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Education Reform: Exploring Human Services Needed to Address Disparities in Urban

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This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

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Walden University
2024

Abstract

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Doctor of Philosophy

Human Services

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Abstract

This investigation sought to delve into the complex issues surrounding racial and institutional racism within urban educational frameworks, emphasizing the substantial role that systemic obstacles and prejudices play in perpetuating educational inequities. Amidst an expanding corpus of literature on this topic, the nuanced contributions of human service interventions to ameliorate these inequities have been somewhat overlooked. The objective of this research was to fill this knowledge void by examining the perspectives and experiences of a diverse range of professionals within the K-12 educational sector, from a human services standpoint. The study utilized qualitative research methodology, gathering data through interviews with a cohort of 12 educators and human service practitioners working in urban educational settings. The purpose was to explore how a collaborative, interdisciplinary approach could catalyze transformative changes. The analysis revealed the complex interactions between resource allocation, student needs, teaching methods, cultural inclusivity, and community involvement and how they are all apart of shaping students' educational experiences in diverse settings. Insights gleaned from the study highlight the profound potential of human service interventions in reshaping school environments, directly tackling the underlying causes of educational disparities and fostering a more equitable educational landscape. These findings offer practical guidance for positive social change for policymakers, educators, and human service workers, positing that joint efforts could significantly improve the educational experiences and outcomes for students in urban areas.

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Dedication

The completion of this dissertation symbolizes the culmination of countless hours of labor, the overcoming of challenges through blood, sweat, and tears, and an unwavering commitment. This body of work is lovingly dedicated to the two extraordinary young men in my life, my adoptive sons and nephews, Twin Keith, and Kenneth. Your understanding and sacrifices during the times I missed school events or could not spend as much time with you as we all would have liked to have not gone unnoticed. The absence was filled with purpose, and this achievement is as much yours as it is mine. The promise I make to you today is to be there for the moments that matter, for every game of catch, school event, and those invaluable man-to man conversations. My love for you is boundless, and I am endlessly grateful for the joy and meaning you bring to my life.

In the same breath, I extend my heartfelt dedication to your mother, my beloved sister, Krista Williams. Her encouragement and prayers were my beacon of hope in moments of doubt, guiding me through the darkest hours. Krista, your spirit, and strength continue to inspire me, rest in power, my big sister. This dedication would not be complete without honoring the memory of our matriarch, my mother, Armelia Lee Williams. Mom, your spirit lives within me, empowering me to face each challenge with the courage you instilled in me. Your voice constantly echoes in my heart, encouraging me to persevere and to choose to swim even when the waters are rough.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Background of the Study

This study contributed to the existing literature on educational disparities, explicitly focusing on K-12 education in urban communities. The study also discusses the disparities rooted in racial discrimination as they related to the human service needs of urban schools. Finally, based on identifying the problem, the study addresses the perspectives of k-12 educators, administrators, and human service professionals in the pursuit of an appropriate solution. The focus of the study extended into two basic areas: the disparities between the urban and suburban education systems, and the role of racial discrimination in exacerbating or underpinning disparities based on location. The background research in this area helped to articulate the problem by identifying the types of disparities and shedding light on the structural and historical underpinning of the factors contributing to such disparities.

For instance, a considerable body of evidence has suggested suburban schools in America are ahead of urban schools in performance terms. One of the main reasons suburban schools outperform their urban counterparts is the difference in the availability of resources. Suburban schools maintain a high quality of education and administrative functions thanks to smooth and sufficient financial and other resources (Diamond et al., 2021). The existing research also suggests that this resource gap is attributable to the demographic differences between urban and suburban populations, with the former having a greater share of Black Americans (Diamond et al., 2021). Hence, the difference can also be explained from a racial perspective, and it is hypothesized that racial

differences mediate the relationship between resource gaps and gaps in the quality of education between urban and suburban schools.

As for the dimension of racism, voluminous research in the existing literature sheds light on the historical, cultural, and structural patterns of the problem. For example, the research suggests that Black Americans cannot escape the societal stereotypes placed on them since slavery. Negative stereotypes are placed on the Black population, portraying them as unworthy, incompetent, inherently minor and less talented than their White counterparts (Lewis-McCoy, 2017; Oh et al., 2022). Similarly, the theoretical background gives considerable coverage to the disadvantages concentrated on Black communities. For instance, it is found that Black Americans are frequently on the receiving end of micro-aggression of micro-invalidation (RURY, 2022; Kanter et al., 2020; Moody and Lewis, 2019). The persistent nuisance of overt and covert microaggressions toward Black people today remains a significant concern, despite apparent social changes and structural reforms, highlighting the difficulty in countering subtle forms of persecution experienced by Black communities compared to many years ago (Kanter et al., 2020).

For instance, Sanguras (2022) found in a recent study that Black students in White-majority schools are frequently faced with microaggression (also referred to as microinvalidation). Microaggressions are mainly linked to the historical asymmetries between Whites and Blacks. Research has found that Black students are critically disadvantaged compared to their White counterparts. Another study by Scott et al. (2019) has revealed that the students' race is a crucial predictor of the feedback they frequently

receive from their teachers. For example, the findings of their study show that Black students more frequently receive negative feedback and criticism. This attitude by the teachers indicates discriminative behaviour since it has no mediation by the general differences in attitudes between White and Black students. The study highlights how structural bias, referring to the systemic and ingrained patterns of discrimination and inequality that impact various aspects of society, such as educational outcomes, disproportionately affects marginalized groups and contributes to the ongoing challenges faced by these communities in the pursuit of understanding specifically rapid inequities in urban communities.

Critical race theory (CRT), as discussed later, provides an understanding of the impact of structural bias on different institutions, including education. For instance, the political interests of mainstream ruling parties are tied to support from the majority. Therefore, at a practical level, the government plays its role in perpetuating the systematic bias and is likely to align its policies and plans to serve the majority's needs (Amiot et al., 2019). This socio-political phenomenon helps us understand the resources gap in an urban educational context related to racial differences.

The research by Crutchfield et al. (2020) is highly significant in how it touches on the human service perspective and situates it in the context of racial disparities in schools. The researchers argue that disparities can be reduced using the school social work association of America (SSWAA) for guidance. A wide range of programs can be unleashed to curtail disparities and promote equity in school-level education. Even though the study offers no direct suggestion to any specific human service role, it

indicates the prospect of using the same as a considerable intervention to curb disparities. However, the method and manner in which NSSW can be used as the foundation for a human service intervention need further inquiry.

The findings of this study are consistent with the inferences drawn by Casad et al. (2018), who have found a four-pronged solution to the racial disparities in the education sector. The four dimensions of the study include value affirmation, utility value intervention, belonging intervention, and goal intervention. Certainly, the implementation of such strategies falls within the spectrum of human services. The interventions require carefully using human services by applying the human service resources to combat the hurdles in the way of an equitable educational environment at the school level.

Regarding the human service aspect, Flamini et al. (2021) have contributed significantly to the literature by highlighting how interventions based on emotional intelligence can help improve equity and reduce gaps in academic achievement between White and Black students. Focusing on school stakeholders, the study suggests that EI-based interventions help shape positive attitudes towards and a high acceptance of diversity and inclusion. The impact of these interventions encompasses the attempts to trigger behavioural changes among teachers and students. Based on these findings, the researchers have strongly recommended incorporating EI-based training sessions in schools' yearly schedules to foster diversity and inclusion and steer clear of micro-aggression and other counterproductive attitudes.

Gap in Literature

The background information gathered above reveals that immense research is being conducted to assess racial inequalities within the educational context (Kanter et al., 2020). Similarly, there is a good range of studies dealing with racial inequalities in the educational domain to help develop insights relevant to the current research (Oh et al., 2022). However, a visible dearth of studies considers the prospect of applying the human service perspective as a possible solution to racial discrimination and social and economic disparities at the K-12 school level.

Similarly, studies focusing on the gap in facilities between urban and suburban schools at K-12 levels are scarce. Whereas a few studies give coverage to this perspective, they do not situate the problem in the racial context. The studies, in general, either focus on racial discrimination or discrimination based on geographic segmentation. However, no study combines these two issues to evaluate how one may perpetuate or lie at the bottom of another. Thus, there is a gap in the literature in combining different factors to shape a holistic picture of the situation, which include K-12 school arrangement, racial inequality, locational advantages and disadvantages (e.g., urban versus suburban context), and human service interventions.

Problem Statement

As evident from background information, resource gaps between urban and suburban schools are the base of the differences in the quality of education. Suburban schools are comparatively better equipped to ensure high rates of academic achievement as compared to urban schools (Diamond et al., 2021). This fact coincides with the

differences in the share of Black Americans in the urban and suburban populations (Diamond et al., 2021). These preliminary findings suggest that Black students are generally disadvantaged since resources are highly concentrated in White-American-dominated regions. Therefore, it is important to evaluate the extent to which the resource gap translates into the gaps in academic achievement between White and Non-White students.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to assess and evaluate the disparities between urban and suburban schools regarding race and equity, specifically focusing on the availability of human services and the effects on student achievement.

The above aim was broken down into the following key objectives to set out the roadmap for the research:

- To evaluate the disparities in access to resources between urban and suburban schools;
- To explore the impact of human services used in the past, which are needed now to reduce the disparities related to systematic racism and equity between urban and suburban schools; and
- To lay out a set of recommendations for the practitioners within the K-12 educational context based on the findings of the study.

Research Questions

The research strives to answer the following questions:

RQ1: Do the findings from this study support historical data indicating disparities in urban education are connected to institutional racism?

RQ2: What theoretical and/or practical human service approaches can address urban education disparities and promote equity in K-12 education for predominantly Black schools?

Conceptual Framework

The study used a three-pronged conceptual framework relying on three underpinning theories, including critical race theory (CRT), social stratification theory (SST), and critical system theory (CST). CRT is a broad theory that sees race as a social construct fuelled by political, structural, and economic forces. The theory sees racism as an ordinary rather than an aberrational phenomenon. It is argued that social systems, laws, and political mechanisms are behind the propagation of the idea that one race is superior to another. Hence, the interests lie at the bottom of social understanding of the status of sets of populations segmented according to ethnic affiliations. At the same time, the theory assumes that the interest of the minority tends to receive support from the majority only if their interests may converge at some point (Amiot et al., 2019). CRT applies to the current study as it offers a meaningful lens through which to examine racial differences. CRT explores the structural aspects contributing to racial discrimination and subsequent issues concentrated on Black students in K-12 educational institutions. In this way, CRT helped situate the study into a wider picture considering social, structural, and political dimensions underpinning the achievement differences between White and non-White students.

At the same time, SST offered a view of the situation from a functional perspective, as set forth by Karl Marx. The theory assumed that social stratification is underpinned by the roles that different groups within the society must play to complement each other and keep the social functions rolling. The social relations aimed at fostering collaboration and complementation are termed sub-structure, while ideologies, philosophies, and theories arising out of such relations are referred to as super-structures (Celeste et al., 2019). The theory applied to the current study since the study adopted a bottom-up approach. It also involved digging into the structural inequalities that explains the differences in academic achievement between Black and White students. The elements of social stratification are one of the key determinants of disadvantages concentrated on Black communities and how these disadvantages reflect in different arrangements, including educational context (Celeste et al., 2019). Within the context of SST, it is believed that stereotypes and labels continue to affect Black communities, tracing their origins from the period of enslavement to the present. Similarly, critical system theory (CST) assumes that social and societal systems can be improved by continuously critiquing the values underpinning social beliefs and considering corrective measures. The theory sees society as a whole system based on certain assumptions exercised as social values and embedded in the system. Hence, CST furthers the insights gleaned from CRT. The theory not only helps identify the problem and its root causes but also helps to provide a roadmap to eradicate those problems (Celeste et al., 2019).

CST is relatable to the current research since it encourages understanding of what underpins the structural differences in education regarding race, urban disparities, and equity. The critical perspective of the theory allows for an examination of current practices in the educational sector, taking into account potential inaccuracies in the construction of realities and their perceptions. This method facilitates an objective interpretation of findings and aids in developing evidence-based recommendations.

Nature of the Study

Generic Qualitative Design

The study was primarily based on the generic qualitative design and underpinned by the pragmatic paradigm of social research. The generic design comes with a high level of flexibility and adaptability, which involves making sense of a situation or research phenomenon by keeping the factors in view that work best in a given scenario (Shenton, 2019). Unlike other designs, it does not involve a predetermined roadmap but relies only on the most suitable options. It enables researchers to switch to a contingency research plan or an alternative strategy if the initial strategy fails to meet expectations.

The adoption of a flexible design is based on the understanding that the adoption of human services for the purpose determined for this research (to address disparities with reference to geographic segments, i.e., K-12 suburban schools, where predominantly White students reside, and K-12 urban schools where predominantly Black students reside) is not well established. The research involved a complex inquiry from a holistic perspective considering the interplay among different factors, such as racial discrimination, geographic segmentation, and human service perspective. Therefore, a

generic approach is better geared toward the nature of the study. It allows researchers to keep all options in view and use ones better aligned to a given context. The generic design is essential to keep the resource constraints in view. As the researcher, I could quickly adapt to the emerging set of requirements rather than trying to apply predefined methods to a scenario, even after their misalignment became evident.

The study also adopted a versatile qualitative design grounded in the pragmatic paradigm of social research, which has evolved to offer flexibility and adaptability for diverse research contexts (Elliott & Timulak, 2021). This design's malleability allows researchers to choose the most appropriate methods for their situation without relying on fixed roadmaps, thus enabling them to adapt their strategies based on emerging needs. In the context of this study, the generic approach enabled a comprehensive examination of the intricate interplay among racial discrimination, geographic segmentation, and human service perspectives concerning disparities within K-12 suburban and urban schools. Given the resource limitations and the need to adjust to the particular contexts of predominantly White suburban schools and predominantly Black urban schools, the generic design ensured that the most suitable methods are employed to achieve the research goals.

Definitions

Definitions of key terms used in the research include as follows:

Human Service Perspective: This is a multifaceted service viewpoint and approach that encompasses a holistic approach to addressing life issues and concerns. This holistic approach and perspective include psychological, biological, cultural, social,

financial, educational, vocational, and spiritual components (Woodside & McClam, 2015, p.135).

School Social Workers of Association of America SSWAA: The only national organization dedicated solely to promoting school social work to enhance all students' social-emotional and academic outcomes nationally and globally (School Social Work Association of America, n.d.).

CRT: Critical race theory is based on the assumption that disparities are constructed, rooted into, and perpetuated by legal, social, and other structural drivers (Amiot et al., 2019).

Diversity: Diversity refers to people from different backgrounds regarding ethnicity, race, or other aspects. (Sue & Sue, 2016)

Equity: It refers to fairness and impartiality in a given context. (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2020)

Urban: Something relating to a city or town. (Hanlon et al., 2018)

Suburban: Refers to rural areas, away from city centers. (Hanlon et al., 2018)

Rural: Refers to areas characterized by sparsely populated landscapes, smaller settlements, and often agricultural or natural environments, contrasting with urban settings with higher population density and more built infrastructure (Brown & Schafft, 2019).

Racism: Refers to the prejudice against or persecution of a socially recognized group of people or an individual based on ethnic origins. (DiAngelo, 2018).

Institutional racism: Refers to the systematic discrimination, overt or covert, embedded within the policies, practices, and norms of organizations or societal structures, which result in unequal treatment and opportunities for specific racial or ethnic groups. (Bonilla-Silva, 2017)

Social welfare: Private or public services in an organized manner to facilitate disadvantaged communities. (Gilbert & Terrell, 2018)

Social justice: The extent to which wealth and resources are equitably distributed among different social groups and individuals (Sen, 2021)

Social economics: The branch of economics deals with the interaction between principles of economics concerning fundamental economic forces and social behaviour. (Ben-Ner & Putterman, 2021)

Social Determinants of Health (SDOH): Conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age that affect their health outcomes (Marmot, M. 2020).

Social disparity: Refers to the unequal distribution of resources, opportunities, privileges, and benefits among individuals or groups based on factors like socioeconomic status, race, gender, or education, highlighting systemic inequalities (Adams, 2019).

Assumptions

It is assumed that the structural dynamics of racial discrimination and racism are not intact, and there are no factors at play that might affect long-term outcomes among the variables under investigation in this study. This involves presuming that the disadvantages related to academic achievement are not embedded in structural racial norms and are not a result of any outburst of racial injustices at the time of conducting the

study. It is also assumed that qualitative interviews are the best data collection approach to gather information for this study. Based on their design, the interviews enabled me to collect richer information from a small sample size through the participants' professional opinions, expert perspectives, objective viewpoints, and personal experiences (King et al., 2019). Moreover, the data collection method allowed me to comprehend better, explain, and explore the participants' personal and professional expertise on the subject matter of this study.

Another assumption is that the sample population has responded ethically and honestly to the research questions and has kept their bias suspended. The dependability and transferability of findings are substantially contingent upon the extent to which this assumption holds.

Scope and Delimitations

Internal Validity

Determining the legitimacy or validity of research can be difficult when using qualitative data. Personal experience and testimonials can often be subjective and biased. Furthermore, determining the internal and external validity of data and facts can help address any barriers to this qualitative study. Research is internally valid if it proves causality between the chosen variables and rules out alternative explanations to make sense of the findings (Silverman, 2011). The internal validity test was applied to the current research using the following criteria.

Causes and Effects of Presenting Social Problems

For a study to be internally valid, it is vital to identify how the effects of the disparities present in urban schools directly result from the causes referenced in this study. In the present study, the causes include differences in access to resources between urban and suburban schools as they relates to systematic racism, which affects students' academic success. It is indicated in the existing literature that causes have a deep historical background (Wolff, 2022; Woodward, 1964). For example, historical redlining practices, influenced by systemic racism, have led to concentrated poverty in predominantly Black urban neighbourhoods, directly impacting the funding and resources available for schools in these areas and limiting educational opportunities for students (Kendi, 2019).

The qualitative study has no numeric measures set for the key variables. The critical inquiry suggests systematic racism, social economics, and inequality predict student achievement but offers no clues regarding the variations in levels of interaction between these factors. Therefore, the constraints inflicted on the study, attributable to its design, affect testing the internal validity against this second criterion. At the same time, the research does not involve a statistical inquiry. It relies on participants' personal experiences from a critical perspective, giving it a subjective flair, lacking objective insights. However, this limit does not affect the validity of research since it is based on critical realism, which allows a margin for subjectivity and looks at reality in terms of how individuals make sense of the same (Jha, 2008; Goddard and Melville, 2011).

Is there a likelihood of an alternative explanation.

Internal validity is affected if the interference of other factors may explain the findings (Shenton, 2019). As the researcher of this study, I have made every effort possible to suspend any biases I have throughout the research process; however, the risk of "unaccounted variables" cannot be completely ruled out, which implies that some external factors may not be addressed in the current study. For example, the easier and greater access to resources for suburban schools can alternatively be attributable to the demographic landscape. Additionally, studies indicate that suburban communities exhibit higher financial stability, decreased student populations and needs, and lower crime rates (Currid-Halkett, 2017). These elements, along with others, can contribute to the disparities in urban schools and further compound the effects of the associated social issue.

External Validity

The external validity of the research involves the evaluation of the extent to which a study's findings apply to real-world scenarios. It tests the generalizability of the results beyond the given context and environment (Chandra & Harindran, 2017). A potential area to consider while testing the external validity is to assess whether the findings apply to disparities related to systematic racism other than that in America. The study met these criteria since systematic racism is a globally experienced phenomenon, though differing in terms of historical discourse and structural configurations. Therefore, it is likely that the reflection of racial discrimination in variations regarding students' academic achievement is globally representative.

In this study, the research exhibited ecological validity to some extent. For instance, racial bias in academic achievement can be generalized to other contexts where a group experience disadvantages due to different biases (Gay, 2018). The group perceived as inferior is likely to encounter outcomes in educational settings similar to those faced by non-White American students (Hughes et al., 2020). In schools, the psychosocial environment can be influenced by existing biases, which may contribute to the ecological validity of the study, as it reflects real-world experiences and the consequences of these biases in academic settings. Besides, I ensured that the factors that might have limited the external validity of the research were avoided. For example, the study involved no selection bias, and all participants having the predetermined characteristics were allowed to partake without adopting any selective approach.

Limitations

A limitation of the study was the small size of the population, which scholars may argue affects the generalizability of the findings (Shenton, 2019). A larger size was not unattainable, given the time constraints and the predetermined characteristics of the sample population. For example, teachers sometimes seem to have highly occupied schedules, making it challenging to spare time for interviews. Furthermore, the research took longer than intended due to time constraints, as the research method deviated from the primary research subject by delving into human interactions of data gathering and discussion. The limitations imposed on the accessibility of the sample population could have prevented me from reaching saturation, although a larger sample size was not needed for the scope of my study.

Several factors play a role in academic achievement; however, in the research I focused on the impact of racial equality/inequality while considering the moderating impact of geographic segmentation (i.e., urban versus suburban). The goal of this research is to fill in the gaps in the literature on the presenting social problem and gain insight from k-12 teachers, administrators, and human service professionals on the socioeconomic issues and needs of particularly Black students in k-12 educational schools as a result of systemic racism, social, economic status and lack of human service support in urban schools. I am further limited by the difficulty of confirming qualitative data results, the difficulty of examining causation, the quality of data gathered through an interview, and the scope of interpretations. Also, interviewees' observations and judgments are influenced by knowledge and personal experiences.

Additionally, the data could potentially be prospectively biased when evaluated by other professionals. For example, professionals from varying disciplinary backgrounds may emphasise certain aspects of the data, leading to diverse conclusions or recommendations; however, since the responses were open-ended and come from a highly knowledgeable population having considerable exposure to research phenomena, the impact of this limitation remains minimal. Finally, as noted above, the method of this study was time-consuming, making it burdensome to obtain visualizing findings which could make it challenging to draw objective and/or subjective conclusions.

Significance

Significance of Theory

The term *human services* refers to a wide range of services that address students' social, emotional, environmental, psychological, and academic needs. The provision of human services in schools is significant because it creates a supportive environment that helps students in all areas of their life, including mental and physical health, and provides access to resources for overcoming obstacles. Human services in schools have been shown to improve academic achievement, reduce absenteeism, promote positive behavior among students, and overall life success. This study particularly examined the provisions of human services and the impact those disparities have on students' achievement because there is a significant gap in the quality of education and resources available to students in urban and suburban schools. This gap is often related to systemic racism and inequality, which can lead to disparities in access to resources and services. This study aimed to explore the influences of human services needed to reduce the disparities related to systematic racism and equity between urban and suburban schools (Marshall et al., 2013).

Moreover, in urban schools, students often face unique challenges related to poverty, violence, and social inequality, which can impact their academic achievement and overall well-being. Therefore, human services in urban schools need to be tailored to meet the specific needs of students in these settings. Also, according to a recent study by Holsenbeck et al. (2021), human services in urban schools should focus on addressing the social determinants of health, such as poverty, housing instability, and food insecurity,

which can impact students' academic achievement and overall well-being. This same study suggested that human services in urban schools should be integrated into the school curriculum and should involve collaboration between school staff, community organizations, and families. The study also highlighted the importance of providing culturally responsive services that are sensitive to the unique needs of students from diverse backgrounds.

The results from this exploration of human services in school settings could provide insight into better equipping urban schools with the resources needed to provide students with an equitable education. The results also indicated strategies that can be implemented to improve the achievement of students in urban school districts. Additionally, the study may lead to policy changes that address unequal access to resources and services between urban and suburban schools. This means that the findings of this research have practical implications for policymakers, educators, and administrators interested in promoting equity and fairness in K-12 education. By providing valuable insights into how to meet the needs of students in urban settings effectively, this research has significant managerial implications for those responsible for designing and implementing educational policies and programs. Therefore, these findings may significantly contribute to the knowledge database by informing future research on educational equity and providing practical guidance for policymakers, educators, and administrators seeking to promote fairness and equal opportunities in K-12 education.

Human services professionals notably play a crucial and vital role in addressing the social determinants of health within educational settings, providing students with

essential support and resources to thrive academically and personally. This significance is further magnified in urban schools, where students encounter unique challenges arising from poverty, violence, and social inequality. Consequently, human services professionals are instrumental in addressing the social determinants of health in such contexts. In support of this, Holsenbeck et al.'s (2021) recent study underscores the importance of human services professionals in educational settings and their prioritization of factors such as poverty, housing instability, and food insecurity. These determinants have a substantial impact on both students' academic achievement and overall well-being. By placing emphasis on these social factors, human services professionals contribute to mitigating the adverse effects faced by students. Through their dedicated efforts, human services professionals in educational settings not only provide students with necessary support and interventions but also aim to enhance their quality of life.

The study proposed that human services professionals should work collaboratively with school staff, community organizations, and families to provide culturally responsive services that are sensitive to the unique needs of students from diverse backgrounds. For instance, human services professionals can provide counseling services to students who have experienced trauma or violence, or they can work with families to address issues related to housing instability or food insecurity. By addressing the social-economic issues previously mentioned along with other issues that exist urban communities, human services professionals can help to create a supportive school environment that promotes academic success and overall well-being.

Furthermore, this study sought to explore the correlation between social determinants of health (SDOH) and urban educational settings. In doing so, research conducted in this study underscored how human services professionals can address social-economic issues and other challenges that exist in urban communities to create a supportive school environment that promotes academic success and the overall well-being of students. Social determinants of health can be defined as conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age that affect their health outcomes (Marmot, 2020). Nevertheless, by that definition, education is a SDOH because it has a significant impact on an individual's health and well-being. With that said, education is associated with better health outcomes, including lower rates of chronic diseases, higher life expectancy, and better mental health. However, social determinants of health such as poverty, housing instability, and food insecurity can negatively impact a student's ability to succeed academically and their overall well-being. For example, students who experience poverty may not have access to adequate nutrition, healthcare, or safe housing, which can impact their ability to learn and succeed in school. Similarly, students who experience housing instability or food insecurity may experience stress and anxiety, which can negatively impact their mental health and academic achievement. Therefore, addressing SDOH in educational settings is critical to promoting academic success and overall well-being (Marmot, M. 2020).

Summary

The study aimed to add fresh insights into the existing knowledge database around disparities between urban and suburban schools in access to resources and

systematic racism and its reflection on the gaps in students' academic achievement. The background information reveals that suburban schools have substantially better access to resources than urban ones, which coincides with the fact that suburban schools have White students in the majority while urban schools have a higher share of Black students. Hence, the problem has its socioeconomic roots. While existing literature is replete with studies dealing with racial disparities and their implications at an academic level, the current study adopts a more correlative and comprehensive approach by combining existing research with respect to perspectives of professionals in the k-12 education sector, geographic data, and relevant theories. Moreover, three crucial theories underpinned this study, including critical race theory, social stratification, and social system theory. Lastly, current and historical research provide concrete foundational research to further explore the role of human services at the length in the given context.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Many studies of racial and ethnic educational disparities compare and contrast urban Black and Hispanic kids to their White suburban counterparts (Logan & Burdick-Will, 2017). The racial and ethnic make-up of a school's student body, the prevalence of low-income families, and the average academic achievement of students are only a few of the many observable differences across schools that are thought to matter. It is common knowledge that these variations are shaped by geographical factors (such as the variances between numerous urban school districts and their neighboring suburban ones) and student demographics (such as race and ethnicity). In this generic qualitative study, I am utilizing field experts in education to explore the disparities between urban and suburban schools regarding providing human services and how those disparities/factors influence achievement in k-12 education. Further, perception data and expert viewpoints comprehensively cover the examined social issue.

Significant improvements occurred in the 1970s when court decisions and new expectations removed de jure segregation in American public schools. Nonetheless, segregation persists at high levels today (Marcotte & Dalane, 2019). High levels of educational discrepancy between White and Asian children and Black and Hispanic children directly result from segregation (Guerrero, 2021). There are disparities because of the huge variations in test scores and dropout rates among individual pupils (Maldonado & De Witte, 2021). The investigation examines disparities in human services on the school and student levels.

Although it is often held that minority pupils go to lower-quality schools than non-Hispanic White students, few studies have revealed actual measurements of school quality (Boyce et al., 2020). Because minorities are disproportionately represented in urban cores, mounting evidence shows that their children are overrepresented in the lowest-income schools (Ahn & McEachin, 2017). Further, according to Manuck (2017), socioeconomic gaps across groups were the primary cause of racial disparities in academic performance. The academic success of schools with White majority students is greater than schools with most of its student population being minorities since the former enroll pupils from more affluent homes. Manuck (2017) concluded that apparent contextual impacts were the result of compositional factors. To the extent that context mattered, it was the makeup of the student's classes.

Families and education activists are still filing lawsuits 65 years after the distinguished Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka decision that deemed racial segregation in schools unconstitutional to get governments to fulfil their education spending duties (Sanders, 2019). In the historical 1954 decision Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, the Supreme Court decided unanimously that segregating students based on race violated their constitutional right to an equal education. One of the defining cases of the civil rights movement, Brown v. Board of Education, established the principle that "separate but equal" systems of education and other services did not work. Plessy v. Ferguson, decided by the Supreme Court in 1896, upheld the constitutionality of segregated public facilities because they were "substantially equivalent" for Black and Whites (Allerfeldt, 2017). It upheld the "separate but equal" theory and the Jim Crow

regulations that prevented Black Americans from using the same public transportation and educational opportunities as whites for the following sixty years (Logan & Temin, 2020). However, by the early 1950s, the NAACP had begun actively challenging segregation rules in public schools, filing cases on behalf of plaintiffs in states including South Carolina, Virginia, and Delaware. After his daughter Linda Brown was turned away from Topeka's all-White primary schools in 1951, Oliver Brown sued the Board of Education in a class action lawsuit, making national headlines.

This year, states like Kansas and New Mexico made efforts to ensure that their K-12 budgets were adequately funded and distributed, avoiding litigation. According to the Center for Education Equity, 14 states are being sued for inadequate or unequal school financing (Sanders, 2019). Studies suggest that providing sufficient money to schools improves student outcomes, such as graduation rates, narrows performance disparities, and increases future employment productivity. Some are sued because of budget disparities, most notably between wealthy and poor schools. More funding should be directed to schools serving low-income students and students of color to achieve equity (Sanders, 2019).

Students in today's urban schools differ not just in terms of race or ethnicity but also in the degree to which each racial or ethnic group is represented. Structural racism is not predicated on people's actions, intentions, or beliefs, in contrast to interpersonal racism and racial prejudice, which persist to this day. A more accurate description would be how the legacy of racial dominance has shaped the fabric of modern civilization. Students in urban areas tend to do worse academically because of the inferior level of

education they get in kindergarten through twelfth grade (Assari et al., 2021). However, the Black-White success disparity remains statistically significant even after accounting for school urbanity as a covariate. Whether the racial achievement difference exists in urban and suburban settings is unclear. Institutional, structural, and systemic racism are all apparent factors behind the low academic achievement of k-12 education, and by highlighting these factors, I intend to offer solutions from the perspectives of teachers, administrators, and human service professionals.

Literature Search Strategy

The databases ProQuest Central, ProQuest Criminal Justice, Academic Search Complete, Education Complete, SAGE Premier, SocINDEX, and Political Science Complete were used for the scholarly study at Walden University Library. The Walden Library and online searches on Google, Google Scholar, and Bing were also used to gather more dissertations, newspaper articles, and research. With these research tools, I explored the disparities in human service provision between urban and suburban schools and the effects of these disparities on K-12 student success, thanks to the data gathered throughout our study.

This should aid in determining the theoretical and/or practical means of meeting the need for human services in urban schools. The research was also conducted using key terms such as *racism* and *discrimination in public schools*, *the effect of racism on k-12 achievement, low funding in urban schools,* and *critical race theory* to achieve a saturation of information on the topic. The thorough examination of papers, publications,

manuals, online resources, libraries, local academic institutions, and public non-profit organizations increased the consistency of the study.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Theoretical Framework

Critical Race Theory

CRT served as the theoretical foundation for this research. The achievement gap between urban and suburban schools in grades K-12 was studied using CRT. Critical race theory (CRT) is an intellectual and social movement, as well as a loosely structured framework of legal analysis that is founded on the idea that race is not a biologically grounded property of physically separate subgroups of humans but rather a socially manufactured (culturally produced) category that is utilized to oppress and exploit people of color (Dixson & Rousseau Anderson, 2017). When it comes to creating and maintaining social, economic, and political inequities between Whites and Nonwhites, notably Black Americans, critical race theorists, as suggested in the above-mentioned article, believe that racism is intrinsic to the law and legal institutions of the United States. While eliminating all racial and other unjust inequalities may seem like a far-fetched idea, critical race theorists are committed to utilizing their knowledge of the structural or institutional roots of racism to that end (Juvonen et al., 2017).

Although the philosophical roots of critical racial theory (CRT) date back to the 1960s and 1970s, it was not until 1989 that the field was formally structured at the first annual Workshop on Critical Race Theory (Ford & Airhihenbuwa, 2018). The critical legal studies (CLS) movement came before it. The CLS movement also examined the

disproportionate benefits that the law and legal institutions provide to the powerful and wealthy, resulting in a detrimental impact on the poor and powerless (Dixson & Rousseau Anderson, 2017). Critical race theorists shared the view of CLS scholars that political liberalism was inadequate to address fundamental problems of injustice in American society because its emphasis on the equal treatment under the law of all races limited its ability to recognize more subtle or systemic forms of racism (Juvonen et al., 2017).

Some liberals were also criticized for assuming that judges make decisions without regard to politics and for adopting a reformist liberalism that allowed unjust social arrangements to continue for longer and for rollbacks to be made through bureaucratic red tape and conservative legal challenges. In contrast to other CLS academics, critical racial theorists did not want to totally throw off the idea of law or legal rights, as they had seen how specific laws and legal reforms had helped oppressed or exploited people tremendously (Ryan, 2017).

Despite the wide range of opinions held by critical race theorists, legal academics Richard Delgado (one of the movement's founders) and Jean Stefancic have identified a number of shared assumptions about race and racism (Ladson-Billings, 2021). These assertions form the "fundamental tenets" of CRT. To begin with, race is not innate but rather a product of society (Matthews & López, 2020). Genetic discoveries in the late 20th century definitively disproved the biogenetic theory of race, which held that the human species is split into various groups based on inherited physical and behavioral variations. As per the above-specified study, academics from several disciplines have agreed that racial categories are artificial creations. Some theorists of critical race theory

(CRT) believe that race is nothing more than a made-up connection between a person's appearance (such as skin tone, facial features, and hair texture) and their assumed mental makeup (which may be good or bad). Dominant groups (in the US, whites of Western European heritage) have developed and maintained these alliances to justify their oppression and exploitation of other groups based on these groups' presumed moral or intellectual depravity or inability to govern themselves.

Second, racism is the everyday reality of most people of color in the United States; it is not exceptional (Ladson-Billings, 2021). Although the prevalence of extreme racist attitudes and beliefs among whites is lower now than it was before the middle of the twentieth century and explicitly racist laws and legal practices, such as the Jim Crow laws that enforced racial segregation and denied fundamental civil rights to Black Americans in the South, have been largely eradicated. Numerous social indicators show that most people of color are discriminated against or treated unjustly in public and private settings. For example, black and Hispanic Americans (Latinxs) are more likely to be refused loans or employment than equally qualified white individuals. They also tend to spend more than whites for various goods and services. Finally, they are more likely to be wrongfully accused of criminal behavior by police or private white residents (Addo & Darity, 2021).

Another application of the CRT is where people of color are disproportionately affected by police brutality and law enforcement's excessive use of force. According to Bent-Goodley et al. (2022) and Ritchie and Jones-Brown (2017), police use more excessive force on African American when implementing law and order than when they

deal with whites. Besides, Mack and McCann (2019) and Massey (2020) note that people of color, particularly Black Americans, face harsher sentencing and lengthier jail terms than whites convicted of the same crimes. Studies by Bent-Goodley et al. (2022), Massey (2020), and Ritchie and Jones-Brown (2017), found that the legal system in the US fails to protect people of color from racial discrimination; instead, it subjects them to unfair treatment.

According to Massey (2020), the term microaggressions refer to verbal or behavioral slights that transmit a stereotype or bad attitude against a person of color and imply an implicit prejudice based on race and are frequently subtle and often unintended or unconscious. While chatting with her colleagues in a campus building, a White professor at a prestigious institution observed a Black student passing down the corridor and screamed enough for the student to hear that she should have closed the door to her office since she left her handbag inside. This incident is mentioned in the CRT literature. Racial microaggressions are prevalent and reveal the persistence of racist sentiments even among those who reject racism consciously; the cumulative impact on persons of color may be emotionally and mentally damaging.

