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The Path to Full Reparations:
A Community-Driven Model of Education Reparations for Black Youth
in Los Angeles County, Phase I (Early Learners)

by

Andrew S. Murphy

A dissertation presented to the Faculty of the School of Education,

Loyola Marymount University,

in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education

2023

The Path to Full Reparations:
A Community-Driven Model of Education Reparations for Black Youth
in Los Angeles County, Phase I (Early Learners)

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by

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This dissertation written by Andrew Murphy, under the direction of the Dissertation Committee, is approved and accepted by all committee members, in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

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one day receive a doctoral degree while living in one of the world's greatest cities, Los Angeles, California. Thank you to everyone who has taken this journey with me. The struggle for justice and love continues.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to the memory of

Rainey Bethea and his descendants.

May our consciousness of injustice
fuel our drive to create a better world.

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ABSTRACT

The Path to Full Reparations:

A Community-Driven Model of Education Reparations for Black Youth
in Los Angeles County, Phase I (Early Learners)

by

Andrew S. Murphy

The unresolved long-term effects of slavery and past and ongoing systemic racism directed toward Black Americans can be seen in the devaluing and aggressively racist treatment of Black students in Los Angeles County schools. Through qualitative interviews with Black education community members in Los Angeles County, this study collected Black education community members' perspectives on the need for a multiphase education reparations system for Black youth, beginning with early learners (ages 0 to 8), and what components such a system should include. Participants overwhelmingly supported an education reparations system due to the over-policing and criminalization of Black students and the history of racist and unjust policies and inequitable education; participants suggested multiple components of a potential education reparations system that can be grouped as student supports, family supports, educational resources, and societal and policy reforms. The study concludes with a proposal for introducing an education reparations system in Los Angeles County led by Black community leaders and grounded in community outreach and ongoing organizing.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The last legal public execution to occur in the United States was the hanging of Rainey Bethea on August 14, 1936, in Owensboro, Kentucky (Pitzulo, 2017, p. 377). Accused of rape and murder of a white woman and convicted of rape, a Daviess County jury that deliberated for less than 5 minutes sentenced Rainey Bethea, a Black man, to the death penalty despite the judge's suggestion of a 10–20-year imprisonment (Pitzulo, 2017, p. 388). That all other states had banned public hangings by the 1930s only served to exacerbate the spectacle that became Bethea's hanging, as throes of spectators, tourists, and townspeople flocked to watch what *The New York Times* described as a “carnival of sadism” (1936 as cited in Pitzulo, 2017, p. 404).

The Unjust Lynching of Rainey Bethea

What occurred in Owensboro was more than any normal execution. The event must be called exactly what it was: a racist lynching of a Black man by a white jury, judge, sheriff, and executioner (Pitzulo, 2017, p. 410). The site of the country's last legal public lynching is the hometown in which I was raised. Owensboro, the seat of Daviess County in western Kentucky, is the same city in which I frequently heard young white men say the “n” word in high school hallways, where I was physically threatened and told to leave a weekend party because “ch*nks weren't allowed,” and where terms like “dirty J*w” and “be*ner” were commonly used to describe peoples of Jewish race or creed and of Latine origins. The 1990s and 2000s Owensboro of my childhood was blatantly racist and discriminatory, and as an Asian American who witnessed and endured daily episodes of racism, I remember fully that white prejudicial vitriol was most heightened when directed toward the Black community. I learned early as a child that

my treatment and otherization was neither normal nor fair. I also observed that racism toward other minoritized communities, especially the Black community, was even more severe than what I faced.

Intersectional Allies: Black and Asian Solidarity

Intersectionality as a concept was first coined by Crenshaw (1989), who argued in legal cases that Black women faced specific discrimination outside of a single context as only Black, or only a woman; as such, the intersection of identities was necessary to consider in discrimination cases. In the Owensboro context, I understood intersectional allyship to mean recognizing the existence of race-based prejudice and racism, acknowledging its nuance and impact across the experiences of communities of color, and working in solidarity and allyship across those lines of racial difference because of that understanding.

A basketball fanatic, I spent most afternoons as an adolescent at the local Young Men's Christian Association gym. Ironically, I sought physical and mental freedom from school bullying on these courts, yet these were the same courts on which I encountered the most direct racism. Young white men constantly labeled me "Jackie Chan," "Jet Li," or "Yao Ming" (in the early 2000s, all household name Chinese celebrities; Chan and Li were martial arts film stars and Ming was a professional basketball player) without asking my name, nor acknowledging that Chan, Li, or Ming were not Korean like me, or even Asian American. Coupled with these racist labels, I was inevitably always picked last, and was sometimes not allowed to play at all.

To my surprise at the time, the intersectional allies who showed up for me were consistently young Black men. I remember distinctly young Black men choosing me for their teams, regularly passing me the ball, providing encouragement to shoot and score, and asking to

call me by my name. Perhaps their own experiences with racism developed empathy for my circumstances. The experience of receiving allyship from Black men continued beyond my childhood and, in three of my life's greatest mentors, allyship became a consistent theme beyond adolescence and well into my 20s (Murphy, 2020).

I chose this dissertation topic both as an impassioned call for justice and as a spiritual call to return the great favors and kindness afforded to me. This study was an attempt to use the education policy skills I have developed to offer my intersectional allyship to the Black community in addressing and triumphing over the same systemic oppression tactics I saw in Owensboro schools. These tactics of systemic oppression have persisted in oppressing the Black students of Los Angeles (LA) County. I hope this dissertation does justice to the many allies working in both Black and Asian communities to achieve true liberation from white supremacy and an antiracist, liberatory education for all students.

Statement of the Problem

The history of institutional and structural racism directed toward Black Americans has been well documented. The need for restorative solutions and adequate reparations for the ongoing effects of slavery, segregation, discriminatory practices, and systemic and interpersonal racism has been the subject of numerous academic studies, journal articles, college courses, and even in popular media, such as in Coates's (2014) "The Case for Reparations."

The history of systemic racism and violence toward Black students has also been studied thoroughly. The *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) Supreme Court decision legalized inequity in education largely built along racial segregation and stood as law until *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), which reversed *Plessy v. Ferguson's* (1896) separate but equal doctrine. Still,

Brown v. Board of Education (1954) stopped short of calling for institutional reparation for the harm caused by *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), creating the backdrop for continued educational inequity and injustice persisting to the present.

Recent scholarship has increased the education reparations conversation with vigor. Wali-Ali (2019) supported a system of education reparations to heal intergenerational trauma and uncommon challenges faced by Black students. Wali-Ali specifically identified an educational opportunity gap that includes disparities in (a) Black versus white student access to math and science courses, (b) access to honors or advanced placement courses, (c) the years of experience of teachers in predominantly Black schools versus predominantly white schools, and (d) accelerated disciplinary measures that severely admonish Black students disproportionately.

