear families of color within the same school districts. Common belief would predict that a future study with nuclear families would support the current research as similarly as the data collected in this study. There is value in exploring the narratives

of non-Black children adopted internationally into white families e.g., children of Asian descent. Do they have the same negative experiences with racism in schools?

During COVID, our nation's communities saw an uptick in race related violence against Asians. *Stop AAPI Hate*, a national coalition that became the authority on gathering data on racially motivated attacks related to the pandemic, received 9,081 incident reports from March of 2020 through June of 2022 (Press, 2021). Was there also an increase in racist incidents in PK-12 schools?

Longevity Study

There would be value in completing a longevity study of the children and families' experiences in schools as they enter, progress, and graduate from public school settings. Narrative inquiry could be used to complete a more detailed chronicle of the children's experiences in school and the family's ability to navigate the school system on behalf of their children of color.

The families' perceptions are critical pieces to informing school officials about the long term effects of culturally responsive practices on student outcomes and the improved school climate and culture as a result of those implemented practices. Are the current Culturally Responsive Professional Development Programs providing teachers and administrators with enough tools to make a real difference for students of color? What are the differences in outcomes of students who attend Culturally Responsive Schools over time? What is the socio-emotional health of students attending Culturally Responsive Schools over time?

Trauma Informed Care

In addition to finding value in the expansion of this research to include other types of families of color, I would be interested to see if expansions of pedagogy in Trauma Informed

Care increases student outcomes and provides for a stronger, more stable socio-emotional BIPOC student. Trauma Informed Care and the structural support and personnel needed to deliver this model in school is relatively new to public education. Would there be a benefit to more research in this area using the data collected in this study as a model or foundation for more education and training for teachers and administrators? Would increasing the number of mental health professionals in the school setting increase student equity and provide students with psychological safety and security needed to be independent learners? Would more trauma informed training be beneficial for the adults in the school setting to become more self-aware of their own biases and experiences and how those transfer to others in the school community? Collecting this data could be beneficial in creating school cultures and climates that are more accepting and inclusionary.

Final Thoughts

This study set out to explore the lived experiences of transracial families with racism in PK-12 Schools. The families in this study did experience racism in multiple forms. They all reported blatant and covert racial incidents in their school community involving students, other parents, teachers, and administrators.

Transracial families face unique circumstances. The families in this study were all created from a deep sense of love and a desire to expand their family through adoption. Although well-intentioned, the parents did not anticipate the extent to which they would be met with racial adversity. In these situations, the white parents were not completely equipped to offer the tools needed to fully embrace the cultural identity differences that their children of color faced.

The similarities did not end there. All of the families had similar adverse race related experiences within their school settings. All of the families interviewed used strong emotional

words to describe their feelings and most of the families had sought mental health counseling or other professional mental health help. Strong emotions and mental health counseling were not unique to transracial families, but the root causes of their issues were unique to their family makeup.

Sadly, racism through bias, microaggressions, schools' policies, and practices are still evident in today's schools. Moreover, the students in this study all suffered strong emotional and traumatic situations stemming from racism. The parents had few options to navigate the school policies with positive outcomes for the family.

All of the parents in this study are to be commended, applauded, and admired. They have met unbelievable challenges with their children and yet, continue to persevere and prosper. They all expressed a desire to pave the way for families of similar make up to have better experiences. All the families in this study were interested in participating in a support group or mentoring program to help or receive help from families that look like their family.

REFERENCES

Alexander, M. (2020). The new Jim Crow mass incarceration in the age of colorblindness. The New Press.

Ali, R. Office of Civil Rights. (2010). Dear Colleague Letter. U.S. Department of Education. Washington, D.C.

Allen, T. W. (2006). Class struggle and the origin of racial slavery; The invention of the white race. Center for Study of Working Class Life, Department of Economics, State University of New York at Stony Brook, NY.

Allen, T. W. (2014). The invention of the white race, volume 2: The origin of racial oppression in Anglo-America. Verso Books.

American Psychological Association. (n.d.). Belonging. In APA dictionary of psychology. Retrieved November 2021, from https://dictionary.apa.org/belonging

American Psychological Association. (n.d.). Bias. In APA dictionary of psychology. Retrieved November 2021, from https://dictionary.apa.org/bias

American Psychological Association. (n.d.). Microagression. In APA dictionary of psychology. Retrieved November 2021, from https://dictionary.apa.org/microaggression

American Psychological Association. (n.d.). Racial identity. In APA dictionary of psychology. Retrieved November 2021, from https://dictionary.apa.org/ racial-identity

Anderson, M. (2017). Transformational leadership in education: A review of existing literature. International Social Science Review: 93(1).

Bailey-Fakhoury, C., & Mitchell, D. (2018). Living within the veil: How black mothers with daughters attending predominantly white schools experience racial battle fatigue when

combating racial microaggressions. Cambridge University Press Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race, 15(2), 489 - 515.

Banks, J. (2004). Teaching for social justice, diversity, and citizenship in a global world. The Educational Forum, 68(4), 296-305. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131720408984645

Bartlett, J. D., & Steber, K. (2019, May 9). How to implement trauma-informed care to build resilience to childhood trauma. Child Trends. Retrieved July 2022, from https://www.childtrends.org/publications/how-to-implement-trauma-informed-care-to-build-resilience-to-childhood-trauma

Berry, O. O., Londoño Tobón, A., & Njoroge, W. F. M. (2021). Social determinants of health: The impact of racism on early childhood mental health. Current Psychiatry Reports 23(5), https://doi.org/10.1007/s11920-021-01240-0

Bilingual Education Act of 1968, Pub. L. No. 90-247, 81 Stat. (1968).

Brake, A. (2019). Right from the start: Critical classroom practices for building teacher–student trust in the first 10 weeks of ninth grade. Urban Review. Retrieved November 2021, from https://doi-org.proxy.library.ohio.edu/10.1007/s11256-019-00528-z

Bremner, J. D., & Narayan, M. (1998). The effects of stress on memory and the hippocampus throughout the life cycle: Implications for childhood development and aging. 104 Helping Traumatized Children Learn Development and Psychopathology, 10, 871–885.

Brown, B. (2012). Daring greatly. Random House.

Brown, B. (2018). Dare to lead. Vermilion.

Brown, B. (2021). Atlas of the Heart. Random House.

Brown v. Board of Education, 347 U.S. 483 (1954).

Burleigh, C., & Wilson, A. (2021). Teachers' awareness in identifying microaggressive behaviors within the K-12 classroom. Soc Psychol Educ, 24, 143–167. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11218-020-09604-9

Burns, J. (1978). Leadership. Harper & Row.

Cambridge University Press. (n.d.). Systemic racism. In Cambridge dictionary. Retrieved November 2021, from https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/systemic-racism

Channing Brown, A. (2018). I'm still here black dignity in a world made for whiteness. Random House.

Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2018). Finding and Working with Adoption-Competent Therapists [Fact sheet]. Children's Bureau ACYF/ACF/HHS. https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/f_therapist.pdf

Chin, M., Quinn, D., Dhaliwal, T., & Lovison, V. S. (2020). Bias in the air: A nationwide exploration of teachers' implicit racial attitudes, aggregate bias, and student outcomes. Educational Researcher, 49(8), 566-578.

Civil Rights Act of 1964, Pub. L. No. 88-352, 78 Stat. 241 (1964).

Civil Rights Act of 1968, Pub. L. No. 90–284, 82 Stat. 73 (1968).

Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC). (2014 March). Data snapshot: School discipline. Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved November 2021, from https://ocrdata.ed.gov/assets/downloads/CRDC-School-Discipline-Snapshot.pdf

Clark, D., Kleiman, S., Spanierman., L., Isaac, P., & Poolokasingham, G. (2014). Do you live in a teepee? Aboriginal students' experiences with racial microaggressions in Canada. Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 7(2), 112-125.

Cobanoglu, N. (2021). The relationship between the transformational leadership, the cultural intelligence of teachers and the skills of principals' diversity management. European Journal of Educational Management, 4(1), 35-49. https://doi.org/10.12973/eujem.4.1.35

Colarossi, J. (2020, November 10). When do kids notice race? Way earlier than most adults think. Futurity. Retrieved July 2022, from https://www.futurity.org/when-kids-notice-race-2469252/

Cole, S., O'Brien, J., Gadd, M., Ristuccia, J., Wallace, D., & Gregory, M. (2005). Helping traumatized children learn; Supportive school environments for children traumatized by family violence. Massachusetts Advocates for Children Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative, Harvard Law School.

Creswell, J. W. (2007.) Qualitative research design and inquiry; Choosing among 5 designs (2nd ed.). SAGE.

Creswell, J. W., & Roth, C. N. (2018). Qualitative research design & inquiry. SAGE.

Crosby, S. (2015). An ecological perspective on emerging trauma-informed teaching practices. Children & Schools, 37(4), 223-230. https://doi.org/10.1093/cs/cdv027

Cross, W. (2021). Black Identity viewed from the barber's chair nigrescense and eudaimonia. Temple University Press.