Synthesis of CRT

Although there is controversy surrounding CRT and how it is to explain racial disparities in education (Powell et al., 2020), structural functionalism, contemporary capitalism, and CRT provide strong theoretical perspectives for comprehending the intricacies and subtleties inherent in Black adolescents' academic underperformance in U.S. public schools, as shown by a critical evaluation of studies examining the economic

and sociopolitical structure of the United States and CRT in education (Candea, 2018). In the post-industrial world, the school has become a place of subjection, and hence production and control, based on socially created identities, especially race. To serve the stratification purpose of a capitalist society that promotes the racist ideology of dominance and submission, the Black race is generally placed at the bottom of the racial hierarchy. According to Ray (2019), discipline rules and standardized test scores are only two examples of how racist school norms and practices may be used to further capitalist sorting and placement techniques. The disproportionate police brutality and harsher punishment inflicted upon Black individuals compared to White individuals, as documented by Bent-Goodley et al. (2022) and Mack and McCann (2019), serves as a prime illustration of Critical Race Theory (CRT). This systemic discrimination is not limited to the legal or judicial system but also extends to the education sector, providing further support for the application of CRT (Bent-Goodley et al., 2022; Mack & McCann, 2019).

This estimation of competence relies on their preconceived racial position in some social order. Without considering the effects of institutional racism, the Black race in the United States has been historically subjugated (under domination or control). As Ray (2019) claimed, the United States' educational system has frequently been insufficient and, at worst, unsympathetic to the situation of the typical Black youngster. This might be because the ordinary young Black person, according to the U.S. social structure's assessment of where they are on the social hierarchy, is seen as a problem to be managed rather than an asset to be invested in via education (Sampson & Wilson, 2020).

Capitalism requires a return on investment; therefore, capitalist states can justify cutting funding for high-quality, effective programs to help these kids learn. The public education system in the United States is likely one of the most powerful governmental mechanisms for disqualifying many Black youngsters to protect the interests of the capitalistic society. This is because the goals of contemporary capitalism favor Whiteness and disadvantage Blackness, as per the article above (Sampson & Wilson, 2020).

The capitalist goal of White hegemony underpinned slavery, which subordinated the Black race to enhance Whites' right to possess and earn profit. This historical perspective is essential for understanding the contemporary pattern of educational hardship among Black adolescents. This system relied on the bodies of Black women to serve the financial needs of White supremacists. Some academics contend that today's public schools and the criminal justice system create a critical mass of Black students for the state's neoliberal objectives (Sbicca & Myers, 2016). As pointed out by Rocque and Snellings (2018), the "school-to-prison pipeline" hypothesis describes a troubling nationwide trend in which young people are diverted from traditional educational settings and instead sent to the juvenile and criminal justice systems. The likelihood that pupils who are unsuccessful in school may get involved in the criminal justice system has increased as a result of changes in both educational and penal policies.

Those may be eager to refer to the success of a small number of Black men and women, such as Barack Obama, Oprah Winfrey, Michael Jordan, Kamala Harris and many others, as evidence that possibilities exist for everybody, including people of African descent, in the United States. However, it must be understood that there is a

difference between possibilities and opportunities. Nothing is possible, but research has shown that Black people are not given the same opportunities as their White counterparts to expand their possibilities of success. Overall, it is challenging to find a theoretical framework that can encompass all the factors in the universe of racial disparities in the U.S. public education system, especially regarding Black children's academic underperformance and opportunity gap (Boddie et al., 2019). Despite this obstacle, integrating structural functionalism, contemporary capitalism, and critical race theory (CRT) contributes to developing social work research, policy, and practice to reduce educational disparities (Boddie et al., 2019). Incorporating these ideas into an analysis of the academic underperformance problem faced by Black kids reveals the urgent need to investigate the historical roots of racism and its connection with the social, political, and economic structure of American society in schools to understand better the lived realities of Black families and their children and to design appropriate, culturally affirming interventions.

Social Stratification Theory

From a sociological and historical perspective, no society has ever been entirely free of class distinctions. The members of any society are ranked in some way, either higher or lower, superior or inferior, prominent or unimportant, compared to one another. Social stratification is a social classification that functions inside a system of institutionalized inequality. Individuals are classified according to certain criteria, restricting their access to resources, influence, and opportunities. Sociologists use the word "social stratification" to describe organizing members of inequality into distinct

categories, resulting in disparities in access to resources, opportunities, and status (Anthias, 2001).

McLeod & Nonnemaker (1999) define social stratification as "structured inequalities between or among distinct social groups." The article impinges that these inequalities are not just the result of pigeonholing people based on their beliefs; rather, they are the result of a complex of social institutions designed to perpetuate existing inequalities (for example, reserving a disproportionate share of society's wealth and power for the most affluent citizens). Some people benefit more than others because of the roles they play or the groups they belong to. Since the fairness of stratification can only be evaluated based on the ease and frequency with which its members can move into different classes, ranks, groups, or hierarchies than those into which they were born, it follows that societies must adopt a democratic structure that allows social mobility, or the ability to move into a different class, rank, group, or hierarchy than those into which they were born (Breen & Jonsson, 2005).

Much more often than it works to alter them, education instead serves to reflect and reinforce preexisting inequalities (Pfeffer, 2008). To be clear, when we talk about "inequality" here, we refer to the presence of what we call "social inequality," or the inequalities established by society. Despite its importance, not everyone has access to higher education. Students in several countries need to take and pass a qualifying test before they may enroll in a certain university or college. According to Pfeffer (2008), sponsored mobility is the name for this setup. Only those pupils who can afford a college education are admitted. Students incur huge expenses by staying in school since they

become financially reliant on their parents for longer and miss out on earning potential. Education plays a crucial role in justifying the uneven distribution of wealth and ensuring that the stratification system can be maintained. Pfeffer (2008) concludes that, like other social structures, schools reflect and contribute to social stratification.

However, the educational system does not provide the same educational possibilities to the most disadvantaged children as it does to the children of the rich class, which means that some underprivileged children can rise into middle-class professional jobs. As a result, educational institutions perpetuate class inequalities from one generation to the next. Education opportunities and outcomes vary by socioeconomic background, gender, aptitude, preference, education, faculty, curriculum, peer dynamics, and other factors (Lucas, 2001; Ermisch & Francesconi, 2001). People move to more affluent areas because of residential stratification, and the quality of the local educational opportunities reflects this. Many families nowadays look for schools where their children will be surrounded by people similar to themselves regarding socioeconomic status, family structure, and even race. If schools get their share of the decentralized economy's riches, they will benefit from it. If the process of choosing teachers is decentralized, better schools will be able to attract more affluent pupils and more qualified educators. Thus, arguments affirming the existence of educational disparity and stratification between urban and suburban schools are justified in terms of funding, geographical location, and resources (Adelman, 2005).

According to Anthias (2001), social stratification or socioeconomic status provides undue advantages to certain people at the expense of others. Research findings

show pupils from more privileged backgrounds do better in school than those from less privileged backgrounds (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2002). Thus, the educational attainment gap has spawned a plethora of studies into the causes, effects, and possible solutions to this problem. In the eyes of many experts in the education system, it is an educational obligation for educators to ensure that all children can succeed academically (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2002). As a result, many scholars have dedicated their careers to investigating the causes of the achievement gap and the effects of poverty on educational success (Claro et al., 2016). Educators have a lot of ground to cover since curriculum and teaching are extensive. Academic curriculum and instruction should be combined and explored through the lenses of economics, biology, psychology, and sociology. As a result, there are several angles to examine and comprehend the discrepancy in the academic performance of affluent and disadvantaged pupils in urban and suburban schools. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, pupils from low-income families are less likely to satisfy their fundamental needs, including food, housing, water, and safety (Lester, 2013). Consequently, previous research has indicated that some urban students may arrive at school with immediate survival concerns that can distract them from focusing on long-term educational goals, leading to a lack of motivation, and concerns with their overall wellbeing (Gonzalez, K. P., & Padilla, A. M. 2016).

The effect of educational and social initiatives on alleviating poverty-related issues like hunger was extensively studied by Payne-Sturges et al. (2017). This study emphasized that although economically disadvantaged pupils fare better when their schools provide free meals, they still lag behind their peers in suburban environments.

According to Maslow's theory of needs, after a person's basic needs are fulfilled, they are driven by the hope of developing meaningful relationships with others (Lester, 2013). People are social animals that need affirmation from their peers. Students from low-income communities struggle in school since their social and family groups' goals conflict with those of education. It is recommended that researchers and practitioners in the human services field look for ways to inspire students by appealing to their need to feel part of a community and seek ways to elevate poverty and reduce achievement gaps in pupils.

Critical System Theory

System theory and critical theory, each in its distinct manner, have contributed to answering some of life's questions. System theorists argue that to get to the heart of an issue; we must first examine where the system fits in addressing the problem as a whole rather than by breaking it down into smaller, more manageable components (Arndt, 2006). Because it fosters an all-encompassing sense of oneness among its participants, system theory is an effective tool for advancing social liberalization and gender parity.

In contrast to proponents of system theory, critical theorists advocate for closed systems and seek explanations for the world's ills by focusing on a single problem at a time rather than the larger context in which it arises. According to system theory, all theories are interconnected and must be considered together to understand a system (Arndt, 2006). Systems theorists seek to understand the phenomenon as a whole rather than focus on its individual aspects. They employ a wide range of research techniques in their quest for answers. It's an "open system" because, according to systems theory, it's

only possible to get to the bottom of an issue by looking at the whole system rather than just one part to provide a complete picture of a situation, system theory considers all possible systems involved and analyzes how each contributes (Arndt, 2006).

Philosophical, political, and pedagogical reactions to real-world situations, critical system theories of education reimagine education's big picture to facilitate positive social and cultural change via students' personal development (Ainsworth, 2013). Proponents of these theories argue that the ideologies of dominant social connections and established needs are crucial to the reproduction and normalization of present social and global inequalities. Hence, they focus on the plight of oppressed and marginalized people. According to the above article, a critical education theory analyzes contemporary capitalist societies, including their subordination and dominance relations, their contradictions, and the opportunities they provide for progressive social change via transformative practices.

Systems thinking could possibly be a useful tool for education leaders as it allows them to recognize the interrelatedness of various components within a school and leverage this understanding to tackle challenges (Henderson, J. G., & Hawthorne, R. 2018). Disparities in educational results between minority and non-minority pupils in urban and suburban schools may be attributed to various institutional, structural, organizational, and human variables in K-12 and higher education systems. However, initiatives, laws, and practices designed to address these issues generally prefer a "silver bullet" solution that tackles just one or two aspects of the system. These methods often fail to be as successful as planned. Using and implementing systems thinking concepts is

a more effective way to deal with educational inequality as a system (Ainsworth, 2013). Systems thinking can help identify the underlying causes of ineffective, unjust, and unsatisfactory outcomes by examining the various components and their interactions. This approach can lead to the redesign of flawed systems to produce better results (Henderson, J. G., & Hawthorne, R. (2018).

Conceptual Distinctions of Theoretical Framework

As mentioned, the three theories that drive this study are CRT, CST, and SST. They each approach the presenting social problem from different theoretical evidenced-based perspectives. CST ultimately explains the importance of critically thinking about how social and societal systems affect the outcomes of social problems. SST is a society categorizing people into groups based on social, economic factors creating generalized structural inequality. These two theories regarding systemic, institutional, and structural societal issues correlate, and that's race. In American society, race is one of the biggest determining factors of minority status and that plagues societal issues. These theories never mention race as a component of their theoretical framework.

However, it is assumed through historical and statistical data and information that race is central to these theories. Like the implications of race in CST and SST, CRT explains itself as a fundamentally cross-disciplinary examination of how social conceptions of race and ethnicity shape laws, social and political movements, and media. CRT and its significance to race-related issues is the reasoning behind the theory being chosen to lead this study and why there is a distinct correlation between this theory and the other two theories mentioned above. Hence, the interests lie at the bottom of social

understanding of the status of sets of populations segmented according to ethnic affiliations. CRT, at the same time, the theory assumes that the interest of the minority tends to receive support from the majority only if their interests may converge at some point (Amiot et al., 2019). Therefore, while all three theories must be considered when addressing the issue of race, CRT becomes the dominant theory.

Moreover, CRT intersects with SST and CST through the assumptions linked to society and how they shape White Americans' societal and structural advantages over Black Americans. These theories, placed in their objective context, suggest that most social structures in the United States. Specifically, social and economic structures in the United States elevate White Americans and pay less attention to the negative impact its structures have on Black Americans. By providing Whites with specific privileges, all other races are cut from resources that might help them improve, suggest, or even implement concepts that do not favor the whites hence the low education, health, and employment standards among blacks (Hawkins et al., 2018). Moreover, this study considers several facets of the conceptual framework on the three theories used. With this understanding, it becomes challenging to validate other philosophies that fail to appraise the validity of White privilege and the oppression and discrimination of Black people. In summation, the theoretical framework underpinning this study based on historical data and existing research allows researchers to objectively conceptualize how the current social problem is a symptom of a widespread issue of race and racism in American society.

Race Implications in K-12 Education Human Services

What are the general race implications in addressing human services?

There are several differences regarding dispensing human services to varying racial and ethnic groups in America. Human service workers are dedicated to minimizing problems in the community. For example, racial minorities receive lower-quality healthcare than Whites (Ndugga & Artiga, 2021). Moreover, poorer health outcomes lead to distractions at school and affect how low-income students perform. Additionally, they have restricted access to preventive health services due to systemic racism in institutions and are supported by past policies. Similarly, the education system is subject to systemic racism, as evidenced by exclusionary measures such as expulsions contributing to lower graduation rates. Furthermore, research indicates worse health outcomes for heart mortality diseases for Black Americans, as the gap between them and Whites has steadily increased over the years (Ndugga & Artiga, 2021). Lastly, human service workers can address disparities in Black communities and schools by acknowledging systematic racial policies within current institutions and changing them through advocacy.

What are the race implications in addressing human services in K-12 education, specifically urban education?

Many educational institutions operate within racial inequities when catering to urban K-12 students, which has implications for human services. A school-to-prison pipeline trend is evident, especially as a punishment tool for children of colour (Clark, 2022). Black students are funnelled into the criminal system through exclusionary discipline measures that their White counterparts do not face. Minority students in urban

areas are subject to poorer learning conditions and a tenth of the spending budget spent by wealthy schools in surrounding suburban areas. Schools in urban districts with a concentration of low-income students often have fewer instructional materials, leading to poorer educational outcomes (Clark, 2022). Addressing this resource disparity will help bridge the gap between urban and suburban institutions.

How does systemic racism affect educational achievement, the role of human services workers, and the services they render inside schools? Specifically urban schools.

Unequal opportunities in urban institutions of higher learning often emanate from systemic racism within the education sector. There are gaps in standardized test scores between White and non-Asian minority students, which wrongly allude to culture or a lack of will. However, the lack of equal resources, especially for students in urban areas, is the cause of poorer educational outcomes for minority students (Nittle, 2021). The author also suggests that human services workers support marginalized learners emotionally to mitigate systemic racism. They do this by addressing the trauma, giving children the required attention to resolve some of their internal and external issues, and creating and executing plans and making referrals to ascertain their safety and overall wellbeing. Advocates must champion equal opportunities for all children of colour to improve their educational outcomes compared to students in affluent suburban schools (Nittle, 2021).

Implication for Human Services

The manifestations of structural and institutional racism are of paramount significance to the human services field. Human services professionals are aware of the

pervasiveness of racism in the United States, but also that racism is often ignored within the context of their work (Le Grand, 2018). To reconcile the cognitive dissonance of a society that preaches human rights, protestant ethics, equality, liberty, democracy, and justice while still practicing racial discrimination and oppression, such as racial profiling, racial microaggressions, and race-based societal structures that impact Black people, human service professionals in the United States may look to race and its significance in society, including in schools (Le Grand, 2018).

To effectively combat racism in the twenty-first century, human service workers must have a nuanced comprehension of White privilege, internalized racism, and structural racism to have a critical appreciation for the lived realities of Black youth and the pivotal role racism plays in the emergence of their academic difficulties (Le Grand, 2018). Insights gained from this kind of study puts the human services field in a better position to hypothesize and create evidence-based interventions in policies and practices, which will improve resources allocated to urban schools, likely improving the educational strategies within. Human service workers who work in urban education work hard to lessen or eliminate educational achievement disparities between White and Black children and other minority youngsters, and having them placed inside schools is an effective practice that can be used to deepen the understanding of cultural dynamics. Human service professionals' adoption of the social work's person-in-environment approach allows them to use the multidimensional assessment framework to improve educational outcomes for Black adolescents at the micro, meso, and macro levels (Boddie

et al., 2019). The field has room to grow and make even greater strides toward creating fair learning settings for students of all races, including Black children and teenagers.

However, successful intervention depends on the profession's capacity to use frameworks that offer light on how contemporary systems of inequality have originated, adapted, and endured. As per Boddie et al. (2019), human service workers and professionals are in a prime position to collaborate with families, youth, policymakers, and educational practitioners to devise interventions due to their history of advocacy, especially in urban environments, and the fundamental value of putting significance on human connections. Through their professional training and experience, human service workers can improve their sensitivity and competency while dealing with Black adolescents and their families by valuing human relationships and researching.

The human services profession also has a strong track record of improving Black children's health. However, its record in improving Black children's academic success is less clear (Boddie et al., 2019). Research investigating the impact of urban minority youth's curriculum content and instructional practices on their academic results is unexplored in human services literature. The authors have shown a correlation between the racial animosity Black adolescents confront in schools and the greater community and the health problems these young people have, problems that human services may try to remedy. Human services can help better education by reducing health and educational disparities among Blacks, including high mortality rates with heart disease and other health concerns that rank higher in the Black community and lower graduation rates emanating from exclusionary measures (Zajacova & Lawrence, 2018). Furthermore,

research suggests that if anti-discrimination legislation is to be effective in eliminating racial prejudice and stereotypes, it should be accompanied by treatments that target the cognitive, social, and cultural dimensions of encounters. This approach creates cultural advancement and understanding of many underrepresented minorities, providing emotional depth to minority communities' plights and logic in addressing them (Boddie et al., 2019).

While it may be too late to intervene in many adults' social contacts to change their thinking or relationship and cultural orientations, today's youngsters provide the best chance to break the cycle. Interventions in human services that address racism at all levels—cognitive, relational, and cultural in the school system —are more likely to be successful because of the holistic approach that delves deeper into people's motivations (Zajacova & Lawrence, 2018). Given that most young people in the United States spend their formative years in school, human service workers implementing effective interventions in schools could be an essential first step in mitigating the negative effects of racism, oppression, and discrimination on Black youth in the country.

Human Services in Urban and Suburban K-12 Settings

What is the current human services infrastructure supporting schools?

Human services workers are meant to mitigate community problems and improve the quality of life within common institutions. The current infrastructure within schools offers a coordinated system of services wherein students can access helpful resources. Safety net programs such as unemployment insurance and child tax credits prevent poverty for millions and aid them in accessing educational opportunities for their

children. Providing social work and/or human services is ubiquitous in most institutions. Addressing problems within school systems and improving students' socioemotional, behavioural, and environmental conditions is essential. The current infrastructure regarding human services offered in education requires funding and resources to improve education, training, service delivery, and evidence-based practices (Janssen Teixeira et al. 2017).

What human services are offered in school settings?

Some school human services focus on child protection against violence, abuse, or vulnerability to threats around them. Social workers offer mental and psychosocial help to prevent stigma and discrimination (Cox et al., 2022). Additionally, they conduct drug assessments to mitigate substance abuse, a barrier to academic learning and excellence. Human services providers also conduct crisis management services and assess safety measures. Furthermore, they create and develop treatment plans encouraging student self-determination and emotional well-being. They may also conduct home visits and develop workshops to train school support staff or parents about the dangers affecting young learners (Cox et al., 2022).

How do those human services vary and differ in urban and suburban schools?

Issues in suburban school's pale compared to urban schools, which suffer from various inequalities and disparities. Services vary between the two because of the increased population density in urban environments, which accounts for roughly 50% of the population (Mitchell, 2021). As a result, there are higher crime rates due to more marginalized communities. Additionally, more low-income students are in urban cities,

leading to a disparity in socioeconomic status. In turn, they lack access to quality healthcare services or mental help, whereas suburban schools have more resources due to a higher influx of wealthy students (Mitchell, 2021). The author also implies that human services offered in suburban areas are more effective due to the available resources.

Who are human service workers, and what is the role of a human service worker specifically in the field of k-12 education?

Human service workers help students do this by providing the necessary support within school systems and communities to facilitate programs and services that promote the highest quality of life possible specifically for those experiencing hardships and/or who are a part of disadvantaged communities. K-12 defines students from the kindergarten level to the 12th grade. Human service workers endeavour to create policies that mitigate violence to this demographic and create education programs that benefit their health, safety, and wellbeing. Schools create positive learning environments by integrating human service workers into holistic programs that address mental health and psychosocial issues, thus improving learners' quality of life. Ultimately, they can also refer students to external agencies for assistance or engage with families to determine the underlying issue motivating systemic disparities (Torres-Pagán, L., & Terepka, A. 2020).

How does the human service role address needs in urban education, and what specific human services are needed in urban education that professionals working in the field of education can assist with?

Green (2018) articulates that urban education is characterized by inequities caused by overpopulation and a lack of access to quality social services. The role of human

service workers in such areas is strategizing for change in unfair education policies, advocating for marginalized students, and identifying systemic reasons for underperforming institutions. Higgins (2017) speaks to human service workers improving the quality of life afforded to poor and low-income students by improving the quality of life. Further, Hines et al. (2020) refer explicitly to human services in urban education needing to include creating programs to improve academic success amongst K-12 students. The publication indicates that human service workers connect teachers and families using afterschool programs and community services. These efforts improve family engagement and school performance in the urban institutions in the area.

How do human service workers, teachers, and administrators (principals) work together to address the human service needs of students?

Human service providers collaborate with teachers in the classroom by sharing resources to influence student success. Specifically, teachers can ask human service workers to attend ongoing classes under the social worker–teacher classroom collaboration (SWTCC) model. They then address behavioural, academic, and attendance issues with learners by intervening early to mitigate educational crises. Furthermore, teachers, service workers, and administrators can share the financial details of low-income students to determine how to allocate relief resources ("The Importance of Interdisciplinary," 2022). Additionally, these three parties communicate on language or cultural barriers that may impact the disbursement of healthcare services to students and thus improve overall educational quality.

How do human service workers and other education professionals such as teachers and principals together/collectively address the disparities in urban schools and communities where k-12 schools are located?

Diamond and Freudenberg (2016) state that education professionals work with human service providers to address disparities in urban school environments. The authors also discuss in their article how both education professionals and human service providers collaboratively advocate for strong educational policies that address the educational needs of Black and other minority group students. These policies include offering financial relief to low-income students and creating after-school programs that connect teachers and parents, creating a stronger support community for the children. Moreover, these professionals develop groups, workshops, and forums to understand better the challenges Black youth in urban settings experience. Such advocacy promotes social justice through the equitable distribution of education resources (Diamond & Freudenberg, 2016).

Human Service Provision Gaps Between Urban and Suburban Schools on K-12 Student Success

What is the gap in research as it relates to this issue and social problem, why does this gap exist, and why is it believed to be a gap here?

The gap in research regarding human services provision between urban and suburban institutions rests in misunderstanding the challenges both settings create. Suburban schools are freer, whereas urban institutions are congested, and their processes are hurried. Researching the problems facing youth in urban schools is difficult because

they are pressed by other concerns, such as increasing crime rates. K-12 students in suburban students are accorded more time and attention by their teachers and better resources (Miller et al., 2019). They are at an educational advantage compared to low-income urban students suffering from socioeconomic disparities and fewer resources. The gap primarily exists due to over-congestion in cities and systemic racial policies that undermine the efforts of minority students.

The gap in research explained as it relates to the social problem and viewing the perspectives of teachers, administrators, and human service workers in k-12 education, and explain why you think the gap exists according to research.

There is an insufficient dedication to understanding urban learners' challenges, which indicates the discriminatory laws governing such institutions. Improving the academic success of Black children is a communal responsibility for teachers, service workers, and administrators (Miller et al., 2019). According to the research, the gap in k-12 education results occurs due to racially-motivated policies that continue segregating urban students. Moreover, problematic policies particularly funnel Black male students toward incarceration compared to their White counterparts.

Conceptual Framework

Providing a clear definition of "urban" and "suburban" that can be applied generally is difficult (Pfledderer et al., 2021). Originally, a suburb was a suburban area far from a major metropolis. From an economic perspective, agricultural activities play a central role in rural areas, although sociologists may see rural areas as less advanced regarding technical and cultural development. These days, demographics, the size and

distribution of the population's income, geographic factors, and indicators of people's engagement with life's most fundamental activities are only a few of the indicators used to dissect rural and urban issues. Thus, Pfledderer et al. (2021) concluded that suburban regions are often less densely populated, home to lower-income residents, and serve a different function than urban areas, with agricultural land dominating the landscape and defining many residents' daily lives and careers.

As highlighted by Cruz et al. (2020), being a society founded on the principle of "liberty and justice for all", it should come as no surprise that most Americans are the products of a national education system. While the education system serves as a framework to educate the populace, many institutions cannot close the existing financing gap. Spending per pupil in school districts is used to calculate the funding gap. Many minority pupils from low-income families are taught by inexperienced instructors and given a curriculum that is not comparable to that of their peers due to the financial imbalance. The investigation conducted by Cruz et al. (2020) found that between 2002 and 2011, the ten poorest schools spent, on average, 30% less on education for each student than the ten wealthiest schools did.

These issues have their roots in the systematic underfunding of urban school systems and the pupils that attend them (Cruz et al., 2020). The federal government often needs to make up for the insufficiency of state financing. The purpose of federal financing was to enhance state funding, not replace it. The number of large cities in a state is a good predictor of its financial shortfall. Funding decisions are made at the state level, and the federal government provides less than 10% of the total in most districts.

Due to the budget deficit, schools have serious complaints. For example, California suburban school districts tend to have less money than their metropolitan counterparts. The disparities are not as severe as in neighboring states like Oregon, Nevada, and Arizona, yet they persist (Cruz et al., 2020). The disparities in funding between suburban and urban schools are minor, as evidenced by California's Local Control Funding Formula. Schools often lack the resources to provide students with an educational setting that is on par with those in other countries. Teachers can create stimulating classrooms and provide challenging lessons but cannot mass-produce school materials on par with other institutions. The literature mentioned above, and other present research suggests that educational policy legislation and financing may create a challenging academic climate. Opportunities in education are restricted by law and standardized testing. Students should not be discriminated against because of where they reside in terms of the educational opportunities they are given. Children may have the opportunity to reach their full potential when they are provided with the necessary resources and support to succeed (Lerner, R. M., et al., 2015). The realization of this potential is dependent on the availability of such opportunities.

According to Lafortune et al. (2018), growing disparities between the accomplishments of the Black and Hispanic populations of varying socioeconomic statuses and those of non-minorities are called the "Achievement Gap." The achievement gap is a tool educators use to illustrate disparities in student performance on standardized tests, high school graduation rates, and post-secondary education. The disparity may also

reveal differences between privileged and less privileged kids. Educators have taken note of the rising disparity and have implemented policies in schools to try to narrow it.

The above-mentioned study highlights the goal of the No Child Left Behind Act, which is to eliminate the disparity, with the federal government assuming responsibility for the academic success of students in all school districts. Originally intended to ensure academic success on a national scale, the rule has taken on a more onerous form, giving low-income school districts a financial edge. The federal government tends to provide more resources to schools that generate high-achieving students. Varied students have different difficulties or ease in grasping a new subject due to their learning styles. Because of standardized testing, teachers are more likely to focus on rote memorization than the practical application of lessons. Teachers are compelled to promote their kids to the following grade to avoid repercussions. Exploiting our kids as bargaining chips for sufficient financial support or other resources is wrong. Every school, regardless of its location, should have the same opportunities.

The achievement gap is seen by many teachers as the starting point for curriculum change (Lafortune et al., 2018). Many educators aim to increase the number of Black and Hispanic American students who drop out of school to reduce the achievement gap. Affluence and educational success seem to be linked with the achievement gap. By the age of three, children living in poverty had smaller vocabularies and weaker language abilities than children living in middle-income homes, according to a landmark study of language development conducted in 1995. Studies have also revealed that children from low-income families are likelier to drop out of school.

Lafortune et al. (2018) note that the education reform movement is based on closing the achievement gap. Identifying the problem is the simple part; fixing it is the tricky part. Educators have a responsibility to help their students succeed in the future by giving them the tools they need to tackle their challenges and seize the opportunities that lie ahead. Schools have a responsibility to help children become intellectually competent adults who can successfully participate in a global market by providing them with an education that equips them with the problem-solving skills and developmental techniques necessary. Using standardized tests to evaluate students and teachers fosters healthy competition across educational institutions but does nothing to improve student performance. Instead of generating children with intellectual capacity, America's educational system only promotes financial rivalry. In today's schools, the emphasis is likely on closing the achievement gap. In education, to complete these inequalities and provide a brighter educational future for all Americans, the federal and state governments should enact legislation to mitigate the effect of inequality. However, the change must bring about equitable district-level financing and good learning conditions for all students because there are still huge disparities within the educational system.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts

There are massive fundamental gaps in education that affects students of color. These gaps in education have created disparities in urban schools for particularly, Black pupils in many cities in the United States of America. Moreover, according to Scott-Elliston et al. (2022), disparities exist in several areas, such as educational attainment, graduation rates, and attrition.

Disparities in K-12 Education

Early schooling disparities (from kindergarten to 12th grade) have plagued the United States since the American Revolution. Before the Civil War, many Black children and adults were denied entry to schools and forbidden to learn or start their schools. After the Civil War, “Separate but Equal” regulations made it permissible to keep the public school system segregated along racial lines until the case of Brown V. Board (Scott-Elliston et al., 2022). Access to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) education is unequal for Black students in today’s society due to white flight and housing discrimination (Scott-Elliston et al., 2022). These problems perpetuate prejudice in selecting students because more funds go to schools with gifted and talented programs in activities like sports or music.

Nevertheless, a similar proportion of Black and White first-year college students choose STEM disciplines, even though the success of White students is 58%, and just 34% of Black students earn a STEM degree (Scott-Elliston et al., 2022). Inclusive education and increasing female participation in STEM fields are often addressed at the undergraduate level. Equal opportunity in STEM fields, however, requires an early start. According to Scott-Elliston et al. (2022), two Black authors who are women in science experienced these problems and have seen them affect their colleagues. This article emphasizes the disparities in K-12 STEM education and focuses on ways to help Black students succeed in school.

Many countries’ efforts to ensure that all citizens have equitable opportunities to pursue and complete a high-quality education have so far failed (Owens, 2017). As a

result, choice-based systems like charter schools and supplementary education programs within the same district have been more popular over the last several decades. It is debatable whether or not choice-based systems, which have been shown to improve students' achievements, should be the main vehicle for expanding all kids' opportunities to participate in a high-quality education (Lincove et al., 2018).

Whether or not choice-based systems have the potential to reduce educational disparities, they are increasingly being implemented, and their success depends on parents having sufficient information and resources to make educated decisions about the schools that are best for their children. Parents typically consult their social networks for advice on which schools to enroll their children in, with the features of the kids at a school indicating its quality. Certain groups of parents, those with more social capital and connections to other "in-the-know" parents, are more likely to use these strategies to find and enroll their children in schools where they are more likely to be among peers of a similar race and socioeconomic status. Overall, this policy has contributed to a "rich get richer" network effect and worsened racial and financial segregation in schools, making it more difficult for students from marginalized groups and lower-income backgrounds to access quality education (Tough, P. 2017).

This macro-level tendency contradicts the wishes many parents have voiced for integrated schools at the micro-level, showing a gulf between individual and collective social motivations that only further cloud the search for educational justice. In recent years, school rating sites and others like them have become more popular tools for parents to use in school research and choice (Corcoran et al., 2018). They may help

parents, especially those not as well-connected, find high-quality educational opportunities for their children.

Corcoran et al. (2018) showed that presenting Section 8 housing voucher holders' information about school quality gleaned from such platforms might encourage them to choose neighborhoods with better schools. While there is little doubt that wealthier families are more likely to use online reviews of schools as a factor in their relocation decisions, there is some evidence to suggest that this trend may be exacerbating racial and economic segregation. For one thing, it's easier to choose a school based on its "peer performance" because ratings on these sites mostly reflect the schools' test results and, by extension, the demographics of the students who attend them.

In this light, digging deeper into the data available on such sites is crucial for gauging whether or not they help alleviate, sustain, or exacerbate existing inequities. The problem of defining and conveying quality on such platforms is vital. However, there is a lot of disagreement on what "quality" means in this context and how it should be defined, measured, and improved. Some educators place a premium on kids' scores on standardized exams, which provide just a "snap picture" of their academic development and are substantially connected with students' race and family wealth (Knoester & Au, 2015). Others use relational, qualitative indicators such as social programs to characterize the school's "climate" or the general atmosphere.

Much research on racial and ethnic educational disparities highlights the differences between Black and Hispanic pupils in urban locations and White students in suburban areas (Logan & Burdick-Will, 2017). By focusing on rural locations and

regional variance, Logan and Burdick-Will (2017) broaden the scope of previous studies on school segregation and racial/ethnic inequalities.

Different schools have vastly varied racial/ethnic compositions, poverty concentrations, and average class performance, all of which are thought to have significant effects on the children that attend them. Spatial factors (such as the variances between many urban and suburban school districts) and the racial and ethnic composition of student bodies contribute to these variations (e.g., the disadvantages of schools attended by Blacks and Hispanics compared to Whites and Asians). Using data from 2010-2011, the authors explain the nature and scope of these variations among public elementary schools in the United States (Logan & Burdick-Will, 2017). In two ways, the author goes beyond existing research. From a systemic and holistic human service perspective, little is known and studied about the extent and nuances of segregation and educational disparities within urban areas.

Logan & Burdick-Will (2017) focused on rural institutions, demonstrating that they share many characteristics with their urban counterparts. Second, the authors examine racial and ethnic segregation among schools and differences in the schools attended by kids of various racial/ethnic origins inside urban and suburban systems. Significant disparities between the three regions are seen. The scope of this research spans the whole country. The authors recognized that national averages might hide regional differences, hence the need for independent statistical assessments for each distinct region and the urban and rural regions where each ethnic group is most heavily

represented. The localized studies mostly confirm the national-level findings, with some minor differences.

According to Logan and Burdick-Will (2017), white students are more likely to attend schools in more affluent settings like cities and suburbs, where they are often held up as a benchmark against minority groups like Black and Hispanic students. Due to their relatively tiny population, Native Americans are often excluded from examinations of urban educational institutions.

They represent a small percentage of pupils throughout the country (about 1%, as indicated below), and even in remote schools, they account for barely 3%. However, the study acknowledged that in rural America, these kids are severely separated from other populations; thus, they wind up at schools where the Native American population is far higher than the white population (40 per cent or more in specific locations). Over 60% of their peers are living in poverty, which is on par with poverty rates in inner-city schools, and their schools consistently have poor test score performance. This study's findings establish that educational inequality persists in rural schools (i.e., racial and ethnic segregation) and also that segregation is showcased in the composition of schools opted for by each group.

The authors broaden the focus of segregation research by systematically comparing urban and rural higher education institutions. The authors utilized the straightforward strategy of extending city limits to metro-plus zones, including nearby schools. Then, they contemplate how these institutions stack up against those in the closest major cities and nearby suburbs. Since huge disparities exist across rather than

within districts, we can ignore district borders and not worry about how to assess segregation within districts.

The most crucial conclusion, as per Logan and Burdick-Will (2017), is that despite their racial makeup being more comparable to urban schools, rural schools nonetheless experience many of the same challenges. While major urban schools tend to grab headlines, the authors believe that rural schools, which educate more than four million primary school students, should also be considered for policy changes. They share problems with poverty concentration and low academic achievement.