Howard (2016) detailed the inequitable and discriminatory policing of Black students in schools, pointing out that Black children account for 42% of preschool suspensions despite making up only 18% of the total preschool population. Furthermore, so-called zero tolerance policies have resulted in an increase in school resource officers, correlating with an increase in youth incarceration. Howard lamented the United States has the highest youth incarceration rate in the world, with approximately 54,100 total youth imprisoned.

In Los Angeles, issues of inequitable policing and educational opportunity gaps for Black students reflect these national statistics. Allen et al. (2018) found Black youth made up 25% of the total arrests, citations, and diversions conducted by the LA School Police Department, despite making up only 9% of the Los Angeles Unified School District's (LAUSD) total student population. The zip codes with the highest overall LA School Police Department involvement were unsurprisingly in South Central and South Gate, predominantly Black areas.

The Black Student Achievement Parent Leaders of Innovate Public Schools (2018), a nonprofit education organization, studied academic data for the 50,557 Black students in Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), finding only 30% of Black students tested on or above grade level in English standardized testing, only 20% tested at grade level in math, and 166 of 235 schools with an enrollment of at least 20 Black students had a poor rating for Black student academic achievement. The study also found only half of Black students who graduated from high school met the eligibility requirements for California state colleges and universities, and at least 57% of Black students did not consider their school to be a supportive and inviting learning environment (Innovate Public Schools, 2018).

Racially biased disciplinary practices and anti-Black school over-policing, coupled with inadequate academic opportunities for Black students, lead to devastating consequences for Black youth. Between 2010 and 2020, only 32.5% of Black 25–29-year-olds completed an associate’s or higher degree nationally, as compared to a national average of 45.5% for all 25–29 year-olds and an average of 52.5% for white 25–29-year-olds (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.). Only 23.5% of Black 25–29-year-old adults completed a bachelor’s degree or higher during the same period, compared to a national average of 35.5% for 25-29 year-old adults and 42% of white adults ages 25–29 (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.).

Tremendous momentum exists in both academic research and greater society for historic efforts to combat institutional racism and invigorate the academic, career, and life trajectories for Black children and adults. Chang (2020) detailed the recently passed California Assembly Bill 3121 that created the California Reparations Task Force. The Task Force has issued recommendations on reparations policies that can be instituted in California, including within the

field of education, and ultimately will issue economic reparations for a determined number of Black Californians (Chang, 2020).

Now is the moment to meet systemic issues with concrete, revolutionary action—what I sought to do in this study. By providing specific policy recommendations for a system of education reparations for Black students in LA County built from a foundation of perspectives from interviews with local Black community members, this dissertation harnesses current political will, advocates for meaningful policy initiatives, and seeks to operationalize justice cemented in the expertise of the Black community.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to propose a system of education reparations for Black youth, beginning with early learners, in LA County based on academic research and grounded in the recommendations of local Black education community members. In this study, I defined *early learners* as 0–8-year-old youth in life stages prenatal through third grade (P–3). Researchers have found this stage is the most rapid period of human brain growth both genetically and in response to environmental stimuli (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021; Huttenlocher, 2002; Johnston et al., 2009; Pascual-Leone et al., 2005; The Urban Child Institute, 2022).

This study collected data through qualitative interviews with LA-based Black community members (e.g., educators, academics, community leaders, school and school systems administrators, teachers, parents, college-aged recent students) to glean community-driven recommendations on potential components of an education reparations system. Following data collection, this study operationalized community-based ideas and proposed a policy campaign

model that can begin coalition building with the purpose of initializing a system of education reparations for Black youth, beginning with early learners. This study serves as an initial phase of an eventual comprehensive reparations system for all Black youth in LA County.

Significance of the Study

The United States' original sin is slavery. To become the country America claims to be, nothing is more important than restoring the moral integrity of the country through reversing the longstanding and continuing effects of slavery on Black Americans—both descendants of slaves and later immigrants who have faced systemic racism rooted in the generational mindsets, biases, and predispositions of a formerly slave-owning nation (Coates, 2014). The United States cannot ensure a high-quality public education for all learners without first addressing and reversing the impact of historical oppression.

This study's literature review detailed how the Black community (including Black students) have been sieged by centuries of racist and inequitable policies under the guise of so-called equal educational rights. In seeking to reverse systemic racism that the Black community has faced and still faces, I sought to authentically record the perspectives of Black education community members in LA County and use those perspectives to build a system of education reparations for Black youth, beginning with 0–8-year-old early learners. To be clear, even historically unprecedented and revolutionary efforts will never be able to fully heal the wounds of generational trauma, discrimination, and racism; however, inquiry and operationalization of Black education community members' perspectives into tangible policy solutions that are fully funded and implemented with haste can begin the process of healing.

At minimum, an education reparations system for Black youth will radically shift and recenter the priorities of the LAUSD and other LA County school districts toward truly equitable and affirming experiences for Black youth. Such a system can build a strong sense of Black students' cultural selves through an Afro-centric curriculum and learning experiences that embrace and develop Black excellence, which will lead to successful learning outcomes and life fulfillment. Disrupting white supremacy by providing an unimpeded, authentic, Black-affirming schooling experience will yield generational benefits; these potential benefits include improving the academic, socioemotional, and psychological health, wellness, and safety of current and future generations of Black students in LA, and reshaping the soul of the United States in the process.

These types of efforts must not be limited to LA County. The United States' history of slavery, segregation, racism, and discrimination must be interrupted across the entire nation via a transformed educational system. This study sought to build that vision in LA County, taking care of this corner of the world in hopes that others will soon follow, and to even greater success.

Some will call this vision grandiose. Some will argue other communities (such as white students) deserve the same resources this study demands be given to the Black community. Some will offer anecdotal examples of Black economic success, manipulatively using those as counterarguments against the necessity of reparations. All those arguments are steeped in the very white supremacy that even more convincingly justifies the necessity for urgent reparations in the United States.

Research Questions

Two research questions guided data collection, analysis, discussion, and implications:

1. Why do Black education community members believe an education reparations system should exist in Los Angeles County?
2. What do Black education community members in Los Angeles County believe are necessary components of an education reparations system for Black students, beginning with early learners?

Theoretical Framework

In this study, I employed Horsford et al.'s (2011) culturally relevant leadership framework. Culturally relevant leadership built upon Crenshaw's (1988, 2011) critical legal studies theory, which Delgado (1995) subsequently translated into critical race theory (CRT) and Ladson-Billings (1998, 2005) applied to the field of education. Building upon Crenshaw's (1988, 2011) work, Bell (1991) characterized the underpinnings of CRT as a societal critique naming the permanence of racism. In large part due to the foundational roots of slavery and white supremacy in the United States, Bell (1973, 1991) described racism as an integrated facet of U.S. life applied toward minoritized groups overtly and subconsciously and at times for societal and economic purposes. Bell (1991) asserted that patterns of white dominance mean civil rights efforts by communities of color have led to only short-lived victories.