Crutchfield, J., Phillippo, K., & Frey, A. (2020). Structural Racism in Schools: A View through the Lens of the National School Social Work Practice Model. Children & Schools, 42(3), 187–193. https://doi.org/10.1093/cs/cdaa015

Data USA. (n.d.). DATAUSA: The definitive place to explore US public data. Retrieved November 2021, from https://datausa.io/

Diangelo, R. (2018). White fragility: Why it's so hard for white people to talk about racism. Beacon Press Books.

Diem, S., & Carpenter, B. W. (2012). Social justice and leadership preparation: Developing a transformative curriculum. Planning and Changing, 43(1-2), 96-112.

Dismantling Racism Stark County. (n.d.). Unity challenge to dismantle racism. https://www.dismantlingracismstarkcounty.org/unitychallenge

Douglass-Horsford, S. (2021, March 17). Whose vision will guide racial equity in schools? White allies don't hold the answers to how students of color should be educated. Education Weekly: Equity & Diversity. https://www.edweek.org/leadership/opinion-whose-vision-will-guide-racial-equity-in-schools/2021/03

DuBois, W. (1903). The Souls of Black Folk. Millennium Publications.

Durrant, L., & Gillum, N. (2021). White fathers' concerns for their biological black and white biracial sons. Family Relations Interdisciplinary Journal of Applied Science, 70(4), 993-1008.

Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, Pub. L. No. 89–10, 79 Stat. (1965).

Every Student Succeeds Act, 20 U.S.C. § 6301 (2015). https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/senate-bill/1177

Executive Order 14035, 86 Fed. Reg. 34593 (June 25, 2021).

Feder, L. (1974). Adoption Trauma: Oedipus Myth/clinical Reality. International Journal of Psychoanalysis, 55, 491-493.

Forrest-Bank, S., & Jenson, J. (2015). Differences in experiences of racial and ethnic microaggression among Asian, Latino/Hispanic, Black, and White young adults. The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare, 42(1), 141–161.

Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research. Sociology Press.

Google Cloud. (n.d.) Google infrastructure security design overview. Retrieved November 2021, from https://cloud.google.com/docs/security/infrastructure/design

Gorski, P. (2008). The myth of the culture of poverty. Education Leadership, 65(7), 32-36.

Govan, I. (2011, August 22). 10 qualities of culturally competent leaders. Cultures connecting. Retrieved November 2021, from https://www.culturesconnecting.com/single-post/2018/05/15/10-qualities-of-culturally-competent-leaders

Guida-Richards, M. (2021). What white parents should know about transracial adoption and adoptee's perspective on its history, nuances, and practices. North Atlantic Books.

Han, L., Chen, E., & Seabright, H. (2022, May 18). Understanding structural racism in public education. Studio ATAO. Retrieved July 2022, from https://www.studioatao.org/public-education?gclid=CjwKCAjwrZOXBhACEiwA0EoRD62UEJIxtS6B-N4iav9fD0WriJnTNTzRO4pzEJGSvlDXkghEMYhB2BoCKeMQAvD_BwE

Hammond, Z. (2015). Culturally responsive teaching and the brain. Corwin.

Hansuvadha, N., & Slater, C. (2012). Culturally competent school leaders: The individual and the system. The Educational Forum, 76(2), 174-189. doi: 10.1080/00131725.2011.653094

Harrison-Bernard, L. M., Augustus-Wallace, A. M., Sousz-Smith, F. M., Tsien, F. Casey, G. P., & Gunaldo, T. P. (2020). Knowledge gains in a professional development workshop on diversity, equity, inclusion and implicit bias in academia. Advances in Physiology Education, 44(3), 286-294.

Henderson, S., Hills, R., & Kendall, E. (2018). Cultural competence in healthcare in the community: A concept analysis. Health and Social Care in the Community, 26(4), 590-603.

Hofstede, G. (2011). National cultures, organizational cultures, and the role of management. Values and Ethics for the 21st Century. BBVA, 385-402.

Hswen, Y., Qiuyuan, Q., Williams, D., Viswanath, K., Brownstein, J., & Subramian, S. V. (2020). The relationship between Jim Crow laws and social capital from 1997-2014; A 3 level multilevel hierarchical analysis across time, county and state. Social Science & Medicine, 262, 113142.

James, J. (2015). Impact of equity and undoing racism training on disproportionality in child advocates. Joyce James Consulting.

Johnson, P., & Bonsell, N. (2021) Guest blog: Melanin and mental health parent and family alliance. https://www.paparentandfamilyalliance.org/post/guest-blog-melanin-and-mental-health?gclid=Cj0KCQiAoY-PBhCNARIsABcz772eiqhp0jjo7kfDVrZ2U6GVFAc5Fj

Johnson W. (2016). What do we mean when we say, 'structural racism'?: A walk down west Florissant avenue, Ferguson, Missouri. Kalfou, 3(1), 36-62.

Johnston, M. P., & Nadal, K. L. (2010). Multiracial microaggressions: Exposing monoracism in everyday life and clinical practice. In D. W. Sue (Ed.), Microaggressions and marginality: Manifestation, dynamics, and impact (pp. 123–144). John Wiley & Sons Inc.

Johnston-Goostar, K., & Roholt, R. (2017). Our kids aren't' dropping out; they're being pushed out: Native American students and racial microaggressions in schools. Journal of Ethnic & Cultural Diversity in Social Work, 26(1-2).

Joseph-Salisbury, R., & Andrews, K. (2017). Locating black mixed-raced males in the black supplementary school movement. Race Ethnicity and Education, 20(6), 752-765. DOI: 10.1080/13613324.2016.1248838

Kaufman T. (n.d.). What is trauma-informed teaching? Understood. Retrieved November 2021, from https://www.understood.org/en/articles/what-is-trauma-informed-teaching

Khalifa, M., Gooden, M., & Davis, J. (2016). Culturally responsive school leadership: a synthesis of the literature. Review of Educational Research. 86(4).

Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity. (2013). Understanding implicit bias: The state of science. Columbus.

Kohli, R., & Solórzano, D. (2012). Teachers, please learn our names: Racial microaggressions and the K-12 classroom. Race, Ethnicity, and Education, 15(4), 441-462.

Kiris, B., & Aslan, H. (2019). Okul mudurlerinin donosumcu liderlik ozellikleri ile ogretmenlerin mesleki benlik saygilari arasindaki iliskiye yonelik ogretmen algilari [Teachers' perceptions of the relationship between the transformational leadership traits of school principals and teachers' professional self-esteem] Electronic Journal of Social Sciences/ Elektronik Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi, 18(72), 1656-1675.

Kwan, P. (2020). Is transformational leadership theory passé? Revisiting the integrative effect of instructional leadership and transformational leadership on student outcomes. Educational Administration Quarterly, 56(2), 321–349. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X19861137

Laszloffy, T. A., & Hardy, K. V. (2000). Uncommon strategies for a common problem: Addressing racism in family therapy. Family Process, 39(1), 35–50. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1545-5300.2000.39106.x

Leavay, T. (Host). (2020 February 14). Part 2: Do schools mirror the inequitable society we live in? (No.2) [Audio podcast]. Teacher Inspired. https://www.npr.org/2021/08/12/1027236499/anti-asian-hate-crimes-assaults-pandemic-incidents-aapi

Lei, Y., Shah, V., Biely, C., Jackson, N., Dudovitz, R., Barnert, E., Hotez, E., Guerrero, A., Bui, A., Sastry, N., & Schickedanz, A. (2021). Discrimination and subsequent mental health, substance use, and well-being in young adults. American Academy of Pediatrics, 148(6), e2021051378. https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2021-051378

Lindsey, D. B., & Lindsey, R. B. (2016). Build cultural proficiency to ensure equity: Explore the standards for professional learning. Journal of Staff Development, 37(1), 51-56.

Lindsey, D. B., Lindsey, R. B., Hord, S., & vonFrank, V. (2016). Reach the highest standard in professional learning outcomes. Corwin.

Litz, D., & Blaik-Hourani, R. (2020). Transformational leadership and change in education in Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education. Oxford University Press.

Lui, P. P., & Quezada, L. (2019). Associations between microaggression and adjustment outcomes: A meta-analytic and narrative review. Psychological Bulletin, 145(1), 45–78. https://doi.org/10.1037/bul0000172

Marshall, S., & Khalifa, M. (2018). Humanizing school communities: Culturally responsive leadership in the shaping of curriculum and instruction. Journal of Educational Administration, 56(5) 533-545. https://doi.org/10.1108/JEA-01-2018-0018

Martin, J. (2015). Racial battle fatigue, insights from the frontlines of social justice advocacy. Praeger.

Martin, L. X. (2022). For Black students in Kansas City's suburbs, attending school can mean regularly facing racist bullying. KCUR News, NPR. https://www.kcur.org/news/2022-01-05/for-black-students-in-kansas-citys-suburbs-attending-school-can-mean-regularly-facing-racist-bullying

Maslow, A. H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. Psychological Review, 50(4), 370–396. https://doi.apa.org/doi/10.1037/h0054346

McCann, E., & Brown, M. (2018). The inclusion of LGBT+ health issues within undergraduate healthcare education and professional training programmes: A systematic review. Nurse Education Today, 64, 204-214.

McCleskey, J. A. (2014). Situational, transformational, and transactional leadership and leadership development. Journal of Business Studies Quarterly, 5(4), 117.