Smaller rural schools, coupled with the persistent problem of population loss in rural America, may make it harder to provide specialized subjects, and teacher recruitment might be more challenging in low-density regions, where the number of available jobs is limited. Rural places are less likely to have the charter school option that has been popular in some urban areas due to factors such as low population density, lengthy commute times, and competition for qualified teachers. It's possible that the challenges students face in urban, majority-minority schools are different from those they face in rural, majority-White schools. Consequently, the subject has to be asked even if it is unclear whether the same strategies generally recommended to promote urban schools would apply equally to rural ones (Logan & Burdick-Will, 2017). Because studies of rural public schools have often been conducted independently of those in large cities, many questions remain unanswered.

The racial and ethnic aspect of educational segregation and inequality drastically alters when rural schools are included. Numerous studies have shown that Black and

Hispanic students face discrimination both across the city-suburb split and inside either setting due to enrollment differences and other factors. When we consider life in rural America, two different perspectives come into play. The first is the widespread but underreported difficulties in urban and suburban Native American schooling that are inescapable in the rural setting. We've established that Native Americans make up a sizable proportion of students at schools that the typical member of this group attends and that questions about the diversity and effectiveness of education in so-called "Native American" schools are analogous to those raised in discussions about the public schooling of Black and Hispanic children (Logan & Burdick-Will, 2017).

The second effect of focusing on rural schools is that they are more likely to be majority White in many parts of the nation. While White students in rural regions have access to somewhat better and more diverse educational opportunities than their Black, Hispanic, and Native American counterparts, their schools are still mostly subpar. To further complicate the widely acknowledged White advantage, Whites Americans, like Native Americans, are overrepresented in rural regions. As per Logan and Burdick-Will (2017), more White elementary school pupils (2.91 million) live in rural areas than Black (1.96 million) or Hispanic (2.85 million) children live in urban areas. This fact indirectly emphasizes the need to include rural schools and the unique circumstances of Native American and White students in the ongoing discussion about addressing inequity in public education.

Academic Achievement

Black kids attend schools in areas with a record of academic failure (Owens, 2017). This pattern holds across various geographic settings in the United States, from big cities to small towns. Furthermore, Kozol (2018) stresses that although White kids make up a smaller percentage of the student body in predominately Black school districts, they too are segregated. This gap between White and Black academic success is emblematic of the structural hurdles racism has erected inside the American school system.

As a result of the low-tax policy that has been entrenched in areas with a mostly Black student body, the quality of education provided to these students has been systemically stifled by the devalued position of Blackness. These low-tax districts reflected the poor standards of Black education, with their uncertified instructors, out-of-date texts, inadequate curriculum, and antiquated equipment. Thus, Dorner et al. (2021) aptly enunciate that American education policy favors middle- and upper-class families over those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, particularly the Black community. This is where the issue of taxation without representation comes into play, which has been historically protested and banned in the United States. Under this so-called system, one section of the public is unjustly subjected to pay tax without any benefit in return, thereby foregoing their fundamental right (Bryant, 2015).

A similar type of injustice can be observed in the American education policy wherein the Black community in low-income areas pay tax but reaps educational inequity and poor-quality education in return. Low-income neighborhoods, notably Black

neighborhoods, are linked to underperforming school districts, while low student achievement is blamed on incompetent educators. Due to limited resources, this unlucky combination exacerbated poor academic achievement among Black students (Dorner et al., 2021).

According to Neidhöfer et al. (2018), school opportunity and achievement gaps persist. Given the same level of aptitude, students from various socioeconomic backgrounds enter higher education at different points in time, illustrating the inequality of educational chances (Neidhöfer et al., 2018). On the other hand, a robust correlation exists between a family's socioeconomic status (SES) and their children's educational results, reflecting the inequitable distribution of educational opportunities (Koricich et al., 2018). The strength of such connections varies and depends on the people and places in which they occur. As per the above-specified article, higher SES at home is correlated with higher scholastic performance among students in the United States.

A recent study found that public schools contribute little to increasing or decreasing socioeconomic disparities in students' access to and success in higher education (Neidhöfer et al., 2018). There are already significant discrepancies in children's academic performance when they first enter school (Koricich et al., 2018), and these disparities persist as the children go through the educational system. Unequal Childhood demonstrates that inequalities in a parental socioeconomic position significantly contribute to the widening performance gap that children experience as they mature (Koricich et al., 2018).

Parental participation, extracurricular scheduling, the use of reasoning language at home, and increased institutional interventions are all hallmarks of "concerted cultivation," a parenting style that is most popular among middle-class families. In contrast, parents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to support the natural growth model, which emphasizes less structured daily activities, greater use of directive language at home, greater reliance on institutions, and greater conflict in child-rearing practices at home and in the classroom (Vincent & Maxwell, 2015).

Given the critical importance of socioeconomic status to students' academic success, education programs have targeted low-income pupils to reduce the disparity in academic accomplishment. Since 2000, the No Child Left Behind Act has prioritized improving the state's lowest-performing schools and promoting equality for students from marginalized groups, such as those who are of a different race or ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, immigration status, disability status, or who are learning English as a second language (Koricich et al., 2018).

Higher state education standards and the enhancement of low-performing schools became a focal point of legislation under the Obama Administration with the Race to the Top initiative, which aimed to reduce educational inequality (Mitra 2018). Nonetheless, as was previously indicated, there is a lack of consensus in the research on whether or not national educational disparity related to the socioeconomic background has been decreasing over time (Koricich et al., 2018). The authors present a comprehensive summary of each research to provide light on its methodology, data collection, socioeconomic status measurement, and results.

Based on their analysis of the achievement gap between pupils in the top and lowest 10th percentiles of family income in the United States, Koricich et al. (2018) presented data from 19 national and international tests covering several cohorts from the early 1940s to 2001. It was discovered that there had been a 30–40% expansion of the income accomplishment gap over the last several decades. The author also looked at the difference in academic success between children of highly and lowly educated parents and found that this gap has not shrunk over the last half-century. Another research looked at the SES performance gap between 1995 and 2015, using data from 20 years of the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) for 13 school systems. To conduct their analysis, the researchers employed a cumulative estimate of SES based on parental education and household characteristics that were consistent across TIMSS waves. The researchers looked at whether or not the achievement gap in mathematics between pupils in the highest and lowest SES quartiles had changed over time and found that it had not. On the other hand, the SES achievement gap narrowed somewhat in science over this time.

Chmielewski (2019) used a variety of large-scale worldwide tests, such as FIMS, PISA, PIRLS, and 4 TIMSS, to examine the persistence of performance differences by socioeconomic status (SES) over the last half-century. The level of parental education is a categorical term used to gauge socioeconomic status in the United States statistics. There was a slight narrowing in the difference between student and parent educational attainment throughout this time.

Finally, Hanushek et al. (2020) used SES achievement gap changes from U.S. student cohorts born between 1954 and 2011 to analyze data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), and the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA). The first main component from a factor analysis of parental education and household possessions was used to create their SES index. The difference in academic performance between the wealthiest and poorest pupils was then determined. Based on these findings, the performance gap between students of different socioeconomic backgrounds has been relatively stable over the last fifty years. With these equivocal results at the national level, the necessity to study possible cross-state variances in the SES trend emerges. And since the Constitution of the United States makes education a state duty, public schooling in the United States differs greatly from one region to the next. Thus, this research expands the subject of whether or not the socioeconomic performance gap in the United States has altered over time to include all fifty states and the District of Columbia. The following section elaborates on how variations across states and jurisdictions may affect student success and educational disparity.

Graduation Rates

Children of diverse racial and ethnic origins continue to attend schools that perform differently because of the pervasiveness of school segregation. The effects of school demographics, geography, and administration on student achievement have been the subject of much research (Varier et al., 2017; Bai et al., 2020; Sebastian et al., 2017). The racial and ethnic makeup of the school, poverty, central city vs suburbia location,

and immigrant status are all interconnected in significant ways. Some studies have also looked at schools' size and grade structure as potential variables. Multilevel analyses, which account for the influence of children's features while assessing their environmental impact, are used in the most cutting-edge research.

Researchers can use even elementary school-level data with simpler designs. A metropolitan area's racial and socioeconomic makeup, closely correlated with educational attainment, is another critical consideration. Schools in disadvantaged urban areas are thought to be more likely to have insufficient resources and financing and less competent teaching staff than their suburban counterparts (Bai et al., 2020).

Dropouts

Many native English speakers from low-income families who do not necessarily attend urban schools end up dropping out of high school, even though much of the attention on the K-12 school dropout rate in the United States has been on urban "dropout factories" that serve large numbers of minority and immigrant students (Baker et al., 2019). Historic conflicts between preparing students for college and the workforce persist even as local rural economies in many of the United States and Canada confront the difficulties of economic globalization, declining populations and tax bases, increased transiency, and poverty. The growing emphasis placed on high-stakes tests of students' college and job preparedness as a condition of graduation from high school only inflames these conflicts.

Despite such challenges, few studies of rural schools, districts, and community settings have been sophisticated enough to account for the evident meaning of "location"

and the mere notion of “the rural.” Different types of rural towns, such as those focused on extracting resources, farming, providing housing for urban and suburban commuters, hosting tourists and recreationists, and serving as Native American reservations, have been shown to have various characteristics by academics (Baker et al., 2019). As per this study, place matters, and so does the fact that these communities are distinct. These ecologies are socially formed and constituted, including identity-bestowing processes for individuals and the institutions they engage in, such as schools.

Human Services Needed

A more level playing field regarding educational possibilities may aid in fostering sustainable, all-encompassing economic development and social harmony (Darling-Hammond, 2018). Regardless of their socioeconomic background at birth, individuals may benefit from effective education and skills programs that allow them to realize their full potential and reap the rewards of their hard work. But many kids and adults from low-income families struggle to keep up (Darling-Hammond, 2018). Large achievement disparities occur between children from different socioeconomic backgrounds in many schools, and these gaps often widen as kids enter adulthood. There is a lot of space for growth in all states to ensure everyone is successful in school.

Investment in early childhood education, as well as in community- and family-based assistance and programming for children from families with low levels of education and skills, has been highlighted as crucial to the long-term success of these populations. Low-achieving students from underprivileged families and low-performing schools need individualized interventions in the classroom. Learning for adults working

with these students should include classroom instruction and on-the-job coaching to maximize students' chances of gaining employment upon graduation. It is vital to break down barriers to education and experiment with new delivery approaches. The most helpless individuals in society need special assistance.

Summary and Conclusion

The CRT theoretical framework was used as the basis for this investigation. CRT was used to investigate the racial gap in student success between urban and suburban schools in grades K-12. It is the central premise of critical race theory (CRT), an intellectual and social movement as well as a loosely structured framework of legal analysis, that race is not a property of naturally distinct subgroups of humans but rather a socially manufactured (culturally produced) category that is used to oppress and exploit people of color. In urban areas, there remains a vast, fundamental gap between the quality of education that Black and White students receive. There are disparities in several ways, including educational attainment, completion rates, and dropout percentages.

As a nation, the United States has struggled with disparities in early education ever since its founding. Many Black children were not allowed to enroll in schools before the Civil War, and "Separate but Equal" laws subsequently made it legal to maintain racial segregation inside the public school system. This qualitative study examines the disparities in human services provision between urban and suburban schools and the effects of these disparities on K-12 student success. A more equitable distribution of educational opportunities might promote long-term, systemic economic growth and social peace. Education and skills programs that help people develop to their fullest potential

and enjoy the fruits of their labor may help anyone from any socioeconomic background. However, many children, students, and adults from low-income backgrounds struggle to stay up. In many classrooms, there is a large gap in academic achievement between students of various socioeconomic origins, which typically widens as students enter adulthood. All states have a long way to go before guaranteeing academic achievement for all students. The intersections of Separate but Equal with other social categories include racial or ethnic background, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, and socioeconomic standing.

To that end, there is a gap in studies that closely examine what variables, if any, cause human service demands in urban schools. This research fills that gap by investigating theoretical and/or practical methods for addressing urban school demand for human services. In Chapter 2, I presented background information, methods, theoretical and conceptual frameworks, findings, summary, and conclusion with careful consideration. In Chapter 3, I laid out the study's framework and justification, detailing my role and responsibilities. This chapter also covered the study's methodology, addressed any potential challenges to the study's credibility, and concluded with a summary, ensuring a comprehensive and thoughtful approach.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the disparities between urban and suburban schools in the provision of human services and how these disparities affect students' achievement in K-12 education. In the literature review, I highlighted the theoretical implications that lend credence to the need to study the possible gaps within urban and suburban schools concerning the provision of human services and their effect on students' accomplishments. I observed that today's urban schools have a diverse student body, varying not just in terms of racial and ethnic makeup but also in the percentages of students who identify with each of those groups. I noted that, in contrast to interpersonal racism and racial prejudice, which are still prevalent today, structural racism does not depend on individuals' actions, intentions, or beliefs. As a result, I employed a critical race theoretical framework in this exploratory research design to examine information that demonstrates the extent of the gap between urban and suburban educational opportunities.

In this section, I laid forth the specifics of the study's methodology. I provided an overview of the study's design process and the justification for using this particular methodology. Following this, I delved further into my role at each stage of the study's implementation. The procedures for selecting participants, equipping them with instruments, and collecting and analyzing data were then elaborated upon. Finally, the research study's possible ethical challenges are discussed. The steps taken to mitigate

them and any risks to the credibility and trustworthiness of the study methods and conclusions are analyzed in depth.

Research Questions

Exploring the human service offerings of public schools in urban and suburban areas is central to answering several research questions. The following are the questions that this research attempts to answer:

RQ1: Are the findings from this study support historical data indicating disparities in urban education connected to institutional/systemic racism?

RQ2: What human services approaches can address urban education disparities and how can they promote equity in K-12 education for predominantly Black schools?

Key Concepts

Racism, Diversity in Urban vs. Suburban schools and Educational Achievement Gaps

Racism is the practice of establishing or maintaining a social order based on a person's race using coercive institutions (Kohli et al., 2017). The history of American education is marked by racialization and racism. Institutionalized circumstances have been imposed on students of colour that are antithetical to their interests and dehumanize them (Kohli et al., 2017).

Even though the racial, cultural, and socioeconomic diversity of students in K-12 public schools in the United States has increased dramatically, there is still a large gap between the achievement of white and minority students (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2022). The sorts of schools, geographic areas, and neighborhoods all have a role in creating these partitions (urban, suburban, and rural). According to

GAO's study of Department of Education statistics for the 2020-21 school year, more than a third of children (about 18.5 million) attended a mainly same-race/ethnicity school, where 75% or more of the student body is of a single race/ethnicity. According to the GAO's Research, 14% of kids were enrolled in schools where 90% or more of the student body comprised members of a single race or ethnicity (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2022).

The American education system still has a significant educational achievement gap (Bainbridge & Lasley, 2002). Teachers have a significant impact on their students' learning. Still, educational practitioners and policymakers would also address social inequities resulting from demographic realities, implement teaching strategies that encourage widespread student participation, and use fair accountability measures when comparing districts (Bainbridge & Lasley, 2002).

Theoretical Underpinning of the Study

CRT is used as the theoretical framework for this study. Using CRT, researchers compared K-12 student performance in urban and suburban schools. It is the central premise of critical race theory (CRT), a philosophical and social movement as well as a conceptual paradigm of legal analysis, that race is not a natural distinction between distinct human populations but rather a socially created (culturally generated) term that is used to oppress and exploit people of colour (Dixson & Rousseau Anderson, 2017). Racism is an inherent part of the United States legal system, according to critical race theorists, who argue that it is used to create and sustain social, economic, and political inequalities between whites and non-whites, especially African Americans (Dixson &

Rousseau Anderson, 2017). While eliminating all racial and other unfair inequities may seem utopian, critical race theorists are dedicated to doing so by understanding the structural or institutional underpinnings of racism to achieve that goal (Juvonen et al., 2017).

The first annual Workshop on Critical Race Theory took place in 1989; however, the intellectual foundations of critical race theory (CRT) go back to the 1960s and 1970s (Ford & Airhihenbuwa, 2018). Before it, a critical legal studies (CLS) movement focused on how the law and legal institutions disproportionately benefited the wealthy and powerful (Dixson & Rousseau Anderson, 2017). Critical theorists of race agreed with CLS academics that political liberalism couldn't fix America's deep-seated injustices because of its narrow focus on racial racism in the law (Juvonen et al., 2017).

Research Design and Rationale: Approach to Research and Logic

Due to the need to conduct and interpret interviews with open-ended questions, I opted for a qualitative methodology using semi structured interviews (Dearnley, 2005). With the ontological premise that everyone's world experience is unique, I figured a collection of accounts would be the most accurate representation of the world. Evidence for a phenomenon may be found as repeatable patterns, which can be uncovered via a multi-perspective investigation (Cheung, 2007). According to the CRT voices of color ideology, it is essential to consider and consider all possible views (Cheung, 2007). Evidence of racism's influence on the availability and efficacy of social capital may be found in the shared experiences of several persons living in the same neighborhood.

Creswell said that qualitative case studies are a good fit for CRT because of its emphasis on telling tales about prejudice from the viewpoints of non-White individuals.

Social stratification is a social categorization that plays a role in an established hierarchy of privilege and disadvantage. Sociologists and historians agree that caste systems of some kind have always existed in human societies. Members of any community are placed on a hierarchy, whether ascending or descending, prominent or insignificant (Anthias, 2001). On the other hand, critical system theory helps identify the reasons for ineffective, unequal, and unsatisfying outcomes and rework the broken systems that generate them because it considers all the contributing factors and how they interact.

Research issues in qualitative studies may need much time spent in the field collecting data (Alam, 2005). Researchers spend a lot of time conducting interviews, visiting places, researching papers, and analyzing audiovisual materials after defining the population and sample size (Alam, 2005). According to Alam (2005), this kind of research is a method to conduct several studies with commonalities across various dimensions. I employed semi structured interviews to provide context for the findings. The semi structured interview method acquired information by asking questions within a particular topical context (Alam, 2005). The questions, however, are not arranged in any specific fashion. Semi structured research interviews are often qualitative. In research domains, including marketing, sociology, and survey methodology, they serve as exploratory tools. Additionally, they are often used in field research with several

interviewers since they provide everyone with the same theoretical framework while allowing for exploring diverse parts of the study issue.

I opted for a semi structured interview method from the qualitative methodological tradition because it allows me to probe a phenomenon in its natural habitat, where the demarcation lines between the phenomenon and its environment are murky and where we can gather evidence from various sources. Because they provide "the best of both worlds," semi structured interviews are being used. Semi structured interviews include components of both structured and unstructured interviews, gaining the benefits of both in the process (Newcomer et al., 2015; Brown & Danaher, 2017). The interviewer and the interviewee benefit from the capacity to plan out a thematic framework ahead of time since it keeps them focused on the conversation at hand and reduces the likelihood of interruptions (Newcomer et al., 2015). Because of their more open-ended nature, semi structured interviews bring more depth and richness than structured interviews, questionnaires, and surveys. It is possible to ask respondents to expound on or rephrase their replies. The design centered on eliciting participants' narratives of the situation to understand how differences in access to human services at urban and suburban schools affect K-12 student success. Using snowball sampling, this study recruited educators and human service workers with relevant experience from Detroit's public schools and public schools in Detroit's neighboring suburbs.

In the spirit of qualitative research, the analytical categories and tools for a semi structured interview are created in response to the needs of the data obtained (Flick et al., 2010). Analysis using the open-ended asking method can only be planned in part before

data collection; it is impossible to analyze and synthesize the information according to a list of subjects in advance (Flick et al., 2010). The aims, questions, and methodology of an inquiry, as well as the time, research equipment, and human resources, helps determine which analytical tools are used for semi structured interviews (Flick et al., 2010).

Role of the Researcher: Purpose of Examiner and Explanation

As the study's coordinator, I have to protect participants' anonymity during each stage of the semi structured interviews, as a vital component of the Delphi method for data collection (Clark & Vealé, 2018). No research assistant was available to help. I was in charge of finding volunteers and making all the necessary arrangements, including designing the questionnaires used to gather data for qualitative and thematic analysis. Additionally, I conducted data coding, assessment of questionnaire responses, statistical analysis, and interpretation. According to Thangaratinam and Redman (2005), researchers should be aware of how their own biases, values, personal history, gender, culture, and socioeconomic level influence the interpretations they draw from their research. Members of the group were given access to details about my background and past. Through member checking by the group, respondents should be able to revise their responses, reducing response bias; through the anonymity of participants, it was possible to display the voices of individuals collectively for individual and group review of responses; and through member checking by the group, respondents can check to revise their answers, reducing response bias through the achievement of narrative responses that are not influenced by the thoughts and opinions of other participants.

The study was designed so that it is unanimous among participants. This was established by using a random selection of participants and through targeted sampling from the K-12 population in Detroit that is not personally known to me through snowball recruitment. Participation in the study was voluntary and no compensation was used as a means to influence or persuade the responses of participants in the study.

Methodology: Qualitative Strategy

Generic Design and Flexibility

This qualitative research study's adaptable, generic design permits an integrative analysis of human service provision and its impact on student achievement in urban and suburban schools. Through this design I opted to examine the disparities between urban and suburban schools' human service provision within a critical race theory (CRT) perspective. The impact of systemic and structural racism on educational results in the United States can be better understood and analyzed with the help of this approach. I also selected to gather data through semi structured interviews. This modality is open-ended, adaptable, and conducive to investigating various perspectives. Moreover, I used a snowball sampling approach to include the perspectives of many different people. Additionally, I also adopted a data collection method called the Delphi procedure, which involves conducting repeated questionnaires to get the necessary information. Essentially, I used this technique to spot and address inconsistencies in participant responses. The school staff members who participated in this study were chosen because of their experience teaching or working in the k-12 education field. Everyone who participated was expected to be a seasoned advisor to the school administration on student conduct

matters. Since they are directly instructing and servicing students, these education professionals are in the best position to assess their academic progress.

Selection and Participation Logic

Population

The population chosen to participate in this study are individuals from several different K-12 public education disciplines, such as principals, teachers, and human service workers in the metropolitan Detroit area who work in urban and suburban schools. The metropolitan Detroit area was used in this study because it is a region with significant disparities in educational outcomes between urban and suburban schools, making it an ideal location to explore the impact of institutional racism and resource allocation on student achievement. Additionally, Detroit has a majority Black population. At the same time, the suburban areas surrounding it are the majority or have diverse populations, providing a rich context for examining the connections between race, resources, and students' success.

According to Boddy (2016), the sample size in qualitative inquiry is not predetermined but rather is determined by the study's goals, stakes, outcomes, utility, credibility, and the research path that may be pursued within the available time and means. A small sample size with a minimum of twelve professionals working in K-12 public education in the aforementioned disciplines equally represented urban and suburban schools. It was selected for this study to have a significant sample size that is adequate to reach saturation. The education professionals participating in the study was chosen because of their experience teaching or working in relevant positions in the

education field. Everyone involved in the study is expected to be seasoned practitioners in multidimensions of K-12 education. Furthermore, the study included participants with a minimum of 5 years of experience in either urban or suburban public schools. Specifically, school social workers or counselors, principals, and teachers were recruited for this research. The sample consisted of no more than 3 stakeholders from two branches of K-12 education (middle and high school) representing both urban and suburban schools, resulting in 6 participants from each area (urban and suburban).

Since these professionals are directly involved in instructing students, providing human and social services to students, and overseeing and coordinating the daily operations of schools, they are best positioned to speak to students and assess human services and their effects on academic progress. In addition, the field of education is filled with professionals who work in different capacities, which could serve as its professional network that I can use for participant referral. Snowball sampling or chain referral, as described by (Fereshteh et at., 2017), is a purposeful method in qualitative research that can be used to perform a descriptive review of a study. Moreover, exponential non-discriminative snowball sampling was used as the first subject for recruitment to the sample that person provided multiple referrals. Each new referral offered more potential participants. This geometric chain sampling sequence continued until there was enough participants for this study. Lastly, this sampling method availed some generalisability in which the findings of this study may be applied to other settings, people, or situations (Hultsch et al., 2020).

Sampling Strategy

As defined by Suri (2011), purposeful sampling was used to choose the study's participants to ensure that only those who qualified as experts on the subject matter were included. A participant information form to profile partakers in the study was developed to identify purposeful sampling. This tool also collected demographics and experience in the field. This sampling method is justified because it aligns with the assumptions of the Delphi procedure, which proposes recruiting a subset of participants from whom I elicited answers to the study issues (Thangaratinam & Redman, 2005). In my research, which employed the Delphi method, the optimal sample size was determined to range from 5 to 20 people. This range was based on the complexity of the questions being asked and the desired level of consensus to be reached, as suggested by Thangaratinam & Redman (2005). This population was chosen because of their seniority in K-12 education.

Criterion for Participant Selection

Prospective participants were required to meet the criteria of being highly educated, credentialed educators working in the K-12 education system, with experiences in dealing with academics, student discipline, student social-emotional wellbeing, human services, etc. To guarantee that the participants in this study meet the criteria for highly educated and credentialed educators and school personnel, the selection process required participants who were teachers or administrations to hold a minimum of a master's degree, teacher certification, and/or administrative certification. Additionally, school counselors and/or social workers had possessed a counseling or social work license

and/or school certification, coupled with a minimum of 5 years of experience in the educational field.

When students are enrolled in high school, these education profession professionals are often the first responders in dealing with matters of student education and all that it may encompass and what impacts it. The 12 individuals who participated in the study were carefully selected because of their expertise in the areas under investigation related to the research questions and presenting social problems.

How Participants Meet Criterion

When any participant agrees to participate in the study, their self-reported level of competence and verbal resume is taken at face value because there is no other way to verify that the participants satisfied the criteria.

Sample Size Justification

There are no established standards for determining adequate sample size for qualitative Research (Marshall et al., 2013). However, as already mentioned, to get enough information, a sample size of 12 people was used for this study. The subject of the research and the proposed number of viewpoints to reach saturation led to the chosen sample size that is thought to be sufficiently large to collect the necessary narrative data. When I used the Delphi data-gathering method, my estimation of the number of participants to utilize and the number of iterations necessary to reach an agreement was informed by the breadth of the issue and my available resources, as suggested by Thangaratinam & Redman (2005).

Procedures for Identifying Participants

K-12 A education professionals were invited to participate in this study by email, social media, and word of mouth. These invitation methods included details about the research, the requirements for taking part in the study, and how to contact me if they are interested in participating. I used the snowball method of finding, contacting, and recruiting k-12 education professionals consisting of teachers, principals, school social workers/human service professionals, and counselors from urban and suburban schools. With snowball sampling, key participants were asked to recruit other professionals in the schools serving other disciplines. This showcases a breadth of knowledge and information, bringing multiple human service perspectives together from a variety of disciplines representing a whole school approach to studying the current social problem in both area and suburban areas, which produced rich data.

Instrumentation

As a data collection technique, semi structured interviews involve posing questions based on thematic topics without rigid structure or phrasing and are frequently employed in qualitative research (Roulston, 2018). Utilized across various domains such as marketing, sociology, and survey methods, these interviews act as exploratory instruments, allowing multiple interviewers to conduct field research under the same theoretical framework while exploring diverse aspects of the research subject, thus enabling a broad range of responses to the interview questions.

When doing research, asking questions in a specific sequence might be helpful to compare results from different respondents. Less rigidity may help in identifying trends while still enabling comparisons between respondents.

Maintaining order and creating a method for keeping track of participant replies are as crucial in unstructured conversations as they are in structured interviews. Nonetheless, the data gathering and analysis become somewhat more complicated due to the lack of rigidity in the questions compared to a structured interview.

I had some prepared questions and used semi structured interviews to explore the differences in human services within K-12 urban and suburban schools and their influence on student success from the perspectives of professionals working in education. Considering race as a construct and acknowledging that social and economic status has not been sufficiently addressed in relation to Black student achievement in K-12 education, the tenets of Critical Race Theory (CRT), social stratification, and critical systems theory serve as essential components in the literature to address this issue (Ladson-Billings, 2018). The development of the interview questions was informed by a Delphi study and an in-depth literature analysis, which helped identify crucial concepts requiring exploration and the most effective data collection methods.

Historical Research (Deductive Reasoning)

Inductive Reasoning

Inductive reasoning begins with observations and progresses to a general conclusion, whereas deductive reasoning goes from general to specific. In historical research, inductive reasoning has been employed to infer conclusions from information

discovered in the sources. I utilized theories based on the information in the sources available and then tested these theories against the data. This study employed inductive reasoning to derive conclusions concerning differences in the provision of human services between urban and suburban schools and its influences on students' progress in K-12 schooling. This project contributed to our understanding of how systemic racism may affect educational achievement and the role of human services plays in resolving this issue through semi structured interviews with K-12 education professionals comprised of teachers, principals, and human service employees.

Deductive Reasoning

On the other hand, deductive reasoning is a type of reasoning in which a researcher can progress from general to specific. This type of reasoning is frequently employed in historical research to test and enhance beliefs through evidence analysis. Deductive reasoning was utilized in this study to assess the validity of existing theories and hypotheses addressing discrepancies in the provision of human services between urban and suburban schools and their impact on students' progress in K-12 schooling. The history of education in the United States is tainted by systemic racism and segregation, with Black and Brown pupils frequently obtaining inferior educational options than White kids. The Supreme Court decision in Brown v. Board of Education 1954 signaled a significant shift in the public education system, setting a legal precedent for school desegregation. Researchers have discovered that educational opportunity disparities between urban and suburban schools persist despite this progress. For example, recent research by the United States Government Accountability Office (2022)

discovered that over one-third of children attend a school where 75% or more of the student population is of a single race/ethnicity.

Latent Approach

Employing the latent approach as a research strategy, researchers utilize inductive and deductive reasoning to reveal hidden patterns and relationships within data that may not be readily apparent (Braun, Clarke, & Gray, 2018). This approach allows researchers to analyze data for evident patterns, themes, and relationships in their study and provide interpretations of their findings. In this study, the latent technique was be used to examine patterns and associations between human service provision and student achievement in urban and suburban schools, thereby illuminating potential educational disparities between these areas.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a theoretical framework for investigating how racism, diversity, and educational success differences affect the quality of human services accessible in urban and suburban schools. It contends that racism is a structural and persistent feature of American culture sustained by laws, regulations, and behaviors. The study tries to comprehend the effects of racism on the delivery of human services in urban and suburban schools and the consequences for student accomplishment.

Typically, these strategies generate inferences from a set of data or observations. This study uses inductive reasoning to draw broad inferences from interviews and other data collected about the inequalities in human service provision between urban and suburban schools and its influences on student achievement. Based on the overall conclusion reached through inductive reasoning, deductive reasoning was used to draw

specific conclusions. However, the latent approach was utilized to discover the underlying causes of the conclusions reached in this study. The conclusions of this study came from the collection of qualitative data using interviews that recorded the perspectives of professionals working in the education field coupled with historical data. With this data, latent reasoning was used to examine theoretical sources and influences of the inequalities in human service provision between urban and suburban schools and their effects on student performance.

Procedures for Recruitment and Participation

Various measures were used to recruit professionals from urban and suburban schools in the metro Detroit area. Social media platforms like LinkedIn and Facebook were used to solicit qualified candidates. It is believed that inquiries from potential participants was result in gathering more data (i.e., demographics, email address, telephone number). As the researcher, I contacted participants through email to review the qualifying requirements from eligible persons. When the criterion was met, I asked for permission to proceed. After approval, I emailed a link to use Survey Monkey for data collection, analysis, and quality assurance checks. This process was done after IRB has approved the study and is posted on the Walden University participant pool site to help recruit those who satisfied the criterion.

K-12 professionals who satisfy the participation criteria and meet the study requirements were selected to be the subjects of the data collection. The data for each interview used for research purposes is estimated to take around 60 days to acquire. The results were processed after all interviewee documentation is received, coded, and

analyzed. The committee and the IRB also oversaw the administration of the questionnaire. Three iterations of administering the questionnaire was explored to maximize the chances of consensus. All information is expected to be captured digitally and evaluated for simplicity. The average time needed to finish the interviewees is estimated to take 20-30 minutes.

Follow-Up Plan

This study required a minimum of 12 participants. Initially, the desired number of participants was not met within the first month. However, recruitment efforts persisted, and after approximately two and a half months, the minimum participation goal and saturation were achieved for study requirements. The entire process was projected to take around 90 days, and it indeed took nearly this full duration to complete.

Exit of Participants

All interviews were conducted via Zoom and participants were expected to leave the session once their interview was completed. Additionally, I ensured that there were clear options available for participants to exit the study at any point during the interview, should they choose to withdraw for any reason.

Data Analysis Plan

Thematic Analysis

In numerous qualitative studies, the thematic analysis serves as an initial step for deriving meaning from a dataset, presenting a transparent representation of the data's emerging themes and patterns (Rogers, 2018). A widely used six-step procedure enables researchers to extract and report themes from qualitative data (Shaffer & Ruis, 2021).

The credibility of qualitative research is heavily reliant on data analysis, with the researcher often considered as the research instrument, given their capacity to comprehend, elucidate, and interpret experiences and perceptions to discover meaning in specific situations and settings. This article applies a systematic approach to the learning and teaching research setting, characterizing and explaining the analysis process.

A thematic analysis aims to draw attention to or make a statement about a problem by highlighting overarching themes or significant recurring patterns in the data. A strong thematic analysis does more than summarize the data; it also interprets and clarifies it. Making the mistake of focusing solely on answers to the most important interview questions during qualitative data analysis can be detrimental, as it can lead to an unmethodical approach. According to Rogers (2018), a systematic approach to data analysis is vital to ensure proper examination of the data. This approach should include summarization and organization to make sense of the data, followed by a more in-depth analysis to uncover underlying concepts, assumptions, and ideologies. This deeper analysis, known as latent-level analysis, aims to reveal hidden meanings and themes within the data. Moreover, taking a provocative angle when interpreting the data can help defy expectations and uncover new insights.

Semantic and hidden themes are distinguished in the analysis process (Shaffer & Ruis, 2021). Semantic themes are found within explicit or surface interpretations of the data, and the analyst does not seek to see anything beyond what a participant has said or written. This semantic analysis is typical of much research and development in education. An analysis is not merely a recitation of facts; it strives to provide context and meaning to

the information presented. On the other hand, the latent-level analysis goes beyond the spoken content. It begins to explore the underlying concepts, assumptions, and ideologies that are thought to shape the semantic content of the data.

Step 1: Familiarization

Reading the transcripts several times is the first step in any qualitative analysis. Before moving further, I ensured I had a firm grasp of the complete data corpus. A researcher must be present and engaged with the data throughout transcription, reading (and rereading), and listening to the recordings (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In other words, I jotted down my first ideas in good practice. Also, as a researcher, I positioned myself to have a thorough knowledge of all aspects of the data and an in-depth understanding of the topic. During this step, essential conditions were established for the subsequent analysis.

Step 2: Generating Codes – Template Analysis and Codification Procedure

Template analysis, rather than referring to a single technique, includes several different approaches to classifying and evaluating text based on commonalities among its parts (King, 2004). Template analysis entails a researcher creating a code set (a "template") to represent recurring topics in their textual data (King, 2004). Some were able to be defined in advance, while others took shape as I read and analyses the materials. I established the relationships among the themes, and the template is then organized appropriately, usually hierarchical. Since template analysis is more of a toolkit than a single methodology, it may be used for data from a wide range of epistemologies (King, 2004). Quantitative and mainstream qualitative social science may both benefit from its use.

Defining Codes

Simplest of all, a code is just a label that a researcher puts on a piece of text to indicate that it refers to some aspect of the data that is significant to their interpretation of the whole (King, 2004). Someone reviewing a transcript of an interview with a workplace counselor could use codes to find specific references to clients or issues. As the code is primarily descriptive, it does not need much interpretation on the researcher's side to comprehend what the interviewee intends. For this research, codes were defined by the number of subsets that group participants' perceptions. I used codes to simplify interpretations and characterize the perceptions of participants into subsets of categories.

Hierarchical Coding

When using a template analysis, codes are organized hierarchically, with lower-order codes becoming the building blocks for more generalized, higher-order codes (King, 2004). Multiple lower-order codes, such as "unrealistic client expectations," "uncertainty regarding the availability of resources," and "confusion in interactions with external agencies," may be included in the same higher-order code, "effects of lack of job clarity" (King, 2004). Using hierarchical coding, the researcher may analyze texts at several levels of specificity. Low-level codes may draw nuanced distinctions inside and between instances, while high-level codes can provide an overarching picture of the interview's progression (King, 2004). Researchers may use as many levels of coding as they want, but this may impede their ability to make sense of the data they've collected.