Delgado (1995) synthesized Crenshaw's (1988, 2011) and Bell's (1991) work into contemporary CRT, defining the CRT movement as "a collection of activists and scholars interested in studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power" (pp. 1–2) that depicts societal organization within racial stratification and hierarchy. Because race has

an undeniable and profound impact on life outcomes for people of color, race must be considered in the analysis and study of all sectors.

Using CRT as a foundation of an educational context, Horsford et al. (2011) presented an education framework with three primary tenets: professional duty, personal journey, and pedagogical approach. These three tenets cannot function without a fourth tenet, political context (Horsford et al., 2011). According to Horsford et al., education practitioners cannot focus solely on (a) their professional duties to lead for equity, engagement, and excellence; (b) their personal journeys of cultural proficiency; (c) their culturally relevant and antiracist pedagogical approaches; (d) nor any of these three areas in a vacuum, absent each other. Rather, they must focus on all of these duties collectively. Public education lives within a societal context with societal implications; therefore, the political context, including the demographic divide and competing values, ideologies, and perspectives, must be taken into consideration (Horsford et al., 2011).

Horsford et al.'s (2011) culturally relevant leadership framework was originally intended to steer aspiring and current school leaders and school leader preparation program administrators. However, the framework's context can easily be expanded beyond individual schools toward, as Horsford et al. (2011) noted, a "deeper consciousness of the politics of race, culture, and difference in educational contexts" and a "movement toward culturally relevant leadership" (p. 600). Horsford et al. described how school district-level leaders already face the difficult task of ensuring compliance with federal, state, district, and school-based policies and procedures. As schools operate within a larger political context, education personnel should be "cognizant of the political and pedagogical significance of engaging in culturally relevant and

antiracist work in schools” (Horsford et al., 2011, p. 596) and beyond. Horsford et al. (2011) wrote this process is both (a) pedagogical, requiring a shift toward antiracist school climates; and (b) personal, requiring greater consciousness of cultural relevance and antiracism by individual leaders.

Horsford et al. (2011) also argued that recognizing pedagogical and personal change through practicing and spreading culturally relevant leadership promotes “educational equity, engagement, and excellence” and noted schools must “successfully monitor and mediate cultural conflict by modeling cross-cultural communication effectively . . . navigate and negotiate opposing cultural perspectives and conflict through dialogue and mediation and . . . [foster] positive cross-cultural relationships” (p. 599). Extrapolating this argument, school systems have the same charge. School systems must practice culturally relevant leadership, beginning by mediating longstanding cultural divides, reconciling broken cultural relationships and misunderstandings, and resolving conflicts with retribution for harm caused. Stated more plainly, schools and school districts have a professional and political duty to repair their legacies of anti-Black racism and systemic oppression. In this study, I advocate for the practice of culturally relevant leadership on a school systems level, namely by proposing a multiphase reparations program for Black youth. Doing so will not only ensure greater equity, engagement, and excellence for Black students, but can also begin the healing process for centuries of U.S. racism and white supremacy that has defined the public education system.

Horsford et al.’s (2011) culturally relevant leadership framework permeated the data collection of this study in qualitative interviews with Black education community members in LA County. Still, merely presenting research about participants’ ideas regarding a potential

education reparations system for Black youth, beginning with early learners, is not enough. Culturally relevant leadership demands action, meaning the data from this study must be operationalized, translated to policy, and pursued for local political action. Building an antiracist and Black-affirming education system in LA County does not just necessitate research, it necessitates intentional action.

Methodology

This study used a qualitative research approach to discover participants' perspectives regarding the need for a multiphase education reparations system for Black early learners in LA County, and the necessary components of such a system. Data were collected in semistructured interviews featuring open-ended inquiries deriving from research questions. Nine total participants were interviewed.

Due to considerations for safety precautions during the ongoing COVID-19 global pandemic, all interviews were conducted virtually via Zoom video conferencing (www.zoom.us), with access provided by Loyola Marymount University (LMU). Interviews were recorded for researcher transcription. To ensure confidentiality, all participants are identified by pseudonyms in the study. Additionally, all data were stored on a secure, password-protected laptop, and all recordings and transcriptions will be deleted no later than 1 year after this study has been published. Participants were recruited through a network sampling strategy, beginning with my personal political, civic, and education network contacts and the recommendations of LMU faculty (see Appendix A). Collected interview transcriptions were analyzed and categorized thematically, and these themes were used to find meaning and make connections within the categories of participant responses.

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations of the Study

This study rested upon the assumption that participant responses could be taken as representative of broader perspectives of Black education community members in LA County, due to the limitation of sample size. To address this limitation, I carefully recruited participants who were diverse along lines of age, gender, and profession, and who fell into one or more of three categories of participants: school employees, families, and community leaders.

School employee participants included educators, school leaders, and school systems administrators. Family participants included recent K–12 students, parents, and guardians. Community leaders included academic researchers, government officials, policymakers, private sector leaders, and community organizers. These three categories provided a 360-degree view of school communities.

Another assumption of the study was that participants' views would not have altered significantly between the time of research (Fall 2022) and the publication of the study. Research was conducted during a set time period, and significant societal events or policy changes could have changed participants' perspectives over time, resulting in a potential limitation. Moreover, because threats to validity cannot be controlled in self-reported data, I assumed all participant responses were truthful and accurate (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). These assumptions and limitations can be delimited by continuing research after this study to ensure a future education reparations system for Black students in LA County remains consistent with the evolving perspectives of the Black community.

This study was specific to LA County, and results may not be representative of Black communities in other locations. All participants agreed that education reparations systems should

exist throughout the United States, but other cities and states should adopt reparations policies based in their own individual contexts after committed and authentic engagement with Black communities in those areas.

Researcher Positionality and Reflexivity

As a Korean American, I join the legacy of Asian Pacific Islander activists including Yuri Kochiyama, Grace Lee Boggs, and many others past and present in advocating for Black civil rights (Nguyen, 2020). Learning from and advocating in solidarity with the Black community is personal, as some of my staunchest childhood advocates were Black peers and, as an adult, many of my most powerful mentors have been Black men (Murphy, 2020).

Although I believe passionately that Black Lives Matter, seek to contribute to Black–Asian solidarity efforts, and advocate on behalf of Black students, I acknowledge I am not and never will be Black. Asian Pacific Islanders in the United States have experienced generations of exclusion, colonization, forced assimilation, legal discrimination, and interpersonal and systemic racism; the experiences of Asian Americans are fundamentally different in scope, scale, history, and intensity from those of the Black community.

Anti-Blackness exists within portions of the Asian Pacific Islander community. As Kim (1999) noted, white supremacy drives a wedge between Asian Americans and other communities of color, especially the Black community, through racial triangulation exacerbated by selective immigration. Anti-Blackness in the Asian American community exists predominantly among first-generation immigrants; second- and third-generation Asian Americans are far more active supporters in the fight for Black liberation (Nguyen, 2020).