McCoy, H. (2020). Black lives matter, and yes, you are Racist: The parallelism of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal, 37, 463-475.

McCoy, H. (2021). What do you call a black woman with a PhD? A n*****. How race trumps education no matter what. SAGE, 11(3), 318-217.

McIntosh, M. L. (2018, November 30). Compound fractures: Healing the intersectionality of racism, classism and trauma in schools with a trauma-informed approach as part of a social justice framework. Journal of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies. Retrieved July 2022, from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1226938

McSherry, D., & McAnee, G. (2022, March 31). Exploring the relationship between adoption and psychological trauma for children who are adopted from care: A longitudinal case study perspective. Child Abuse & Neglect. Retrieved July 2022, from https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0145213422001430

Meer, N (2018). W. E. B. Du Bois, double consciousness and the 'spirit' of recognition. The Sociological Review, 67(1), 47-62.

Mental Health Foundation. (2021). Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities. Retrieved November 2021, from https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/explore-mental-health/a-z-topics/black-asian-and-minority-ethnic-bame-communities

Merriam, S., & Tisdell, E. (2014). Qualitiative Research: A guide to design and implementation (4th ed.). Jossey-Bass.

Moore, E. (2021). 21-day racial equality habitat challenge. https://www.eddiemoorejr.com/21daychallenge

Morton, J. (2014). Cultural code-switching: Straddling the achievement gap. The Journal of Political Philosophy, 22(3), 259-281.

Mydral, G. (1944). An American dilemma: The Negro problem and modern democracy. New York: Harper and Bros.

Nadal, K. L. (2018). Racial microaggressions and trauma. Theory, research, and clinical treatment, 53–70. American Psychological Association. https://doi.org/10.1037/0000073-004

National Center for Education Statistics. (2013). Enrollment and percentage distribution of enrollment in public elementary and secondary schools, by race/ethnicity and region: Selected years, fall 1995 through fall 2023 [Data set]. U.S. Department of Education. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d13/tables/dt13_203.50.asp

National Center for Education Statistics. (2019). Status and trends in the education of racial and ethnic groups 2018 [Data set]. U.S. Department of Education. https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2019/ 2019038.pdf

National Child Traumatic Stress Network (2008). Child trauma toolkit for educators. https://www.nctsn.org/resources/child-trauma-toolkit-educators

National Child Traumatic Stress Network, Justice Consortium, Schools Committee, And Culture Consortium. (2017). Address race and trauma in the classroom: A resource for educators. National Center for Child Traumatic Stress.

Neville, H. A., & Cross, W. E., Jr. (2017). Racial awakening: Epiphanies and encounters in Black racial identity. Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 23(1), 102–108. https://doi.org/10.1037/cdp0000105

Noguera, P.A. (2008). The trouble with black boys…and other reflections on race, equity, and the future of public education. Jossey-Bass.

O'Callahan, T. (2021). How the Philadelphia schools confronted systemic racism. Yale Insights Management in Practice. https://insights.som.yale.edu/insights/how-the-philadelphia-schools-confronted-systemic-racism

Obama, Barack (2020). A Promised Land. Crown.

Office of the Assistant Secretary for Administration & Management. (n.d.) Legal Highlight: The Civil Rights Act of 1964. U.S. Department of Labor. https://www.dol.gov/agencies/oasam/civil-rights-center/statutes/civil-rights-act-of-1964

Ohio Department of Education, The Human Capital Resource Center. (n.d.). Culturally Responsive Practice. https://ohiohcrc.org/crp

Ohio Department of Education (2022). District Profile Reports. https://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Finance-and-Funding/School-Payment-Reports/District-Profile-Reports

Okçu, V. (2014). Relation between secondary school administrators' transformational and transactional leadership style and skills to diversity management in the school. Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice, 14(6), 2162–2174.

Osta, K. A., & Vasquex, H. (n.d.). Implicit bias and structural racialization. National Equality Project. https://www.nationalequityproject.org/frameworks/implicit-bias-structural-racialization

Patton, M. (2015). Qualitative research and evaluation methods (4th ed). Sage.

Pendharkar, E. (2021, May 07). Why two superintendents of mostly white districts are actively fighting anti-black racism. Education Weekly: Equity & Diversity. https://www.edweek.org/leadership/why-two-superintendents-of-mostly-white-districts-are-actively-fighting-anti-black-racism/2021/05

Perry, S., Skinner, A., & Abaied, J. (2019). Bias awareness predicts color conscious racial socialization methods among white parents. Journal of Social Issues, 75(4), 1035-1056.

Pertman, A. (2006, September 22). Adoption in the schools; A lot to learn promoting equality and fairness for all children and their families. Donaldson Adoption Institute Research and Reports: National Center on Adoption and Permanency. https://www.nationalcenteronadoptionandpermanency.net/post/adoption-in-the-schools-a-lot-to-learn

Piper, K. N., Elder, A., Renfro, T., Iwan, A., Ramirez, M., & Woods-Jaeger, B. (2022). The importance of anti-racism in trauma-informed family engagement. Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research, 49, 125–138. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10488-021-01147-1

Plessy v. Ferguson, 163 U.S. 537 (1896).

Posey-Maddox, L. (2017). Race in place: Black parents, family-school relations, and multi-spatial microaggressions in a predominantly white suburb. Teachers College Record, 119(11), 1–42.

Potapchuk, M., Leiderman, S., Halbert Jones, S., & Butler, S. (n.d.). Racial equity tools. Retrieved November 2021, from https://racialequitytools.org

Press, T. A. (2021, August 12). More than 9,000 Anti-Asian incidents have been reported since the pandemic began. NPR. Retrieved August 2022, from https://www.npr.org/2021/08/12/1027236499/anti-asian-hate-crimes-assaults-pandemic-incidents-aapi

Quinn, D., & Stewart, A. (2019). Examining the racial attitudes of white pre-k-12 educators. The Elementary School Journal, 120(2), 272-299.

Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Pub. L. No. 93-112, 87 Stat. 355 (1973).

Reiss, R. (2021, October 09). A teacher at a North Carolina charter school resigns after claims of "field slave" comments. CNN. Retrieved July 2022, from https://www.cnn.com/2021/10/09/us/teacher-resigns-racist-lesson-north-carolina

Rogers, K. (2021, November 08). Discrimination of any kind can lead to much higher risk of mental and behavioral issues for young people. CNN. Retrieved July 2022, from https://www.cnn.com/2021/11/08/health/ageism-racism-sexism-discrimination-mental-health-effects-wellness/indix.html

Rogers, K. (2020, October 10). People of color face significant barrier to mental health services. CNN. Retrieved July 2022, from https://www.cnn.com/interactive/2020/10/health/mental-health-people-of-color-wellness/

Rogers, K. (2020, November 20). Structural racism is taking a toll on children's mental health. CNN. Retrieved July 2022, from https://www.cnn.com/interactive/2020/11/health/childrens-day-2020-mental-health-wellness/

Rogers, L., & Meltzoff, A. (2017). Is gender more important and meaningful than race?: An analysis of racial and gender identity among Black, White, and mixed-race children. Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 23(3), 323–334.

Roosevelt, T. (n.d.). Citizenship in a republic [Speech transcript]. https://www.worldfuturefund.org/Documents/maninarena.htm (Original work published 1910)

Rose, J., & Johnson, C. (2020). Contextualizing reliability and validity in qualitative research: Toward more rigorous and trustworthy qualitative social science in leisure research. Journal of Leisure Research, 51(4), 432-451. doi: 10.1080/00222216.2020.1722042

Rothstein, R. (2017). The color of law, a forgotten history of how our government segregated America. Liveright Publishing.

Samuels, G. (2009). Being raised by white people: navigating racial difference among adopted multiracial adults. Journal of Marriage and Family, 71(1), 80-94.

Savory, J. (1972). The rending of the veil in W.E.B. DuBois's "The Souls of Black Folk.". CLA Journal, 15(3), 1858-1932.

Shields, A., & Cicchetti, D. (1998). Child maltreatment: Theory and research on the causes and consequences of child abuse and neglect (D. Cicchetti, & V. Carlson, Eds.). Cambridge University Press.

Shields, C. (2010). Transformative leadership: Working for equity in diverse contexts. Educational Administration Quarterly, 46, 558-589.

Shields, C. (2020). Transformative leadership. Oxford research encyclopedias. Oxford University Press.

Simko-Bednarski, E., & Brown, M. (2021, October 16). Duluth Edison charter schools: Minnesota charter school sued by parents alleging racist behavior. CNN. Retrieved July 2022, from https://www.cnn.com/2021/10/16/us/minnesota-alleged-racist-behavior-charter-school

Smith, D.T., Jacobson, C. K., & Juarez, B. G. (2011). White parents, black children experiencing transracial adoption. Rowman & Littlefield.

Smith, D., Juarez, B., & Jacobson, C. (2011). White on black: Can white parents teach black adoptive children how to understand and cope with racism. National Library of Medicine, 42(8), 1195-1230.

Sorkin, D. (2018). Transformative leaders in the making and understanding of adolescent leadership development through student voice, service-learning, and social justice. SoJo Journal: Educational Foundations and Social Justice Education, 4(2), 91-105.