Parallel Coding

Using a template analysis, it is possible to code text paragraphs in parallel, assigning the same paragraph to two (or more) codes at the same level (King, 2004). Using this coding system, I assigned codes to various paragraphs of texts from the interviews. It allows for a more basic and in-depth analysis of the codification process that ensures all perceptions of participants are addressed. Parallel coding is only likely to be a problem in studies that strongly lean toward the positivistic end of the qualitative research spectrum and when researchers desire to combine template analysis with elements of quantitative content analysis.

Creating the Initial Template

Template analysis often begins with at least a minimal set of guiding codes, as was previously mentioned (King, 2004). The first challenge a researcher confronts is deciding how thorough the first template should be. Start with a template that doesn't have too many pre-defined codes, and you could make too many assumptions. Researchers may become drowned in a sea of complex data if they aren't given enough codes to begin with. The interviewer's topic guide is a good place to start when developing the initial version of the template since it contains question types, probes, and prompts. The topic guide pulls from various sources, including academic literature, the researcher's experience, anecdotal and informal evidence, and exploratory study. The guide's primary questions may include higher-order codes, while supplementary questions and probes are more likely to contain lower-order codes. The approach works best when the interviewer has predetermined most topics to be covered and the topic guide is comprehensive and (in qualitative terms) well-organized. However, other

research projects need a more skeletal description of potential topics, with the understanding that most problems do emerge naturally during interviews. The initial template was created with highest- and lower-order codes, as shown below. The initial template several high-level codes subdivided into two, three, and four lower-level codes, depending on the depth of transcript analysis.

Initial Template (example)

1.0 K-12 Education influencers

1.1 Family

1.2 Gender

1.3 Social Class

1.2 Disparity between Urban and Suburban education

1.2.1. Achievement gap:

1.2.1.1 Influences on Perceptions of graduation rates

1.2.1.2 Test scores

1.2.1.3 Course Grades

1.2.1.4 Retention

There is a significant discrepancy in academic success between students in urban and suburban settings. As a researcher, I have observed disparities in graduation rates, standardized test scores, and overall academic performance (Murnane, 2018). These disparities are evident in urban schools with higher dropout and retention rates. Contributing factors to such disparities include lower quality of instruction, insufficient stimulating educational materials, and a lack of resources and support for students in

urban schools. The overrepresentation of students of color, low-income, and those with disabilities in urban schools' retention rates can be linked to systemic oppression. The disparity between urban and suburban schooling bears long-term consequences, as it may limit opportunities for students in urban schools, leading to persistent economic inequalities. Eliminating this inequality is crucial to ensure all children have access to a high-quality education.

1.3 Funding Disparity

Revising the Template

Following creating a preliminary template, I systematically went through the complete collection of transcripts, identifying relevant sections and assigning them the most suitable code(s) from the created template (King, 2004). The procedure revealed problems with the initial plan and lead to the need for fixes. These elements are the foundation around which the whole template was based.

The 'Final' Template

Knowing when to stop refining an analytical template is one of the most challenging decisions. While code definitions may continuously be improved, research projects always face external constraints that provide them with limited space to develop a "perfect" template. To what extent a specific template is regarded enough for a given project relies on details unique to both the task and the researcher in charge. However, no template can be considered "full" if uncoded text parts remain connected to the research subject. More importantly, it is quite unlikely that a template would be regarded as complete if all the data had not been reviewed twice and the code had not been audited

three times. You should have gone over the majority, if not all, of the content many times before you feel comfortable using the template. Whether or not to stop the template's development is simplified when two or more experts collaborate on a study. To determine whether or not the template is sufficiently clear and comprehensive, a lone researcher may seek advice from one or more outside professionals. I achieved the final template after addressing all relevant codes in the text and having it reviewed by a professional.

Step 3: Searching for Themes

In the third step, I investigated the assembled codes to figure out what they mean. Extracts of pertinent material are organized (grouped or separated) based on a common subject (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Codes, motifs, and super themes all work together; therefore, my methodology references this. A theme, as previously stated, is a pattern that represents an essential or fascinating aspect of the data and the study issue. Braun & Clarke (2006) point out no universally accepted theme definition exists. The relevance of a topic is what distinguishes it. Following this process, the codes were categorized into overarching themes that provided insight into the posed research topic. Manual document analysis can be performed to identify themes within the research, or thematic analysis software such as NVivo can facilitate the process (Bazeley & Jackson, 2021). This approach reveals themes from the text, which can then be used to address research questions.

Step 4: Reviewing Themes

Once I identified several potential themes, I conducted a more thorough examination to determine whether any topics should be integrated, modified, separated,

or abandoned altogether. When seen as a whole, the material included inside each topic made sense, and information that cuts between themes was straightforward and easy to locate. First, I examined the coded extracts to see whether they corroborate the patterns of systemic and structural racism that would have a negative impact on educational outcomes. Then I took a broader look at the data (phase 2). in this fashion, I made it possible to create a "map" of the thematic themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Step 5: Defining and Naming Themes

This phase analyses the data's overarching themes and identifies any underlying subthemes. Additional research is required to hone the emerging themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In addition to providing appropriate names, I also provided extensive working descriptions that adequately represent the topics' essential natures. At this point, the data themes should have merged into a logical narrative. Themes were be defined and named in the context of how the interview questions are answered and in line with the research questions under investigation.

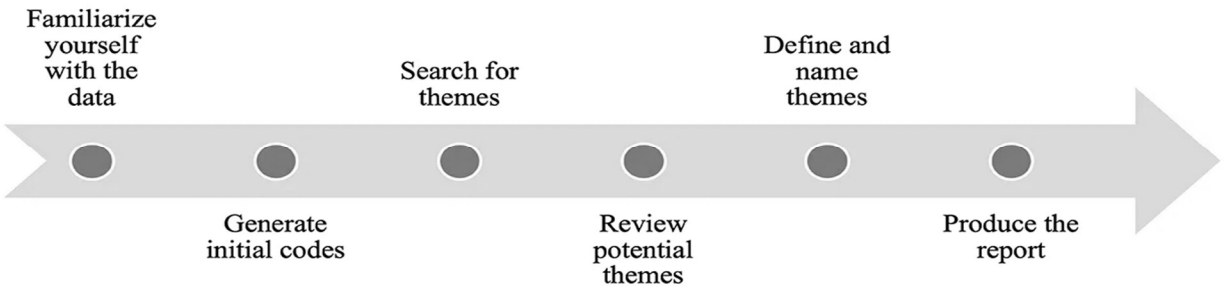
Step 6: Producing the Report

Lastly, I wrote a report that is accessible by using quotations that provide light on the study's overarching themes, the issue at hand, and the literature that was used (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Conclusions from the analysis need to be conveyed in a way that inspires trust in the reader. It has to do more than summarize the concepts; it needs to analyse the themes supported by facts that help answer the research question. The final report presents an account of the interpretation of the data in an academic paper. The report is not a separate stage but a continuation of the analysis that summarizes detailed

notes about the uncovered themes and their relationship with the research questions in a coherent story.

Figure 1

Six Steps of Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006)



Trustworthiness

Suppose qualitative researchers want their findings to be regarded seriously. In that case, they must demonstrate that they kept careful records, standardized their procedures, and published their analysis methods in credible detail for the reader to evaluate the validity of the process (Nowell et al., 2017). While there are many instances of qualitative research, researchers in the field lack access to sophisticated tools for conducting thorough and insightful thematic analysis. The generic design was performed using a method that was credible, transferable, dependable, and conformable; this greatly increased the reliability of the Research (Nowell et al., 2017). It is possible to verify the credibility of a study by placing its key researchers or readers in a comparable position. A crucial component in determining credibility is whether or not my depiction of respondents' views "fits" with their beliefs. My use of approaches, including substantial participation and several data sources and analyses, assured the study's integrity. The

extent to which an investigation may be utilized in other settings is called its transferability. In qualitative research, this only applies to generalizations made from one instance to another (Nowell et al., 2017).

I employed a methodical, auditable, well-documented process to ensure dependability (Nowell et al., 2017). Access to the study's methodology improves readers' capacity to assess the study's dependability. An audit of the study's methodology may show proof of the dependability of a research study. The purpose of showing confirmability is to back up the existing literature and claims with proof that they made valid inferences from the facts (Nowell et al., 2017). Confirmability is a combination of credibility, transferability, and dependability.

Validity and Reliability of the Study

In line with Jones and Donmoyer's (2021) definition of triangulation, a study's dependability and reliability are determined by the consistency and stability of the research process over time and across researchers and methods. As described by Shufutinsky (2020), validation in qualitative research involves efforts to ascertain the accuracy of the results; employing diverse methods ensures the effectiveness of the study. To ensure that the questions are administered consistently, I conducted a pre-test of subsequent instruments to confirm content validity. I did this by sending out a preliminary information form to all participants simultaneously and providing timely feedback to the group for each iteration to build consensus while keeping participants' identities concealed, which refers to the Delphi method. I also collected narrative responses from experienced faculty members thanks to the study's design.

I also employed research triangulation to establish credibility by using an iterative interview instrument to obtain narrative data from participants while preserving their anonymity, thus ensuring a level of comfort when answering. By utilizing open-ended questions to elicit responses from all participants and maintaining continuity and consistency throughout the research process, I aim to build credibility. I expect to maintain participants' trust by not making assumptions about them and allowing them to respond on their terms. Incipient data collected before conducting the interviews and all data gathered from interviewees were used to assess the impact of human service provision gaps between urban and suburban schools on K-12 student success.

As outlined by New Findings from the University of Florida (2021), data collection is an ongoing process, which includes eliciting open-ended responses through broad questions, organizing, and preparing the data for analysis, reading through all the data to get a sense of the information, and conducting detailed analysis through a coding process. According to the concept of "detailed description," the research study should be so in-depth that readers can evaluate the study outcomes. Within the scope of the study's limitations, transferability was established by self-certification of meeting participation criteria through preliminary information forms, semi structured interview questions, interviewers' anonymity, and answer analysis as a routine method for participants, posing the possibility of replication with variance reduced through consistent use of semi structured interview questions and a group of qualified experts in urban and suburban schools. Due to efforts to reduce threats to external validity, the findings of this study can be applied to the broader population at large.

As previously mentioned, triangulation was used to establish dependability via a preliminary information form that was used as an instrument to collect baseline data from participants, along with semi structured and open-ended interview questions and primary sources to allow for the examination of the study's validity by future researchers. In this analysis, I used an iterative questionnaire to collect data. Then a reflexive stance is employed to analyze and evaluate the data via coding, establishing confirmation through intra-coder reliability. I recorded my reflections on the study's execution and process in a written/digital log following each round of interviews. According to Dodgson (2019), reflexivity is characterized by a two-way process of constant modification (of the researcher and the study). As the research was developed and takes form in the final analysis, reflecting on the study's conduct via log helped preserve a sense of personal responsibility for the process. Since I'm expected to eliminate bias in my research, I had the participants examine the data for discrepancies after each interview was coded and decoded.

Ethical Considerations

Several ethical issues were considered while performing research on humans, and those ethical concerns required my full attention during the entire study. Working carefully with the regulations and guidelines supplied by Walden University's Institutional Review Board was the first step in establishing high levels of ethical conduct (IRB). IRB specialists helped evaluate each step of this study's protocol. Additionally, I was not expected to start working with participants in this Ph.D. study until the IRB was accepted and approved the application.

As the researcher, I eliminated potential ethical issues by obtaining participants' informed consent before conducting interviews. I intended to inform everyone engaged in the research of their legal protections. Most importantly, I informed participants that they may cease their involvement at any moment without fear of repercussion. Finally, the confidentiality of the study's participants was ensured by implementing several measures. Coded names were used to protect the interviewees' anonymity. A database, secured by a username and password, held all the data. The final results report did not include participant identities or location names; only broad geographic descriptors were provided.

The participants' dignity and autonomy were prioritized throughout the research process. I earned their confidence and respect by introducing myself to them through a personal letter to school administrators, a flyer, or online forums. After establishing a level of trust, I informed the study's participants and the broader community about the potential findings and implications of the research. To protect participants' privacy, I sent out questionnaires via email to those who volunteered for the research. This approach allowed me to keep participants anonymous and create an environment where they felt safe responding to questions without fear of repercussion.

Participants who agreed to participate in the study, answered questions in the preliminary information form, and were informed of their rights to withdraw at any time. Iterative interview responses were analyzed for commonalities to identify themes that could be used to explore the differences in the provision of human services between urban and suburban schools and their impact on students. The participants were informed that only the Dissertation Committee would see the raw data, with no personal identifying

information included. After the briefing, participants were given the contact information of the university conducting the study, allowing them to ask questions or express any concerns about the research. As the sole researcher in this study, I was the only one able to identify participants from their comments. To manage the data, an external hard disk, sufficiently large to store all study data, was used, ensuring a cost-effective and efficient process. Once the final questions in the semi structured interviews were answered, participants received either a thank you card or a letter, expressing my appreciation for their contribution to the study. If it had been necessary, had any participant chosen to withdraw from the study, the plan was to identify another relevant participant from either the same school where the initial participant worked or a different school. In such a case, a pertinent staff member from that school would have been sought out to complete the study. However, no participants withdrew, making this contingency plan unnecessary.

Summary

The purpose of this Qualitative study is to explore the disparities between urban and suburban schools regarding the provision of human services and how those disparities affect students' achievement in K-12 education. The study's theoretical frameworks are critical race theory (CRT), social stratification and Critical system theory. Thematic analysis is the method for analyzing my semi structured interviews since it allows for the most natural and organic interviews with participants. More importantly, this study seeks to contribute to the ongoing discourse and research surrounding the social problem by utilizing the theoretical frameworks of CRT, CST, and SST. It also systematically aims to identify essential themes from interviews using a well-

established methodology, which, in turn, endeavors to address the research questions outlined in this study. This research used semi structured interviews with open-ended questions to acquire its data. I began by categorizing the data before subjecting it to thematic analyses. Three analysis methods were used: codification, pattern matching, and cross-analysis. I also employed several techniques to maintain confidence in the results and comply with the IRB's stringent ethical criteria. Thematic analysis was used to analyze qualitative data, transcripts, and other collections of historical written material. I analyzed the data for concepts and patterns to find common themes. Although there are many ways to conduct thematic analysis, the standard procedure followed consisted of six stages: familiarizing with the material, coding it, generating themes, reviewing those themes, defining, and naming them, and producing a report. Analyzing qualitative data is ideal for answering the research questions because the generated themes was analyzed with each question while aligning them with the theoretical framework of Critical Race Theory, Social Stratification, and Critical System Theory.

Chapter 4: Study Results and Findings

Introduction

The findings from this project are explored in detail in this chapter. The research continues with the focus on unearthing the disparities that exist between urban and suburban schools as well as the human service needs within K-12 education. Thematic analysis, as outlined in Chapter 3, was used to distil nuanced perspectives and to provide an understanding of the multifaceted challenges and potential solutions for people of color.

While preparing to conduct my study, I set out to answer two main research questions. First, I aimed to discern if the findings from this study support historical data indicating disparities in urban education are connected to institutional/systemic racism (RQ1). Second, I sought to identify what human services approaches can address urban education disparities and how can they promote equity in K-12 education for predominantly Black schools (RQ2). The research was also carried out to unravel the dichotomy that currently exists between Black students who are residing in predominantly urban school areas and predominantly White students residing in suburban school areas. This qualitative study delved into understanding the specific human services that could be efficaciously integrated to promote equity within K-12 education. Lastly, in this study, I aimed to explore and understand the nature of the discrepancies observed in urban and suburban schools, particularly focusing on how racial dynamics influence academic achievement. The exploration was guided by an in-depth analysis of experiences, perceptions, and contextual factors within the educational settings.

The research utilized thematic analysis to help facilitate the in-depth exploration of discerning voices from several stakeholders in the education industry. These stakeholders include teachers from both suburban and urban schools, administrators, and various social service workers within these institutions. Extensive interviews with these stakeholders helped me illuminate the complexities that surrounded the human services needs of these schools. Thematic analysis was chosen because it served as the right analytical tool that could interpret the qualitative data gathered from the extensive interviews. It helped me uncover underlying patterns and critical themes needed to substantiate the disparities that currently exist (if any) between urban schools and suburban schools. The thematic analysis serves as a lens through which the research findings are elucidated. It presents a comprehensive narrative that aligns with the overarching goal of comprehending, evaluating, and proposing pragmatic approaches to bridge the prevalent gaps in the public educational landscape.

Settings

I conducted this research with a rather diverse cohort of relevant stakeholders. The 12 participants selected to participate in this study were equally chosen from urban and suburban school settings. This step was required to extract a comprehensive insight into the distinct educational landscape from both regions. Among those selected from the urban schools included teachers, counselors, school administrators, and principals who were key candidates. Furthermore, participants selected from the suburban school setting were also from a poll of personnel that hold key roles in the educational field. Those participants included social workers, administrators, and teachers.

Demographics

In terms of the demographics of those selected for the interview, the participants were from a broad spectrum of experienced personnel that helped to amplify the richness and depth of the data gathered. Interview candidates from the urban school settings brought a wealth of knowledge concerning the challenges and opportunities that are peculiar to Black student schools. The opportunities and challenges were primarily focused on gaining a deeper understanding of the everyday struggles, aspirations, and unfulfilled needs common in urban educational settings.

The candidates from suburban areas shared perspectives deeply influenced by their experiences in schools primarily attended by White students. Their insights shed light on the nuances of privilege and the effects of socioeconomic status on students. They also highlighted the significant disparities in the availability of educational resources between urban and suburban schools. The roles, experiences, and viewpoints of each participant interviewed provided a distinct perspective of the issues at hand. They helped expose the different but related realities that exist in suburban and urban learning environments. The combination of these perspectives offered a comprehensive overview of the complex issues and possible paths toward improvement in K–12 education.

The experiences and viewpoints of each participant provided a vital starting point for deriving comprehensive insights that went beyond the obvious differences between urban and suburban schools. The comprehensive demographic summary from this study provided valuable insights into the diverse cohort of stakeholders involved in the research study. By equally selecting 12 participants from urban and suburban school settings,

including teachers, counselors, administrators, and social workers, the demographics shed light on the varied perspectives and experiences that were considered in the thematic analysis. The demographic information can help the reader understand how thematic analysis was used to distill nuanced perspectives and provide a comprehensive illustration of the multifaceted challenges and potential solutions within the educational environment. Thematic analysis, as outlined in the study, allowed for the in-depth exploration of discerning voices from several stakeholders, and the demographic details highlighted the diverse range of perspectives that were incorporated into the analysis. Table 1 illustrates the demographics of the participants selected for this study.

Table 1

Demographic Information

Participant	Role	Years of Experience	School Level
1	Principal	27	High School
2	Teacher	19	High School
3	Counselor	7	High School
4	Principal	23	High School
5	Teacher	17	High School
6	Social Worker	32	High School
7	Administrator	9	Middle School
8	Teacher	11	Middle School
9	Counselor	11	Middle School
10	Administrator	16	Middle School
11	Teacher	18	Middle School
12	Social Worker	12	Middle School

Figure 2

Word Cloud from Thematic Analysis

Above, Figure 1 displays the terms in this word cloud from the thematic analysis of the qualitative data collected from interviews with stakeholders, including teachers, administrators, and social service workers from both urban and suburban schools. The word cloud reflects the prominent themes and concepts that emerged from the data, such as access, opportunity, urban equity, inequality, poverty, and community resources.

The significance of the word cloud lies in its ability to visually represent the key themes and concepts that were identified through the qualitative data analysis. Figure 1 serves as a concise and impactful visual summary of the study's findings, highlighting the central issues and disparities in educational resources, socioeconomic factors, teaching approaches, and cultural relevance. The word cloud provides a quick and accessible overview of the most salient topics, allowing readers to grasp the core themes of the study at a glance.

The word cloud is important to the study as it offers a snapshot of the major concerns and focal points that emerged from the interviews and thematic analysis. It helps to emphasize the critical areas of disparity and need within urban and suburban schools, reinforcing the significance of the study's findings and the implications for addressing systemic challenges and promoting equity in the public educational landscape.

Data Analysis

Coding

Table 2 provides a comprehensive overview of the thematic codes and key insights derived from interviews with educational stakeholders. The table includes the role of the participant, the thematic code assigned to their input, an explanation of the thematic code, and the key insights obtained from their perspectives. Principals from both urban and suburban settings shared insights on resource allocation disparities, with urban principals highlighting challenges in managing limited budgets and providing adequate support; meanwhile, suburban principals noted subtler inequalities and the need to maintain educational standards. Similarly, teachers emphasized the importance of culturally relevant teaching in urban environments and reflected on disparities in student engagement and resources between urban and suburban schools. Counselors focused on the diverse and complex needs of urban students, stressing the importance of tailored support services, while also addressing the unique challenges and expectations faced by students in suburban contexts. Table 2 offers valuable insights into the experiences and perspectives of educational leaders and professionals, shedding light on the nuanced dynamics within urban and suburban school settings

Table 2

Role-Based Insights Table

Role	Participant	Thematic Code	Thematic Code Explanation	Key Insights From Interviews
Principal	1 (Urban)	RADU	Resource Allocation Disparity – Urban	Discussed challenges in resource allocation in urban schools, highlighting struggles to provide adequate resources and support to students.
Principal	4 (Suburban)	PSE	Principal – Suburban Experience	Noted the subtler challenges and inequalities in suburban schools, including dealing with less visible socioeconomic issues while maintaining educational standards
Principal	7 (Urban)	RADU	Resource Allocation Disparity Urban	Highlighted the impact of underfunding on educational quality in urban schools, emphasizing difficulties in managing limited budgets.
Principal	10 (Suburban)	PSE	Principal – Suburban Experience	Observed differences in resource availability and challenges in providing equal opportunities, compared to urban schools.
Teacher	2 (Urban)	TACRU	Teaching Approach and Cultural Relevance – Urban	Emphasized the need for culturally relevant teaching in urban settings, adapting curriculum to be inclusive of a diverse student body.
Teacher	5 (Suburban)	TSE	Teacher – Suburban Experience	Reflected on disparities in student engagement and resources, noticing differences in student experiences compared to urban schools.
Teacher	8 (Urban)	TACRU	Teaching Approach and Cultural Relevance – Urban	Discussed the challenges of teaching in resource-limited environments, finding innovative ways to engage students.
Teacher	11 (Suburban)	TSE	Teacher – Suburban Experience	Highlighted the contrast in teaching experiences and awareness of the privilege in resources between urban and suburban schools.
Counselor	3 (Urban)	CUE	Counselor – Urban Experience	Focused on the diverse and complex needs of urban students, addressing challenges from academic to mental health.
Counselor	6 (Suburban)	CSE	Counselor – Suburban Experience	Observed different student needs in suburban schools, often related to competition and stress, and the need to balance academic pressures with personal development.
Counselor	9 (Urban)	CUE	Counselor- Urban Experience	Stressed the importance of tailored support services in urban schools, creating systems that cater to varied student backgrounds.
Counselor	12 (Suburban)	CSE	Counselor – Suburban Experience	Discussed the nuances of counseling in a suburban context, focusing on the unique challenges and expectations faced by students.

In Table 3, the thematic codes and critical race theory (CRT) aspects are presented to shed light on the impact of race and socioeconomic factors on educational disparities in both urban and suburban school settings. The table includes thematic codes such as CESU, which focuses on community engagement and support in urban schools, highlighting the influence of socioeconomic factors on this engagement and its impact on educational quality. Additionally, the thematic code HSAU addresses access to services in urban schools, emphasizing the challenges faced in providing comprehensive support to students, particularly within the context of socioeconomic constraints. These thematic codes and CRT aspects provide valuable insights into the complex dynamics of race and socioeconomic factors in shaping educational experiences and opportunities in urban and suburban schools.

Table 3

Thematic Codes and Critical Race Theory (CRT) Aspects

Thematic Code	Impact of Race	Urban/Suburban	Description	Thematic Code Explanations
SSRIU	Yes	Urban	Urban school participants highlighted how systemic racism and institutional biases significantly affect the quality of education for minority students.	Systemic Racism Impact - Urban: Captures the impact of systemic racism and institutional biases on the quality of education in urban schools, particularly for minority students.
SSRIS	Yes	Suburban	Suburban education professionals acknowledged that racial dynamics, though sometimes less overt, play a crucial role in shaping educational experiences and opportunities.	Systemic Racism Impact - Suburban: Highlights the role of racial dynamics in influencing educational experiences and opportunities in suburban schools, even when these influences may be less overt.
RADU	Yes	Urban	The disparities in resource allocation in urban schools are linked to racial and economic factors, affecting the quality of education for predominantly minority students.	Resource Allocation Disparity - Urban: Focuses on the disparities in resource allocation in urban schools, often tied to racial and economic factors.
HSAU	Yes	Urban	Interviews with urban education professionals about human service provision emphasized the impact of race on the availability and quality of services offered.	Human Service Approach - Urban: Highlights the impact of race on the availability and quality of human services in urban schools, as perceived by education professionals.
CESU	Yes	Urban	Urban participants noted that community disempowerment, often along racial lines, affects the ability of schools to effectively serve their student population.	Community Engagement and Support - Urban: Examines how community disempowerment, often influenced by racial factors, affects the capacity of urban schools to serve their students effectively.

Table 4 below presents thematic codes and their corresponding descriptions, noting the impact of socioeconomic factors on educational disparities in both urban and suburban school settings. The table includes thematic codes such as SNSU, which focuses on the diverse and often unmet needs of students in urban schools, influenced by socioeconomic status. Additionally, the thematic code SNSS addresses economic disparities in suburban schools and their significant impact on the quality of education and resources. Furthermore, the thematic code RADU highlights the lack of essential resources in urban schools, often tied to lower socioeconomic status, echoing the concerns of urban school participants. These thematic codes and their explanations

provide valuable insights into the complex dynamics of socioeconomic factors and their influence on educational disparities in both urban and suburban school.

Table 4

Socioeconomic Factors and Educational Disparities

Thematic Code	Socioeconomic Factor	Description	Thematic Code Explanations
SNSU	Student Needs	Urban school participants, particularly counselors, emphasized the diverse and often unmet needs of students, influenced by socioeconomic status.	Student Needs and Services - Urban: Focuses on the diverse and often unmet needs of students in urban schools, highlighting the direct impact of socioeconomic factors on these needs.
SNSS	Economic Disparities	Suburban educators highlighted how economic disparities, though less apparent, still significantly impact the quality of education and resources in suburban schools.	Student Needs and Services - Suburban: Addresses the economic disparities in suburban schools and their impact on the quality of education and resources.
RADU	Resource Allocation	Echoing the concerns of urban school participants, this theme focuses on the lack of essential resources in urban schools, often tied to lower socioeconomic status.	Resource Allocation Disparity - Urban: Addresses the lack of essential resources in urban schools, emphasizing how this scarcity is often tied to lower socioeconomic status and impacts educational outcomes.
CESU	Community Engagement	Urban participants, especially principals and teachers, examined the role of community involvement in their schools and how socioeconomic factors influence this engagement.	Community Engagement and Support - Urban: Examines the role and challenges of community involvement in urban schools, highlighting how socioeconomic factors influence this engagement and the overall educational quality.
HSAU	Access to Services	Discussions about the availability and quality of human services in urban schools emphasized the challenges faced due to socioeconomic constraints.	Human Service Approach - Urban: Highlights the challenges urban schools face in providing comprehensive support to students, particularly in the context of socioeconomic constraints.

The thematic codes in Tables 3 and 4 provide a structured way to analyze the qualitative data from the study, linking the experiences and perceptions of the participants to broader theoretical and socioeconomic contexts. They offer insights into how educational disparities are understood and experienced by professionals in different school settings, and how these disparities are framed within the context of Critical Race Theory and socioeconomic factors.

Table 5 presents a thematic codification of key themes and corresponding codes related to disparities in education. The themes identified include Resource Disparities, Student Needs and Services, Teaching Approaches and Cultural Relevance, Cultural Differences in Teaching Approach, Community Engagement and Support, Human Service Approaches to Address Disparities in Education, Implications of Race in Education, and Historical Alignment with Interview Testimonials. Each theme is accompanied by specific codes that provide detailed insight, such as Urban school's lack of essential resources (RD01), More funding and resources in suburban schools (RD02), Diverse Student Needs and Lack of Tailored Services (SN01), and Cultural Responsiveness in Teaching (TA01). These codes offer a comprehensive understanding of the various components within each theme, shedding light on critical aspects of educational disparities and their implications.

Table 5

Thematic Codifications

Themes	Codes
1. Resources Disparities	RD01: Urban School's lack of essential resources
	RD02: More funding and resources in suburban schools
2. Student Needs and Services (Socioeconomic factors)	SN01: Diverse Student Needs and Lack of Tailored Services
	SN02: Diversity Enriches Learning and Requires Inclusive Services
3. Teaching Approaches and Cultural Relevance	TA01: Cultural Responsiveness in Teaching
	TA02: Integration of Diverse Perspectives in Teaching Methods
4. Cultural Differences in Teaching Approach	CDTA01: Consideration of Diverse Cultural Backgrounds in Teaching
	CDTA02: Integration of Cultural Diversity in Curriculum
5. Community Engagement and Support	CES01: The crucial role of community involvement
	CES02: Positive influence of community engagement
6. Human Service Approaches to Address Disparities in Education	HS01: Community Outreach and Support Programs
	HS02: Tailored Counselling and Mental Health Services
7. Implications of Race in Education	RE01: Systemic Bias in Educational Policies
8. Historical Alignment with Interview Testimonials	HT01: Persistence of Historical Educational Disparities

Thematic Coding Process

In this qualitative study, which examined human service provision and its impact on student achievement in urban and suburban schools through a critical race theory lens, the thematic analysis was conducted following Braun and Clarke's six-step model (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Initially, the process involved a thorough familiarization with the data, where transcripts from semi structured interviews with educators and social service workers across urban and suburban schools were meticulously reviewed. This initial immersion was critical for identifying preliminary ideas and setting the stage for the subsequent coding phase.

During the coding phase, data were systematically segmented into concise, meaningful elements, transcending mere labeling to an interpretative process. For

example, references to “lack of resources in urban schools” were coded as RADU (Resource Allocation Disparity - Urban), while discussions about “diverse student needs” were coded as SNSU (Student Needs and Services - Urban). This iterative process ensured that the codes encapsulated the essence of the data. The search for themes involved collating these codes into potential themes and examining all relevant data for each theme, moving beyond mere data summarization to pattern identification and interpretation. Themes such as “Resource Disparities” emerged, encompassing issues like the unequal distribution of resources between urban and suburban schools. The review phase involved refining these themes to ensure they accurately represented the dataset, followed by defining and naming each theme to reflect the data’s essence. Finally, the report production integrated these themes into a coherent narrative, supported by vivid data extracts.

The thematic codification system, integral to this analysis, assigned specific codes to data segments, facilitating the development of broader themes. This systematic approach grounded the analysis in the data, providing a robust framework for interpreting the findings. The thematic codes, such as RADU, SNSU, TACRU (Teaching Approach and Cultural Relevance - Urban), and others, were instrumental in identifying patterns and constructing meaningful themes that addressed the research questions and objectives. These codes captured the nuanced perspectives and experiences of the participants, reflecting their roles, the school environments they worked in, and their years of experience. This detailed and structured analysis of the qualitative data enabled the study to effectively address its research objectives, offering insights into the disparities in

human service provision and the impact of systemic and structural racism on educational outcomes in urban and suburban schools.

Thematic Analysis (Themes)

Theme 1: Resource Disparities

Resource disparities between urban and suburban schools are critical factors influencing educational outcomes. This theme directly addresses research question RQ1, by highlighting historical data and literature regarding unequal access to resources impacting student services and educational quality. Theme 1also comprehensively addresses critical research inquiries, including identifying specific human services that can be integrated into K -12 education to enhance equity, and examining the socioeconomic and racial dynamics that influence academic achievement.

Resource Disparities, as identified in the study, highlights the presence of significant differences in resources between urban and suburban schools. This theme points to a greater need for specific human services in underfunded urban schools, including increased funding, better access to quality educational materials, and comprehensive support programs. The data also showed a correlation between these resource disparities and racial dynamics, with predominantly Black urban schools experiencing a scarcity of resources, which contrasts with the resource availability in suburban schools.

Findings. Among those interviewed, a recurring theme emerged, focusing on the pronounced disparities in educational resources between urban and suburban schools. Urban school staff consistently emphasized the severe lack of essential resources,

including current educational materials, extracurricular activities, and school enrichment programs, which significantly affect the quality of education. On the other hand, personnel from suburban schools acknowledged their access to a relative abundance of these resources, while also recognizing the issue of their unequal distribution. Teachers from suburban schools acknowledged that suburban schools are fortunate to have modern facilities and ample resources, but it's disheartening to see the disparity.

Data Presentation: Regarding the code "Urban school's lack of essential resources," an urban school counselor noted, "Our school lacks essential resources; we struggle to provide adequate counseling." Also, regarding Code RD02, more funding and resources in suburban schools, a suburban school administrator stated, "In suburban schools, there's more funding; resources are readily available for student support."

Theme 2: Student Needs and Services

Addressing student needs and services is central to RQ1 and RQ2, focusing on the necessity for tailored services in diverse educational settings.

Findings: Socioeconomic factors emerged as a critical theme and a major determinant affecting student educational success. Urban educators underscored the profound influence of poverty, limited parental involvement, and inadequate access to supplementary services on student performance. Many students are faced with adversity outside school that affects their academic progress and poverty exacerbates their struggles.

Conversely, suburban school personnel acknowledged the indirect impact of socioeconomic status. They also made references to the positive correlation between

affluent backgrounds and academic achievement but expressed concerns about overlooking students' emotional needs amid academic pressure. Students grappling with immense pressure to excel often find their mental and physical health, socioeconomic status, and overall well-being relegated to secondary importance in favor of their education. However, this educational focus is also not adequately prioritized, as these unmet needs further impede their academic progress.

Data Presentation: Extracts highlighting student needs and services: Code SN01: Diverse Student Needs and Lack of Tailored Services

"Our students face complex challenges; we lack specialized services for their diverse needs." (Urban school social worker)

"More certified teachers and smaller class sizes, along with access to a counselor or social worker, are essential." (Middle school urban teacher).

"Students have different challenges in urban settings and other places, but students can be successful in urban settings**."** (Suburban admin district)

"We would need more wraparound services like community mental health, housing, clothing, food assistance, and transportation services brought directly to the schools. There also needs to be more of a requirement for parental participation with accommodations, for those with extensive work schedules to have alternative options to participate." (Urban high school counselor 1)

Code SN02: Diversity Enriches Learning and Requires Inclusive Services

" To ensure inclusivity, we adapt our services to meet the diverse needs of students." (Suburban school teacher)

“Suburban schools have the privilege of diversity, benefiting students by exposing them to various backgrounds and cultures, which broadens their understanding of the world. It gives them more access and more insight into the reality of the world. In an urban setting, most of the time you’re surrounded by the same demographic as you. So, you don’t have the privilege of being able to learn about different cultures and understand how different people operate.” (Urban High School Counselor 1)

“…I think what it keeps coming back to is you have to have the right voices at the table. You can’t just have people who are in powerful positions making these decisions. I think you have to have the voices of the people who are being impacted sitting at the table.**”** (Suburban High School Social Worker)

Theme 3: Teaching Approaches and Cultural Relevance

Teaching methods’ cultural relevance connects to RQ2, emphasizing culturally inclusive pedagogies and their impact on student achievement.

Findings*:* Racial disparities in academic expectations were also evident. Urban educators voiced their frustration regarding the biased perceptions they encountered from fellow educators and leadership. An administrator from an urban school lamented the onset of unconscious bias. The urban school administrator also mentioned during their interview that students from marginalized communities, particularly Black students, face underestimation and bias based on their race, leading to a negative impact on their confidence and academic performance. Participants identified as suburban education professionals reported the presence of privilege and higher expectations in predominantly

White student environments within their schools. They also pointed out that these environments frequently entail significant pressure on the students.