As an aspiring ally to all marginalized and oppressed groups with my own lived experiences with interpersonal and systemic racism, I arrived at this study with a passionate desire to convey gratitude for the allyship shown to me by many Black leaders, colleagues, and friends. I attempted to engage participants with the deep respect and humility required for a non-Black person conducting research in the Black community. As a policy maker and racial solidarity advocate, I committed to using a researcher–practitioner mindset in seeking solely to elevate the voices of Black education community members, rather than making potentially consequential policy recommendations driven by my own thoughts, biases, and assumptions. I also remained conscious that ignoring the responsibility to interrupt racism experienced by other communities under the false guise of positionality is a form of racism.

In this study, I sought to be a researcher co-building a car whose parts and design were from the Black community, and whose driver should be a Black leader. I was happy to pump gas into this car; the keys were not my own.

Connection to Leadership and Social Justice

Social justice is incomplete without racial justice. This study focused on racial justice for the generations of Black Americans in LA County who have suffered, endured, and triumphed despite centuries of anti-Blackness, white supremacy, and systemic racism. Leadership for social justice must not only acknowledge racial injustice and inequity, but also, as Horsford et al. (2011) noted, pursue political and policy solutions to rectify and repair historical oppression. Rooting out anti-Black oppressive school cultures and policies, replacing those with Black-affirming and transformative cultures to highlight and propel Black excellence, and cleansing the

soul of the nation by finally addressing the original sin of U.S. slavery should be fundamental causes for any social justice advocate.

Definitions of Terms

The terms *Black* and *African American* are used interchangeably in U.S. discourse but have different meanings and connotations based in individual and collective preferences, generational learnings and experiences, and complicated and nuanced understanding and personal histories (Adams, 2020; Chavez, 2020; Eligon, 2020). I recognized, due to the large immigrant population of LA County that includes a sizeable population of undocumented immigrants, many Black students may not identify as African American; therefore, I used the term *Black* to describe all people who identify as Black, African American, African immigrant, AfroLatine, or of other Black descent.

In this study, I also made the stylistic choice to capitalize Black in accordance with contemporary journalistic standards, denoting the categorical lived experiences of Black people in the United States (Eligon, 2020). The term “white” is an identifier of skin color, which can be applied to phenotypically lighter skinned peoples of multiple continents; given the disparate experiences of white Americans, I followed research in not capitalizing white in this study (Eligon, 2020).

In the context of this dissertation, the term “American” was used to describe all individuals residing within the borders of the United States, regardless of documentation status, including refugees and undocumented immigrants.

The term *Los Angeles* (LA) was used interchangeably to refer to the City of Los Angeles, Los Angeles County, and the Greater Los Angeles metropolitan area. Because the largest public

school district in LA, LAUSD, encompasses areas outside of City of LA limits but not outside of LA County, the term *Los Angeles* was used synonymously with the areas of LA County that include LAUSD schools.

Organization of Dissertation

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. The first chapter introduced the problem being studied, its meaning and significance, and the study's theoretical framework and research questions. The second chapter includes a literature review that provides historical context for reparations efforts for Black Americans, context for reparations in public education, background of prior policy efforts that have demonstrated the need for full-scale education reparations, and context for specific components needed in an education reparations system. The third chapter details this study's methodology, which rested in qualitative semistructured interview research using purposive network sampling. The fourth chapter shares research results, categorizing data into general themes. Finally, a concluding chapter illustrates a policy campaign model proposal for a multiphase education reparations system for Black youth, beginning with early learners, that can be implemented in LA County by building upon the results of this research.

Conclusion

Using Horsford et al.'s (2011) culturally relevant leadership framework, this dissertation presents data collected in interviews with local Black education community members regarding their perspectives on a potential education reparations system for Black youth in LA County, beginning with early learners (ages 0–8). In this study, I sought to understand why Black education community members believe such a system is necessary, and what components should

be included in a reparations system that can begin to heal the wounds of anti-Blackness and systemic racism in LA public schools.

As an Asian American education policy maker, it was a humbling privilege to gain the trust of members of the local Black community in undertaking this research. Prior to pursuing this topic, I consulted with several members of the Black community to ask whether I was the appropriate person to do this research. Although speaking to a small number of individuals obviously does not represent the views of the entire LA Black community, I received unanimous positive encouragement, which gave me the confidence to pursue this topic. Though the research prowess of many far surpasses my own, it was my intention that the honesty, authenticity, and candor participants offered during interviews would be matched by the vigor, intentionality, and intersectional allyship I sought to bring to this study. My intention was to propose a policy campaign model that is immediately actionable (i.e., research with a purpose). Still, good intentions alone are not sufficient given the delicacy, emotion, and significance of this topic. Following the publication of this dissertation, I commit to following my intentions with action and convening community members to initiate the policy campaign proposed in this study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In researching the topic of reparations for Black Americans, it was important not to forget that this subject is not theoretical or abstract in nature—the discussion focuses on the lived experiences and trauma of people. Abundant research exists on the topic of reparations for Black Americans; as such, this literature review should not be considered exhaustive. The existence of significant research on this topic itself suggested to me what is apparent—the U.S. society is still grappling with the issue of reparations for Black Americans because the wounds of slavery and post-slavery structural and institutional racism and discrimination have not been healed with any form of adequate or meaningful repair. In all existing research on the topic, two things were clear: (a) Black Americans in each generation since slavery have organized for and been promised reparation; and (b) in each of those instances, forces of white supremacy have left those promises unfulfilled, furthering systemic racism and oppression through political and economic means.

Reparations for Black Americans

Robinson (2001) presented a legislative, human rights-oriented, international law-aligned, moral, historical comparative, economic, and ethical case for restitution for slavery and post-slavery racism. Robinson (2001) noted the evidence of discrimination “is so overwhelming that one hardly knows which examples to select” (p. 225). Robinson shared multiple examples of instances in which Black Americans were promised restitution (e.g., the Reconstruction-era Southern Homestead Act of 1866, Cornelius J. Jones’ 1915 lawsuit against the U.S. Department of the Treasury) but in each of those examples, noted the U.S. government either created

parameters that made it impossible for Black Americans to actually receive the allotted restitution, or the U.S. court system struck down Black-led reparations efforts. This theme has remained consistent in every significant reparations effort post-slavery.

Berry (2006) uncovered a past example of a Black community-led reparations effort founded by Callie House in the late 1800s: the Ex-Slave Mutual Relief, Bounty, and Pension Association (ESMRBPA). Berry detailed a powerful movement with over 600,000 members who provided mutual aid to the organization's members and advocated for a national pension providing reparations to former slaves. Berry (2006) and Perry (2010) recounted how the federal government, through the Bureau of Pensions, the U.S. Post Office, and the Department of Justice, ravaged the ESMRBPA by alleging fraud, investigating ESMRBPA officers, and eventually arresting and imprisoning House on charges of mail fraud.