State Board of Education of Ohio. (2020). 20. Resolution to condemn racism and to advance equity and opportunity for black students, indigenous students and students of color. Retrieved July 2022, from https://s3.documentcloud.org/documents/21062274/equity_resolution-boe.pdf

Steele, C. (2011). Whistling vivaldi: How stereotypes affect us and what we can do. W.W. North & Co.

Steel, V., & Valentine, G. (1995). New colors: mixed families still find mixed reception. Teaching Tolerance, 4(1), 44-49.

Steketee, A., Williams, M., Valencia, B., Printz, D., & Hooper, L. (2021). Racial and language microaggressions in the school ecology. Perspectives on Psychological Science, 16(5) 1075-1098.

Sullivan, J., Wilton, L., & Apfelbaum, E. P. (2021). Adults delay conversations about race because they underestimate children's processing of race. Journal of Experimental Psychology: General, 150(2), 395–400. https://doi.org/10.1037/xge0000851

Tatum, B. D. (1997). "Why are all the black kids sitting together in the cafeteria?" and other conversations about race. Basic Books.

Terrell, R., Terrell, E., Lindsey, R. B., & Lindsey, D. (2018). Culturally proficient leadership the personal journey begins within. Corwin

Title IX, Education Amendments of 1972, 20 U.S.C. §§ 1681-1688.

Tillman, L. C., Brown, K., Campbelljones, F., & Gonzalez, M. L. (2006). Transformative leadership for social justice. Journal of School Leadership, 16(2) 122-125.

U.S. Census Bureau (2021). Explore census data. The Census Bureau. Retrieved July 2022, from https://data.census.gov/cedsci/

U.S. Department of Education. Nondiscrimination on the basis of sex in education programs or activities receiving federal financial assistance, 87 Fed. Reg. 41390 (July 12, 2022) (34 CFR Part 106).

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2020, January). Coping with traumatic events. National Institute of Mental Health. Retrieved July 2022, from https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/coping-with-traumatic-events

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. (n.d.). History of fair housing. Retrieved November 2021, from https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/fair_housing_equal_opp/aboutfheo/history

White, A. (2022). Reaching back to reach forward: Using culturally responsive frameworks to enhance critical action amongst educators, Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies, 44(2), 166-184. doi: 10.1080/10714413.2021.2009748

White House. (2021). FACT SHEET: President Biden signs executive order advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in the Federal Government [Fact sheet]. https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/06/25/fact-sheet-president-biden-signs-executive-order-advancing-diversity-equity-inclusion-and-accessibility-in-the-federal-government/

Wilkerson, I. (2020). Caste the origins of our discontents. Random House.

Williams, D. (2011). Mixed Matters: Mixed-race pupils discuss school and identity. Troubador Publishing Ltd.

Williams, D. (n.d.). Multiple Heritage Project. Mixed Race Studies. http://www.mixedracestudies.org/?tag=multiple-heritage-project

Williams, D., Ellery, J., Manby, J., & West, J. (2013). Mixed matters: mixed-race pupils discuss school and identity. Ethnicity and race in a changing world, 4(1).

Williams, D. R., & Etkins, O. S. (2021). Racism and mental health. World Psychiatry, 20(2), 194-195. doi: 10.1002/wps.20845

Woods-Jaeger, B., Hampton-Anderson, J., Christensen, K., Miller, T., O'Connor, P., Berkley-Patton, J. (2021). School-based racial microaggressions: A barrier to resilience among

African American adolescents exposed to trauma. Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy, 14(S1), S23–S31. https://doi.org/10.1037/tra0001091

Wright, Marguerite A. (1998). I'm chocolate, you're vanilla raising healthy black and biracial children in a race-conscious world. Jossey-Bass San Francisco, CA.

Yancura, L., Fruhauf, C. A., Greenwood-Junkermeier, H. (2016). Recognizing microaggressions: a framework for helping grandfamilies. GrandFamilies: The Contemporary Journal of Research, Practice and Policy, 3(1).

Zill, N. (2017, August 8). The Changing faces of adoption in the United States. Institute for Family Studies. https://ifstudies.org/blog/the-changing-face-of-adoption-in-the-united-state

APPENDIX A: PRESIDENT BIDEN'S EXECUTIVE ORDER

BRIEFING ROOM

Executive Order on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Workforce

JUNE 25, 2021•PRESIDENTIAL ACTIONS

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including sections 1104, 3301, and 3302 of title 5, United States Code, and in order to strengthen the Federal workforce by promoting diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility ,it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. Policy. On my first day in office, I signed Executive Order 13985 (Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government), which established that affirmatively advancing equity, civil rights, racial justice, and equal opportunity is the responsibility of the whole of our Government. To further advance equity within the Federal Government, this order establishes that it is the policy of my Administration to cultivate a workforce that draws from the full diversity of the Nation.

As the Nation's largest employer, the Federal Government must be a model for diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility, where all employees are treated with dignity and respect. Accordingly, the Federal Government must strengthen its ability to recruit, hire, develop, promote, and retain our Nation's talent and remove barriers to equal opportunity. It must also provide resources and opportunities to strengthen and advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility across the Federal Government. The Federal Government should have a workforce that reflects the diversity of the American people. A growing body of evidence demonstrates that diverse, equitable, inclusive, and accessible workplaces yield higher-performing organizations.

Federal merit system principles include that the Federal Government's recruitment policies should "endeavor to achieve a work force from all segments of society" and that "[a]employees and applicants for employment should receive fair and equitable treatment in all aspects of personnel management" (5 U.S.C. 2301(b)(1), (2)). As set forth in Executive Order 13583 of August 18, 2011 (Establishing a Coordinated Government-Wide Initiative to Promote Diversity and Inclusion in the Federal Workforce), the Presidential Memorandum of October 5, 2016 (Promoting Diversity and Inclusion in the National Security Workforce), Executive Order 13988 of January 20, 2021 (Preventing and Combating Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity or Sexual Orientation), the National Security Memorandum of February 4, 2021 (Revitalizing America's Foreign Policy and National Security Workforce, Institutions, and Partnerships), and Executive Order 14020 of March 8, 2021 (Establishment of the White House Gender Policy Council), the Federal Government is at its best when drawing upon all parts of society, our greatest accomplishments are achieved when diverse perspectives are brought to bear to overcome our greatest challenges, and all persons should receive equal treatment under the law. This order reaffirms support for, and builds upon, the procedures established by Executive Orders 13583, 13988, and 14020, the Presidential Memorandum on Promoting Diversity and Inclusion in the National Security Workforce, and the National Security Memorandum on

Revitalizing America's Foreign Policy and National Security Workforce, Institutions, and Partnerships. This order establishes that diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility are priorities for my Administration and benefit the entire Federal Government and the Nation, and establishes additional procedures to advance these priorities across the Federal workforce.

Sec. 2. Definitions. For purposes of this order, in the context of the Federal workforce:

(a) The term "underserved communities" refers to populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, who have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life. In the context of the Federal workforce, this term includes individuals who belong to communities of color, such as Black and African American, Hispanic and Latino, Native American, Alaska Native and Indigenous, Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander, Middle Eastern, and North African persons. It also includes individuals who belong to communities that face discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity (including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, gender non-conforming, and non-binary (LGBTQ+) persons);persons who face discrimination based on pregnancy or pregnancy-related conditions; parents; and caregivers. It also includes individuals who belong to communities that face discrimination based on their religion or disability; first-generation professionals or first-generation college students; individuals with limited English proficiency; immigrants; individuals who belong to communities that may face employment barriers based on older age or former incarceration; persons who live in rural areas; veterans and military spouses; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty, discrimination, or inequality. Individuals may belong to more than one underserved community and face intersecting barriers.

(b) The term "diversity" means the practice of including the many communities, identities, races, ethnicities, backgrounds, abilities, cultures, and beliefs of the American people, including underserved communities.

(c) The term "equity" means the consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment.

(d) The term "inclusion" means the recognition, appreciation, and use of the talents and skills of employees of all backgrounds.

(e) The term "accessibility" means the design, construction, development, and maintenance of facilities, information and communication technology, programs, and services so that all people, including people with disabilities, can fully and independently use them. Accessibility includes the provision of accommodations and modifications to ensure equal access to employment and participation in activities for people with disabilities, the reduction or elimination of physical and attitudinal barriers to equitable opportunities, a commitment to ensuring that people with disabilities can independently access every outward-facing and internal activity or electronic space, and the pursuit of best practices such as universal design.