Data Presentation: Interview quotes and responses when asked about the demonstration of teaching approaches and cultural relevance:

- **Code TA01:** Cultural Responsiveness in Teaching

  "*Cultural responsiveness matters. Students need relatable content and teaching approaches*." (Urban School Teacher)

  "...*The quality of education in suburban schools often benefits from a better pool of candidates for staffing, unlike urban schools where limited options can result in a lower teaching quality.*" (Urban High School Counselor 1)

  "…*Those in authority often fail to collaborate effectively for systemic change. While diverse in race and ethnicity and striving for improvement, their efforts tend to result in only temporary, feel-good changes. Such changes might benefit some immediately, but there are likely ten other kids who miss out on these benefits because they're not directly involved in the situation.* (Suburban high school teacher)

- **Code TA02:** Integration of Diverse Perspectives in Teaching Methods

  "*Incorporating diverse perspectives in teaching methods enhances students' understanding."* (Suburban school administrator)

Theme 4: Cultural Differences in Teaching Approaches

Cultural disparities influencing teaching approaches relate to RQ1 and RQ2, examining how cultural perspectives impact educational methods and student achievement.

Findings: Variances in teaching approaches based on cultural settings were evident. There was a strong emphasis on the necessity for culturally relevant teaching methods to engage students effectively. While cultural responsiveness matters, students also need relatable content and teaching approaches.

Interviewees from suburban schools consistently reported a commonality in their teaching strategies, which predominantly revolve around traditional, lecture-based methods, with limited use of diverse or innovative instructional techniques. This uniform approach in suburban teaching contrasts with the more varied and adaptive methods observed in urban schools, as reported by respondents. The interview data suggests that the range of teaching styles in suburban schools is relatively narrow, potentially not meeting the full spectrum of their students' diverse learning needs.

Data Presentation: An urban school principal commented on Code CDTA01, consideration of diverse cultural backgrounds in teaching, stating, "Teaching methods should consider diverse cultural backgrounds; it affects student engagement." Additionally, Urban High School Counselor 1 noted, "I believe that even today White teachers struggle when it comes to teaching Black kids because they have biases, they've been socially engineered to think a certain way about them."

Regarding integration of cultural diversity in curriculum (Code CDTA02), Subruban School Teacher 1 noted, "We integrate cultural diversity in our curriculum, it fosters inclusive learning."

Theme 5: Community Engagement and Support

Community involvement's impact on education addresses RQ2, human services approaches can address urban education disparities and how can they promote equity in K-12 education for predominantly Black schools. It also explores the role of community engagement in supporting educational equity.

Findings: The impact of community engagement on student success was a recurring theme. The vital role that communities play in supporting and augmenting the current lack of resources in urban schools cannot be overstated. Community involvement is a lifeline. External support plays a crucial role in addressing the deficiencies present within public school systems by providing additional resources and support where the school's capabilities are limited. This external aid can come in various forms, such as community involvement, funding, educational materials, and expertise, helping to bridge gaps in the school's ability to fully meet the needs of its students. These external resources compensate for the inadequate systems that plague urban communities where schools with predominantly Black students reside.

The data and findings from the study, underscored by thematic codes and themes derived from interviews, reveal the critical role of community engagement in student success, particularly in urban schools. These themes indicate varying levels of community involvement across urban and suburban settings, with community engagement serving as a vital supplement to educational resources and support in areas with resource deficiencies. The thematic analysis of interview data highlights how this involvement, encompassing funding, educational materials, and expertise, are

instrumental in addressing the disparities in resources that are prevalent in urban schools with predominantly Black student populations. **Data Presentation**: An urban school administrator commented on the crucial role of community involvement (CES01), noting that "Community involvement is crucial; it provides vital resources that the school lacks." Regarding Code CES02, positive influence of community engagement on learning, a suburban school social worker stated, "Engaging the community positively influences students' learning experiences."

Theme 6: Human Service Approaches to Address Disparities in Education

This theme pertains to initiatives involving community partnerships and outreach programs aimed at bridging the resource gap in urban education. These programs may encompass after-school programs, mentorship initiatives, or collaborations with local organizations to provide additional support and resources to students in need. It aligns with RQ2 for factors that directly contribute to addressing human service needs by expanding support networks for students in urban schools. Furthermore, there is a need for specialized counseling services and mental health provisions tailored to address the unique challenges faced by students in urban schools. The themes speak to the necessity of implementing comprehensive mental health programs that go beyond traditional counseling to cater specifically to the needs of these students. This also directly aligns with RQ2 which emphasizes the significance of targeted services to promote equality in K-12 education.

Data Presentation*:* Regarding code HS01, community outreach and support programs, a middle school urban teacher stated the following: "These services can

include counseling after school programs, family engagement initiatives, community partnerships." Addressing the human service needs of urban schools and communities (HS02), an urban high school counselor had this to say, "We would need more wraparound services like community mental health, housing, clothing, and food assistance brought directly to the schools."

Theme 7: Implications of Race in Education

The major tenet of this theme is embedded bias within educational policies that inadvertently contribute to disparities between urban and suburban schools. It speaks to the need to critically examine and address policy-level biases that perpetuate inequality. This directly connects with RQ1 exploring the relationship between historical data, institutional racism, and the resulting disparities in urban education. The unequal distribution of academic resources, such as textbooks, technology, or qualified teachers, between schools based on racial demographics is also highlighted this theme and correlates with RQ4.

Data Presentation*:* In terms of bias in educational policies (RE01), a suburban district administrator stated the following.

> That's part of the system that informs the trajectory of their lives. We know that systemic bias takes place. We know that in schools, those biases manifests in various forms, including implicit and explicit biases among professionals, and this ultimately impacts students in their education.

Theme 8: Historical Alignment with Interview Testimonials

This theme pertains to the enduring consequences of historical inequalities and their impact on the present state of urban education. It explores the lasting effects of past discriminatory practices on current educational disparities. Aligning with RQ1 and RQ2, this theme addresses the theoretical/practical approaches and their relation to historical racial disparities in education. It captures how these disparities persist despite efforts towards equity. It also relates to RQ1 by providing insights into the continuance of historical data patterns indicating disparities influenced by institutional racism.

Data Presentation: Regrading code HT02, persistence of historical educational disparities, all participants interviewed (Urban and Suburban) responded "yes" to the question on whether they believed there was an inequality in education such as access to facilities resources and services between urban and suburban schools.

Analysis

The obvious disparities in education resources as highlighted by both urban and suburban personnel is a pivotal theme that influences the educational outcomes of students. Inadequacies in the equitable distribution of resources directly impact the quality of education for students in black-majority schools. In practice, disparities in resources are far-reaching in areas of poor support systems for students, poor academic performance, and general poor educational experiences. Research demonstrates that urban schools face substantial challenges in resource availability, notably due to funding limitations (Webb, 2017). These limitations translate into a lack of essential services such as counseling, support programs, and extracurricular activities. Furthermore, the

discrepancies in funding models contribute significantly to the disparities in resource allocation (Wright, 2012).

White students from suburban schools are fortunate enough to have a system that provides more robust financial support and a wider spectrum of socioeconomic initiatives that are aimed at supporting families and students. The enhanced financial stability enables suburban schools to offer diverse programs, smaller class sizes, and additional support staff like counselors and social workers. This theme is widely supported by the research of Salloum, Goddard & Berebitsky (2018), which emphasized that these additional resources positively correlate with improved educational outcomes and overall student well-being.

When it comes to the issue of funding, there is a consensus that urban schools are poorly funded (Baker et.al, 2020). Thus, an understanding of the funding disparities between urban and suburban schools is crucial. We are at a stage where gaps/disparities in funding between these learning environments have helped fuel the systemic challenges that urban schools face in providing equitable educational opportunities. Scholars argue that addressing these disparities necessitates policy changes that focus on equitable funding models and resource allocation (Bowen, 2023). Thus, those at the helm of affairs bear the blame as to why huge gaps in funding continue to persist in urban schools today. Nevertheless, policy initiatives aimed at redistributing resources more fairly among urban schools have been proposed as potential solutions. But as some of those interviewed in this study claimed, many of these policy interventions have at best only scratched the surface of the problem.

Researchers have also emphasized the need for increased advocacy efforts and community involvement to address these funding gaps and provide better opportunities for urban students (Weiss et.al, 2009). The evident resource disparities between urban and suburban schools stem from funding inequities and significantly impact the quality of education and support systems available to students. Addressing these disparities requires comprehensive policy reforms and community-driven initiatives to ensure equitable resource distribution.

Code SN01: Diverse Student Needs and Lack of Tailored Services

Urban educational settings often grapple with diverse and complex student needs. Most of these needs can be grouped into socioeconomic challenges, behavioral issues, and academic disparities. Providing solutions to these needs is often challenging as there is an absence of specialized services that are accurately tailored to the specific challenges faced by black students (Banks, 2008).

Several studies have demonstrated the lack of resources needed to support the needs of students in predominately Black schools (Dorn et.al, 2020). Some of the disparity in resources can be traced to inadequate certified teachers (Farinde, Allen & Lewis 2016), social workers, few counseling services, and larger classroom sizes that hinder specialized attention to the peculiar needs of students. Furthermore, this situation is exacerbated by limited access to wraparound services like community mental health support systems, housing, clothing, family support, and food assistance directly available within schools.

In essence, both academic achievement and emotional health are impacted because of the incapacity to meet the resource requirements of students. This often translates to higher dropout rates and apathy toward the educational process. A major solution to this problem involves creating a supportive learning environment for the student in urban settings with the required educational resources that are tailored to their specific needs.

Code SN02: Diversity Enriches Learning and Requires Inclusive Services

Suburban schools are sometimes known to embrace the diversity of their student body. It is considered a strength that exposes students to various cultures and perspectives. As a suburban teacher highlighted, there are concerted efforts to increase DEI (diversity, equality, and inclusion) in both the recruitment of staff and the student body. Suburban schools continue to foster an environment that prioritizes the incorporation of diverse perspectives into their curriculum and teaching methods. This approach acknowledges the necessity of providing an education that reflects and respects the diverse cultural backgrounds of students.

The disparity in addressing student needs between urban and suburban schools is evident from these findings. Urban schools grapple with diverse challenges and lack tailored services to support their students adequately. This deficit negatively impacts students' academic success and overall well-being. In contrast, suburban schools celebrate diversity, integrating inclusive teaching approaches to enrich students' educational experiences. To successfully address these discrepancies a variety of strategies are needed. These strategies must include funding reforms (Dinerstein &

Smith, 2021), and developmental programs for educators to better meet the needs of those they tutor. Additionally, there must also be a paradigm shift in education so that diversity is seen as a strength and a necessary part of a well-rounded education.

Code TA01: Cultural Responsiveness in Teaching

Cultural responsiveness in teaching practice is very important. Urban schools that are faced with a multitude of cultural backgrounds within the student population must address the issue of incorporating culturally relevant content into teaching practice. Notwithstanding, there are several limitations prevailing within the urban setting that negatively impact the quality of culturally relevant content. Some of these challenges include but are not limited to resource constraints and challenges in recruitment. Urban schools are lagging when it comes to attracting and retaining academic teaching talent. They often struggle to attract a diverse pool of educators and thus the quality of culturally relevant education is impacted.

The lack of systemic changes and collaboration among educators further inhibits the effective implementation of culturally inclusive pedagogies (Gay, 2018). While efforts have been made to right this wrong, these efforts have often been temporary and have failed to create a sustained impact on the learning experiences of urban students (Howard, 2019)

Code TA02: Integration of Diverse Perspectives in Teaching Methods

This research unearths a contrast in suburban schools where they embrace the integration of diverse perspectives into teaching methodologies. Even though they have a predominantly white student population, there is a push for respect for students from

other cultural backgrounds. Educators are known to actively incorporate diverse viewpoints into the curriculum to promote an inclusive learning environment (Banks, 2015). Research highlights the importance of culturally inclusive pedagogies as a positive theme needed for student engagement, academic achievement, and overall satisfaction with their educational experiences (Howard, 2019). Subsequently, students will benefit significantly when their cultural backgrounds are recognized and integrated into the learning process.

From the interviews, there seems to be a glaring difference in the use of culturally appropriate teaching strategies between urban and suburban schools. Urban schools have challenges because of a lack of funding, understaffing, and institutional reforms that are required to provide culturally relevant education. On the other hand, suburban schools place a high priority on including a variety of perspectives in their curricula to create an inclusive atmosphere that promotes cultural diversity.

Comprehensive and strategic measures are needed to address the barriers that urban schools face in providing culturally appropriate education. These measures may include more funding allotted to support culturally inclusive pedagogies, structural adjustments to recruiting practices, and focused professional development for educators. Policy reforms may also be needed to provide a platform of initiatives among educators to address systemic changes in urban education.

Code CDTA01: Consideration of Diverse Cultural Backgrounds in Teaching

Recognizing and incorporating varied cultural backgrounds into teaching methodologies is critical in establishing inclusive educational settings (Gay, 2018).

Implicit biases and a system of sociocultural conditioning have been fingered as the major culprits creating limitations in educators on how they should engage students from diverse backgrounds (Ladson-Billings, 2014). According to research, these issues impede effective communication, comprehension, and the overall efficacy of teaching practices (Howard, 2019).

Code CDTA02: Integration of Cultural Diversity in Curriculum

Suburban schools promote the incorporation of cultural diversity into their curriculum. They try to establish inclusive learning environments (Banks, 2015). Suburban educators regularly include several cultural components in their teaching approaches to help students respect and comprehend other cultures (Gay, 2018).

Research highlights the significant benefits of culturally diverse curricula on students' cognitive growth, social engagement, and overall academic achievements (Howard, 2019). It supports the idea that being exposed to various perspectives not only fosters critical thinking but also enriches comprehension of the world we live in (Ladson-Billings, 2014).

There's a visible gap between urban and suburban schools when it comes to how they handle cultural differences in teaching. Urban schools face hurdles in engaging with a diverse student body. It's tough for educators there due to ingrained biases and societal norms that hinder adjusting teaching styles.

On the flip side, suburban schools place a strong emphasis on integrating cultural diversity into their curriculum. They create an inclusive learning environment where

students can explore and understand various cultural perspectives. This approach significantly boosts students' critical thinking abilities and cognitive development.

It's vital to take a holistic approach to tackling the challenges that Urban schools face. Educators need solid cultural competence training to recognize and overcome their biases. They could greatly benefit from strategies tailored to reach a diverse set of students. Creating a collaborative and culturally sensitive classroom is key to giving every student a meaningful educational journey.

Code CES01: The Crucial Role of Community Involvement

The community in which the school is domiciled plays a pivotal role in supporting the needs of students. This is particularly evident in resource-deprived urban schools. This research has established from the interviews of a diverse pool of stakeholders that urban schools often lack the required resources needed to cater to the needs of their student population. Thus, the community must take the initiative to help address these gaps (Medina, Cosby & Grim 2020). The multifaceted role of the community extends beyond financial support to include mentorship programs, career opportunities for families, and services like mental health support that directly benefit students (Weiss, Lopez & Rosenberg, 2010).

Code CES02: Positive Influence of Community Engagement on Learning

The host community must be actively engaged to help bridge the gap in resource availability and support. Considering this analysis, suburban schools are often associated with stronger and more established community ties. It's no wonder then that the student

population often benefits from community engagement programs that provide additional resources and support (Medina, Cosby & Grim 2020).

Studies show that when communities are actively engaged, students feel a stronger sense of belonging and support. The positive from this engagement is seen in the significant boosts in their academic performance and overall wellness (Epstein, 2018). The involvement and engagement of host communities go beyond satisfying the educational journeys of students to deepening school ties to programs outside the educational settings.

The pivotal role of community engagement in supporting schools in resource-challenged urban settings can't be overemphasized. Resource-strapped urban schools heavily rely on community involvement to bridge these gaps and offer crucial support services for students. However, it is still highly debated if the support from host communities (which are essentially characterized by low socio-economic status) is sufficient to meet the needs of urban schools.

In a contrasting vein, suburban schools thrive due to established community connections. The connections with robust and socio-economically rich communities enhance the educational experiences of students by providing extra resources and support services. Community involvement has significantly impacted students' academic success and helped foster a sense of belonging and support within suburban schools. Strengthening urban community ties necessitates concerted efforts. Collaborative initiatives that bring together schools, local businesses, civic organizations, and

community members are essential in delivering crucial resources and support services that directly benefit students.

Diverse Student Needs and Lack of Tailored Services (SN01)

Urban Educational Challenges. Urban schools face a myriad of challenges, primarily centered around socioeconomic, behavioral, and academic disparities. Banks (2008) highlights the absence of specialized services tailored to the unique challenges of black students. Dorn et al. (2020) further emphasize the resource deficiencies in predominantly Black schools, including inadequate certified teachers and limited access to essential support services.

Impact on Students. The lack of resources in urban schools adversely affects both academic achievement and emotional health, leading to higher dropout rates and educational apathy. Farinde, Allen, & Lewis (2016) suggest that creating supportive learning environments with tailored resources is crucial in urban settings.

Diversity Enriches Learning and Requires Inclusive Services (SN02)

Suburban Schools' Approach: Contrasting with urban schools, suburban schools often embrace student body diversity, integrating DEI initiatives in staff recruitment and curriculum development. This approach not only respects diverse cultural backgrounds but also enriches the educational experience.

Strategies for Addressing Discrepancies: Addressing these disparities requires multifaceted strategies, including funding reforms and educator development programs (Dinerstein & Smith, 2021). A paradigm shift in education is needed to view diversity as a strength and an integral part of comprehensive education.

Cultural Responsiveness in Teaching (TA01)

Challenges in Urban Schools: Urban schools, with diverse cultural backgrounds, face significant challenges in incorporating culturally relevant content due to resource constraints and difficulties in recruiting a diverse teaching staff. Gay (2018) and Howard (2019) note the lack of systemic changes and collaboration among educators, which hinders the effective implementation of culturally inclusive pedagogies.

Contrast with Suburban Schools: Suburban schools, despite a predominantly white student population, actively incorporate diverse viewpoints into their curriculum, fostering an inclusive learning environment. Banks (2015) and Howard (2019) emphasize the importance of culturally inclusive pedagogies for student engagement and academic achievement.

Need for Comprehensive Measures: Urban schools require more funding, structural adjustments in recruiting practices, and focused professional development for educators to provide culturally relevant education. Policy reforms are also necessary to facilitate systemic changes in urban education.

In my qualitative research, I focused diligently on establishing the trustworthiness of the findings, particularly emphasizing credibility. Following Morse's (2015) principles, I implemented a process where interviewees could review their transcripts, as recommended by Harper and Cole (2012). This process allowed participants to validate their responses, ensuring the accuracy and authenticity of the data. This method proved effective, as evidenced by four interviewees actively confirming the accuracy of their transcripts without needing any modifications. Additionally, I included direct quotations

from participants in the data analysis, following Creswell and Poth's (2018) recommendations, to ensure that the findings genuinely reflected the participants' experiences. I also practiced reflexivity throughout the research process, as Finlay (2002) suggested, involving reflective notetaking and memo writing during interviews and data analysis to mitigate my biases and preconceptions.

In addressing transferability, I adhered to Shenton's (2004) guidelines by providing detailed presentations of data, including comprehensive tables of participant demographics and thematic codes, along with rich descriptions of the educational settings and experiences. I crafted these detailed descriptions to enhance the potential applicability of the study's findings to similar contexts. The use of a virtual platform for conducting interviews facilitated participant understanding and engagement, further supporting the study's transferability. My commitment to maintaining dependability and confirmability was evident in the systematic documentation of research decisions and the maintenance of an audit trail, as outlined by Rodger and Cowles (1993), ensuring that the findings were grounded in the data and free from my biases.

I placed a strong emphasis on dependability in this study, ensuring the reliability and consistency of the research findings. As Nowell, Norris, White, and Moules (2017) outline, achieving dependability in qualitative research involves a transparent and replicable research process. I employed an audit trail, meticulously documenting each step of the research process, including using a consistent interview protocol and clearly documenting the data collection and analysis procedures, noting any deviations from the methods outlined in Chapter 3. This approach, recommended by O'Reilly and Parker

(2013), provided a clear roadmap of the research process and ensured that the findings were based on a reliable and consistent methodology.

Confirmability was paramount in my research to ensure that the findings genuinely represented the participants' experiences, free from my biases or preconceptions. Following Tufford and Newman's (2012) guidelines, I engaged in extensive reflexivity protocols, including bracketing procedures before interviews and during data analysis, as Moustakas (1994) suggested. This approach was instrumental in setting aside my personal beliefs and assumptions, thereby avoiding misinterpretation of the participants' intended meanings and experiences. I took notes during interviews and the data analysis phase and compared these with additional notes to ensure a balanced interpretation of the data. The use of verbatim quotations from participants throughout the chapter further solidified confirmability, accurately capturing their thoughts, perceptions, and lived experiences.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

In this study, the credibility of the research findings was meticulously established by aligning the depiction of respondents' views with their beliefs, thus creating a strong foundation for credibility. This alignment was achieved through substantial participation, multiple data sources, and analyses, ensuring the integrity of the study. Additionally, adjustments were made to the research process to further bolster credibility, including the use of open-ended questions to elicit responses from all participants and maintaining continuity and consistency throughout the research process.

Regarding transferability, the study's methodology was presented in detail, including comprehensive tables of participant demographics and thematic codes, along with rich descriptions of the educational settings and experiences. These adjustments were made to enhance the potential applicability of the study's findings to similar contexts, thereby addressing the transferability strategies. Furthermore, the use of a virtual platform for conducting interviews facilitated participant understanding and engagement, further supporting the study's transferability.

In terms of dependability, the research process was carefully designed to ensure the reliability and consistency of the findings. An audit trail was meticulously documented, including a consistent interview protocol and clear documentation of the data collection and analysis procedures. Additionally, adjustments were made to maintain a transparent and reflexive research process, documenting decision-making steps and rationale throughout the study to enhance dependability.

Lastly, to address confirmability, extensive reflexivity protocols were engaged, including bracketing procedures before interviews and during data analysis. This approach was instrumental in setting aside personal beliefs and assumptions, thereby avoiding misinterpretation of the participants' intended meanings and experiences. The use of verbatim quotations from participants throughout the study further solidified confirmability, accurately capturing their thoughts, perceptions, and lived experiences. Adjustments were made to ensure that the findings genuinely represented the participants' experiences, free from biases or preconceptions, in line with the consistency strategies.

Results

In this study, I conducted a detailed analysis of qualitative data to address the research questions, focusing on the disparities in urban education and the effectiveness of human services approaches in predominantly Black schools. The analysis included interviews with educational professionals from both urban and suburban schools, and the findings were presented through thematic analysis, supported by visual representations in figures and tables.

Regarding the first research question, the study's findings strongly support historical data indicating significant disparities in urban education connected to institutional and systemic racism. This conclusion was drawn from thematic analyses of interviews with participants, including principals, teachers, counselors, and social workers, across various school levels. For instance, urban principals (Participants 1 and 7) highlighted challenges in resource allocation in urban schools, emphasizing struggles to provide adequate resources and support to students. These observations align with the thematic code RADU (Resource Allocation Disparity - Urban), underscoring the persistent nature of these disparities. Additionally, urban teachers (Participants 2 and 8) emphasized the need for culturally relevant teaching in urban settings, aligning with the TACRU (Teaching Approach and Cultural Relevance - Urban) code.

Furthermore, the SSRIU (Systemic Racism Impact - Urban) code was identified based on comments from urban school participants who highlighted how systemic racism and institutional biases profoundly affect the quality of education for minority students.

In response to the second research question, the study identifies various human services approaches to effectively address urban education disparities and promote equity in predominantly Black schools. The thematic analysis revealed key strategies, including community outreach and support programs, tailored counseling, and mental health services. For example, a middle school urban teacher (Participant 8) emphasized the importance of after-school programs and family engagement initiatives. An urban high school counselor (Participant 3) highlighted the need for comprehensive wraparound services, including mental health support and basic necessities. The CUE (Counselor - Urban Experience) code reflects the importance of tailored support services in urban schools. Additionally, the HSAU (Human Service Approach - Urban) code highlights the impact of race on the availability and quality of human services in urban schools. Urban participants also noted the issue of community disempowerment, as indicated by the CESU (Community Engagement and Support - Urban) code, suggesting that addressing the unique challenges of urban schools requires a holistic approach extending beyond traditional academic support.

Additionally, I employed a detailed thematic analysis to explore disparities in human service provision within urban and suburban schools, with a particular focus on the impact of systemic and structural racism on educational outcomes. The thematic codes, as delineated in Tables 2, 3, and 4 were pivotal in organizing and interpreting the qualitative data gathered from interviews with educational professionals.

Table 2, titled “Role-Based Insights”, provided a structured overview of the perspectives of various educational roles, including principals, teachers, and counselors,

from both urban and suburban settings. The thematic codes, such as RADU (Resource Allocation Disparity - Urban) and TACRU (Teaching Approach and Cultural Relevance - Urban), were crucial in understanding the unique challenges and experiences in different educational environments. Urban principals (Participants 1 and 7) consistently highlighted the challenges of resource allocation in urban schools, emphasizing struggles to provide adequate resources and support to students. This was echoed by urban teachers (Participants 2 and 8), who stressed the need for culturally relevant teaching in resource-limited environments, finding innovative ways to engage a diverse student body.

Tables 3 and 4 expanded this analysis by linking these experiences to Critical Race Theory (CRT) aspects and socioeconomic factors. The thematic codes such as SSRIU (Systemic Racism Impact - Urban) and HSAU (Human Service Approach - Urban) underscored how race and socioeconomic status significantly influence the quality of education and human services in urban schools. These codes revealed that systemic racism and economic constraints are pervasive issues affecting the educational experiences of minority students in urban settings. In contrast, codes like SSRIS (Systemic Racism Impact - Suburban) highlighted that racial dynamics, though sometimes less overt, still play a crucial role in shaping educational experiences in suburban schools.

In this qualitative study, the thematic coding process, adhering to Braun and Clarke's six-step model, rendered a wealth of relevant qualitative findings. This process commenced with an in-depth familiarization with the data, involving a meticulous review of transcripts from semi structured interviews conducted with educators and social

service workers from both urban and suburban schools. During the coding phase, data were systematically segmented into concise, meaningful elements. For example, references to “lack of resources in urban schools” were coded as RADU, while discussions about “diverse student needs” were coded as SNSU (Student Needs and Services - Urban). This iterative process ensured that the codes encapsulated the essence of the data. The search for themes involved collating these codes into potential themes and examining all relevant data for each theme, moving beyond mere data summarization to pattern identification and interpretation.

The thematic codification system was integral to this analysis, assigning specific codes to data segments and facilitating the development of broader themes. This systematic approach grounded the analysis in the data, providing a robust framework for interpreting the findings. The thematic codes, such as RADU, SNSU, TACRU, and others, were instrumental in identifying patterns and constructing meaningful themes that addressed the research questions and objectives. These codes captured the nuanced perspectives and experiences of the participants, reflecting their roles, the school environments they worked in, and their years of experience. This detailed and structured analysis of the qualitative data enabled the study to effectively address its research objectives, offering insights into the disparities in human service provision and the impact of systemic and structural racism on educational outcomes in urban and suburban schools.

Moreover, The Role-Based Insights Table (Figure 3) was instrumental in my study, offering a nuanced understanding of the diverse perspectives of educational

professionals in both urban and suburban settings. This table delineated the roles of participants, their corresponding thematic codes, and key insights derived from their interviews. For instance, insights from suburban principals (Participants 4 and 10) revealed subtler challenges in suburban schools, such as less visible socioeconomic issues, which contrasted with the more overt challenges noted in urban settings. This disparity in experiences between urban and suburban educators underscored the complexity of educational disparities and highlighted the necessity for tailored approaches to address these multifaceted challenges.

In this study, I also developed various figures to enhance the understanding of the data and support the findings. Figure 1 provided a demographic breakdown of the participants, ensuring a comprehensive representation of diverse perspectives in the study. Figure 1, a word cloud, visually summarized key themes and concepts from the qualitative data analysis, such as “access,” “opportunity,” “urban equity,” “inequality,” “poverty,” and “community resources.” This visual representation was pivotal in emphasizing the critical areas of disparity and need within urban and suburban schools, reinforcing the significance of the study’s findings and its implications for addressing systemic challenges and promoting equity in the educational landscape.

The Thematic Codes and CRT Aspects (Figure 4) were central to the study, offering a detailed breakdown of how race impacts educational experiences in both urban and suburban settings. For example, the SSRIS (Systemic Racism Impact - Suburban) code highlighted the subtle yet significant role of racial dynamics in shaping educational experiences in suburban schools. This finding was crucial in understanding the

multifaceted nature of educational disparities and underscored the need for nuanced approaches in addressing these challenges. The thematic codes developed from the qualitative data provided a structured understanding of how these disparities are experienced by educational professionals and how they relate to broader socioeconomic contexts.

Furthermore, the results and findings detailed in Figure 5 offered a comprehensive analysis of the impact of socioeconomic factors on educational disparities, particularly in urban and suburban school settings. The thematic codes, such as SNSU (Student Needs and Services - Urban) and SNSS (Student Needs and Services - Suburban), elucidated the direct impact of socioeconomic factors on educational needs and services. This analysis provided a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by educational professionals and highlighted the importance of considering socioeconomic contexts in developing strategies to address educational disparities.

During this research, the analysis of qualitative data led to the emergence of eight themes, each elucidating distinct aspects of disparities in urban education and the effectiveness of human services approaches.

The first theme, “Resource Disparities,” emerged from data highlighting the stark contrast in funding and resources between urban and suburban schools. This theme underscored the significant resource scarcity in predominantly Black urban schools compared to their suburban counterparts, which had more access to funding and resources according to all the study participants.

"Student Needs and Services," the second theme, was identified through discussions with study participants about the diverse challenges urban students face, including a lack of specialized services, contrasting with the different but also unmet needs in suburban schools.

The third theme, "Teaching Approaches and Cultural Relevance," developed from insights on the necessity of culturally responsive teaching in urban settings and the importance of incorporating diverse perspectives in suburban schools highlighted in interviews with urban education professionals.

Theme 4: "Cultural Differences in Teaching Approaches" arose from data highlighting the need for teaching methods that consider diverse cultural backgrounds in urban schools and the integration of cultural diversity in suburban school curriculum explained by interviewees in urban settings.

The fifth theme, "Community Engagement and Support," was shaped by the recognition of the crucial role of community involvement in providing resources and enhancing learning experiences in both urban and suburban schools identified by most participants.

Theme 6: "Human Service Approaches to Address Disparities in Education" came from discussions about the need for community outreach, specialized counseling, and mental health services in urban schools to bridge resource gaps and address student challenges which was mentioned in various interviewees with both urban and suburban educational professionals.

The seventh theme, “Implications of Race in Education,” surfaced from data on systemic biases in educational policies that contribute to disparities, highlighting the need for policy-level examination and reform also indicated by both urban and suburban educational professionals.

Finally, “Theme 8: Historical Alignment with Interview Testimonials” emerged from reflections on the enduring impact of historical inequalities on current educational disparities, particularly in urban settings influenced by institutional racism which was explicitly stated by some of the participants in diverse educational positions from urban and suburban school districts.

These themes, derived from the qualitative data collected through interviews, provided a clear, concise, and detailed understanding of the multifaceted challenges in urban education and the potential for human services to address these disparities.**Summary**

In this chapter, I made use of thematic analysis to delve deep into the heart of the disparities between urban and suburban educational settings. Several vital themes through qualitative exploration and appropriate codes were generated to represent these themes. Six distinct themes emerged that shed light on the multifaceted challenges and possible ways to tackle the gaps in K-12 education.

The first theme on resource disparities (RD) starkly contrasted the resources available in urban and suburban schools. It uncovered how funding and resources were unevenly distributed, leading urban schools to struggle with essential services like

counseling and limited program offerings. Meanwhile, suburban schools are well-funded and characterized by ample resources from both the host community and the government.

Student Needs and Services (second theme) explored the intricate challenges faced by urban students. It highlighted the absence of tailored services for diverse student needs while emphasizing the importance of flexibility and inclusivity in addressing these challenges. The theme stressed the need for comprehensive services covering mental health, housing, and accommodations for parents. Catering for the immediate needs of parents means more emphasis and time can be dedicated by parents to make the education of their kids a major priority.

Teaching Approaches and Cultural Relevance (theme 3) focused on teaching methods, stressing the significance of culturally responsive teaching. It revealed how embracing diverse perspectives in the curriculum significantly impacted student achievement.

Cultural Differences in Teaching Approach (theme 4) further highlighted how cultural backgrounds influenced teaching methods and student engagement. It exposed the struggles teachers faced, especially in urban areas, due to implicit biases and the difficulty in adapting to diverse cultural contexts. Nonetheless, it showcased the successful integration of cultural diversity in certain school curricula to create inclusive learning environments.

The fifth theme (Community Engagement and Support) emphasized the crucial role of community involvement in bridging educational gaps. It emphasized how

community resources compensated for school shortcomings which has the potential of positively impacting students' learning experiences.

Under Theme 6, the focus on Human Service Approaches to Address Disparities in Education is crucially underscored by two codes: HS01 and HS02. Code HS01, Community Outreach and Support Programs, highlights the essential role of community partnerships in mitigating resource disparities in urban educational settings. These outreach initiatives and support programs are instrumental in supplementing the educational resources for urban students, thereby contributing significantly to the expansion of support networks essential for their academic and personal growth.

On the other hand, Code HS02 emphasizes Tailored Counselling and Mental Health Services. This aspect is particularly vital in urban schools where students often face unique socio-emotional challenges. The implementation of specialized counseling and mental health services, tailored to the specific needs of these students, is not just an add-on but a necessity for fostering an equitable educational environment. Together, these codes reflect a comprehensive approach to addressing educational disparities through human-centric services.

Theme 7 delved into the Implications of Race in Education, with Code RE01, Systemic Bias in Educational Policies, playing a pivotal role. This code brought to light the deep-seated biases embedded within educational policies that disproportionately affect urban schools, often leading to a perpetuation of racial disparities. The critical examination and restructuring of these policies are imperative to dismantle the systemic barriers that contribute to educational inequity. This theme, through RE01, aligns with

the broader discourse on institutional racism and its historical and ongoing impact on educational outcomes. It calls for a transformative approach in policy-making that acknowledges and actively addresses racial biases, thereby aligning with the theme's emphasis on understanding and rectifying the racial implications in education.

In Theme 8, the focus on Historical Alignment with Interview Testimonials was encapsulated in Code HT01, Persistence of Historical Educational Disparities. This code was significant as it shed light on the enduring nature of educational disparities rooted in historical inequalities. It underscores the fact that despite various efforts and initiatives, the shadows of past injustices continue to loom over the current state of urban education. This persistence of disparities, as revealed through historical data and reinforced by interview testimonials, aligned with the theme's exploration of the long-standing impact of institutional racism on educational systems. HT01 not only acknowledged the historical context of these disparities but also emphasized the need for a sustained and informed effort to address and overcome these deep-rooted educational challenges.

Each theme drew on coded data and interview excerpts, offering a comprehensive understanding of the historical and current disparities and challenges in urban and suburban education. The analysis revealed the complex interactions between resource allocation, student needs, teaching methods, cultural inclusivity, and community involvement and how they are all apart of shaping students' educational experiences in diverse settings. Thus, the intricate complexities inherent in both urban and suburban communities have been greatly expounded. This analysis should urge for targeted

interventions, systemic changes, and policy reforms capable of reducing the crippling disparities experienced in urban schools.

Chapter 5: Conclusions, Interpretations, and Recommendations

Introduction

In this chapter, I am presenting a comprehensive summary and conclusion of the qualitative research study, "Education Reform: Exploring Human Services Needed to Address Disparities in Urban Schools." In this study, I aimed to explore the disparities between urban and suburban schools regarding the provision of human services and their impact on students' achievement in K-12 education. The research utilized a qualitative approach, incorporating thematic analysis to distill nuanced perspectives and provide an understanding of the multifaceted challenges and potential solutions for people of color in the education system. Through extensive interviews with stakeholders, including teachers, administrators, and social service workers from both urban and suburban schools, the study uncovered critical themes that shed light on the disparities in educational resources, the impact of socioeconomic factors, teaching approaches, and cultural relevance.

The findings from the thematic analysis provided valuable insights into the complexities that surround the human services needs of urban and suburban schools, offering a lens through which the prevalent gaps in the public educational landscape are elucidated. This chapter presents a comprehensive narrative that aligns with the overarching goal of comprehending, evaluating, and proposing pragmatic approaches to bridge the existing disparities in the public educational landscape. The study's findings hold significant implications for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders in the field of K-12 education, providing a foundation for future research and interventions aimed at

promoting equity and addressing the systemic challenges faced by students in urban schools.