According to Perry (2010), the District of Columbia Court of Appeals and later, the U.S. Supreme Court, denied ruling on *Johnson v. McAdoo* (1916) on grounds of governmental immunity. Johnson was a class action lawsuit by ESMRBPA members against the U.S. Treasury seeking a \$68 million cotton tax to benefit Black Americans, the first reparations lawsuit in U.S. judicial history (Perry, 2010, par. 51). Meanwhile, the U.S. Senate refused to take up reparations pension legislation proposed by the ESMRBPA. Berry (2006) questioned why the history of all three branches of government colluding to deny Black reparations has been erased from historical narratives.

According to Perry (2010), these efforts were preceded by General William T. Sherman's 1865 Special Field Orders No. 15, which promised 40 acres of abandoned and confiscated Confederate land to former slaves in South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida (par. 8). Other

unfulfilled promises of reparations to Black Americans included the Freedman's Bureau Act of 1865, the Southern Homestead Act of 1866, House Speaker Thaddeus Steven's H.R. 29 of 1867, and 1868 campaign promises of 40 acres and a mule by Republicans (Perry, 2010, par. 19). Despite these multiple promises to Black Americans, legal challenges such as (a) President Andrew Johnson's Amnesty Proclamation of 1865, (b) the failure of H.R. 29's passage, and (c) unfulfilled campaign promises resulted in none of these restorative efforts being enacted (Perry, 2010, par. 9, 16-18). Black Americans were manipulated for political gain for the Republican Party, but without follow through that improved Black economic outcomes.

Franklin (2012) wrote a comprehensive literature review of arguments and justifications for reparations for Black Americans, citing the works of Robinson (2001) and Berry (2006), among others. Franklin (2012) proposed a Reparations Superfund for many Black community-affirming causes, including (a) violence prevention in Black neighborhoods; (b) youth development; (c) youth intervention and remediation programs; (d) arts and music educational programs; (e) school reform, including alternatives to high-stakes testing, which results in high dropout rates among Black students; (f) educational resources and youth career development; (g) culturally responsive and Black-affirming health care networks supporting maternal and early childhood health care programs; and (h) economic and financial support for Black families. Franklin also mentioned how Black homebuyers were targeted by mortgage loan companies such as Countrywide, Household Finance, Champion, and New Century Financial Corporation for subprime loans in the lead up to the 2007–2009 Great Recession (Franklin, 2012, p. 3).

A popular nonacademic work on reparations for Black Americans, Coates's (2014) "The Case for Reparations," described reparations as "more than recompense for past injustices," but a

“revolution of the American consciousness, a reconciling of our self-image as the great democratizer with the facts of our history” (para. 9). Coates detailed a brief timeline of the history of anti-Black systemic racism in the United States, including colonization and slavery (1565–1865); the failure of Reconstruction and the rise of Jim Crow laws (1865–1960s); race-driven terrorism and the destruction of Black wealth (1910s–1950s); exclusion of Black Americans during societal liberalization, including redlining, exclusion from the New Deal and the *Servicemen’s Readjustment Act* (1944) otherwise known as the G.I. bill, and the creation of ghettoized public housing (1930s–1960s); the draft and Vietnam War, gutting of liberal reforms, and race-driven police violence against Black Americans (1960s–present); and predatory lending, the mortgage crisis, and the Great Recession (2000–2010s).

Similar to Robinson (2001), Berry (2006), and Franklin (2012), Coates (2014) also detailed the many instances in which Black Americans fought back against oppressive systems. Black Americans rebelled against slave owners, formed contract buyers’ leagues to oppose unfair housing practices, formed unions to advocate for workers’ rights, exercised legal options against racist policies, worked on electoral campaigns and ran for public office, created Kwanzaa, and established Juneteenth. Additionally, Black Americans have formed and led revolutionary social movements, including the Civil Rights Movement, Black Power, Afrofuturism, Black Lives Matter, and the All Black Lives Matter LGBTQIA+ movement (Ihemeson, 2020). At each stage, white supremacy in collusion with government has intervened against Black civil rights movements and has disrupted or disbanded these efforts, resulting in continuing inequities in the financial, educational, health, and career outcomes for Black Americans.

In addition to significant research on the history of reparations efforts, substantial research also exists on potential reparations programs. Hunter (2018) argued for financial reparations for Black Americans by presenting a qualitative historical account of the Freedmen's Bank. Signed into law by President Abraham Lincoln in 1865 as a component of the Freedman's Bureau Act of 1865, the Freedmen's Bank Act established the United States' first and only nationalized and federally established Black bank (p. 421). Hunter found inequitable lending practices by mostly white management, corruption by white bank officials, and the failure of the U.S. government to meaningfully intervene directly led to the bank's failure and generational financial loss for Black depositors, while also establishing deep mistrust by Black Americans in national financial systems. Hunter argued that descendants of Freedmen's Bank depositors are owed over 7 billion dollars in accounting for their lost economic share of gross domestic product. No restitution was ever offered to Black customers for their significant financial loss.

Blau and Graham (1990) conducted a quantitative analysis of 1976 and 1978 national longitudinal surveys and found the racial wealth gap in the United States is attributable to disparities in inheritances, bequests, and intrafamily transfers rather than individual choices or lifestyle factors. Blau and Graham (1990) observed that "three quarters of the observed racial differences in wealth appear to be related to race" (pp. 332–333) and could be explained by barriers faced by Black people in starting businesses, purchasing homes, securing loans, navigating discriminatory education, and working for lower wages—all of which must be attributed to racial discrimination. Hamilton and Darity (2010) advocated similarly for the reconciliation of the racial wealth gap through financial reparations to Black Americans in the form of baby bonds, or individual trusts set up for Black children that accumulate at least 1.5%—

2% annual growth and are accessible once a child turns 18. Hamilton and Darity (2010) embodied realism in adding, “We are not optimistic about the public will to directly address the racial wealth gap” (p. 214). Hamilton and Darity’s Afro-pessimistic realism has since proved correct, as no meaningful program to address the racial wealth gap has been established since their study.

Messer et al. (2018) argued for both reparations for generational financial loss and financial redress for accumulated historical trauma, including the 1921 Tulsa Race Riots. Conducting historical qualitative research that included coding archival data and victims’ framing, Messer et al. found the Race Riots’ impact transcended economic devastation, leading to loss of legacy, psychological trauma, and individual fear. Messer et al. argued the U.S. government was culpable in first ignoring and later encouraging the Race Riots, in addition to a lack of meaningful apology or redress afterward—two inactions that collectively sowed seeds of generational mistrust in government by Black Americans. Similar to Berry’s (2006) detailing of the ESMRBPA, Messer et al.’s study (2018) of the Tulsa Race Riots provided yet another example of successful infrastructure created by Black Americans that was later destroyed by white supremacy in collusion with the U.S. government.