(f) The term "agency" means any authority of the United States that is an "agency" under 44U.S.C. 3502(1), other than one considered to be an independent regulatory agency, as defined in44 U.S.C. 3502(5)

Sec. 3. Government-Wide Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Initiative and Strategic Plan. The Director of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and the Deputy Director for Management of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) — in coordination with the Chair

of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and in consultation with the Secretary of Labor, the Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy, the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, the Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy(APDP), the Director of the National Economic Council, and the Co-Chairs of the Gender Policy Council — shall:

(a) reestablish a coordinated Government-wide initiative to promote diversity and inclusion in the Federal workforce, expand its scope to specifically include equity and accessibility, and coordinate its implementation with the provisions of Executive Order 13985 and the National Security Memorandum on Revitalizing America's Foreign Policy and National Security Workforce, Institutions, and Partnerships;

(b) develop and issue a Government-wide Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Strategic Plan (Government-wide DEIA Plan) within 150 days of the date of this order that updates the Government-wide plan required by section 2(b)(i) of Executive Order 13583. The Government-wide DEIA Plan shall be updated as appropriate and at a minimum every 4 years. The Government-wide DEIA Plan shall:

(i) define standards of success for diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility efforts based on leading policies and practices in the public and private sectors;

(ii) consistent with merit system principles, identify strategies to advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility, and eliminate, where applicable, barriers to equity, in Federal workforce functions, including: recruitment; hiring; background investigation; promotion; retention; performance evaluations and awards; professional development programs; mentoring programs or sponsorship initiatives; internship, fellowship, and apprenticeship programs; employee resource group and affinity group programs; temporary employee details and assignments; pay and compensation policies; benefits, including health benefits, retirement benefits, and employee services and work-life programs; disciplinary or adverse actions; reasonable accommodations for employees and applicants with disabilities; workplace policies to prevent gender-based violence (including domestic violence, stalking, and sexual violence); reasonable accommodations for employees who are members of religious minorities; and training, learning, and onboarding programs;

(iii) include a comprehensive framework to address workplace harassment, including sexual harassment, which clearly defines the term "harassment"; outlines policies and practices to prevent, report, respond to, and investigate harassment; promotes mechanisms for employees to report misconduct; encourages bystander intervention; and addresses training, education, and monitoring to create a culture that does not tolerate harassment or other forms of discrimination or retaliation; and

(iv) promote a data-driven approach to increase transparency and accountability, which would build upon, as appropriate, the EEOC's Management Directive 715 reporting process;

(c) establish an updated system for agencies to report regularly on progress in implementing Agency DEIA Strategic Plans (as described in section 4(b) of this order) and in meeting the objectives of this order. New reporting requirements should be aligned with ongoing reporting established by Executive Order 13985 and the National Security Memorandum on Revitalizing America's Foreign Policy and National Security Workforce, Institutions, and Partnerships. Agency reports on actions taken to meet the objectives of this order shall include measurement of improvements, analysis of the effectiveness of agency programs, and descriptions of lessons learned. The Director of OPM and the Deputy Director for Management of OMB shall support agencies in developing workforce policies and practices designed to advance diversity, equity,

inclusion, and accessibility throughout agencies by, for example, providing updated guidance and technical assistance to ensure that agencies consistently improve, evaluate, and learn from their workforce practices;

(d) pursue opportunities to consolidate implementation efforts and reporting requirements related to advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility established through related or overlapping statutory mandates, Presidential directives, and regulatory requirements; and

(e) support, coordinate, and encourage agency efforts to conduct research, evaluation, and other evidence-building activities to identify leading practices, and other promising practices, for broadening participation and opportunities for advancement in Federal employment, and to assess and promote the benefits of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility for Federal performance and operations and barriers to achieving these goals. Agencies should use the capabilities of their evaluation officers and chief statistical officers and requirements under the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018, Public Law 115-435, to advance this goal.

Sec. 4. Responsibilities of Executive Departments and Agencies.

The head of each agency shall make advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility a priority component of the agency's management agenda and agency strategic planning. The head of each agency shall implement the Government-wide DEIA Plan prepared pursuant to section 3 of this order and such other related guidance as issued from time to time by the Director of OPM or the Deputy Director for Management of OMB. In addition, the head of each agency shall:

(a) within 100 days of the date of this order, submit to the APDP, the Director of OPM, and the Deputy Director for Management of OMB a preliminary assessment of the current state of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in the agency's human resources practices and workforce composition. In conducting such assessment, the head of each agency should:

(i) assess whether agency recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention, professional development, performance evaluations, pay and compensation policies, reasonable accommodations access, and training policies and practices are equitable;

(ii) take an evidence-based and data-driven approach to determine whether and to what extent agency practices result in inequitable employment outcomes, and whether agency actions may help to overcome systemic societal and organizational barriers;

(iii) assess the status and effects of existing diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility initiatives or programs, and review the amount of institutional resources available to support human resources activities that advance the objectives outlined in section 1 of this order; and

(iv) identify areas where evidence is lacking and propose opportunities to build evidence to advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility and address those gaps identified;

(b) within 120 days of the issuance of the Government-wide DEIA Plan, and annually thereafter, develop and submit to the APDP, the Director of OPM, and the Deputy Director for Management of OMB an Agency Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Strategic Plan(Agency DEIA Strategic Plan), as described by section 3(b) of Executive Order 13583 and as modified by this order. Agency DEIA Strategic Plans should identify actions to advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in the workforce and remove any potential barriers to diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in the workforce identified in the assessments described in subsection (a) of this section. Agency DEIA Strategic Plans should also include quarterly goals and actions to advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility initiatives in the agency workforce and in the agency's workplace culture;

(c) on an annual basis, report to the President on the status of the agency's efforts to advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility within the agency, and the agency's success in implementing the Agency DEIA Strategic Plan. Consistent with guidance issued as part of the Government-wide DEIA Plan, the agency head shall also make available to the general public information on efforts to advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in the agency's workforce;

(d) oversee, and provide resources and staffing to support, the implementation of the Agency DEIA Strategic Plan;

(e) enhance diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility within the agency, in collaboration with the agency's senior officials and consistent with applicable law and merit system principles;

(f) seek opportunities to establish a position of chief diversity officer or diversity and inclusion officer (as distinct from an equal employment opportunity officer), with sufficient seniority to coordinate efforts to promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility within the agency;

(g) strongly consider for employment, to the extent permitted by applicable law, qualified applicants of any background who have advanced diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in the workplace; and

(h) in coordination with OMB, seek opportunities to ensure alignment across various organizational performance planning requirements and efforts by integrating the Agency DEI Strategic Plan and diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility goals into broader agency strategic planning efforts described in 5 U.S.C. 306 and the agency performance planning described in 31 U.S.C. 1115.

Sec. 5. Data Collection.

(a) The head of each agency shall take a data-driven approach to advancing policies that promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility within the agency's workforce, while protecting the privacy of employees and safeguarding all personally identifiable information and protected health information.

(b) Using Federal standards governing the collection, use, and analysis of demographic data(such as OMB Directive No. 15 (Standards for Maintaining, Collecting, and Presenting Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity) and OMB Memorandum M-14-06 (Guidance for Providing and Using Administrative Data for Statistical Purposes)), the head of each agency shall measure demographic representation and trends related to diversity in the agency's overall workforce composition, senior workforce composition, employment applications, hiring decisions, promotions, pay and compensation, professional development programs, and attrition rates.

(c) The Director of OPM, the Chair of the EEOC, and the Deputy Director for Management of OMB shall review existing guidance, regulations, policies, and practices (for purposes of this section, "guidance") that govern agency collection of demographic data about Federal employees, and consider issuing, modifying, or revoking such guidance in order to expand the collection of such voluntarily self-reported data and more effectively measure the representation of underserved communities in the Federal workforce. In revisiting or issuing any such guidance, the Director of OPM, the Chair of the EEOC, and the Deputy Director for Management of OMB shall take steps to promote the protection of privacy and to safeguard personally identifiable information; facilitate intersectional analysis; and reduce duplicative reporting requirements. In considering whether to revisit or issue such guidance, the Director of OPM, the Chair of the EEOC, and the Deputy Director for Management of OMB shall consult with the Chief

Statistician of the United States, the Chair of the Chief Data Officers Council, and the Co-Chairs of the Interagency Working Group on Equitable Data established in section9 of Executive Order 13985.

(d) The head of each agency shall implement any such revised guidance issued pursuant to subsection (c) of this section to expand the collection of voluntarily self-reported demographic data. The head of each agency shall also take steps to ensure that data collection and analysis practices allow for the capture or presence of multiple attributes and identities to ensure an intersectional analysis.

(e) The head of each agency shall collect and analyze voluntarily self-reported demographic data regarding the membership of advisory committees, commissions, and boards in a manner consistent with applicable law, including privacy and confidentiality protections, and with statistical standards where applicable. For agencies that have external advisory committees, commissions, or boards to which agencies appoint members, agency heads shall pursue opportunities to increase diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility on such committees, commissions, and boards.

Sec. 6. Promoting Paid Internships.

(a) The Director of OPM and the Deputy Director for Management of OMB shall issue guidance to agencies and the Executive Office of the President with respect to internships and similar programs within the Federal Government, including guidance on how to:

(i) increase the availability of paid internships, fellowships, and apprenticeships, and reduce the practice of hiring interns, fellows, and apprentices who are unpaid;

(ii) ensure that internships, fellowships, and apprenticeships serve as a supplement to, and not a substitute for, the competitive hiring process;

(iii) ensure that internships, fellowships, and apprenticeships serve to develop individuals' talent, knowledge, and skills for careers in government service;

(iv) improve outreach to and recruitment of individuals from underserved communities for internship, fellowship, and apprenticeship programs; and

(v) ensure all interns, fellows, and apprentices with disabilities, including applicants and candidates, have a process for requesting and obtaining reasonable accommodations to support their work in the Federal Government, without regard to whether such individuals are covered by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Public Law 93-112.