Educational equity is a bedrock of societal progress. Nevertheless, navigating the complex landscape of disparities inherent in our institutions continues to act as a significant barrier to progress. Policymakers must acknowledge the disparities within our education system, particularly in urban areas, by extending their focus beyond mere quantitative data to include the diverse experiences of individual and collective demographics. While statistical data lays a foundational understanding, it often fails to capture the depth and nuances inherent in urban educational experiences, as explored in this study. The limitations of an overreliance on quantitative data become apparent when attempting to unravel the complex tapestry of societal divisions. This highlights the necessity for a more holistic approach that integrates qualitative data, thereby capturing the richness and complexity of these experiences and providing a more comprehensive understanding of the issues at hand.

Education is undeniably the gateway to all professions, serving as the foundation upon which individuals build their future endeavors. A robust K-12 education is paramount in shaping the trajectory of one's life, as it equips students with the fundamental knowledge and skills necessary for success in higher education and the workforce. However, the significance of education extends beyond mere academic attainment; it is intrinsically linked to human rights and human services, particularly for Black students. Inadequate K-12 education severely diminishes the prospects of Black

students, perpetuating systemic disparities and hindering their access to equal opportunities (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

The research conducted offers a significant contribution to the field of education and human services, particularly in understanding the disparities in urban education and the role of institutional and systemic racism. The findings from this study align with and extend the knowledge base established in the peer-reviewed literature, as discussed in Chapter 2 of the dissertation.

Historical Data on Disparities in Urban Education

As it relates to this study, historical data collected from the Social Mobility Commission (2020) revealed significant trends in poverty and homelessness among Black Americans, highlighting persistent disparities in urban education and socio-economic status. From 1959 to 2022, poverty rates among Black Americans fluctuated, peaking at 40% in 1959 and dropping to 17% in 2019 (Social Mobility Commission, 2020). Despite this decline, which mirrors the overall reduction in poverty across the United States, disparities in urban areas, particularly in education, persist.

This decline in poverty and homelessness has implications for urban education. Improved economic conditions in Black communities suggest a potential shift in resource allocation, leading to better-equipped schools and enhanced access to quality education and extracurricular activities. Such changes may contribute to narrowing achievement gaps, as students from these backgrounds face fewer barriers, such as food insecurity and stress.

However, the data also underscore ongoing educational disparities. According to Barshay (2023), systemic inequalities remain, with White and Asian American students achieving higher college attainment rates than Hispanic and Black students. This disparity indicates deeper structural issues in the education system that extend beyond resource availability.

The decline in poverty reflects increased community engagement and support, potentially strengthening school-community partnerships and enhancing support for students' holistic needs. This positive shift is likely to influence educational policy and advocacy, advocating for sustained or increased investment in urban education. As the socioeconomic status of Black families improves, it could lead to heightened educational aspirations and greater long-term socioeconomic mobility, perpetuating a cycle of empowerment and positive change within these communities. In conclusion, while the Social Mobility Commission (2020) reports progress in reducing poverty and homelessness among Black Americans, the persistent disparities in educational outcomes highlight the need for more targeted and effective strategies to address the complex issues of race, education, and socio-economic status in the United States.

Also, in an analysis conducted by the Economic Policy Institute (EPI) on data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten (ECLS-K) for the kindergarten classes of 1998-1999 and 2010-2011, significant findings were revealed regarding the disparities in cognitive and noncognitive skills between children from high socioeconomic status (SES) and low SES backgrounds (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.). This study focused on the unadjusted gaps in these skills, providing a

clear comparison between the two cohorts. The gap observed in 2010 was determined by adding the initial gap from 1998 to the change observed over the 12-year period. For instance, the gap in approaches to learning, as reported by teachers in 2010, was quantified at 0.51 standard deviations, derived from an initial gap of 0.63 standard deviations in 1998, reduced by a change of 0.12 over the years. This analysis offers critical insights into the evolving nature of educational disparities based on socioeconomic status, highlighting the persistent challenges faced by low-SES children in acquiring key cognitive and noncognitive skills during their formative kindergarten years.

Moreover, the qualitative data collected from participants in this study is consistent with historical data indicating that disparities in urban education are intricately connected to institutional and systemic racism which essentially answers the first research question presented in this study. This is evidenced by the testimonies of urban educators who highlighted the severe lack of essential resources, the profound influence of poverty, and the impact of biased perceptions on student performance. These observations are consistent with the literature that underscores persistent disparities in educational opportunities between urban and suburban schools, despite legal advancements in desegregation. This confirmation of historical data is crucial as it underscores the enduring nature of these disparities and the need for continued attention and action.

Insights into Human Services Approaches

Addressing the second research question, the study identified potential human services approaches to address urban education disparities and promote equity in K-12

education for predominantly Black schools. The insights provided by educational professionals about the cultural differences in teaching approaches, the impact of socioeconomic factors, and the disparities in educational resource allocation offer a nuanced understanding of the challenges faced in urban and suburban schools. These findings extend the discipline's knowledge by providing firsthand accounts and perspectives that are often underrepresented in traditional academic literature.

In addressing the disparities in urban education, particularly in predominantly Black schools, a comprehensive human services approach is essential. Culturally responsive teaching and curriculum development play a critical role in this context. It is imperative to implement educational strategies that are inclusive of the diverse backgrounds of students, involving training educators in culturally relevant pedagogies and developing curricula that reflect the histories and experiences of Black students. Such an approach not only respects and celebrates cultural differences but also enhances student engagement and learning outcomes (Gay, 2010). Additionally, the provision of enhanced socioeconomic support services is crucial. Addressing factors such as food insecurity, housing instability, and limited healthcare access through comprehensive support systems directly impacts educational outcomes. Collaborations with local organizations to provide these services in schools or community centers can create a more supportive and conducive learning environment for students facing socioeconomic challenges (Jensen, 2009).

Equitable resource allocation is another critical area of focus. The existing disparities in resource distribution between urban and suburban schools necessitate a

more equitable approach, encompassing not just financial investment but also access to experienced teachers, advanced technology, and extracurricular opportunities. Advocacy for policy changes at state and federal levels is essential to address these systemic inequities (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Furthermore, integrating mental health and emotional support services in schools is vital, especially considering the higher levels of stress and emotional challenges prevalent among students in high-poverty areas. On-site counselors, social-emotional learning programs, and community mental health partnerships can provide much-needed support. Additionally, fostering community engagement and empowerment strengthens the bond between schools and their communities, enhancing educational initiatives and creating a supportive network for students (Warren, 2005).

Finally, ongoing professional development for educators is imperative to equip them with the skills and knowledge to address the unique challenges faced by students in predominantly Black urban schools. This includes training in managing socioeconomic diversity, classroom dynamics, and implementing inclusive educational practices (Howard, 2003). Moreover, continued research and policy advocacy are crucial to keep the needs of these schools at the forefront of educational discussions, promoting evidence-based solutions and engaging policymakers in meaningful reforms. Addressing the digital divide through technology and infrastructure investment is also essential, ensuring equitable access to digital learning tools and resources (Warschauer, 2006). In summary, a multifaceted human services approach, encompassing culturally responsive education, socioeconomic support, equitable resource allocation, mental health services,

community engagement, educator professional development, policy advocacy, and technology investment, is vital for promoting equity and excellence in K-12 education for predominantly Black schools.

Interpretation of the Findings

The research conducted presents a comprehensive analysis of the disparities in urban education, particularly highlighting the pervasive influence of institutional and systemic racism. The study's findings, grounded in historical data, unequivocally confirm the existence of these disparities, thereby reinforcing the narratives that have long been discussed in academic and policy circles. This confirmation is not merely a reiteration of known facts but serves as a critical reinforcement of the urgent need for systemic change in educational policies and practices.

Moreover, the study contributes significantly to the field of education and human services by integrating a wide array of perspectives, especially those of Black students and educators in urban environments. This inclusion of diverse viewpoints is not just about representation; it is a fundamental shift towards a more holistic understanding of the educational landscape. By centering the voices of those most affected by educational disparities, the study sheds light on the nuanced and often overlooked experiences that shape the educational journeys of Black students in urban settings.

The insight into potential human services approaches to address these disparities is particularly noteworthy. These approaches, as identified in the study, range from targeted interventions in resource allocation to systemic reforms in educational policy and curriculum design. However, the study acknowledges a critical gap in the current

body of knowledge – the need for empirical research to test the effectiveness of these proposed interventions. This gap underscores the importance of not only conceptualizing potential solutions but also rigorously evaluating their impact in practice.

Furthermore, the study's findings emphasize the importance of a sustained focus on equity and justice in education policy and practice. This is not a call for incremental change but a demand for a radical rethinking of how educational systems operate, particularly in urban settings. The persistent disparities in urban education, exacerbated by systemic racism, require solutions that are as complex and multifaceted as the problems themselves.

Lastly, findings from this study align with the historical data on disparities in urban education but also extends our understanding by incorporating diverse perspectives and highlighting the need for empirical evaluation of proposed human services interventions. It serves as a clarion call for continued and concerted efforts towards achieving equity and justice in education, urging policymakers, educators, and researchers to engage in transformative actions that go beyond traditional approaches. The findings from this study thus represent a critical step forward in the ongoing endeavor to create more equitable and just educational environments for all students, particularly those in urban settings.

Opportunity, Access, and Societal Divisions

Educational disparities are strongly entrenched in the uneven distribution of opportunity and access across communities. The inequitable distribution of resources and opportunity sustains structural divides, impeding progress toward an egalitarian society.

Educational disparities, as described in the literature review and echoed by all interviewees in this study, are fundamentally linked to the unequal allocation of resources and opportunities across communities, particularly between urban and suburban schools. This imbalance, highlighted by the interviewees, manifests in significant differences in access to facilities, resources, services, and socioeconomic conditions, with urban schools facing more pronounced challenges (Breen & Jonsson, 2005; Chmielewski, 2019). The qualitative study's historical analysis and research methods, including interviews with education professionals, provide valuable insights into the real-world impacts of these disparities, reinforcing the understanding that structural inequalities in education are perpetuated by this uneven distribution (Adams, 2019; Clark, 2022).

Challenges in Achieving Absolute Equality

While absolute equality is an aspirational goal, it is hampered by the distinct and unequal requirements of various ethnicities. A sophisticated awareness of these demands and a specialized strategy for meeting them are required to achieve fairness (Dworkin, 2018). Subsequent sections will delve into the multifaceted dimensions of educational disparities. During my research I explored the nuanced experiences of marginalized urban school's vs their suburban counterparts and proposes pathways toward equity and justice. Through this study I examined how systemic inequalities impact educational outcomes and endeavors to unravel the complex tapestry of disparities through a multifaceted lens.

Social and Economic Systems for Equitable Access

There is a need to address the current reforms and economic systems in the country in other to understand the multifaceted challenges faced by Black communities.

The disparity in resources and opportunities creates an uneven playing field that profoundly impacts the educational landscape and social progress.

The historical data presented in this study and the qualitative interview data collected shows that there is a significant need to address current reforms and economic systems in the country to understand the multifaceted challenges faced by Black communities. Moreover, the interview data in this study precisely revealed that all interviewees expressed that there are significant differences between urban and suburban education, with all agreeing that there is inequality in education, including access to facilities, resources, and services, as well as socioeconomic differences and disparities in K-12 education. Additionally, all interviewees stated that there is an achievement gap between urban and suburban school students, indicating an uneven playing field that profoundly impacts the educational landscape and social progress (Logan & Burdick-Will, 2017; Maldonado & De Witte, 2021; Marcotte & Dalane, 2019;).

Furthermore, the qualitative study, bolstered by interview data, highlights the pressing need for reforms in educational and economic systems to effectively address the challenges faced by predominantly Black communities in urban areas. These reforms are necessitated by the unanimous agreement among interviewees on the significant disparities between urban and suburban education, which underscores a systemic issue. This consensus is not merely about the inequality in education, including access to facilities, resources, and services, but also encompasses the socioeconomic differences and disparities prevalent in K-12 education according to study participants. Such a unanimous view among education professionals' points to a perception of deeply rooted

trauma and systemic deficiencies in urban schools. Based on the perspectives of educational professionals in this study, these deficiencies contribute to an achievement gap between students in urban and suburban settings, a gap that has been historically documented and discussed in the literature review. This achievement gap underscores an uneven playing field that significantly impacts the educational landscape and hinders social progress. The findings of this study align with existing literature, indicating that these disparities are not isolated incidents but are indicative of broader and historic systemic issues that necessitate comprehensive and targeted reforms (Logan & Burdick-Will, 2017; Maldonado & De Witte, 2021; Marcotte & Dalane, 2019;). The insights gained from this study call for a critical examination of current policies and practices, advocating for changes that directly address the root causes of these educational inequalities.

Fairness Over Absolute Equality

The pursuit of absolute equality within societal systems is fraught with challenges, primarily due to the diverse and varying needs of different demographic groups. Instead, the focus should shift towards fostering fairness by reforming social and economic structures. This approach is more feasible and promising than striving for absolute parity. In my examination of historical literature, research, and data, I found no evidence to support the hypothesis that absolute equality is achievable. However, adopting multiple theoretical frameworks and engaging in action research suggests that striving for fairness is a more attainable and equitable goal. Dworkin (2018) underscores the importance of tailored approaches to meet the unique needs of different

demographics, advocating for a fair and just society. Such approaches could include allocating targeted funding to underprivileged schools, implementing specific community-based programs, and developing customized social support systems, all aimed at addressing the distinct needs of various groups.

Addressing Systemic Disadvantages

History has subjected the Black community to deep-rooted psychological damage with long-lasting trauma that continues to cut across generations (Blair, 2009). Today, Black communities are characterized by persistent social-economic deficiencies as highlighted through the breadth of existing literature and data collected in this study. The socioeconomic deficiencies persistent among Black communities disproportionately affect Blacks and place them at a significant disadvantage in accessing quality education and resources. Pham et.al (2021), underscores the enduring impact of historical trauma and systemic biases in perpetuating educational and societal disparities. Any lasting reforms targeted at leveling the playing field for urban schools must include trauma-informed education policies that consider the mental health status of both students and parents as well as the socio-economic challenges faced within the communities.

Rectifying the systemic disparities requires a comprehensive analysis that encompasses the domains of social-economic, social-emotional, behavioral, and racial dimensions that are embedded within our current system. An in-depth examination of these intertwined aspects to unveil systemic biases and deficiencies is needed. This analysis will look at issues related to funding and resource disparities. Only when a truthful assessment of the social problem is discussed at the table will comprehensive

evaluations lay the foundation for evidence-based decisions needed to tackle the systemic concerns.

Advocating for Community Influence

Another element fueling the social problem of inequalities experienced at urban schools is the phenomenon of taxation without representation. There is a growing call for increased community involvement in policymaking processes to ensure a more equitable distribution of resources that directly impact marginalized communities. Brown and Jones (2019) stress the significance of community-driven policies for fostering a more just society. Providing proper representation to address this abnormality is not far-fetched. Involvement can take the form of community-led education boards or adequate representation in budgeting to enhance inclusive decision-making structures that help amplify the voice of marginalized urban schools and communities.

Culturally Responsive Systems

The inadequacy of the American school system to be culturally responsive to the specific needs of Black and brown communities perpetuates disparities in educational access and outcomes. For urban school reform to be effective in the United States, it must be connected to the revitalization of the neighborhoods around our schools. It is imperative to create an educational environment that honors and integrates the cultural identities and experiences of students from diverse backgrounds. To do this, administrators must infuse culturally responsive teaching methods, inclusive curriculum development, and diversification of the teaching workforce. The discussion on culturally responsive systems emphasizes the necessity for systemic reforms that prioritize fairness

and equity over the pursuit of absolute equality. Diverse and multifaceted responses are needed to address the deeply rooted difficulties in social and economic processes. These responses may include but are not limited to comprehensive analysis, community-driven policies, and culturally responsive systems.

Educational System Reform

Lack of Cultural Responsiveness

The failure to adequately tackle the needs of students of color has been a major problem with the American Educational System (Howard, 2019). This failure has manifested in a lack of cultural responsiveness. Cultural responsiveness refers to a pedagogical approach that recognizes values and integrates cultural diversity into teaching practices and curricula. However, the current educational landscape often adopts a one-size-fits-all model that neglects the rich cultural backgrounds and experiences of diverse student populations.

The lack of cultural responsiveness results in an educational environment that does not validate students' identities nor recognize the histories and lived experiences of these students. Thus, contributing to disengagement that manifests as low academic achievement. Coupled with the perpetuation of racial disparities, it is no wonder that Black student-dominated urban schools' lag. This discrepancy underscores the urgent need for transformative changes within the educational system.

Urgency for Radical Changes

Radical changes are imperative to address the deep-seated issues of race, racism, and education. The current educational framework often sidesteps or inadequately

confronts the realities of systemic racism. The avoidance arises from educational institutions' uneasiness and inability to accept their involvement in maintaining racial injustices. These changes must begin with identifying the presence of systemic racism within educational institutions and curricula. Then the changes can gradually proceed to more proactive actions to eliminate the established prejudices. Schools can establish an inclusive and equitable learning environment that celebrates diversity, recognizes past injustices, and actively fights discriminatory behaviors by including anti-racist teaching techniques.

Differentiating Individual vs. Systemic Racism

A crucial aspect of addressing racial disparities within education is understanding the distinction between individual and systemic racism. Individual racism refers to personal prejudices and discriminatory actions based on racial biases (Efimoff & Starzyk, 2023). However, systemic racism operates at an institutional level that is embedded within the policies and practices of societal systems (Efimoff & Starzyk, 2023).

Research by Brown (2018) highlights the significance of recognizing systemic racism to effectively combat racial disparities. Educational institutions often focus on individual racism without adequately addressing the systemic factors that perpetuate inequities. By differentiating between these forms of racism, educational reforms can target systemic issues that bedevil the system (Efimoff & Starzyk, 2023). Some of these issues are biased curriculum, inequitable resource allocation, and disparities in disciplinary actions.

Equity vs. Equality

Another critical distinction lies in understanding the difference between equity and equality within the educational system. While equality aims to provide the same resources and opportunities to everyone regardless of their individual needs (Spring, 2016). Equity on the other hand strives to ensure fairness by offering resources and support based on specific requirements to level the playing field for marginalized groups. Achieving educational equity involves acknowledging the unique challenges faced by marginalized students and tailoring resources and interventions to address these disparities. In contrast, pursuing educational equality without considering the varying needs and backgrounds of students may further perpetuate inequities. By promoting equity, educational institutions can better address the diverse needs of students, fostering an environment where all learners, including those from historically marginalized communities, have equal opportunities to thrive.

Racism, Truth, and Acknowledgment

Racism is deeply embedded within systems, particularly in the education sector, and its nuances are often overlooked or not always blatant. It is imperative that we all confront the truth about the division it creates and its profound racial effects within education. We must acknowledge the role that each of us inadvertently plays in perpetuating these disparities. Only by recognizing our individual and collective contributions to this systemic issue can we begin to implement the necessary changes and improvements. This requires a concerted effort to dismantle systemic barriers, foster

genuine inclusivity, and ensure equitable access to resources for all students, regardless of their racial or ethnic background.

Debunking Color-Blindness and Systemic Racism

The concept of colorblindness perpetuates resource disparities by ignoring the unequal allocation of resources between urban and suburban schools. Yi et al. (2023) shows how colorblind beliefs ignore systemic injustices in educational financing. This continues to fuel the prolongation of resource disparities in urban schools. Recognizing these differences is critical for enacting fair policies and resource allocation.

Addressing disparities through color blind policies perpetuates systemic issues (Ochs, 2006). The concept of color blindness is often adopted as an ideological approach to negate racism but paradoxically it fosters culturally insensitive policies. The idea behind color blindness is to act as a blindfold that averts the acknowledgment of deep-rooted inequalities. The repercussions of color blind policies are that they promote a misguided belief in racial equality while blurring the real systemic disadvantages faced by marginalized groups.

Colorblind policies make it difficult to recognize various student needs in urban schools. A thorough examination of social, emotional, and behavioral elements must consider the influence of systematic racism on these requirements. Tarca (2005) conducted research that emphasizes the need for culturally responsive services by demonstrating how colorblind methods ignore the varied needs of Black kids and perpetuate disparities in educational services.

Challenges in Acknowledgment and Culturally Responsive Policies

Efforts to address disparities encounter immense hurdles due to a collective denial of racism's pervasive influence. Acknowledgment becomes the cornerstone for implementing culturally responsive policies. However, the hesitancy or reluctance to confront the historical roots of racism hinders the development and implementation of these much-needed reforms. There is a need to emphasize the acknowledgment of historical realities to create policies fostering equality within the education system.

Understanding the difference between individual versus systemic racism is pivotal in acknowledging the cultural relevance in teaching approaches. Studies by Legette et. al (2023) and Singla et.al (2023) stress the importance of acknowledging systemic biases in educational practices. Colorblind approaches hinder efforts to incorporate culturally responsive pedagogies by inhibiting inclusive educational experiences for Black students.

Sanitization of History and Accountability

There exists an undeniable tendency to sanitize and sugarcoat the history of racism, obscuring the harsh realities faced by Black communities. This omission undermines the need for accountability and corrective measures. Smith's study (2018) underscores how the sanitization of history in educational curricula education, how education is funded and resourced perpetuates the cycle of ignorance and hampers efforts to foster genuine inclusivity and equity within the education system.

Reforms and Recognition

The refusal to acknowledge systemic racism hampers efforts to bridge cultural differences in teaching approaches. Research by Aragón, Dovidio and Graham (2017)

highlights how colorblind ideologies inhibit recognizing the impact of cultural disparities on teaching methodologies. Addressing these disparities requires acknowledging and embracing cultural diversity within educational frameworks.

The current demand to eliminate racial inequities rests on changes in perception and policy. Reform requires a comprehensive knowledge of individual vs systemic racism, as well as the disparities between equity and equality. Brown and James (2020) underline the importance of this important distinction, underlining the necessity for structural reforms to ameliorate systematic racial prejudices.

America's societal framework requires radical changes in perception and policy to address racial disparities. Implementing reforms demands a nuanced understanding of individual versus systemic racism and the distinctions between equity and equality. The study by Brown and James (2020) emphasizes this critical differentiation by emphasizing the need for structural changes to mitigate systemic racial biases.

Opportunities, Outcomes, and Ongoing Research

Understanding that equal opportunities may not yield equal outcomes: Disparities in educational outcomes persist despite efforts to ensure equal opportunities due to multifaceted factors that extend beyond educational access. Socioeconomic, cultural, and systemic issues contribute significantly to these discrepancies (Howard, 2019). The disparities create a complex web of challenges that affect students in urban and suburban schools differently.

This research has demonstrated that resource disparities play a pivotal role in shaping educational outcomes. The thematic analysis in Chapter 4 highlighted stark

differences in resource allocation between urban and suburban schools. For instance, resource inadequacies in urban schools bordering on insufficient funding, limited access to specialized services, and higher student-to-teacher ratios (larger class sizes) have a direct impact on educational quality. Quotes from the interviews underscored these challenges and helped to emphasize the struggles in providing essential resources to urban schools.

Furthermore, cultural differences influence teaching approaches and student engagement. Urban schools often grapple with the integration of culturally relevant content and teaching methods. Teachers in these settings face several challenges in catering to diverse student needs. This distraction usually hurts the effectiveness of education. The research revealed instances where cultural responsiveness was highlighted as essential in emphasizing the need for relatable content and inclusive teaching practices.

Community engagement also emerges as a critical factor influencing educational outcomes. Urban schools often face challenges in garnering adequate community support which impacts the accessibility of vital resources for students. Interviews indicated the importance of community involvement and the lack thereof with urban schools expressing the need for more resources like career opportunities and parental support. Thus, it goes beyond meeting the needs of urban students to a general socio-economic improvement of host communities. Conversely, suburban schools tend to benefit from more substantial resource allocation. This favoritism leads to better-equipped facilities

and access to specialized services. These advantages contribute significantly to improved educational outcomes for students in suburban settings.

The bottom line is that the unequal outcomes between urban and suburban schools stem from a culmination of resource disparities, cultural differences in teaching approaches as well and varying levels of community support systems. All these factors highlighted in the thematic analysis underscore the systemic challenges embedded within the educational system that go beyond the mere provision of equal opportunities.
The analysis of these factors emphasizes the need for comprehensive reforms addressing resource allocation, cultural responsiveness in teaching, and increased community involvement to bridge the gap between urban and suburban educational outcomes.

The Dichotomy of America: A Land of Opportunities and Many Challenges

The concept of America as a land of opportunity is deeply ingrained in its ethos. However, this perception starkly contrasts with the prevalent environment of intense striving that permeates various facets of society. The thematic analysis in Chapter 4 sheds light on how this dichotomy manifests within educational systems in urban and suburban settings.

In urban schools, limited opportunities are often exacerbated by the pervasive pursuit of scarce resources. Urban settings face significant challenges in resource allocation, stemming from various socioeconomic obstacles and historical disparities. The interviews underscored the struggles of urban schools in accessing adequate funding, essential support services, and specialized programs. These resource inadequacies create

an environment of competition within urban education, where schools vie for limited resources.

Conversely, suburban schools often benefit from a more favorable distribution of resources. Suburban settings enjoy well-equipped facilities, lower student-to-teacher ratios (resulting in smaller class sizes), and greater access to specialized services. This abundance of resources contributes to a less competitive environment in suburban education, allowing for more comprehensive educational experiences for students.

The impact of this dichotomy on educational systems is substantial. Urban schools grappling with resource constraints must operate within a highly competitive framework, where the scarcity of resources directly affects educational quality. Meanwhile, suburban schools, supported by ample resources, experience a less competitive environment that fosters a more conducive educational atmosphere.
The findings from the thematic analysis align with the dichotomous nature of America's educational landscape, reflecting disparities in resource allocation and their implications for student experiences. This ongoing dichotomy perpetuates systemic inequalities, contributing to divergent educational outcomes between urban and suburban settings.

Addressing this dichotomy necessitates a reevaluation of resource allocation strategies to ensure a more equitable distribution. It also calls for policy reforms aimed at mitigating the competitive nature of resource acquisition to provide a more level playing field for all students. Efforts to bridge this gap must address not only the availability of resources but also the quality and accessibility of educational opportunities for all students, irrespective of their geographic location or socioeconomic background.

Continuous Action Research is Required for Ongoing Social Issues

Continuous action research stands as a critical instrument in addressing the persistent social issues and disparities entrenched in our educational system. Ongoing research and evaluation play a pivotal role in informing policies and interventions aimed at mitigating these discrepancies needed to foster equitable educational opportunities for all students.

Urban and suburban educational disparities persist due to multifaceted factors like resource inequalities, cultural differences, and community engagement. Continuous action research serves as a proactive mechanism to delve into these complexities. Action research can offer insights into the evolving landscape of educational needs to provide solutions.

By emphasizing the need for ongoing action research, policymakers and educators can stay attuned to the dynamic nature of these disparities. Action research in this area should be characterized by continuous data collection, analysis, and evaluation to unearth the changing needs of urban and suburban schools (Evered & Roger, 2022). This iterative process enables the identification of emerging challenges and the evaluation of the effectiveness of interventions over time.

In shaping policies and interventions, continuous action research provides empirical evidence to support decision-making processes (Evered & Roger, 2022). Existing studies such as longitudinal analyses of resource allocation in urban and suburban schools can offer insights into the long-term impact of different funding models on educational outcomes. Moreover, qualitative research exploring the cultural nuances

in teaching methods between these settings informs the development of culturally responsive pedagogies.

Proposed methodologies for continuous action research in addressing urban and suburban educational disparities involve a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches. Longitudinal studies tracking resource allocation trends over the years and across districts provide valuable data on the evolution of disparities. Additionally, qualitative research employing interviews and focus groups among stakeholders can unearth nuanced perspectives on the impact of these disparities.

Existing studies like the Coleman Report in the 1960s and contemporary research on educational equity frameworks offer foundational knowledge (Lezotte, 2001; Wong & Nicotera, 2004). They highlight the significance of continuous research in shaping policy and practice. Research methodologies such as mixed-method approaches integrating quantitative data on funding allocation and qualitative insights into community perceptions aid in comprehensive evaluations.

Insights from Interviews

Disparities in education within Black communities are deeply entrenched. The evidence of this can be thought of via poignant analogies that capture the systemic challenges faced by Black students. The analogy of “students are given a plane without wheel”, a quote given by suburban school administrator in this study mirrors the situation wherein students lack essential resources or support necessary for academic success. Expecting them to thrive under such conditions disregards the fundamental disparities that hinder their progress.

The interviews conducted in this study yielded unanimous consent among participants regarding the pressing need for increased resources in education in urban schools. The resounding sentiment emphasized that a lack of adequate resources stands as a primary obstacle hindering the success of Black students. Many interviewees echoed the conviction that "if *urban schools were provided with comparable resources to their suburban counterparts, Black students could thrive academically and holistically".*

What adds depth and credibility to these perspectives is the diverse professional backgrounds and roles of the participants. Their varied experiences which spanned different levels of education and encompassing roles within both urban and suburban schools helped offer a panoramic view of the intricacies embedded within the educational system. This multifaceted exposure has granted them a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the systemic challenges faced by Black students. Put together they all offered invaluable insights into the multi-layered dimensions of the social problem.

Their collective experiences indicated a harsh reality. The resource discrepancy between urban and suburban schools has a major influence on Black children's scholastic trajectory and general well-being. This direct knowledge underlines the essential impact that resource allocation has in molding student's academic results and life chances.
The consensus emerging from these interviews underscores a systemic imbalance in the educational landscape which disproportionately impacts Black students. Participants unanimously emphasized that the disparity in resources stands as a formidable barrier that impedes the progress and success of Black students. They conveyed a resolute belief that

resource equality, rather than mere equality in theory should be pivotal in leveling the educational playing field.

These experts' accounts give a clear picture of the tremendous effect that resource discrepancies have on Black students. From watching students in the classroom to contending with bigger social obstacles inhibiting learning, their observations provide a compelling picture of the need for change. Finally, these interviews serve as a rallying cry for equitable resource distribution, emphasizing the critical role it plays in closing the educational gap and cultivating an atmosphere in which Black children may succeed academically and beyond.

Humanistic Approaches and Societal Impact

Human centered approaches offer a glimmer of hope when it comes to addressing the rooted disparities, in education. These approaches place value on recognizing and honoring the worth and dignity of every individual (Leavitt, 2013). They emphasize empathy, compassion and a deep understanding of the lived experiences of marginalized communities. By adopting these human centered perspectives educational institutions can create environments that prioritize the needs of students who come from marginalized backgrounds with a focus on Black communities.

Understanding the impact on students requires acknowledging the challenges faced by burdened communities. These communities, burdened by hardships create an environment that significantly influences the experiences of Black students. Such environments are characterized by resources, social and economic burdens and systemic

disadvantages that often hinder success. Recognizing these burdens is vital in developing strategies that provide tailored support to help students navigate these challenges.

The effects of racism are far-reaching. Cannot be easily measured or quantified—both for individuals and society as a whole. Its pervasive nature seeps into every aspect of society shaping attitudes, opportunities and life trajectories. Its profound impact on students, within settings goes beyond simple metrics or numerical evaluations; it permeates their experiences and shapes their academic journey in ways that defy easy measurement or assessment.

The intangible consequences of racism such, as distress, diminished sense of self institutional obstacles contribute to a complex array of difficulties faced by Black students. To address these disparities comprehensively it is essential to recognize the wide-ranging effects of racism. Approaches rooted in empathy and understanding provide a pathway toward acknowledging the multifaceted challenges that Black students encounter and fostering a supportive environment. By prioritizing tailored support and cultivating an understanding of their needs these approaches aim to mitigate the diverse impacts that systemic disadvantages have on Black students.

In summary, humanistic approaches offer a framework for addressing inequalities by acknowledging the embedded challenges in marginalized communities and recognizing the influence of racism these approaches strive to create inclusive and supportive educational environments that cater specifically to the needs of Black students. Through empathy, comprehension, and a commitment to dismantling barriers humanistic approaches seek to pave the way, for an equitable educational landscape.

Human Services Approach: Employing a human service approach to address disparities in urban education, particularly in relation to race and institutional racism, requires a comprehensive and multifaceted strategy. A human service perspective in this context involves providing services that cater to students' social, emotional, psychological, and academic needs, acknowledging that personal experiences can significantly impact academic performance and overall well-being.

To effectively employ a human service approach, it is essential to create a supportive school environment that addresses the specific challenges faced by students in urban schools, especially those predominantly attended by Black students. This can be achieved through the implementation of various resources and initiatives, such as counseling services, after-school programs, family engagement initiatives, and community partnerships. Additionally, practical approaches should be tailored to address the unique needs of students in urban areas, focusing on promoting equity and reducing achievement gaps.

These approaches may include targeted interventions to address social determinants of health, such as poverty, housing instability, and food insecurity, as well as the integration of culturally responsive services that are sensitive to the diverse backgrounds of students. Furthermore, collaboration between educators, administrators, policymakers, and human service professionals is crucial to ensure the successful implementation of these approaches and to address potential challenges and barriers that may arise in the process.

In employing a human service perspective for addressing disparities in urban education, it is imperative to consider the significance of theory and the practical implications of human services in school settings. The provision of human services plays a vital role in creating a supportive and inclusive environment that fosters equitable opportunities for all students, particularly those in urban schools facing unique challenges related to poverty, violence, and social inequality.

By examining the influences of human services needed to reduce disparities related to systemic racism and equity between urban and suburban schools, policymakers, educators, and human service professionals can gain valuable insights into how to meet the specific needs of students effectively. This research has significant managerial implications for those responsible for designing and implementing educational policies and processes, as it can lead to policy changes that address unequal access to resources and services between urban and suburban schools.

Moreover, the findings from this exploration of human services in school settings could provide insight into better equipping urban schools with the resources needed to provide students with an equitable education and indicate strategies that can be implemented to improve the achievement of students in urban school districts. Overall, employing a human service perspective in addressing disparities in urban education requires a holistic and collaborative approach that considers the specific needs of students and aims to create a supportive and inclusive educational environment.

Conclusions From Theoretical Framework

CST, SST, and CRT: Strategic Insights and Practical Limitations in Urban Education

Critical System Theory (CST) offers a comprehensive framework for analyzing how beliefs in racial superiority are perpetuated through societal structures, laws, and political mechanisms. It plays a crucial role in examining the relationship between minority interests and the often-conditional support they receive from the majority, especially when these interests intersect. CST's application in the context of urban educational disparities has been particularly insightful, highlighting how societal elements contribute to these inequities and suggesting human services that could be integrated to promote equity within K-12 education.

Social Stratification Theory (SST) provides a critical lens for understanding societal hierarchies and their impact on academic achievement disparities, particularly between Black and White students. It emphasizes the differentiated roles played by various groups in maintaining societal structure and encourages an examination of social dynamics to understand how these interactions contribute to disparities in academic achievement. However, SST's broad, theoretical nature poses challenges in translating macro-level perspectives into specific, actionable strategies at the school or community level, limiting its direct application in addressing educational inequities in predominantly Black schools.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) has been instrumental in analyzing the systemic nature of racism and its impact on educational structures. It sheds light on how institutional racism shapes educational outcomes in urban schools, providing a critical

perspective on the systemic nature of racism and its impact on educational structures. However, translating these theoretical insights into actionable interventions in urban educational environments, especially in predominantly Black schools, is complex. This complexity necessitates strategies that effectively bridge theoretical concepts with practical human service applications.

In summary, while Critical Race Theory (CRT), Critical Systems Theory (CST), and Social Stratification Theory (SST) offer valuable insights into the structural and systemic dimensions of urban educational disparities, their effectiveness in directly impacting practical human service strategies is limited. These frameworks deepen our understanding of historical and systemic racism in urban education, yet they do not fully address the practical human service interventions needed to mitigate these disparities. This gap highlights the necessity for a new, more integrative theoretical framework. Such a framework should effectively bridge the divide between theory and practice, facilitating the development of concrete strategies that address urban education disparities and promote equity in K-12 education, particularly in predominantly Black schools. This approach would not only enhance theoretical understanding but also translate these insights into actionable solutions, thereby contributing to meaningful change in urban educational settings.