Cooper (2012) acknowledged controversy over the topic of reparations, about which researchers have written extensively, including Torpey and Burkett (2010). Conducting a philosophical and legal qualitative analysis of the reparations debate, Cooper (2012) argued although reparations for slavery are justified due to the exploitation of Black workers, the economic basis of financial reparations claims do not meet minimum standards for judicial standing. Cooper argued firmer justification exists for financial reparations on the grounds that

Jim Crow laws constituted legal genocide under the 1948 United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. Cooper supported this argument with historical precedent, including the U.S. Senate's registering of concerns that the United Nations Genocide Convention could be used as a tool to advance civil rights in the 1950s. Cooper compared Jim Crow laws to South African apartheid policies, which led to financial reparations, and cited examples of international historical precedent as to why Black Americans are owed financial reparations on the grounds of legal genocide. These examples included (a) the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, which provided reparations to formally interned Japanese Americans; (b) reparations paid by the U.S. government to Indigenous Native American tribes; and (c) reparations paid by the U.S. government in 2004 to compensate Hungarian Jews for the looting of their property by U.S. soldiers during World War II (Cooper, 2012).

Malveaux (2022) urged a presidential executive order to establish a commission to study reparations for Black Americans and countermeasures for economic discrimination. Although Malveaux applauded some recent actions, such as President Biden's 2022 designation of Juneteenth as a federal holiday, she questioned whether such actions came with meaningful government reform, such as ending persisting pay disparities for Black federal government employees (Malveaux, 2022, par. 4-5). Instead, Malveaux (2022) advocated for fully embracing reparations at the federal policy level to correct ongoing "hidden racism," including the fact that "Black employees are more likely to be clerical workers in the federal government than employed in the Senior Executive Service" (para. 5).

Education Reparations for Black Students

Given the significant historic, economic, and legal arguments for reparations for Black Americans, researchers must consider whether reparations are also required to provide redress for anti-Black racism in U.S. public education. In mass media, several opinion writers have offered arguments in support of education reparations for Black students, including Burnette (2020), Harris (2020), and Kelleher (2019).

Academic arguments for education reparations for Black students rest in legal precedent set by *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), in which the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that racial segregation in public schools is unconstitutional, overturning *Plessy v. Ferguson's* (1896) separate but equal doctrine. According to McNeal (2009), *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) addressed a fundamental inequity in U.S. public education, establishing a legal benchmark for prior years of inequal and inadequate public education for Black students.

Still, McNeal (2009) argued in the post-*Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) era, its impact has largely been symbolic rather than substantive. McNeal conducted a qualitative research and legal analysis to detail the lack of commitment by many school districts post-*Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) toward full racial integration, the rapid growth of segregated minority schools, and substandard academic outcomes at segregated minority schools. Moreover, McNeal discussed the legal erosion of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) in recent court cases, including *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1* (2007), which ruled that public school districts cannot assign students to schools based solely on race even in integration efforts. Amid *Brown v. Board of Education's* (1954) ineffectiveness, the *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1* (2007) ruling followed

attempts to erode prior rulings on school integration, including *Green v. County School Board of New Kent County* (1968), which ruled that school districts must provide a plan to dismantle segregated school districts.

McNeal's (2009) assertion that *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) did not rectify discrepancies in the quality of public education between white and Black students is supported by literature across educational research. This support includes research on positive and negative academic reinforcement, teaching and leadership pedagogy, and school staffing.

Positive and Negative Academic Reinforcement

So-called gifted education claims to award intelligence and academic excellence, regardless of student backgrounds, with more enriching educational experiences. Ford and King (2014), however, found gifted education access disproportionately excludes Black children. Conducting a quantitative analysis of U.S. Department of Education data measuring gifted program student access in 2006, 2009, and 2011, Ford and King found total enrollment in gifted education classes were disproportionately white, affluent students, whereas students of color, especially Black students, were systemically underrepresented. This underrepresentation can be attributed to the under identification of Black students for gifted education opportunities due to systemic racism and implicit bias in a public education workforce, in which white educators and school leaders are the overwhelming majority (Ford & King, 2014).

Conversely, Black students are systemically overrepresented in school disciplinary action. Walker's (2014) qualitative literature analysis on school disciplinary action studies concluded so-called zero tolerance school disciplinary policies disproportionately target Black students. Walker found white students were more likely to be suspended or expelled for specific

offenses (e.g., smoking or vandalism), whereas 95% of Black student suspensions were for unspecific or subjective punishment offenses such as insubordination and disrespect. Zero-tolerance school disciplinary policies contribute directly to the school-to-prison pipeline, and Black students are disproportionately subjected to law enforcement and penal institutions (Walker, 2014). Walker added Black students are more frequently and more harshly suspended and expelled from school than any other racial group, and out-of-school suspensions for similar offenses are longer for Black students than peers of other racial backgrounds.

Walker's (2014) conclusions were further supported by local data in LA County. The University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) Center for the Transformation of Schools produced comprehensive reports on the state of Black students in the LA area. In their 2019 study, the researchers found the Black student total suspension rate in LA County was 6%, significantly higher than any other racial group (University of California, Los Angeles [UCLA] Center for the Transformation of Schools, 2019). Black students experiencing homelessness had a suspension rate 6% higher than any other student group (University of California, Los Angeles [UCLA] Center for the Transformation of Schools, 2019). In their 2021 study, the researchers found that despite accounting for only 8% of total student enrollment in Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) schools, 25% of total serious interactions with school resource officers occurred with Black students.

Teaching and Leadership Pedagogy

Ladson-Billings (1995) introduced the concept of culturally relevant pedagogy, advocating for student collective empowerment resulting in academic success, cultural competence, and societal critical consciousness. Ladson-Billings found culturally relevant

teaching is needed to ensure Black student success, and Black teachers are best positioned to provide culturally relevant teaching given their proximity to Black culture and experience. Following Ladson-Billings' study, many research articles have been published exploring culturally relevant pedagogical practices. Culturally relevant pedagogy, and, specifically, culturally relevant pedagogy delivered by Black teachers, is more effective at overcoming learning obstacles in Black male students (Murff, 2020) and in improving the overall quality of the teacher workforce (Gershenson et al., 2021).

Khalifa et al.'s (2016) qualitative literature synthesis found culturally responsive school leadership combats marginalization and minoritization of students of color, which occurs regularly through gaps in school disciplinary practices, discomfort in nonculturally affirming school cultures, low expectations from teachers, and the unpreparedness of principals to lead in diverse schools and implement school policies responsive to non-white learners. Amiot et al. (2019) supported this notion, adding that CRT has been underused as a school leadership practice. Amiot et al.'s qualitative case study research demonstrated that CRT can be used in high schools to conduct equity audits, develop school improvement models, interrupt implicit bias, and instill greater excellence and equity in teachers' mindsets toward students of color, as well as change school disciplinary policies.