(b) The head of each agency shall, as part of the annual reporting process described in section 4(c) of this order, measure and report on the agency's progress with respect to the matters described in subsection (a) of this section.

Sec. 7. Partnerships and Recruitment.

(a) The Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), the Director of OPM, and the Deputy Director for Management of OMB, in consultation with the Chair of the EEOC, shall coordinate a Government-wide initiative to strengthen partnerships (Partnerships Initiative) to facilitate recruitment for Federal employment opportunities of individuals who are members of underserved communities. To carry out the Partnerships Initiative, the Director of OSTP, the Director of OPM, and the Deputy Director for Management of OMB shall take steps to increase diversity in the Federal employment pipeline by supporting and guiding agencies in building or strengthening partnerships with Historically Black Colleges and Universities, including Historically Black Graduate Institutions; Hispanic-Serving Institutions; Tribal Colleges and Universities; Native American-serving, nontribal institutions; Asian American and Pacific Islander-serving institutions; Tribally controlled colleges and universities; Alaska Native-serving

and Native Hawaiian-serving institutions; predominantly Black Institutions; women's colleges and universities; State vocational rehabilitation agencies that serve individuals with disabilities; disability services offices at institutions of higher education; organizations dedicated to serving veterans; public and non-profit private universities serving a high percentage of economically disadvantaged students or first-generation college or graduate students; community colleges and technical schools; and community-based organizations that are dedicated to serving and working with underserved communities, including return-to-work programs, programs that provide training and support for older adults seeking employment, programs serving formerly incarcerated individuals, centers for independent living, disability rights organizations, and organizations dedicated to serving LGBTQ+ individuals.

(b) The head of each agency shall work with the Director of OSTP, the Director of OPM, and the Deputy Director for Management of OMB to make employment, internship, fellowship, and apprenticeship opportunities available through the Partnerships Initiative, and shall take steps to enhance recruitment efforts through the Partnerships Initiative, as part of the agency's overall recruitment efforts. The head of each agency shall, as part of the reporting processes described in sections 3(c) and 4(c) of this order, measure and report on the agency's progress on carrying out this subsection.

Sec. 8. Professional Development and Advancement.

(a) The Director of OPM, in consultation with the Deputy Director for Management of OMB, shall issue detailed guidance to agencies for tracking demographic data relating to participation in leadership and professional development programs and development opportunities offered or sponsored by agencies and the rate of the placement of participating employees into senior positions in agencies, in a manner consistent with privacy and confidentiality protections and statistical limitations.

(b) The head of each agency shall implement the guidance issued pursuant to subsection (a)of this section, and shall use demographic data relating to participation in professional development programs to identify ways to improve outreach and recruitment for professional development programs offered or sponsored by the agency, consistent with merit system principles. The head of each agency shall also address any barriers to access to or participation in such programs faced by members of underserved communities.

Sec. 9. Training and Learning.

(a) The head of each agency shall take steps to implement or increase the availability and use of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility training programs for employees, managers, and leadership. Such training programs should enable Federal employees, managers, and leaders to have knowledge of systemic and institutional racism and bias against underserved communities, be supported in building skillsets to promote respectful and inclusive workplaces and eliminate workplace harassment, have knowledge of agency accessibility practices, and have increased understanding of implicit and unconscious bias.

(b) The Director of OPM and the Chair of the EEOC shall issue guidance and serve as a resource and repository for best practices for agencies to develop or enhance existing diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility training programs.

Sec. 10. Advancing Equity for Employees with Disabilities.

(a) As established in Executive Order 13548 of July 26, 2010 (Increasing Federal Employment of Individuals with Disabilities), the Federal Government must become a model for

the employment of individuals with disabilities. Because a workforce that includes people with disabilities is a stronger and more effective workforce, agencies must provide an equitable, accessible, and inclusive environment for employees with disabilities. In order for Federal employees and applicants with disabilities to be assessed on their merits, accessible information technologies must be provided and, where needed, reasonable accommodations must be available that will allow qualified individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions of their positions and access advancement opportunities. To that end, the relevant agencies shall take the actions set forth in this section.

(b) The Secretary of Labor, the Director of OPM, the Chair of the EEOC, the Deputy Director for Management of OMB, and the Executive Director of the Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board (Access Board), in consultation with the Administrator of General Services, as appropriate, shall coordinate with agencies to:

(i) support the Federal Government's effort to provide people with disabilities equal employment opportunities and take affirmative actions within the Federal Government to ensure that agencies fully comply with applicable laws, including sections 501, 504, and 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (29 U.S.C. 791, 794, 794d);

(ii) assess current practices in using Schedule A hiring authority to employ people with disabilities in the Federal Government, and evaluate opportunities to enhance equity in employment opportunities and financial security for employees with disabilities through different practices or guidance on the use of Schedule A hiring authority; and

(iii) ensure that:

(A) applicants and employees with disabilities have access to information about and understand their rights regarding disability self-identification;

(B) applicants and employees with disabilities have access to information about Schedule A hiring authority for individuals with disabilities;

(C) applicants and employees with disabilities have access to information about, understand their rights to, and may easily request reasonable accommodations, workplace personal assistance services, and accessible information and communication technology;

(D) the process of responding to reasonable accommodation requests is timely and efficient;

(E) the processes and procedures for appealing the denial of a reasonable accommodation request are timely and efficient; and

(F) all information and communication technology and products developed, procured, maintained, or used by Federal agencies are accessible and usable by employees with disabilities consistent with all standards and technical requirements of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

(c) To ensure that all Federal office buildings and workplaces are accessible to employees with disabilities, the Administrator of General Services, the Director of OPM, the Deputy Director for Management of OMB, and the Executive Director of the Access Board shall work with Federal agencies to ensure that Federal buildings and leased facilities comply with the accessibility standards of the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968, Public Law 90-480, and related standards.

(d) Beyond existing duties to comply with the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 and related standards, the head of each agency shall maximize the accessibility of the physical environment of the agency's workplaces, consistent with applicable law and the availability of appropriations, so as to reduce the need for reasonable accommodations, and provide periodic notice to all

employees that complaints concerning accessibility barriers in Federal buildings can be filed with the Access Board.

(e) The Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Labor shall review the use of the Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP) for college students and recent graduates with disabilities and take steps, as appropriate and consistent with applicable law, to expand the WRP. The Secretaries shall submit a report to the APDP describing any steps taken pursuant to this subsection and providing recommendations for any Presidential, administrative, or congressional actions to further expand and strengthen the program and expand job opportunities.

Sec. 11. Advancing Equity for LGBTQ+ Employees.

(a) As established in Executive Order 13988, it is the policy of my Administration to prevent and combat discrimination on the basis of gender identity or sexual orientation. Each Federal employee should be able to openly express their sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression, and have these identities affirmed and respected, without fear of discrimination, retribution, or disadvantage. To that end, the relevant agencies shall take the actions set forth in this section.

(b) The head of each agency shall, in coordination with the Director of OPM, ensure that existing employee support services equitably serve LGBTQ+ employees, including, as appropriate, through the provision of supportive services for transgender and gender non-conforming and non-binary employees who wish to legally, medically, or socially transition.

(c) To ensure that LGBTQ+ employees (including their beneficiaries and their eligible dependents), as well as LGBTQ+ beneficiaries and LGBTQ+ eligible dependents of all Federal employees, have equitable access to healthcare and health insurance coverage:

(i) the Director of OPM shall take actions to promote equitable healthcare coverage and services for enrolled LGBTQ+ employees (including their beneficiaries and their eligible dependents), LGBTQ+ beneficiaries, and LGBTQ+ eligible dependents, including coverage of comprehensive gender-affirming care, through the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program; and

(ii) the Secretary of Defense shall take actions to promote equitable healthcare coverage and services for LGBTQ+ members of the uniformed services (including their beneficiaries and their eligible dependents), LGBTQ+ beneficiaries, and LGBTQ+ eligible dependents, including coverage of comprehensive gender-affirming care, through the Military Health System.

(d) To ensure that LGBTQ+ employees (including their beneficiaries and their eligible dependents), LGBTQ+ beneficiaries, and LGBTQ+ eligible dependents have equitable access to all other insurance coverage and employee benefits, the head of each agency shall, in coordination with the Director of OPM, ensure that the Federal Government equitably provides insurance coverage options and employee benefits for LGBTQ+ employees (including their beneficiaries and their eligible dependents), LGBTQ+ beneficiaries, and LGBTQ+ eligible dependents, including long-term care insurance, sick leave, and life insurance. This includes ensuring that Federal benefits, programs, and services recognize the diversity of family structures.