Theory vs. Practice: This study encountered the critical task of harmonizing theoretical insights with practical applications in urban education. While the theories offered profound insights into systemic issues, they lacked in providing clear, actionable steps for the implementation of human services in urban educational environments. This

gap between theoretical knowledge and practical implementation highlighted the need for strategies that effectively translate complex theoretical concepts into tangible, effective human services tailored to the unique challenges of urban schools.

The applicability of these theoretical frameworks in both the human services and educational sectors was evident, particularly in their ability to dissect the systemic challenges impacting urban education. However, the study highlighted the necessity for a more integrative approach that could effectively bridge the gap between theoretical understanding and practical application, focusing on developing human service strategies that directly contribute to fostering equity in predominantly Black schools. This alignment with the research questions underscores the importance of not only understanding but also practically addressing the disparities in urban educational contexts.

The Social Concept of Race

Within the intricate weaving of our nation's history, the issue of urban educational disparities emerges not as a localized anomaly confined to the metropolitan area of Detroit or the state of Michigan, but as a national concern that beckons for our collective consciousness. This study, steeped in the historical context of this social problem, implores us to transcend traditional perceptions of race.

It urges us to see race not merely as a matter of skin color but as a social construct, a condition, a state of being that encompasses various human experiences, whether it be poverty, mental illness, or resource deprivation. In this light, race and racism are not static 'isms' but dynamic states that can be transformed. The urgency of

addressing the disparities in urban education transcends geographical boundaries, emerging as a national imperative that beckons for a collective awakening.

The conceptualization of race and racism as a condition and human state of being, rather than merely as an 'ism', represents a profound shift in understanding these complex phenomena. This perspective transcends the traditional view of racism as a series of isolated, individual acts of prejudice or discrimination. Instead, it recognizes racism as a pervasive condition that affects the lived experiences, opportunities, and well-being of individuals and communities.

This extremity calls for a profound shift in the American consciousness – a shift that requires us to be acutely aware of the intricate interplay of race, class, and socioeconomic factors that shape the fabric of our nation, revealing that the disparities in urban education are not mere anomalies, but symptomatic of deeper systemic issues that permeate our society.

Race as a Human Condition: Viewing race as a human condition involves acknowledging that racial identity profoundly influences one's life experiences, interactions, and the opportunities one is afforded or denied. This perspective recognizes that race, while a social construct without biological basis, has real and significant implications for individuals' lives. It shapes one's identity, informs one's worldview, and impacts one's interactions with the social, economic, and political environments.

Racism as a State of Being: Understanding racism as a state of being means recognizing it as an embedded and enduring feature of society. It is not just a matter of individual attitudes or actions but is ingrained in the structures, systems, and institutions

that govern society. This systemic nature of racism means that it is not merely an aberration but a fundamental aspect of the societal fabric, influencing policies, practices, and norms in ways that perpetuate racial inequalities.

To transform the condition of race and the state of being of racism, a human service approach must be employed, one that delicately treats race not as a mere category but as a lived experience deeply intertwined with societal structures and individual lives. This approach requires a profound shift in perspective and methodology, moving beyond traditional paradigms to embrace a more compassionate, holistic, and action-oriented path.

Addressing Race and Racism Beyond 'Isms': To address issues of race and racism effectively, it is crucial to move beyond seeing them simply as ideologies or attitudes ('isms'). This requires a holistic approach that considers the broader socio-economic and political contexts in which racial dynamics are embedded. It involves examining and dismantling the systemic barriers that perpetuate racial disparities, such as in education, healthcare, employment, and criminal justice. This approach also necessitates a focus on the lived experiences of those affected by racism, ensuring that their voices and perspectives are central in the discourse and action taken to combat racial inequalities.

Central to this journey of healing and reconstruction is the dismantling of the social construct of race and racism in America. The nation must confront and deconstruct the systemic biases that have perpetuated inequality and injustice. This process involves

redefining the concept of race – moving away from a divisive tool used to oppress and discriminate, and towards a deeper understanding of our shared humanity.

The imperative need for reform and reconstruction of the social construct of race is evident. It is not only about acknowledging past issues of race but actively working towards a future where race is no longer a barrier to equality and justice. To truly transform American society, it is crucial to dismantle and reconstruct the social construct of race. This process involves redefining race not as a divisive tool but as a means to recognize and address the unique characteristics and needs of different social groups. The ultimate goal is to create universal equity, equalizing opportunities for all communities to prosper. In this context, race should be used effectively as a system for understanding and addressing social needs, rather than as a defective 'ism' that perpetuates division and inequality.

Transforming the Condition of Race: To change the condition of race, we must first recognize its multifaceted impact on individuals and communities. This involves understanding race as a dynamic and complex aspect of human experience that shapes identities, influences opportunities, and affects outcomes across various life domains. The transformation requires dismantling the deeply entrenched societal narratives that perpetuate racial stereotypes and biases. It involves creating new narratives that celebrate racial diversity, promote inclusivity, and recognize the unique contributions of each racial group to the societal tapestry.

Altering the State of Being of Racism: Addressing racism as a state of being necessitates acknowledging its systemic and structural nature. This means confronting

and dismantling the institutional mechanisms that sustain racial inequalities, whether in education, healthcare, employment, or the criminal justice system. It requires a concerted effort to reform policies and practices that inadvertently perpetuate racial disparities. This endeavor demands courage and commitment to challenge the status quo and advocate for systemic changes that foster equity and social justice.

This reconceptualization is pivotal in our journey towards a truly colorblind society – a society where people are seen and understood in the totality of their human experience, unencumbered by the biases and preconceptions that race often carries. It is about treating the human conditions of society from a holistic human service perspective, where the focus is on addressing the needs of populations based on their unique circumstances, rather than on predetermined identities.

Human Service Approach to Race and Racism

A human service perspective on race and racism emphasizes empathy, understanding, and support. It calls for interventions that are not only reactive but also proactive, focusing on preventing racial disparities and promoting racial equity. This approach involves:

1. Empathetic Understanding: Developing a deep understanding of the lived experiences of those affected by racial disparities. This requires active listening, cultural humility, and an openness to learning from diverse perspectives.
2. Community Engagement: Working collaboratively with communities to identify their needs, strengths, and aspirations. This participatory approach ensures that interventions are culturally relevant, community-driven, and sustainable.

3. Resource Allocation: Ensuring equitable distribution of resources to address the historical and ongoing disadvantages faced by marginalized racial groups. This involves advocating for policies that allocate resources in a manner that rectifies past injustices and promotes future opportunities.
4. Education and Awareness: Raising awareness about the complexities of race and racism, and educating individuals and communities about the importance of racial equity. This includes integrating anti-racist education in schools, workplaces, and public forums.
5. Supportive Services: Providing comprehensive services that address the holistic needs of individuals affected by racial disparities. This includes mental health services, career counseling, educational support, and legal assistance.
6. Policy Advocacy: Advocating for policy changes that address the root causes of racial disparities. This involves engaging in policy analysis, lobbying, and collaboration with policymakers to enact laws and regulations that promote racial equity.

In essence, treating the condition of race and the state of being of racism from a human service perspective requires a multifaceted approach that is empathetic, inclusive, and action oriented. It demands a commitment to understanding the nuanced realities of race, advocating for systemic change, and providing supportive services that empower individuals and communities. This path, though challenging, is essential for building a society where racial equity and justice are not just ideals but lived realities.

Limitations of the Study

In conducting my study on urban education disparities and the effectiveness of human services, several limitations pertaining to trustworthiness arose, which had varying impacts on the study. These limitations included access to tools for thorough analysis, issues related to credibility and transferability, as well as challenges in ensuring dependability and confirmability.

The lack of access to sophisticated tools for conducting a thorough thematic analysis in qualitative research was a significant limitation. This constraint potentially limited the depth and comprehensiveness of the analysis, which could impact the study's credibility and dependability. To mitigate this, I employed rigorous manual coding processes and cross-checked findings with existing literature to enhance the credibility of the analysis, despite the absence of advanced analytical tools.

Regarding credibility and transferability, while methodical and well-documented processes were employed, the inherent limitations of generalizing findings in qualitative research affected the study. The specific context of my study might not fully apply to different environments or populations, impacting the transferability of the conclusions. To address this, I provided detailed descriptions of the research context and participants, enabling future researchers to gauge the applicability of the findings to other settings. In terms of dependability and confirmability, although a methodical, auditable, and well-documented process was used, limitations in demonstrating confirmability persisted, particularly in backing up existing literature and claims with valid inferences from the facts. To counter this, I maintained a transparent and reflexive research process,

documenting decision-making steps and rationale throughout the study to enhance confirmability.

Lastly, ensuring the consistency and stability of the research process over time, across different researchers and methods, and reducing threats to external validity presented challenges to the study's dependability and reliability. To mitigate these issues, I employed consistent methods and maintained a detailed audit trail, allowing for the replication of the study under similar circumstances.

Moreover, there is no doubt that data serves as one of the fundamental foundations for understanding disparities. However, data was limited in encapsulating individual and collective demographic experiences. In this study, quantitative data analysis was considered but ultimately not used. While it offers a broad insight, they do not adequately capture the complexities and nuances of challenges within diverse communities, especially in understanding social and economic disparities among marginalized groups (Krauss, 2016). Quantitative data often fails to fully convey individual experiences and perceptions in educational settings (Shenton, A. K. 2019). Furthermore, there is a risk of misrepresenting or oversimplifying complex social phenomena with quantitative methods. Additionally, the categorization and numerical representation required in quantitative analysis can remove the context and depth essential to understanding educational disparities (Bryman, 2016).

Therefore, qualitative data was chosen for this study due to its strength in providing a deeper, more contextual understanding of the issues at hand. Qualitative data, particularly from interviews, offers rich, detailed insights that are essential in exploring

themes like systemic bias, cultural responsiveness, and community involvement in education (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). However, this approach is not without its limitations.

In conducting this study, I encountered significant challenges in representing qualitative data, particularly when it came to decoding interview data. The interviews generated a vast amount of data, and I found that it required meticulous analysis to identify relevant patterns and themes. I was constantly aware of the complexity of human language and the nuances in communication. This complexity often led to challenges in ensuring the accuracy and reliability of my interpretations, as noted by Saldaña (2021).

To address this, I employed a systematic approach to coding and thematic analysis, which helped in organizing the data and identifying key themes more accurately. This approach involved categorizing the data into codes based on recurring concepts and then grouping these codes into broader themes. This method helped in structuring the data more coherently and in identifying significant themes with greater precision.

Another challenge I faced was dealing with verbatim quotes. Many participants used colloquial language, incomplete sentences, or context-specific jargon. This made it challenging to interpret their words accurately and meaningfully within the broader context of the study. To mitigate this, I took the time to familiarize myself with the participants' backgrounds and the specific contexts of their responses. This deeper understanding allowed me to interpret their language and expressions more accurately.

Furthermore, the task of paraphrasing quotes or statements from interviews introduced additional complexity. As a researcher, I had to balance the need to retain the original meaning and context of the participant's words while presenting them in a coherent and concise manner. This process was inherently subjective and posed a risk of reflecting my biases or misunderstandings, as Braun & Clarke (2021) have discussed. To address this, I engaged in reflexive practices, constantly questioning my interpretations and seeking feedback from peers to ensure that my paraphrasing accurately reflected the participants' intended meanings.

Overall, the qualitative data offered rich insights and context to the study, but analyzing and interpreting it required careful, reflective consideration to preserve the authenticity and integrity of the participants' experiences and viewpoints.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Addressing Disparities in Urban Education

Boots on The Ground Approach

To effectively address the social problem of disparities in urban education, a "Boots on The Ground" approach is essential. This method entails a direct engagement with the realities of urban educational environments, involving educational professionals, community members, and other stakeholders in a hands-on manner. Such an approach ensures a grounded understanding of the challenges and needs specific to urban schools, facilitating the development of tailored solutions that are responsive to the actual conditions and experiences of those within these educational settings.

Inclusive Participation of Study Participants

This study encompassed a diverse array of participants, including teachers, counselors, administrators, and social workers from both urban and suburban contexts. This diversity was crucial for capturing a comprehensive view of the educational landscape, ensuring that the study reflects a wide range of experiences and perspectives. Such inclusivity in participant demographics was vital for examining the nuanced understanding of the disparities in urban education and for formulating strategies that are equitable and effective

Educational Professionals' Recommendations

1. Community/Education Needs Assessment in Urban Schools: Conducting a detailed community and education needs assessment in urban schools is critical. This assessment should focus on identifying the unique challenges and requirements of these schools, encompassing aspects such as resource allocation, student demographics, community engagement, and specific educational needs.
2. Research and Screenings for Educational Support: In-depth research and screenings are necessary to pinpoint the specific supports and interventions required in urban educational settings. This process should systematically address the varied challenges faced by students and educators, ensuring that the support provided is comprehensive and effective.
3. Collection and Reporting of Honest, Fact-Based Data: Accurate and honest data collection and reporting are imperative for understanding the true state of urban education. This data should be meticulously gathered and analyzed to inform

decision-making processes and to guide targeted interventions that address the identified needs effectively.

4. Empowering Educational Professionals: Educational professionals should be empowered with the access and ability to make informed decisions regarding the educational needs of their students. This empowerment entails providing them with the necessary resources, autonomy, and support to implement strategies that are best suited to their specific educational contexts.
5. Restructuring Standardized Testing: There is a need to critically evaluate and, where necessary, restructure the use of standardized tests, particularly in terms of their cultural responsiveness. The current limitations of these tests in adequately assessing the diverse capabilities of students from various backgrounds call for more inclusive and adaptable assessment methods.
6. Increased Funding for Urban Schools: Prioritizing the allocation of funds to urban schools is essential. This recommendation addresses the resource disparities, ensuring that urban schools are adequately equipped to provide quality education and support to their students.
7. Conducting Equity Audits: Equity audits are vital for systematically assessing and addressing disparities within the educational system. These audits should focus on evaluating and rectifying inequities in resource distribution, educational opportunities, and student support services in urban schools.
8. Fostering Community-School Partnerships: Strengthening community partnerships with schools is crucial for bridging resource and support gaps. These

partnerships should involve collaborative efforts with local businesses, civic organizations, and community members, aiming to provide essential resources and support to students.

The combination of a "Boots on The Ground" approach, inclusive study participant selection, and the implementation of recommendations from educational professionals forms a comprehensive strategy for tackling the issue of disparities in urban education. By engaging directly with the challenges of urban educational settings and leveraging the expertise and insights of educational professionals, it is possible to develop and implement effective, equitable solutions that promote justice and quality education in K-12 settings.

Summary and Recommendations

The need to transform education in the United States is becoming increasingly evident. The traditional way of working within the education field and different districts must give way to a collaborative approach. It doesn't matter if educators work in rural areas; they should come together and combine their efforts going beyond geographical limitations. It's crucial to establish a development framework that follows consistent national guidelines. This involves training, from peers and ongoing education creating a comprehensive approach to meet the diverse needs of students.

The profound quote, "*Students learn what they live*," resonates deeply in contextualizing the pivotal role of K-12 education. Unfortunately, in many educational settings, students are acquiring survival skills that are not only not needed in the educational environment but also detrimental to their social-emotional well-being. These

skills, rather than empowering them, often confine them to their current conditions of despair, offering little opportunity to transcend their challenging circumstances. Amidst these challenges, a harsh reality becomes evident: urban education is facing a crisis, a situation further intensified by the unexpected impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Recent statistics unequivocally demonstrate the detrimental impact of the pandemic on urban education that eroded any gains previously made (Bono, 2020). The crisis necessitates an immediate intervention to counteract the amplified educational disparities stemming from the pandemic's aftermath.

However, the current practices, in education often prioritize intervention over prevention perpetuating a cycle of social issues. It is crucial to shift our mindset towards an approach that focuses on addressing problems before they occur. The existing data reveals disparities faced by communities in terms of unemployment, homelessness, and educational achievement. However, these statistics only scratch the surface of the experience in America." The challenges faced by communities go beyond numbers. Are deeply intertwined with their struggle for recognition equitable opportunities and even their very existence.

The landmark case of Brown v. Board of Education is historically significant for its role in addressing issues of diversity and access in the educational system (Fine, 2004). However, it fell short in effectively tackling the broader dimensions of equity and inclusion. This shortfall underscores a critical departure in the researcher's perspective from the prevailing notion that Black or urban school districts should merely have access to the same resources as their counterparts.

Instead, there is a compelling argument for educational approaches that prioritize fairness. This involves acknowledging and actively confronting the unique barriers that Black students encounter. Such a shift from a focus on mere equality to a more nuanced understanding of equity is essential for creating educational environments that truly cater to the diverse needs and challenges of all students, particularly those in historically marginalized communities.

To illustrate the difference, between equality and fairness let's consider a hypothetical scenario and imagine two young boys with the given names of Alex and Jordan who need to see over a fence to watch a soccer game. Equality would mean giving both students the same size crate to stand on. However, if Jordan is much shorter than Alex, Jordan still might not be able to see over the fence, while Alex can see over it without needing any additional help.

Fairness, on the other hand, would mean giving each student the support they need to have an equal chance of seeing the game. So, in this case Jordan might be given a taller crate to stand on than Alex, ensuring both have a clear view. As it relates to education, this concept of fairness is about addressing the specific needs and challenges faced by each student.

For Black students, fairness in education means recognizing and addressing the unique barriers they may face, such as systemic inequalities, biases, and lack of resources that can impede their educational progress. Providing a quality education through fairness would involve tailored support, resources, and opportunities that meet their specific circumstances, ensuring they have the same chance to succeed as their peers. Likewise

achieving fairness, in education involves acknowledging the inequities, biases and lack of resources that hinder the advancement of Black students. Assisting necessary resources and ample opportunities are crucial, for ensuring their success.

The Need for Additional Research

While the study sheds light on potential human service approaches, it is critical to acknowledge that the effectiveness of these strategies has not been empirically tested. This gap highlights the need for conducting more research to evaluate the efficacy of these approaches in real-world settings. Such research would be invaluable in determining the most effective strategies for addressing disparities and promoting equity in urban education and Black and brown communities overall.

The necessity for additional research in the realm of human services for urban schools, particularly those serving predominantly Black communities, is underscored by the current study. This research should delve into the key factors contributing to the human service needs of urban schools, which include but are not limited to, socioeconomic disparities, cultural diversity, and the unique challenges posed by urban environments (Anyon, 2005). Comparatively, the human service needs of urban schools often differ significantly from those of suburban schools, primarily due to higher levels of poverty, more diverse student populations, and different community dynamics (Kozol, 1991). Future research should aim to provide a detailed understanding of these differences and propose tailored human service interventions. Additionally, improving the provision of human services in urban schools is crucial for reducing disparities and promoting equity. This involves not only addressing immediate needs but also tackling

systemic issues such as funding inequities and policy constraints (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

The impact of human service offerings on academic achievement in urban and suburban areas is another critical area for research. Studies should investigate how services like mental health support, career counseling, and extracurricular activities influence student outcomes in different settings (Rothstein, 2004). Furthermore, identifying and overcoming barriers to providing adequate human services in urban schools is essential. These barriers may include limited funding, bureaucratic hurdles, and a lack of culturally responsive practices (Noguera, 2003). Research should focus on innovative strategies to navigate these challenges, such as community-school partnerships and policy advocacy. Recommendations from study participants, including conducting community/education needs assessments and restructuring standardized testing, provide valuable starting points for this research. These assessments can identify specific local needs, while restructured testing can ensure fair evaluation of diverse student capabilities (Au, 2007).

Moreover, future research should adopt a holistic human service perspective, considering the socio-economic and environmental challenges faced by urban schools. This approach should include mixed methods research to identify effective strategies for educational challenges and their contemporary relevance (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Inclusive training for educators, a whole child approach in education, and the implications of transitioning to such a model are also vital areas for exploration. This research could illuminate how holistic education, focusing on cognitive skills, identity,

and mental, social, and emotional health, can address racial disparities (Brightwheel, 2023). Additionally, adopting a new theoretical framework that focuses on problem resolution and solution-oriented approaches can offer a comprehensive understanding of how systemic racism affects educational outcomes, thereby addressing the multifaceted challenges in urban schools. Integrating intersectionality in research and solutions ensures responsive interventions for students with intersecting identities, offering a more nuanced and effective approach to addressing disparities in urban education (Crenshaw, 1991).

Introduction to Practical Race Systems Theory (PRST)

Historically, CRT emerged from the Critical Theory, which originated from neo-Marxist theorists at the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt, such as Adorno and Horkheimer (Mingers, 1980). Because of its sociological tradition, it later branched out into the race-focused theory of CRT today. Meanwhile, systems theories originated from the fields of Biology and Engineering to address complex problems (i.e. problems with clearly defined goals), which later Checkland developed into a 'soft' system theory, the HAST, which is an applied systems theory (Mingers, 1980). This dissertation aimed to initiate the development of an integrated theory combining Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Human Service Practice (HSP), grounded in Historical Analysis of Systemic Trends (HAST) and Kantian ethics.

The Practical Race Systems Theory (PRST) emerged from this study as a pioneering theoretical framework, specifically designed to address the complexities of urban education disparities and promote equity in K-12 education for predominantly

Black schools. Rooted in the rich historical context of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and informed by the systemic insights of Human Activity System Theory (HAST), PRST integrates these perspectives with the ethical considerations of Kantian Ethical Theory (KET). This synthesis provides a comprehensive approach to understanding and addressing the historical data that highlight systemic racism in urban education. By incorporating the insights gained from interviews with educational professionals, PRST offers a nuanced understanding of the challenges faced in urban educational environments. It aims to guide the implementation of human service approaches that are both ethically grounded and systemically informed. This strategic pathway is designed to tackle deep-rooted disparities not only in predominantly Black schools but also Black communities in general and address broader societal issues surrounding race.

Practical Race Systems Theory (PRST): A Comprehensive Framework for Addressing Social and Racial Equity Systems

Definition and Origin: Practical Race Systems Theory (PRST) is a comprehensive framework that addresses racial equity within social systems. It is an amalgamation of critical race theory, human activity system theory, and Kantian ethics. The theory was formulated in the context of urban education to address the deeply ingrained systemic disparities and historical injustices that have disproportionately affected Black communities.

Formulation in the Study: PRST was formulated in this study as a response to the multifaceted challenges faced by Black students and communities within the educational landscape. It provides a structured approach to address racial disparities by

integrating 10 tenets that focuses on the following: racial equity, representation, restorative justice, access, decision-making power, education reform, laws and policies, continuous monitoring assessment and evaluation, ongoing research, and reparations.

The Practical Race Systems Theory (PRST) is grounded in a set of foundational assumptions that emerge from a deep understanding of historical, sociological, and ethical contexts. These assumptions are not arbitrary; they are derived from the historical evolution of racial dynamics, the sociological understanding of race as a systemic factor, and the ethical imperative to address racial disparities. They form the bedrock of PRST, guiding its application and ensuring its effectiveness in addressing racial issues in urban education. These assumptions are critical as they shape the theory's approach to understanding and intervening in the complex landscape of race and education.

Assumption No. 1: Human systems, especially those involving race, are inherently complex and multifaceted. They cannot be fully comprehended or addressed through simplistic, mechanical, or non-human biological system models.

Foundation and Application: This assumption is rooted in the understanding that human interactions, particularly those influenced by race, involve a multitude of factors including historical contexts, social dynamics, and individual experiences. It underscores the necessity for human-centered approaches in educational interventions. Such approaches recognize the nuanced nature of racial issues and strive to ensure that solutions are humane, empathetic, and beneficial to all stakeholders in the educational ecosystem.

Assumption No. 2: Race is a system deeply ingrained within societal structures and institutions in America, functioning both as a product and a producer of societal norms and dynamics.

Race, as a system, arises from the human system and is indirectly influenced by the broader societal system, serving as a mechanism to organize society (Bell, 2019; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, as cited in Blair, 2009 and Klupchak, 2014). Human beings, capable of both good and ill, can utilize the race system for self-benefit and to the detriment of other groups, leading to the emergence of racism (Bell, 2019; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, as cited in Blair, 2009 and Klupchak, 2014). Furthermore, race is deeply entrenched within American societal structures and institutions, functioning as both a product and a producer of societal norms and dynamics.

Foundation and Application: This assumption acknowledges the historical and ongoing role of race as a significant social construct that shapes and is shaped by societal institutions, including education. It highlights the need for systemic approaches in tackling racial disparities in education. By understanding race as an embedded system, PRST advocates for interventions that are not just surface-level adjustments but are aimed at transforming the underlying societal and institutional frameworks that perpetuate racial disparities.

Assumption No. 3: Practicality of Race Systems; A race system is practical if correctly used. A Race Systems Theory is only practical if it is also beneficial. It is because practice must be inseparable from that which is good, fair, and just founded on the ethical and moral difference between persons and things (Bjorndahl et al., 2017).

Without goodness, fairness, and justice, any race system is destructive to the human being because it fails to differentiate a person from an object and, therefore, is not practical.

Foundation and Application: Proper practice entails acknowledging and respecting the humanity of every individual, treating them with dignity and consideration. This means valuing each person as a human being with inherent worth and not reducing them to the status of an impersonal object. It emphasizes the importance of recognizing the individuality and personal dignity of every person in their interactions and engagements.

Engaging in any form of racism, whether it is individual or systemic, direct or indirect, is considered incorrect practice. This assumption is crucial for ensuring that educational policies and practices are not only effective in addressing racial disparities specific to urban education but are also aligned with broader principles of social justice and human rights.

These assumptions are integral to the PRST framework, providing a comprehensive and humane approach to addressing racial disparities in education and also in the broader society. They ensure that the theory remains grounded in a deep understanding of the complexities of human systems, the embedded nature of race in societal structures, and the ethical imperatives of fairness and justice. By adhering to these assumptions, PRST positions itself as a robust and effective tool in the pursuit of equitable and just educational outcomes for all students, particularly in urban settings with predominantly Black schools.

These assumptions are crucial to the PRST framework, offering a comprehensive and humane approach to addressing racial disparities in education and the broader society. They ensure that the theory remains grounded in a deep understanding of the complexities of human systems, the embedded nature of race in societal structures, and the ethical imperatives of fairness and justice. By adhering to these assumptions, PRST positions itself as a robust and effective tool in the pursuit of equitable and just educational outcomes for all students, particularly in urban settings with predominantly Black schools. Moreover, it serves as an effective tool for researching, investigating, and providing solutions to issues of historical systemic racism and negative race practices.

As a researcher, my work was firmly rooted in the essential principles of PRST, guiding my pursuit of a rigorous and insightful doctrine. This approach was focused on uncovering and implementing significant changes in response to the research questions posed by the study. Motivated by these foundational assumptions, I engaged in action research, consistently incorporating new discoveries and theories to seek concrete answers and solutions. This endeavor led to the development of what I have termed the "Tenets of Change in PRST." As it relates to the social problem indicated in the study, these tenets can provide a structured framework for effecting change within urban education systems, drawing on the depth and methodologies integral to PRST.

The Tenets of Change in PRST

1. Racial Equity: PRST emphasizes the importance of accurately understanding and applying racial concepts, advocating for equitable treatment across all racial groups, not just in educational settings but also in broader societal interactions.

2. Representation: The theory emphasizes the necessity of ensuring proper representation for racial minorities and all underrepresented communities within societal systems and institutions, recognizing the historical underrepresentation and its profound impacts.
3. Restorative Justice: Aligning with restorative justice principles, PRST calls for the rectification and reversal of damages caused by systemic racism, promoting ethical treatment of all individuals.
4. Access: PRST underscores the necessity of equal access to resources and opportunities, recognizing this as essential for achieving racial equity in all communities.
5. Decision-Making Power: The acquisition of political and decision-making power is seen as vital for implementing systemic changes that support anti-racism and promote equity.
6. Education Reform: PRST advocates for sweeping reforms in the educational system, transcending K-12 and higher education to encompass the broader societal landscape. It underscores the importance of educating and advocating for the just and equitable dissemination of accurate public information and educational resources. This ensures that educational reforms play a pivotal role in eradicating racism and promoting equity across all facets of society, while also ensuring accurate public awareness.

7. Laws and Policies: The theory calls for the reform of laws, programs, and policies to actively combat racism and oppression of all forms, recognizing the role of legal frameworks in societal transformation.
8. Monitoring and Evaluation: Continuous monitoring and evaluation of reforms are crucial for ensuring their effectiveness and adaptability in addressing racial issues.
9. Continued Research: Ongoing research is vital for informing and improving practices and policies, particularly in education-related issues and broader societal challenges.
10. Reparations: PRST acknowledges the importance of reparations in addressing historical injustices and promoting healing and equity across all racial groups.

In short, the PRST framework aligns with the study by providing a structured, comprehensive approach to understanding and addressing the complexities of systemic racism in education and beyond. It offers a framework through which the research questions can be explored, focusing on human service approaches to mitigate urban education disparities and promote equity, not only in predominantly Black schools but in various racial contexts. Furthermore, PRST serves as a versatile tool for addressing broader social problems related to race. It offers insights and strategies that can be adapted to various contexts, fostering a more equitable and just society. This universal applicability makes PRST a valuable framework for exploring and resolving racial issues in diverse settings.

Importance: PRST is important because it offers a holistic and systematic framework to dismantle systemic barriers, rectify historical injustices, and foster an

environment conducive to the holistic development of all students, irrespective of race, gender, or intersecting identities. It emphasizes the need for comprehensive reforms, continuous assessment, and the integration of diverse perspectives to foster inclusive environments within educational institutions.

Synthesis from Literature Review: Practical Race Systems Theory (PRST) integrates critical race theory with a systems-based approach, focusing on the multifaceted nature of racial disparities in education. It examines how systemic factors, including policies, institutional practices, and societal norms, contribute to ongoing educational inequities, particularly in Black communities.

Application in Data Collection: In this study, PRST was employed to dissect and understand the complex interplay of systemic factors that lead to educational disparities in urban settings. This involved examining the efficacy of various human services and their alignment with the needs of predominantly Black schools, thereby identifying gaps and areas for improvement.

Strategic Recommendations: PRST advocates for comprehensive reforms that encompass policy changes, resource reallocation, and the implementation of culturally responsive educational practices. It emphasizes the importance of creating inclusive environments and curricula that reflect the experiences and histories of Black students. Additionally, PRST calls for the empowerment of Black communities in decision-making processes, ensuring their voices are central in shaping educational policies and practices.

Limitations and Constraints: While PRST offers a broad framework for addressing racial disparities in education, its implementation may face challenges due to

existing systemic barriers and resistance to change. The theory's broad scope might also pose difficulties in pinpointing specific, localized strategies for immediate application in diverse urban educational settings.

Alignment with Research Objectives: PRST aligns closely with the research objectives by providing a comprehensive lens through which to view and address the systemic nature of racial disparities in urban education. It supports and extends historical data on systemic racism, offering a nuanced understanding of how these disparities are perpetuated and proposing targeted strategies for their mitigation.

Comprehensive Conclusion: PRST stands out as a dominant theoretical framework in addressing the complexities of racial disparities in urban education through its comprehensive approach that combines systemic analysis with targeted intervention strategies. This framework not only facilitates in-depth research into the complexities of these disparities but also guides the conduct and implementation of human services approaches in predominantly Black schools. By offering a clear pathway that acknowledges and addresses both historical and contemporary facets of educational inequity, PRST stands as a crucial tool for researchers and practitioners. It is instrumental in promoting equity in K-12 education and fostering meaningful change in urban educational settings.

Application and Use: PRST can be applied by formulating equitable policies, encouraging greater representation of Black individuals within decision-making bodies, incorporating restorative justice practices within schools, addressing resource gaps to provide access to capital, wealth, healthcare, and opportunities for Black people, and

implementing educational reforms that prioritize anti-racist pedagogy and culturally relevant curriculum. It also involves continuous evaluation, revision, and decision-making on socioeconomic systems and institutions, as well as ongoing research to inform best practices and interventions.

In the context of this study, the principles of PRST, as delineated, offer a multifaceted approach to addressing educational disparities in predominantly Black communities. These principles encompass racial equity, representation, restorative justice, access, empowerment in decision-making, educational reform, and the formulation and revision of laws and policies, coupled with continuous monitoring, evaluation, and research. This framework presents a structured and holistic strategy to tackle the complex challenges encountered by Black students and communities within the educational sphere. It underscores the necessity for systemic transformations, strategic resource distribution, and the implementation of inclusive programs, all aimed at cultivating an educational environment that supports the comprehensive development of every student.

The main goal is to bring about change by acknowledging and rectifying societal wrongs that continue to impact Black communities today. Moreover, when it comes to the last tenant of PRST, reparations as it relates to the field of education it is crucial to redistribute resources, human services, funding, and much more to bridge the gap between suburban schools. This means allocating funding strengthening infrastructure resources and implementing programs for urban students. These programs should cover areas such as mental health support, community and social services, tutoring initiatives,

career guidance and much more. All of these measures are components within PRSTs framework as it relates to k-12 education and reparations.

The idea of reparations based on PRST suggests a path that goes beyond providing compensation. It involves making changes, to the educational system by addressing the deeply ingrained systemic racism that exists within it. This includes revamping the curriculum to incorporate perspectives providing professional development to educators on anti-racist teaching methods and creating inclusive learning environments that prioritize the needs of Black students. All these aspects are crucial in bringing about a change, in education.

Representation is also central within this paradigm. PRST underscores the significance of Black representation across all echelons of societal systems, including educational institutions. Enhancing the presence of Black educators, administrators, and policymakers in urban educational settings is crucial to fostering an inclusive and culturally responsive environment. Empowering Black communities to actively participate in decision-making processes that shape their educational landscape becomes pivotal.

In summation, adopting the tenets of PRST with utilizing reparations as the main tenant of resolve within urban education underscores the imperative for systemic changes. It mandates rectifying historical injustices, bridging resource gaps, enhancing representation, and fundamentally reshaping educational paradigms to foster anti-racism and inclusivity.

An intersectional approach emerges as essential in dismantling these systemic barriers that entrench inequality. Acknowledging and addressing these multifaceted challenges is pivotal in fostering an equitable, inclusive educational system. By embracing intersectionality and dismantling systemic barriers, we can strive to create an educational environment that offers equal opportunities irrespective of race, gender, or intersecting identities.

Given its emergence in this study, Practical Race Systems Theory (PRST) appears to be the predominant theoretical framework in this study, surpassing Social Stratification Theory (SST), Critical System Theory (CST), and even Critical Race Theory (CRT), in both scope and applicability for addressing systemic educational disparities in predominantly Black communities. PRST's comprehensive nature lies in its integration of critical race perspectives, human activity system insights, and Kantian ethics, forming a robust and multidimensional approach to dismantling systemic racism within educational systems.

PRST transcends the traditional focus on historical injustices, advocating for a proactive rectification of systemic disparities. It champions equitable policy development, strategic resource allocation, curriculum reform, and the implementation of inclusive programs. A key aspect of PRST is its emphasis on ensuring representation and inclusion of Black individuals in decision-making and leadership roles, coupled with the adoption of restorative justice practices in educational settings. This theory also advocates for ongoing educational reforms, continuous evaluation, and the leveraging of

expertise from education and human service professionals to develop strategies that resonate with the specific needs of Black communities.

In contrast to CRT, which primarily explores the implications of racism and diversity on educational success, PRST offers a more actionable and holistic approach. It extends beyond theoretical analysis to provide concrete recommendations for policy reforms, educational initiatives, and cultural transformations. PRST's strength lies in its practical orientation, drawing on the experiences of professionals in education and human services to foster social change through dialogue and the implementation of targeted measures to combat racial disparities in education.

Furthermore, PRST's integration of humanistic principles acknowledges the profound impact of racism and strives to create inclusive and supportive educational environments. This approach not only addresses the immediate challenges faced by Black students but also focuses on long-term strategies to mitigate the systemic disadvantages they face.

Simply put, PRST's comprehensive, action-oriented approach, underscored by its commitment to equity-centric policy, representation, restorative justice, and continuous reform, establishes it as a superior framework in this study. Its ability to provide practical, nuanced solutions and its focus on fostering systemic change make it an essential tool for addressing racial disparities in education, surpassing the implications and recommendations of CRT, SST, and CST. PRST stands as a pivotal model for promoting racial equity, dismantling systemic barriers, and nurturing an environment that supports the holistic development of all students.