Horsford et al. (2011) argued schools must foster a culturally relevant and antiracist pedagogy, and that effective culturally relevant leadership involves the successful integration of pedagogical approaches informing school leaders' professional duties to equitably serve diverse student populations. Horsford et al.'s qualitative study found culturally relevant and antiracist pedagogy is no less important to teachers than to educational administrators, necessitating

culturally relevant preparation and support by school administrators to lead diverse schools. Horsford et al.'s culturally relevant leadership framework presented the elements of effective culturally relevant leadership by educational leaders via four key dimensions: political context, pedagogical approach, personal journey, and professional duty. In combination, these dimensions comprise the characteristics school administrators must possess to become culturally relevant leaders.

Collectively, the lack of culturally relevant pedagogy, culturally responsive school leadership, critical race theory (CRT), and culturally relevant leadership frameworks in schools mean that schools are inherently designed so Black students will fail, instead of offering a liberatory education. If schools are not designed intentionally to support the needs of Black learners, those schools are perpetuating systemic racism against Black students in U.S. public education. As Freire (1985) described, liberatory education allows students to understand themselves in relation to systems of oppression and learn how to free themselves from those conditions. Horsford (2022) referred to such educational leadership as *emancipatory leadership*. School districts that reject curriculum and instruction that teaches the accurate history of oppression, and emancipatory leadership in response to that oppression, are racist.

School Staffing

The educators and administrators best prepared to provide Black student-affirming, culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally relevant leadership are Black educators and administrators; however, the ongoing lack of Black teachers has been well documented in academic research. King's (1993) quantitative analysis of higher education and employment data found a disproportionate absence of Black teachers due to four primary factors: (a) limited

funding for historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) that produce Black teachers, (b) decreases in the number of Black students attending college due to inequitable educational opportunities, (c) the lack of perceived prestige in the teaching profession among members of the Black community, and (d) biased teacher competency tests that inequitably exclude prospective Black teachers from the teaching profession.

Two decades after King's (1993) study, discouragingly low numbers of Black male (Lewis & Toldson, 2013) and female (Farinde-Wu et al., 2017) teachers continues. Farinde-Wu et al. (2017) noted Black teachers comprise only 8% of all public school teachers. Bell and Busey (2021) found the absence of Black teachers (along with Latine teachers) also exist in preservice teacher education programs. In interviews with preservice teachers, Bell and Busey (2021) heard consistent themes of racial oppression that provide a substantial psychological hurdle for potential Black teachers. Racially discriminatory experiences and program biases leave Black preservice teachers vulnerable to negative evaluations from implicitly and explicitly biased mentor teachers, adding an additional barrier to entry even for determined preservice teachers (Bell & Busey, 2021).

Black principals face anti-Black bias and discrimination when seeking school leadership positions. Smith and Lemasters (2010) found disproportionately low numbers of Black principals, including a long-term statistical stagnation of Black principals, in both public and private schools. Barshay (2020) found Black principal candidates were 18% less likely to be promoted than equally qualified white candidates, and Black assistant principal candidates were typically promoted to principal after an average of 5.27 years, compared to white assistant principals who were promoted after an average of 4.67 years. Zockoll (2019) confirmed the

existence of a promotional lag of Black assistant principals behind white assistant principals with similar qualifications in parochial schools. These statistics can be explained by anti-Black bias and systemic discrimination.

Khan (2016), a Black principal and researcher–practitioner, found in a qualitative ethnographic study that Black principals face standards and challenges not faced by white principals. These challenges include being viewed with suspicion when speaking up for Black students, feeling forced to carefully craft conversations around race and equity, and encountering uncommon discomfort from white parents and guardians. Thorpe (2019) found Black women principals especially face challenges, including encountering implicit bias and stereotypes (e.g., the “angry” Black woman stereotype) in addition to a glass ceiling limiting promotion and leadership opportunities.

Tillman’s (2004) work on Black principals summarized their experiences facing anti-Blackness and institutional racism. According to Tillman, prior to *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), Black principals displayed passive and direct resistance in the face of overt hostility while also serving as central community figures advocating directly for the segregated schools they led. Black principals simultaneously played the role of liaisons to the white community in requesting funding and support (Tillman, 2004). Although predominantly Black student-serving schools faced inequitable access to resources and funding, Tillman noted contrary to the self-empowerment of Black principals prior to *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), one unintended effect of the Supreme Court ruling was that desegregation resulted in the disempowerment and displacement of Black principals. Many of these principals were demoted or fired in newly integrated schools by white school district administrators’ biased, unfounded beliefs that Black

principals were ineffective in educating Black children. This displacement formed the contemporary roots of disproportionately low numbers of Black principals in U.S. public education. Tillman found a positive relationship between Black principal leadership and Black student achievement, and noted many Black principals exhibit interpersonal caring that meets the specialized needs of Black learners. Moreover, Black principals understand the cultural perspectives of Black students while prioritizing their academic and social development more than non-Black principals (Tillman, 2004).

Brown v. Board of Education (1954): A Promise Unfulfilled

In the decades following *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), Black students continue to face inequitable access to gifted programs and higher rates of adverse school discipline. Researchers have found culturally responsive pedagogy led by Black school leaders and teachers positively impacts Black students' academic and socioemotional success. Meanwhile, both Black principals and teachers face bias, anti-Black discrimination, and glass ceilings that suppress the matriculation, promotion, and retention of Black educators (Khan, 2016; Tillman, 2004).

Brown v. Board of Education (1954) may have reversed *Plessy v. Ferguson's* (1896) separate but equal doctrine, but it did not lead to equitable, much less equal, educational experiences for Black students. Furthermore, anti-Black racists have even weaponized *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) against Black educators. Isaacs (2014), Zinn Education Project (n.d.), and Disare (2018) shared the case of the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Teachers' Strike of 1968, in which a Black and Puerto Rican-led community school fired 19 white, underperforming union teachers. The firing resulted in protests by both the Board of Education and the New York United Federation of Teachers. Three city-wide teacher strikes led by predominantly white and

Jewish teachers led to a city-wide education decentralization plan and stripped community schools of personnel decision-making authority. Although modern-day teachers' unions are typically passionate advocates for racial justice causes, the Ocean Hill-Brownsville case demonstrates how the Black community's significant efforts at creating ideal learning conditions for Black children in Black schools were plundered through white protest and legal and government control.

Brown v. Board of Education's (1954) failure has left open many questions. Yosso et al. (2022) used a CRT framework to analyze Black student achievement scores on the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study to test Du Bois's (1935) hypothesis that Black students may thrive in adequately resourced segregated schools. Yosso et al. (2022) confirmed Du Bois's hypothesis and concluded, "Black students do not benefit from attending schools with higher percentages of Black students" (p. 380). This finding does not mean that Afro-centric, Black only schools cannot be exceptionally successful in educating Black students; rather, the findings suggest in the current U.S. public education system, schools with higher percentages of Black students continue to be neglected in resources, attention, and quality by school districts, which evidences institutional racism in schooling.