(e) To ensure that all Federal employees have their respective gender identities accurately reflected and identified in the workplace:

(i) the head of each agency shall, in coordination with the Director of OPM, take steps to foster an inclusive environment where all employees' gender identities are respected, such as by

including, where applicable, non-binary gender marker and pronoun options in Federal hiring, employment, and benefits enrollment forms;

(ii) the Secretary of Commerce, acting through the Director of the National Institute of Standards and Technology, shall update, as appropriate and in consultation with any other relevant agencies, any relevant Federal employee identification standards to ensure that Federal systems for issuing employee identity credentials account for the needs of transgender and gender non-conforming and non-binary employees. The Secretary, in coordination with any other relevant agencies, shall take steps to reduce any unnecessary administrative burden for transgender and gender non-conforming and non-binary employees to update their names, photographs, gender markers, and pronouns on federally issued employee identity credentials, where applicable; and

(iii) the head of each agency shall, in consultation with the Director of OPM, update Federal employee identification standards to include non-binary gender markers where gender markers are required in employee systems and profiles, and shall take steps to reduce any unnecessary administrative burden for transgender and gender non-conforming and non-binary employees to update their gender markers and pronouns in employee systems and profiles, where applicable.

(f) To support all Federal employees in accessing workplace facilities aligned with their gender identities, the head of each agency shall explore opportunities to expand the availability of gender non-binary facilities and restrooms in federally owned and leased workplaces.

(g) The Director of National Intelligence, in consultation with the Director of OPM and the heads of agencies, shall take steps to mitigate any barriers in security clearance and background investigation processes for LGBTQ+ employees and applicants, in particular transgender and gender non-conforming and non-binary employees and applicants.

(h) The Director of OPM shall review and update, if necessary, OPM's 2017 Guidance Regarding the Employment of Transgender Individuals in the Federal Workplace.

Sec. 12. Pay Equity.

Many workers continue to face racial and gender pay gaps, and pay inequity disproportionately affects women of color. Accordingly:

(a) The Director of OPM shall review Government-wide regulations and guidance and, as appropriate and consistent with applicable law, in order to address any pay inequities and advance equal pay, consider whether to:

(i) work with agencies to review, and revise if necessary, job classification and compensation practices; and

(ii) prohibit agencies from seeking or relying on an applicant's salary history during the hiring process to set pay or when setting pay for a current employee, unless salary history is raised without prompting by the applicant or employee.

(b) The head of each agency that administers a pay system other than one established under title 5 of the United States Code shall review the agency's regulations and guidance and, as appropriate and consistent with applicable law, revise compensation practices in order to address any pay inequities and advance equal pay. Agencies should report to OPM any revisions to compensation practices made to implement this direction.

(c) The Director of OPM shall submit a report to the President describing any changes to Government-wide and agency-specific compensation practices recommended and adopted pursuant to this order.

Sec. 13. Expanding Employment Opportunities for Formerly Incarcerated Individuals. To support equal opportunity for formerly incarcerated individuals who have served their terms of incarceration and to support their ability to fully reintegrate into society and make meaningful contributions to our Nation, the Director of OPM shall evaluate the existence of any barriers that formerly incarcerated individuals face in accessing Federal employment opportunities and any effect of those barriers on the civil service. As appropriate, the Director of OPM shall also evaluate possible actions to expand Federal employment opportunities for formerly incarcerated individuals, including the establishment of a new hiring authority, and shall submit a report to the President containing the results of OPM's evaluation within 120 days of the date of this order.

Sec. 14. Delegation of Authority. The Director of OPM is hereby delegated the authority of the President under sections 3301 and 3302 of title 5, United States Code, for purposes of carrying out the Director's responsibilities under this order.

Sec. 15. General Provisions.

(a) Nothing in this order shall be construed to impair or otherwise affect:

(i) authority granted by law to an executive department or agency, or the head thereof; or

(ii) functions of the Director of the Office of Management and Budget relating to budgetary, administrative, or legislative proposals.

(b) This order shall be implemented consistent with applicable law and subject to the availability of appropriations.

(c) Independent agencies are strongly encouraged to comply with the provisions of this order.

(d) This order is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person.

JOSEPH R. BIDEN JR.

THE WHITE HOUSE,
June 25, 2021.

APPENDIX B: RESOLUTION 20

Resolution

20. RESOLUTION TO CONDEMN RACISM AND TO ADVANCE EQUITY AND OPPORTUNITY FOR BLACK STUDENTS, INDIGENOUS STUDENTS AND STUDENTS OF COLOR

The State Board of Education (the "Board") hereby **ADOPTS** the following Preambles and Resolution:

As our nation grapples with the hard truths of racism and inequality, we are listening with broken hearts and engaging with determined spirits. We acknowledge that Ohio's education system has not been immune to these problems, and while we earnestly strive to correct them, we have a great deal of work left to do.

Whereas the Ohio Strategic Plan for Education: 2019-2024 Each Child, Our Future, adopted by a resolution of the State Board of Education in June, 2018 begins with the vision that in Ohio each child is challenged to discover and learn, prepared to pursue a fulfilling post-high school path and empowered to become a resilient, lifelong learner who contributes to society; and

Whereas, Equity is our plan's greatest imperative and number one principle; and

Whereas profound disparities between Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) students and their white peers exist in all parts of the Ohio education system; and

Whereas gaps between test performance of Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) students and their white peers have been observed since Ohio began disaggregating the data; and

Whereas progress to close these gaps has been uneven and unsatisfactory; and

Whereas a culturally responsive curriculum reflects the history and background of all students, and empowers students to value all cultures, not just their own; and

Whereas research has shown that a culturally responsive curriculum can motivate students of color to a higher level of academic achievement and in many cases increase the graduation rate of previously disengaged students; and

Whereas, black male students lag far behind their white counterparts in several measures of educational attainment, including graduation rates, which keeps gainful employment out of reach, and

Whereas starting as early as preschool, black male students are affected disproportionately by suspensions, expulsions and zero-tolerance discipline policies in schools; and

Whereas "separate but equal" is no longer the law of the land, but systemic inequity in education has relegated millions of children of color to under-resourced, struggling schools; and

Whereas significant gaps between the performance of Black students compared to their white peers exist even in generously resourced schools; and

Resolution

Item 20 continued

Whereas the State Board of Education believes that public schools are fundamental to our democratic society and we must be dedicated to equity and thoughtful teaching of future citizens that racism, bigotry and hatred have no place; and

Whereas, the path to equity begins with a deep understanding of the history of inequalities and inhumanity and how they have come to impact current society; therefore be it

Resolved, that the State Board of Education condemns, in the strongest possible terms, white supremacy culture, hate speech, hate crimes and violence in the service of hatred. These immoral ideologies and actions deserve no place in our country, state and school system. And be it

Further resolved, that the starting point of our work in racial equity must be reflection and internal examination, whereby the board will look for ways to engage our members in open and courageous conversations on racism and inequity; and be it

Further resolved that the State Board of Education shall offer training to Board members to identify our own implicit biases so that we can perform our duties to the citizens of Ohio without racial bias; and be it

Further resolved that the State Board of Education shall require training for all state employees and contractors working with the Department of Education to identify their own implicit biases so that they can perform their duties to the citizens of Ohio without unconscious racial bias; and be it

Further resolved that the State Board of Education directs the Ohio Department of Education to reexamine the Academic Content Standards and Model Curriculums to make recommendations to the State Board of Education as necessary to eliminate bias and ensure that racism and the struggle for equality are accurately addressed; and be it

Further resolved that the State Board of Education directs the Ohio Department of Education to continue the practice of ensuring all state administered tests are free of racial bias; and be it

Further resolved that the State Board of Education strongly recommends that all Ohio school districts begin a reflection and internal examination of their own involving all members of their school community to examine all facets of the school's operations ; with a special emphasis on curriculum, hiring practices, staff development practices, and student discipline e.g. suspension/expulsion; and be it

Further resolved that the State Board of Education directs the Ohio Department of Education to provide support for school districts' reflection and internal examination, including identifying and sharing curricular models and resources; promoting sessions to allow districts to share and collaborate on their actions; and to share progress in implementing these changes; and be it

Resolution

Item 20 continued

Further resolved, that the State Board of Education will be led by our guiding document Each Child, Our Future and advocate for it as a framework for developing policy and action.

I certify that the above is a true and correct copy of the action taken by the State Board of Education at its meeting on July 14, 2020.

Columbus, Ohio
July 14, 2020

Paolo DeMaria
Superintendent of Public Instruction

APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Consent for Participation in Research Study

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative narrative research study is to share the experiences of transracial families within the PK-12 community regarding; racial identity, bias, microaggressions, and systemic racism. Facilitated questions during the interview format will allow the participants to share their experiences and determine the outcomes of this study in relation to the current research. The findings of this study may be used to contribute to the current academic literature and to perpetuate understanding and acceptance of issues surrounding cultural competency.

By signing this:

I understand that I will be participating in an online interview facilitated by the researcher that will last no longer than 60 minutes. During this interview, the facilitator will ask questions to promote understanding of the family's experiences in schools related to racial identity, bias, microaggressions, and systemic racism. The virtual meetings will be recorded and transcribed for the purpose of accurately documenting the information shared during the interview.

I understand that my participation in this study will contribute to the current academic literature concerning the experiences of transracial families in PK-12 school communities. I understand the researcher will take the necessary steps to protect my confidentiality and privacy including using pseudonyms and omitting details that may identify me or my family members. However, it is possible that my responses may identify me and may lead to potential risk.

I volunteer to participate in this research study conducted and facilitated by Ms. Carole M. Sutton from Youngstown State University. I understand this study will gather information surrounding the experiences of transracial families in PK-12 communities.