Barriers to Using Practical Race Systems Theory (PRST)

Implementing Practical Race Systems Theory (PRST) faces significant barriers deeply rooted in systemic racism and resistance to transformative change. These obstacles hinder the adoption of practices and principles necessary to achieve racial equity within the educational system. Here are some of the key barriers:

Resistance to Change: Resistance from individuals and institutions entrenched in existing power structures poses a significant barrier. Those benefitting from the status quo may resist systemic shifts that challenge established norms and practices, impeding efforts to implement PRST principles effectively.

Deep-Rooted Systemic Racism: Systemic racism, ingrained in societal institutions and policies, presents a pervasive barrier. The historical and structural elements of racism pose formidable challenges, requiring comprehensive strategies to address deeply embedded biases and discriminatory practices.

Political and Institutional Resistance: Institutional inertia and political resistance to transformative measures hinder progress. Rigid structures and policies often prioritize maintaining the status quo, making it challenging to enact substantive reforms aligned with PRST principles.

As we deepen our understanding of race through the lens of Practical Race Systems Theory (PRST), we should wholeheartedly embrace this perspective and take active steps to reconceptualize race. PRST encourages us to view race not merely as a matter of skin color, but as a complex social construct that encompasses a myriad of human conditions such as poverty, mental illness, and resource deprivation. This theory

invites us to see race and racism through a multifaceted prism, and by understanding race in this manner, we begin to dismantle traditional racial paradigms and move toward a society that values individuals holistically, recognizing them for their unique circumstances and needs, rather than categorizing them solely based on physical attributes or racial stereotypes. This vision aligns with the ethos of PRST, advocating for objective and measurable solutions to systemic issues of race, with the aim of dismantling discrimination, underrepresentation, and inequity across all marginalized populations. Consider, for instance, the disparities faced by various communities:

- Asian Americans grapple with specific cancer health disparities and often are diagnosed at later stages due to low rates of cancer screening and cultural beliefs about illness (Gomez et al., 2019).
- Native Americans face environmental injustice including disproportionate exposure to environmental hazards rooted in historical land treaties and marginalization (Hoover et al., 2019).
- Black Americans continually endure economic disparities and inequality with persistent wage gaps and higher unemployment rates which has become a legacy of systemic racism and historical economic oppression (Mason, 2018).
- Latino Americans experience occupational health disparities with higher rates of injuries and fatalities, often due to overrepresentation in high-risk labor industries and language barriers (Grzywacz et al., 2019).

- Arab Americans show a significant underutilization of mental health services, influenced by cultural stigma, lack of culturally competent care, and post-9/11 trauma (Amer & Bagasra, 2019).

These examples highlight the necessity of comprehending race as a complex and multifaceted concept. We should participate in an open and sincere dialogue about race, progressing from discussions on where or not it exists to discussions on addressing the factors that shape it. The historical quantitative data across different populations undeniably reveals specific disparities unique to each community.

Furthermore, when specifically examining Black Americans, the historical statistical data highlights distinct challenges such as high rates of unemployment, homelessness, and incarceration, stemming from systemic economic disparities and inequality. The key challenge lies not within disputing the irrefutable facts about these disparities but in understanding their origins and effectively addressing them according to the unique historical and systemic factors that perpetuate them.

This study initiates this crucial dialogue by exploring educational disparities in Black and brown communities through a human service lens, guided by the theoretical and conceptual framework of PRST. It is a call to action, urging us to move from a state of systemic racial oppression to one of systemic racial equity. We must look beyond assumptions and stereotypes, whether it's questioning why Asian Americans face specific health disparities, why Latino Americans are more prone to occupational injuries, or why Arab Americans underutilize mental health services. Each of these issues is a piece of a

larger puzzle, reflecting the complex interplay of cultural, economic, and systemic factors.

Moreover, in this study, we have embarked on a critical journey of exploring and addressing the educational disparities that disproportionately affect Black and brown communities. By employing a human service approach and integrating the theoretical and conceptual framework of PRST, we have begun to peel back the layers of these disparities, revealing their deep-seated roots in systemic racial inequities. This approach is not just about identifying problems; it is about fostering a comprehensive understanding of these issues and developing targeted strategies to address them.

Insufficient Resources and Support: Limited financial and institutional support for initiatives aiming to address racial disparities poses a significant barrier. Insufficient resources hinder the implementation of comprehensive programs and reforms essential for achieving racial equity.

Ideological Challenges: Deeply ingrained ideologies and beliefs about race and equality present a formidable challenge. Overcoming biases, stereotypes, and misconceptions regarding racial issues is crucial but challenging within the broader society and educational systems.

Lack of Awareness and Understanding: A lack of awareness and understanding about the complexities of systemic racism can impede progress. Insufficient knowledge about the historical context and ongoing impact of racial inequalities may hinder the adoption of PRST-based approaches.

Resistance to Restorative Justice: Resistance to acknowledging and rectifying historical injustices, such as reparations, can hinder efforts toward racial equity. Lack of support for restorative practices may impede healing and reconciliation processes.

Policy and Legislative Challenge: Inadequate policies and legislative frameworks addressing racial disparities pose a barrier. The absence or inefficiency of policies supporting racial equity can hinder the implementation of PRST principles in educational systems.

Addressing these barriers requires multifaceted strategies, including policy reforms, educational initiatives, cultural shifts, and active engagement from all stakeholders. Overcoming these challenges demands concerted efforts and a commitment to dismantling systemic barriers to achieve racial equity in education.

Lastly, while providing insights into urban education disparities and the effectiveness of human services, this study revealed a significant limitation in its scope by not thoroughly examining the variability within suburban schools. This oversight is crucial as suburban schools, much like their urban counterparts, are not homogeneous and face a spectrum of challenges influenced by diverse demographics, socioeconomic statuses, resource availability, and educational outcomes. The variability in suburban schools, ranging from issues akin to urban schools such as tailored services for diverse student needs and high low-income student populations to unique challenges like racial segregation and achievement gaps, presents an opportunity for future research. Investigating these variabilities can lead to a more nuanced understanding of educational disparities across different suburban contexts, thereby informing more precise and

effective educational policies and human services interventions that cater to the varied needs of both urban and suburban school environments (Smith, 2021).

Upon closer examination, it becomes evident that crucial inquiries necessitate attention in forthcoming research on socioeconomic disparities in urban education, particularly within Black communities. To gain a comprehensive understanding of these issues, it is imperative to investigate the involvement of stakeholders and policymakers and their respective roles in addressing these challenges. This involves identifying the decision-makers in education and their capacity to effect change in schools. Delving into the professional backgrounds of these individuals is essential to comprehend their expertise, experiences within the education sector, and their perceptions of the conditions prevalent in urban schools, particularly those predominantly attended by Black and Brown students.

Vital considerations include scrutinizing the demographic profiles of these policymakers, analyzing their socioeconomic backgrounds, educational experiences, residential settings, and potential biases that may influence their decision-making. Furthermore, evaluating their familiarity with evidence-based practices for urban education, their implementation, and the oversight mechanisms ensuring their execution emerges as a pivotal area for exploration.

The existing research gaps indicate that we urgently require funding to support investigations. By obtaining the resources to hire researchers and practitioners as well as setting specific research goals and objectives we can make significant strides in addressing the current state of education and treat it as a national crisis. Establishing

deadlines, for achieving research milestones will enable us to convert our findings into strategies, which can then be promptly implemented by education professionals working directly with students.

Also, further research is imperative to address the current and historical needs in urban education, especially regarding the socioeconomic disparities within and surrounding Black communities that profoundly impact Black students' learning experiences. Additionally, comprehensive research is essential to address educational disparities within the Black community from a holistic human service perspective, taking into account the multifaceted challenges faced by students, such as socio-economic and environmental concerns affecting their home and community environments.

It is crucial to analyze historical and current research using a mixed methods approach to identify effective strategies for resolving educational challenges and discerning their relevance in contemporary society. Furthermore, there is a critical need for comprehensive research to develop inclusive training programs for leaders, direct service providers, and educators to address the unique needs of urban students.

Moreover, further research is required to advance the study and implementation of the whole child approach in education in a meaningful, effective, and progressive manner to yield optimal student outcomes and contribute to the goal of creating a more equitable society. The whole child approach, rooted in evidence-based models, prioritizes the holistic developmental needs of every child to enable them to reach their fullest potential. It acknowledges that students' educational and life outcomes depend on their access to

safe, inclusive learning environments and rich learning experiences both within and outside of school.

Transitioning towards a whole child education model has profound implications for the education system. Hence, further research is indispensable to understand and evaluate the implications of all recommendations and suggestions as valuable options for addressing race-specific disparities, particularly for eradicating education disparities within the Black community. Action research is warranted to provide rigorous, evidence-based training, strategies, and implementation with minimal margin for error.

According to Brightwheel (2023), the whole child approach in early childhood education goes beyond academics to focus on building a child's character, emphasizing the child's cognitive skills, identity, and mental, social, and emotional health to ensure a holistic and successful education experience. This approach recognizes the importance of addressing a child's emotional, mental, physical, and social health within the learning environment. It aims to create safe, engaging, and supportive learning environments to promote the overall well-being and development of every child.

In integrating human services into education, the PRST (Theory) holds substantial promise. Given the multifaceted challenges faced by urban schools, this theory offers insights into systemic racism's impact on educational outcomes. Its application could shed light on the intersections of socioeconomic disparities, racial dynamics, and other underlying factors, providing a comprehensive framework for understanding and addressing these issues.

Incorporating Intersectionality

Intersectionality refers to the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, gender, sexuality, and other identities that overlap and intersect (Phoenix & Pattynama, 2006). In the context of addressing disparities in education, incorporating intersectionality into research methodologies and solution-oriented approaches is crucial for several reasons.

Incorporating intersectionality into research methodologies and problem-solving approaches enriches the understanding of disparities in education, guiding the development of more holistic and inclusive solutions. It ensures that interventions are responsive to the diverse experiences and challenges faced by students of varying intersecting identities within Black communities.

Integrating PRST: Integrating Practical Race Systems Theory (PRST) offers a novel approach to addressing the pervasive social problem of racial disparities in education. PRST, amalgamating critical race theory with human activity system theory and Kantian ethics, provides a robust framework to guide anti-racist practices within the educational system.

Implementing PRST requires a comprehensive overhaul of policies, practices, and ideologies within educational institutions. Its application to the social problem in this study can involve:

1. Equity-Centric Policy Formulation: PRST advocates for equitable policies that address historical injustices and aim to rectify systemic disparities. This includes

resource allocation, curriculum reform, and the implementation of inclusive programs.

2. Representation and Inclusion: Encouraging greater representation of Black individuals within decision-making bodies and leadership roles is pivotal. PRST emphasizes diverse perspectives, fostering inclusive environments that reflect the communities they serve.
3. Restorative Justice Practices: Incorporating restorative justice practices within schools is essential. PRST calls for acknowledging and redressing past harms inflicted by systemic racism, promoting healing, and fostering a supportive educational environment.
4. Educational Reforms: Overhauling the educational system through anti-racist pedagogy, culturally relevant curriculum, and capacity-building for educators is imperative. PRST advocates for comprehensive reforms starting from primary education to higher levels.
5. Continuous Evaluation and Revision: Continuous assessment, monitoring, and evaluation are crucial elements of PRST. Implementing systems for ongoing assessment ensures accountability and facilitates necessary adjustments for effective implementation.

Utilizing the expertise of education and human service professionals, particularly those directly engaged in K-12 education and community services, is pivotal in formulating and implementing PRST-based strategies. These professionals possess valuable insights into the nuanced challenges faced by Black students and communities.

Their firsthand experiences offer a real-world perspective that is essential in crafting solutions tailored to the specific needs of these communities. Engaging these professionals in decision-making processes ensures that solutions are practical, effective, and grounded in the realities of the educational landscape. By integrating PRST principles and leveraging the expertise of frontline professionals, educational institutions can make significant strides toward fostering racial equity, dismantling systemic barriers, and fostering an environment conducive to the holistic development of all students.

Implications

Implications of Race

Addressing the implications of race on structural disparities and inequalities necessitates a comprehensive, multi-layered approach that intertwines historical acknowledgment, policy reform, economic equity, educational restructuring, community empowerment, health equity, criminal justice reform, rigorous data collection, public awareness, and international collaboration. This strategy involves recognizing and rectifying historical injustices, enacting and revising policies to combat discrimination, ensuring equitable economic and educational opportunities, empowering affected communities through representation and decision-making, addressing health disparities, reforming the criminal justice system to eliminate biases, and fostering a global exchange of ideas and practices. Such an approach, underpinned by sustained commitment and collaboration across various sectors, is crucial for moving towards a more equitable and just society where racial disparities are significantly reduced.

The work initiated by this study is a crucial step in a much larger journey. It is a journey that demands our relentless pursuit of equity and social justice, a journey that requires us to continually challenge and dismantle the systemic barriers that perpetuate racial disparities in education and beyond. As we move forward, it is imperative that we maintain this momentum, continually expanding our research and deepening our understanding of these complex issues. Only through a sustained effort and unwavering commitment can we hope to eradicate the disparities that plague urban education and build a society that truly embodies the principles of equity and justice for all.

Essentially, this study serves as a clarion call for transformative action, not just an academic exercise. It is a journey towards understanding and addressing the conditions of race and racism in all their complexities. By applying the insights of PRST, we can begin to dismantle the barriers that perpetuate disparities and move towards a society where every individual, regardless of race or background, has the opportunity to thrive. This perspective on race and racism offers a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of these complex issues. It provides a framework for addressing racial disparities in a manner that is deeply rooted in the realities of those most affected, paving the way for more effective and sustainable solutions to achieve racial equity and justice. This is our collective responsibility, a mission that demands our utmost commitment and resolve.

The History and Implications of and Reparations

In the historical context, America's role in reconstructing nations like Germany and Japan post-World War II highlights its global influence and financial commitment. This reconstruction involved not just physical rebuilding but also revitalizing political

systems and economies, necessitating a deep commitment to international cooperation (Muller, 2019). However, within America's borders, the story of construction and reconstruction is marked by the contributions of Black Americans, foundational to the nation's building yet often unrecognized and inequitably treated. This history underpins the argument for reparations, acknowledging long-standing injustice.

The U.S. has a complex history of reparations, with various groups receiving compensation for historical injustices. Japanese Americans received reparations for internment during World War II through the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 (Muller, 2019), and Native American tribes have received compensation and land settlements for violated treaties, though these are often seen as insufficient (Evans-Campbell, 2018). The U.S. also supported Holocaust survivors in obtaining reparations from Germany (Bazyler, 2017). However, the Black American experience reflects a profound and multifaceted scope of systemic injustices.

The history of Black Americans is marred by oppression, from slavery to the post-slavery era's widespread violence and institutionalized racial segregation and disenfranchisement (Alexander, 2020; Coates, 2019). This history includes efforts to suppress Black voting rights (Anderson, 2021) and a disproportionate representation in the criminal justice system (Davis, 2020). Black communities face limited access to quality education and healthcare, exacerbating socioeconomic disparities (Williams & Mohammed, 2019), and employment disparities further impact their economic stability (Jones & Schmitt, 2020).

Addressing these wrongs requires substantial commitment, both in time and financial resources, not just to level the playing field but to heal deep-seated wounds. America's debt to its Black citizens is both its oldest and largest, encompassing moral and social aspects. The nation continues to prosper while failing to address this fundamental injustice. The need for reform and reconstruction of the social construct of race is imperative, involving not just acknowledging the past but actively working towards a future where race is no longer a barrier to equality and justice.

The call for reparations is urgent, representing a commitment to acknowledging the past, repairing the present, and reimagining the future. Investing in the Black community is a moral and strategic imperative, strengthening American society and enhancing its global standing.

In addressing systemic barriers affecting Black Americans, it's crucial to consider the broader context in which education operates. Tackling systemic issues like housing instability and healthcare access is essential for educational success (Taylor, 2020). Housing instability can lead to frequent school changes and absenteeism, while inadequate healthcare can impede cognitive development. Therefore, educational reform must be part of a broader strategy addressing socio-economic factors impacting Black communities.

The historical context of reparations in America, particularly for Black Americans, necessitates a comprehensive approach, with educational reform being pivotal. However, for such reform to be effective, it must be accompanied by efforts to tackle broader systemic barriers, such as housing instability and healthcare access.

The necessity for reparations in Black communities in the United States is underscored by a history of systemic injustices and ongoing disparities. Understanding the role of race and reparations in America's history is crucial to comprehending the current state of the Black community and the disparities in the educational system. The Brown v. Board of Education decision, while significant, did not erase deep-seated inequalities. A comprehensive approach addressing the root causes of these inequalities is needed to create a more just and equitable nation.

Economic inequality, educational disparities, the criminal justice system, and issues in health and housing are critical areas where Black Americans face significant disparities. These disparities are direct results of historical policies and systemic biases, impacting their overall well-being and ability to build generational wealth.

Social equity is a pivotal concern, reflecting broader systemic racism issues. Reparations are seen as necessary for rectifying long-standing injustices, representing not only financial compensation but also a commitment to systemic change, including reforms in education, criminal justice, housing, and employment sectors. These changes are crucial for creating a more equitable society where Black Americans have equal opportunities to thrive and succeed.

Also, the data presented in the literature review displays significant socio-economic disparities affecting predominantly Black communities in the United States, underscoring the need for comprehensive reparations. These disparities, evident in education, employment, income, homeownership, and the criminal justice system, are not

only social injustices but also human rights issues, demanding a multifaceted approach to reparations.

Educational Disparities: According to EdBuild (2019), schools with a majority of Black or Hispanic students receive approximately $23 billion less in funding compared to predominantly White schools. This funding gap leads to unequal educational opportunities, a clear violation of the right to equitable education. Reparations in education could include equitable funding allocation, curriculum reform to incorporate Black history and cultural studies, more expansive scholarship programs for Black and Brown students, and initiatives for recruiting and training Black educators. The success of these reparations can be measured by improvements in graduation rates, academic performance, and increased enrollment in higher education among Black students.

The disparities in employment and income between Black and White Americans, as reported by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2021) and the U.S. Census Bureau (2021), necessitate targeted reparative actions. These actions should not only aim to reduce the unemployment rate among Black Americans but also address the systemic barriers that contribute to these disparities. A comprehensive approach would include job training programs, affirmative action in hiring, and multifaceted support for Black entrepreneurship.

Job Training Programs: Job training programs should be designed to equip Black Americans with the skills needed in high-demand industries. This training should be both accessible and relevant, ensuring that participants are prepared for the current job market. Importantly, these programs should offer paid training to remove financial

barriers that might prevent participation. This approach not only provides immediate financial support but also incentivizes participation and completion of the training.

Affirmative Action: Affirmative action in hiring today requires a transformative approach to enhance its effectiveness. It should extend beyond traditional numerical targets and concentrate on fostering equitable hiring practices. This involves conducting implicit bias training for hiring managers, which is crucial for creating a more unbiased and fair recruitment process. Additionally, forging partnerships with organizations that specialize in supporting Black professionals can provide a more diverse pool of candidates.

Creating internship and mentorship programs specifically designed for Black candidates is another vital step. These programs can serve as a bridge, connecting talented individuals from Black communities to meaningful career opportunities. They also play a crucial role in providing the necessary exposure, experience, and professional guidance to help these individuals thrive in their chosen fields.

Moreover, affirmative action today should focus on actively identifying and nurturing talent from Black communities. This means not only recruiting Black candidates but also supporting their career development and progression. Ensuring representation of Black individuals in all levels of employment, from entry-level roles to executive positions, is essential. This approach helps in dismantling systemic barriers and promotes a more inclusive and diverse workforce.

In essence, reimagining affirmative action in the context of modern hiring practices involves a commitment to deep-rooted change, moving beyond mere

compliance to a proactive strategy of inclusion and empowerment. This shift is critical for building workplaces that truly reflect the diversity of society and for promoting equal opportunities for all.

Educational and Skills Training: Access to quality education and skills training is a fundamental barrier. Programs that offer vocational training, upskilling, and reskilling opportunities are crucial. These should be accessible and tailored to meet the demands of the current job market, ensuring that Black Americans are not only employable but also competitive in the workforce.

Legal Assistance and Advocacy: Some Black Americans face barriers due to past legal issues or discrimination in the workplace. Legal assistance can help navigate these challenges, from expunging minor criminal records that unfairly limit job opportunities to advocating for rights in cases of workplace discrimination.

Networking and Mentorship Opportunities: Professional networks play a significant role in career advancement. Creating platforms for networking, mentorship, and sponsorship can open doors to opportunities that might otherwise be inaccessible. These networks can also provide guidance, support, and a sense of community.

Professional Development and Supportive Employment Services: Professional development opportunities are crucial for career advancement. This includes ongoing training, workshops, and access to conferences and networking events. Supportive employment services are also essential, particularly for individuals with barriers to maintaining employment. These services can include counseling, job coaching, and assistance with navigating workplace challenges. For individuals with disabilities,

ensuring workplace accommodations and providing specialized support services is critical.

Support for Black Entrepreneurship: Support for Black entrepreneurship should extend beyond just financial assistance. It should encompass mentorship programs, networking opportunities, and access to business development resources. Skill-building workshops in areas such as digital literacy, marketing, and financial management are crucial. Additionally, incubator programs that help Black entrepreneurs to develop and test their business ideas in a supportive environment can be instrumental.

Support for Entrepreneurial Endeavors: For those looking to start their own businesses, barriers include lack of access to capital, business mentorship, and knowledge of how to navigate the business environment. Providing resources, funding opportunities, and business education can empower Black entrepreneurs. The pursuit of reparations, adequate employment, and stable housing for Black Americans is deeply intertwined with the quality of K-12 education. Systemic issues in education form the bedrock of many challenges faced by Black communities, and without addressing these, efforts in other areas may not reach their full potential.

Foundation for Future Success: Quality K-12 education is essential for laying the groundwork for future success, equipping students with vital skills, knowledge, and critical thinking abilities. A lack of robust educational foundation places individuals at a disadvantage in higher education and the job market.

Impact on Employment Opportunities: The quality of education directly influences employment prospects. Inadequate education limits job opportunities,

perpetuating cycles of poverty and unemployment, and hinders the ability to fully benefit from reparations programs.

Influence on Housing Stability: Education affects economic stability, which is closely linked to housing security. Better educational outcomes lead to higher earning potential, enabling individuals to secure stable and adequate housing.

Educational Reforms and Recommendations: Addressing systemic issues in K-12 education requires comprehensive reforms, including equitable funding, curriculum inclusivity, addressing the racial achievement gap, and ensuring access to quality resources and teaching.

Impact on Criminal Justice: Education plays a significant role in shaping life trajectories that can influence encounters with the criminal justice system. A lack of quality education is often correlated with higher rates of incarceration (Hirschfield, P. J., & Swanson, J. A., 2020). Educational reforms that focus on inclusivity, engagement, and support can help in reducing these disparities.

Financial Income Sustainability: Education is a key driver of financial stability and income sustainability. Higher educational attainment is typically linked to better job prospects, higher incomes, and greater financial security, which is crucial for the long-term economic empowerment of Black communities (Darling-Hammond, L., 2018).

Ultimately, the quality of K-12 education is not just a parallel goal but a foundational step in addressing broader systemic issues faced by Black Americans. It is pivotal in shaping the effectiveness of reparations, improving employment and housing conditions, reducing criminal justice disparities, and ensuring financial income

sustainability. Therefore, educational reform is a critical element in the journey towards equity and social justice.

Conclusion

Education is a fundamental human right because it plays a crucial role in guaranteeing that every person, irrespective of their identity or background, has access to a quality education and the opportunity to achieve their maximum potential. From a human services perspective, education plays a crucial role in addressing the social determinants of health and well-being, as it provides the necessary support and resources for students to thrive academically and personally. For Black students, equitable access to quality education is essential in combating historical injustices and systemic barriers, ultimately fostering social equity and empowerment within communities. Therefore, education stands as a human rights and human services issue, particularly for Black students, as it serves as a catalyst for breaking the cycle of inequality and promoting inclusive opportunities for all.

The unequal distribution of opportunities and access to these opportunities in our society continues to fuel divisions among communities, racial lines, and ethnicities. The stark contrast of access creates disparities that vibrate across generations creating a platform where systemic racism and inequalities strive. Nevertheless, education is supposed to be a beacon of hope, a system that emerges as an equalizer to offer pathways and opportunities to bridge the gaps created by disparity.

Even though education is seen as a key leveller the quest for absolute equality is constrained by the vast and disparate needs within various demographics. The lens

through which we perceive equality must shift from an idealistic pursuit of parity to a more pragmatic understanding of equity. Pivotal to crafting lasting solutions to systemic disparities in our schools is the realization that different demographics require distinct resources to foster fairness, equity, and justice.

Addressing these facets requires a multidimensional understanding that transcends mere statistical analysis. Policymakers must take into consideration how far historic inequalities, societal structures, and systemic biases are entrenched within the four walls of our educational system. Thus, the limitations inherent in achieving absolute parity are reflective of the vast spectrum of needs across communities

My personal astute observation of all data and information considered in this study is that "*Expanding human services does not necessarily change the human condition*," it encompasses a critical reality within the realm of urban education. While advocating for expanded human services within education is paramount, it's imperative to acknowledge that such efforts alone may not wholly transform the underlying complexities ingrained in the human condition.

The idea that providing access to resources may not fully bridge the gap between suburban schools carries significant weight. Urban schools face a range of challenges that extend well beyond necessities and deeply impact their communities. Simply aiming for equality through resource distribution overlooks the differences in needs. Urban environments often require two, three or even four times more resources than their counterparts to address both educational requirements and broader societal needs.

This observation highlights a point—that inequality isn't solely due to a lack of resources. Also stems from the disproportionate needs arising from diverse environmental and socio-economic circumstances. With increased resources allocated to education the inherent disparities linked to community environments call for multifaceted interventions that go beyond the confines of the classroom. While advocating for services is crucial to achieving true equity necessitates a comprehensive approach. Tackling these disparities requires strategies that encompass education, social services and community development tailored specifically to the intricate needs of urban students. Merely expanding resources cannot fully address the rooted challenges ingrained within the educational landscape.

In the pursuit of addressing the profound disparities within urban education, it is essential to explore the perspectives of educational professionals who are direct service experts in the field. These individuals, through their daily interactions and experiences, offer invaluable insights into the realities of the educational landscape. Their voices are crucial in shaping strategies that are not only theoretically sound but also practically effective in meeting the unique needs of urban students. Engaging these professionals in ongoing discussions about race and education is vital for developing a new construct of race that fosters positive social change.

The need for a reimagined construct of race is imperative. This new construct should transcend traditional boundaries and stereotypes, focusing instead on identifying and addressing the unique characteristics and needs of diverse social groups. In creating this positive social change, the goal is to establish a framework where race is used as a

tool for equity and inclusivity, rather than division and exclusion. The Practical Race Systems Theory (PRST) offers a foundational approach to apply these concepts to the overarching issue of race and racism, which perpetuates systemic disparities across various domains.

Given the current data and research conducted in this study, there is a clear indication for more inquiries into these complex issues. The social issue of racial disparities in the U.S is centuries old and demands a lifelong commitment to continuous research. Specifically, there is a need to conduct research on race and its various dimensions leading to the development of measurable strategies and solutions to mitigate the multifaceted aspects of social economical and racial inequality. This commitment must be rooted in a deliberate process of creating and applying ideas, strategies, and actions that promote the worth, dignity, and development of individuals and communities. Positive social change, in this context, results in the improvement of human and social conditions, aligning with the tenets of PRST.

The application of PRST in this study provides an intellectually comprehensive and socially constructive foundation for addressing the research questions under examination in this study. This theory, combined with scholarly research, supports positive social change through the development of principled, knowledgeable, and ethical approaches. The hope is that this research will contribute to evidence-based publications that will contribute to the betterment of society, particularly in the realms race, racism, and education.

Moreover, integrating Practical Race Systems Theory (PRST) into this study analytical framework represents a significant advancement in the field of Human Services. It not only enriches the theoretical underpinnings of the discipline but also enhances its practical applicability in addressing complex racial disparities. The incorporation of PRST, with its emphasis on critical race theory, human activity system theory, and Kantian ethics, provides a nuanced and comprehensive approach to understanding and addressing the systemic issues faced by marginalized communities. This innovative approach not only broadens the scope of Human Services but also deepens its impact, making it a more effective tool in promoting social justice and equity.

In the concluding synthesis of this comprehensive study, we are poignantly reminded of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s words, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." This profound statement resonates deeply within the context of the findings in this study, particularly concerning the state of education in urban communities, where Black and brown students are disproportionately affected. The current educational landscape in these areas represents an injustice that calls for immediate and collective action, drawing upon the valuable solutions proposed in this study.

The study highlights that education, especially in urban schools, is in a dire state of crisis, necessitating urgent intervention. The unforeseen and devastating impact of the Covid 19 pandemic has significantly exacerbated this crisis, eroding any progress made in urban education. This setback has not only hindered the educational progress of Black and brown students in Generation Z but has also widened the chasm between the haves and the have-nots, deepening the divide between Black and White students. Urban

education has not demonstrated substantial improvement, and disparities persist with minimal to no progress, mirroring the lack of advancement seen since the Brown v. Board decision. The pandemic has exacerbated the situation, resulting in setbacks in bridging educational disparities and effectively undoing years of progress.

The literature review within this study starkly highlighted the disparities faced by Black Americans, including high rates of unemployment, homelessness, involvement in the criminal justice system, and underachievement in education. While these statistics are irrefutable, they do not fully capture the "Black experience in America," indicating the existence of a problem but not fully explaining the how or why of these disparities. This continual struggle against systemic forces underscores the need for a paradigm shift in our strategies and methodologies.

Human services at its best, is a vital instrument for correcting everything that negatively affects the progress of humanity, our sustainability, and the collective well-being of society. It is imperative that we utilize its intellectual property to its fullest extent and potential. In this context, the Practical Race Systems Theory (PRST) emerges as a relevant and potent framework for integrating human services within the education system. PRST, which combines critical race theory, human activity system theory, and Kantian ethics, guides the implementation of anti-racist practices in the field of human services. Applying PRST to the disparities in urban education necessitates a comprehensive approach, addressing the historical and ongoing injustices faced by Black students and communities. This involves systemic changes in resource allocation, representation, curriculum, disciplinary practices, and support services to ensure racial

equity and promote the well-being and academic success of Black students in urban schools.

As we recognize that K-12 education is the training ground for life, PRST can universally address systemic issues in today's society if applied effectively. These systemic issues are not confined to race and racism alone. This theory can also advance the field of education, K-12 and beyond, and expand the reach, purpose, and effectiveness of the field of human services.

In conclusion, this study's findings are more relevant now than ever, given the historical issues with education as it relates to Black students and the significant setbacks from the pandemic. As we strive to bridge the gap between the haves and the have-nots, and between Black and White, we must embark on this journey towards justice and equality in education with sustained effort, unwavering commitment, and the collective will to create a more equitable and just society. There are questions that still remain to be seen from this study particularly regarding the course of action to address the social issue at hand. The uncertainty revolves around the starting point for intervention, the timeline for initiating efforts, strategies for prevention, and the duration required to witness positive and meaningful change. Let us begin this journey with the understanding that every step we take brings us closer to a world where every child, regardless of their race or zip code, has access to the quality education and social economic resources they rightfully deserve.

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Appendix A: Study Recruitment Letter

5/1/2023
Investigator: Antonio Williams
Walden University Doctoral Candidate
antonio.williams1@waldenu.edu

Re: Name of Study: EDUCATION REFORM: EXPLORING HUMAN SERVICES NEEDED TO ADDRESS DISPARITIES IN URBAN EDUCATION

Name of potential participant _____
Contact _____

Prospective participant,

I am writing to let you know about an opportunity to participate in a research study about disparities in urban education as it relates to race and institutional racism. This study is being conducted by doctoral candidate Antonio Williams at Walden University. This study is aimed to evaluate the disparities in urban schools as opposed to suburban schools in relation to race and equity in terms of the provision of human services and the impact those disparities have on students' achievement by gathering perceptions and points of view from professional in the field of education.

I obtained your contact information from other educational professionals in the metropolitan area of Detroit, MI. Please note that I have not shared and will not share any of your personal information without your permission.

If you do not wish to be contacted again, please contact me at antonio.williams1@waldenu.edu and request that no further contact be made.

If you are interested in participating or have any questions about the study, please do not hesitate to contact us at the above email anytime or call me at [redacted]. Please note that expressing interest does not mean that you are enrolled in the study. I will follow up with you after receiving your response to discuss next steps.

Thank you for considering this opportunity.

Sincerely,

Antonio Williams, PhD(c), LLMSW, MA

Appendix B: Interview Schedule

DISSERTATIONN STUDY INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Before establishing perspectives in this study preliminary questions have to be asked to establish if there is a major difference in urban and suburban education that possibly contributes to disparities in education. Please answer the following close ended questions.

1. What level of k-12 do you currently work?
2. What is your current position or role in K-12 education? (Must be an administrator, teacher, counselor, or social worker)
3. Have you worked in education for at least the last 5 years? (Required to participate in the study)
4. How many years have you worked in education? (Please explain thoroughly)
5. Are you currently working in an urban school, or a suburban school? If so which one? (Urban or Suburban)
6. Follow up: What is the racial and ethnic demographics of the school where your currently working? Please explain.
7. What race and/or ethnic group(s) have you worked with in the past and have you ever been a majority Black student population?
8. At what level of education (middle or high school) do you currently work?
9. Have you worked at any other level in the past? Please explain!
10. What is the social economic status of the students with whom you work?

Introductory Questions/ Second Level Questions
Please respond yes or no to the following close ended questions.

1. Are there significant differences between urban and suburban education?
2. Do you think urban education and suburban education are fair and/or equal to each other?
3. Do you believe there is equal access to facilities, resources, and services for student success between urban and suburban schools, or do you perceive an inequality in urban and suburban education?
4. Are there socioeconomic differences between urban and suburban public schools?

5. Are there disparities in k-12 education?
6. Follow up: If yes, do those disparities exist more in Urban schools?
7. Is there an achievement gap between urban school students and suburban school students?
8. Do urban and suburban schools provide the same opportunities for their students?
9. Do you see any challenges or advantages to education in your current school compared to students in other locations?

Primary Study Questions
Please answer the following questions based only on your perspective and/or opinion on this research topic using your personal knowledge and experience. Additionally, please reframe from answering any questions based on personal biases or hearsay.

1. In your perspective, does education currently need to be reformed? Please explain why or why not.
2. What are the socioeconomic differences between urban and suburban public schools, and what other differences do you perceive there to be between these two types of schools? Please provide a detailed explanation.
3. Do socioeconomic concerns or social systems and structures play a role in disparities in education? Please explain thoroughly.
4. From your perspective how does having predominantly Black students in schools determine how schools' function, how they operate, and the resources they provide? Please explain thoroughly.
5. In your opinion, do urban public schools offer a quality education with sufficient resources and opportunities for the success of Black students, and how do the two settings compare in relation to quality of education and resources available? **Please explain.**
6. Follow up: Do you think race plays a part of the quality in education students get in urban and suburban schools? Why or why not? Please explain thoroughly.

   For the purpose of expanding the information and knowledge of this study, the remainder of this interview will be spent with me asking about your thoughts about human services as it relates to education.

7. First, how would you define human services and what does that look like in the field of K-12 education?

Elaborating on human service-related questions, you will be asked to answer the next questions from a human service perspective. This study defines a human service perspective in education to mean a viewpoint of providing services that help students with their social, emotional, psychological, and academic needs. It considers that personal experiences can affect academic performance and well-being. The perspective aims to create a supportive school environment that helps students in all areas of their life, including mental and physical health, and provides access to resources for overcoming obstacles.
Examples: of these resources are counseling, after-school programs, family engagement initiatives, and community partnerships.

8. In your opinion, what resources are needed to provide students with an equitable education in urban school districts?

9. In your opinion, what practical approaches and strategies can be implemented to promote equity and address human service, resource needs, and achievement gaps in K-12 education, especially in urban areas with predominantly Black students compared to suburban areas with predominantly White students?
10. Follow-up: How can these practical approaches to human service needs in education be implemented and what are the potential challenges and barriers that could arise in the implementation process?
11. How do you think policy and law makers, educators, and administrators can work together to promote fairness and equal opportunities in K-12 education?

12. Do you think most unbiased education professionals in K-12 schools, whether they work in urban or suburban areas, would agree with the statements you've made in this interview?

13. Lastly, do you have any general thoughts and/or things you would like to share regarding human services needed in urban schools?