I understand that I will not be identified by name in any reports or publications. My confidentiality will be ensured during this study and all the data used will be subject to standard data use policies which protect my privacy and personal information. Only the researcher will have access to the data gathered in this study.

I understand that I may opt out at any time during this study if I feel uncomfortable.

I have read all the information enclosed herein about this research study in addition to my rights as a research participant. I voluntarily agree to participate in this interview and have been given

a copy of this form. If you have any questions about this research project please contact Carole Sutton at cmsutton@student.ysu.edu and/or Dr. Jane Beese jbeese@ysu.edu.

If you have questions about your rights as a participant in a research project, you may contact the Office of Research Services at YSU (330-941-2377) or at YSUIRB@ysu.edu.

Printed name:_____

Signature:_____ Date:_____

Signature of Researcher:_____

Carole M. Sutton
Youngstown State University
cmsutton@student.ysu.edu

APPENDIX D: DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

Parent Participants - Carole M. Sutton Dissertation Study: Transracial Family Experiences in PK-12 School Communities

Thank you for agreeing to complete this form to include background and demographic Information on your family as well as highlight any experiences you've encountered with identity, bias, microaggressions, and systemic racism in your child(ren)'s school. The information gathered here will remain confidential and serve only to provide background to the study.

* Required

1. Chosen Family Pseudonym - please select a family pseudonym that will be used to provide anonymity in the study *

_____

2. First Parent Pseudonym - please choose a first name pseudonym to be used within the study *

_____

3. First Parent Race *

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ White
- ◯ Black
- ◯ Latino/Hispanic (non-black)
- ◯ Asian
- ◯ Mult-Racial
- ◯ Other: _____

4. Second Parent Pseudonym - If there is a second parent in the home, please choose a first name pseudonym to be used within the study

_____

5. Second Parent Race - If there is a second parent in the home, please complete this question

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ White
- ◯ Black
- ◯ Latino/Hispanic (non-black)
- ◯ Asian
- ◯ Mult-Racial
- ◯ Other: _____

6. School District of residence and/or attendance *

_____

7. How many school age children are in the household? *

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ 1
- ◯ 2
- ◯ 3
- ◯ 4
- ◯ 5

8. If your child(ren) was/were adopted into your family, at what age did he/she/they come to live with you? Check all that apply. *

Check all that apply.

- [ ] Birth to 2 years
- [ ] 2 - 4 years
- [ ] 4 - 8 years
- [ ] 8 - 12 years
- [ ] 12-15 years
- [ ] 15 - 18 years
- [ ] Other: _____

School Age Child(ren) in the Home

Please answer the following questions about your school age child(ren) currently in your household

9. Child #1 Pseudonym *

_____

10. Child #1 Age *

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Birth to 2 years
- ◯ 2 - 4 years
- ◯ 4 - 8 years
- ◯ 8 - 12 years
- ◯ 12-15 years
- ◯ 15 - 18 years

11. Child #1 Race *

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ White
- ◯ Black
- ◯ Latino/Hispanic (non-black)
- ◯ Asian
- ◯ Mult-Racial
- ◯ Other: _____

12. Child #1 Grade Level *

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ PK-1
- ◯ 2-4
- ◯ 5-8
- ◯ 9-12

Child #2

Please complete the information for Child #2. If there are no more school age children it the home, please skip to section 7 Notable Experiences.

13. Child #2 Pseudonym

_____

14. Child #2 Age

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Birth to 2 years
- ◯ 2 - 4 years
- ◯ 4 - 8 years
- ◯ 8 - 12 years
- ◯ 12-15 years
- ◯ 15 - 18 years

15. Child #2 Race

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ White
- ◯ Black
- ◯ Latino/Hispanic (non-black)
- ◯ Asian
- ◯ Mult-Racial
- ◯ Other: _____

16. Child #2 Grade Level

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ PK-1
- ◯ 2-4
- ◯ 5-8
- ◯ 9-12

Child #3

Please complete the information for Child #3. If there are no more school age children it the home, please skip to section 7 Notable Experiences.

17. Child #3 Pseudonym

_____

18. Childe #3 Age

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Birth to 2 years
- ◯ 2 - 4 years
- ◯ 4 - 8 years
- ◯ 8 - 12 years
- ◯ 12-15 years
- ◯ 15 - 18 years

19. Child #3 Race

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ White
- ◯ Black
- ◯ Latino/Hispanic (non-black)
- ◯ Asian
- ◯ Mult-Racial
- ◯ Other: _____

20. Child #3 Grade Level

Mark only one oval.

- PK-1
- 2-4
- 5-8
- 9-12

Child #4

Please complete the information for Child #4. If there are no more school age children it the home, please skip to section 7 Notable Experiences.

21. Child #4 Pseudonym

_____

22. Child #4 Age

Mark only one oval.

- Birth to 2 years
- 2 - 4 years
- 4 - 8 years
- 8 - 12 years
- 12-15 years
- 15 - 18 years

23. Child #4 Race

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ White
- ◯ Black
- ◯ Latino/Hispanic (non-black)
- ◯ Asian
- ◯ Mult-Racial
- ◯ Other: _____

24. Child #4 Grade Level

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ PK-1
- ◯ 2-4
- ◯ 5-8
- ◯ 9-12

Child #5

Please complete the information for Child #5. If there are no more school age children it the home, please skip to section 7 Notable Experiences.

25. Child #5 Pseudonym

_____

26. Child #5 Age

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Birth to 2 years
- ◯ 2 - 4 years
- ◯ 4 - 8 years
- ◯ 8 - 12 years
- ◯ 12-15 years
- ◯ 15 - 18 years

27. Child #5 Race

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ White
- ◯ Black
- ◯ Latino/Hispanic (non-black)
- ◯ Asian
- ◯ Mult-Racial
- ◯ Other: _____

28. Child #5 Grade Level

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ PK-1
- ◯ 2-4
- ◯ 5-8
- ◯ 9-12

Notable Experiences

29. Please describe any significant experiences(s) you've had with the schools, school officials, and/or school policies as they relate to your child(ren)'s race, gender, ethnicity, language, nationality, or other area of distinction. *

APPENDIX E: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER

2022-146 - Initial: Initial - Exempt

do-not-reply@cayuse.com <do-not-reply@cayuse.com>
Thu 4/14/2022 10:39 AM
To: Carole Sutton <cmsutton@student.ysu.edu>;Jane Beese <jbeese@ysu.edu>

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

Apr 14, 2022 10:39:34 AM EDT

Jane Beese
Teacher Ed and Leadership St

Re: Exempt - Initial - 2022-146 The Experiences of Transracial Families in PK-12 School Communities - a Narrative Inquiry from Adopted Parents about Identity, Bias, Microaggressions, and Systemic Racism.

Dear Dr. Jane Beese:

Youngstown State University Human Subjects Review Board has rendered the decision below for The Experiences of Transracial Families in PK-12 School Communities - a Narrative Inquiry from Adopted Parents about Identity, Bias, Microaggressions, and Systemic Racism.

Decision: Exempt

Selected Category: Category 2.(i). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording).
The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

Any changes in your research activity should be promptly reported to the Institutional Review Board and may not be initiated without IRB approval except where necessary to eliminate hazard to human subjects. Any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects should also be promptly reported to the IRB.

The IRB would like to extend its best wishes to you in the conduct of this study.

Sincerely,
Youngstown State University Human Subjects Review Board

APPENDIX F: INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

Date: June 7, 2022

Dear Family,

I am currently a doctoral candidate in the Educational Leadership program at Youngstown State University. I am conducting a qualitative research study on the experiences of Transracial Families (families with white parents and children of color) within the PK-12 School Community. You have been referred to me for this study based on your family dynamic and connection to other families of transracial make up. You are in an ideal position to contribute to the academic research about the experiences of transracial families in school systems. This letter serves as a formal invitation to participate in this research study.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to sign an official consent form to engage in a sixty minute interview. This interview will be conducted electronically in a virtual meeting room format where confidentiality will be maintained at all times. You will select a family and individual pseudonym of your choice. The meeting will be recorded and transcribed for reference purposes only and you will have the opportunity to review the data prior to submission of my research work. This will ensure that I have represented your comments accurately.

There are benefits and risks to participation in this research. The benefits are contributing to societal awareness and understanding of transracial families and their experiences with PK-12 school communities as well as providing critical insights of your experiences that are specific to transracial families. The most important benefit is providing you a voice within the academic community about your family's experiences associated with race. The risk involved could be recalling and/or reliving a negative experience that causes you to be uncomfortable or have an emotional reaction during your retelling.

Prior to the interview I will ask you to complete a brief electronic demographic survey about you and your family that will include: pseudonyms, for your family and yourself, and other relevant information to this study. All of this information will be held in confidence and housed in a secure digital format and stored to protect your privacy and identity.

It is my sincere hope that you agree to participate in this interview and contribute to this research. If you are interested in participating, please reply to this email no later than 10 days after the date of this email. Once you agree, I will forward a consent form to you by email to be completed and returned to me.

Respectfully,

Carole M. Sutton

Carole M. Sutton
Doctoral Candidate, Youngstown State University
cmsutton@student.ysu.edu

APPENDIX G: IMPACT OF CHILDHOOD TRAUMA