According to Abioye (2021), the Black Panther Party (BPP) created thriving, segregated schools, such as the BPP's Oakland Community School in the early 1970s. Abioye detailed how myriad Afro-centric practices empowered Black students and their surrounding communities, including:

- nontraditional classroom groupings;
- rejection of traditional classroom management principles;

- emphasizes on self-discovery, critical thinking, and self-mastery;
- empowerment of students as leaders;
- restorative justice practices;
- dual language immersion;
- the teaching of Native American genocide and Black oppression;
- a rejection of high-stakes standardized testing to determine curriculum or grade placement;
- a strong emphasis on teaching U.S. Black history;
- freedom of expression and learning exploration;
- free food, free medical care, clothing, counseling, family services, and tutoring; and
- access to an on-site job center.

Such examples of Black-affirming, thriving, Black-led schools existed until the destruction of the BPP by the U.S. government through legal, covert, and violent means (Farnia, 2017). Farnia (2017) detailed how the U.S. government used coercive tactics to spur conflict among BPP chapters, murdered or arrested BPP members in regular police raids, infiltrated BPP groups with Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agents, spied on BPP groups, manipulated mass media coverage about the BPP, and used other immoral state repression tactics to destroy the BPP and its education programs. Examples of these tactics included the J. Edgar Hoover FBI-created counterintelligence program, which, in issuing thousands of counterintelligence actions against the BPP, instituted “the most repressive apparatus that any US-based organization has perhaps ever faced” (Farnia, 2017, p. 173). Police and agents from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and Tobacco Tax Department raided BPP headquarters in Indianapolis on

December 18, 1968, firing tear gas bannisters into the building, whereas an FBI and San Diego Police Department raid the following year on BPP headquarters effectively ended the BPP in San Diego (Farnia, 2017, p. 174-175). Between 1968 and 1971, police arrested almost 80 Panthers in Baltimore, Cleveland, Indianapolis, and New Orleans, at times using covert means such as disguising themselves as Catholic priests, leading to over 1 million dollars in bail charges (Farnia, 2017, p. 175). In December 1969, the FBI, Chicago Police Department, and District Attorney's office used a BPP infiltrator to locate BPP leader Fred Hampton's apartment, drugged Hampton to ensure he would not awake, and raided Hampton's apartment, killing him, Mark Clark, and other BPP leaders (Farnia, 2017, p. 175). Four days later, the LA Police Department SWAT team (formed specifically to target the BPP), fired 500 rounds of ammunition into BPP headquarters; the following month, the FBI shot and killed BPP leaders Alprentice "Bunchy" Carter and John Huggins (Farnia, 2017, p. 176). Although these acts of state repression actually raided the Black community, resulting in increased membership, funding, and support, frays of division had been created; in 1969, a nationwide membership purge of suspected infiltrators dramatically affected the BPP's momentum (Farnia, 2017, p. 177). In short, state-sponsored oppression in partnership via federal departments and local policing led to the suppression of BPP activities, including BPP-led community schools.

Other examples of Black community-led, Afrocentric educational efforts exist on the postsecondary level. Nelson and Williams (2018) documented the impact of HBCUs, which have educated such prominent Black leaders as Booker T. Washington, Martin Luther King, Jr., W. E. B. DuBois, Toni Morrison, and Oprah Winfrey. Nelson and Williams's (2018) documentary film, *Tell Them We Are Rising*, argued HBCUs shield Black intellectuals from societal racism,

providing for an Afrocentric educational experience that empowers its students and drives social, political, and economic progress.

Much like other successful Afrocentric educational efforts, racism and white supremacy have stymied the progress of HBCUs. Adams and Tucker (2022) found compared to predominantly white institutions, Black land-grant universities, especially HBCUs, have been underfunded by at least \$12.8 billion in the past 30 years. North Carolina served as an example of this disparate resource allocation in 2020 when the state legislature granted HBCU North Carolina A&T only \$95 million in funding, which was \$8,200 less per student than the funding granted to North Carolina State (Adams & Tucker, 2022, par. 7). Moreover, Black-led institutions like HBCUs face exorbitant difficulties in borrowing money; a 2018 study found HBCUs pay underwriters \$35,000 more than white universities per \$30 million bond (Adams & Tucker, 2022, par. 16). In 2022, three public HBCUs won a \$500 million settlement from the state of Mississippi for racial disparities in funding, but only after a 27-year lawsuit (Adams & Tucker, 2022, par. 30).

According to Adams and Tucker (2022), HBCUs also face frequent threats of violence. In Spring 2022, bomb threats were made against multiple HBCUs, including almost 12 on the first day of Black History Month (Adams & Tucker, 2022, par. 3). Despite massive underfunding, structural financial racism, and terroristic threats, HBCUs remain resilient. Despite only making up 4% of all U.S. higher education institutions, HBCUs have educated “80% of Black judges, 50% of Black lawyers and doctors, and 25% of Black science, technology, engineering, and math graduates” (Adams & Tucker, 2022, para. 27).

Present Opportunity

If *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) and *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) were mile markers in the U.S. history of education of Black students, the creation of a meaningful, holistic education reparations program can serve as a revolutionary new mile marker. Such a system must (a) incorporate positive academic reinforcement and eliminate negative reinforcement through anti-Black bias and institutional racism; (b) reflect culturally relevant pedagogy, culturally responsive school leadership, CRT, and culturally relevant leadership frameworks; (c) eliminate barriers to entry, retention, and promotion for Black teachers and school leaders; and (d) create and maintain equitable funding of Afrocentric educational institutions. According to Ladson-Billings (2021), the COVID-19 global pandemic offered an opportunity to rethink public education as an institution, and to provide a hard reset around technology, curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, and parent–community engagement.

Such a hard reset must address systemic racism and anti-Blackness from an antiracist approach. The reset must change school culture for young Black men (Kunjufu, 2013) and reverse deficit-based approaches toward them to asset-based, positive accounts (Howard, 2015). Moreover, a reset of this nature must employ culturally relevant leadership from an emancipatory framework (Horsford, 2022). Finally, the reset must involve coalitions of leaders committed to fighting for an U.S. education system with a focus on, above all else, the liberation of Black students.

Preliminary Attempts at Reparations Programs for Black Students

Research on education reparations programs for Black students in the United States remains limited, as very few school districts have explicitly attempted such efforts. Programs

that have been created via established school district policies are still in their infancy, such as the “In Support of the Achievement and Success of African American/Black Students in the West Contra Costa Unified School District” Resolution (West Contra Costa Unified School District, 2020) and the “Reparations for Black Students” Resolution (Oakland Unified School District Board of Education, 2021).

Despite the lack of published research on those efforts, extensive research does exist on Promise Neighborhoods, federally funded efforts to support nonprofit organizations, higher education institutions, and Native American tribes seeking to improve and bolster cradle-to-career wraparound services for students in disadvantaged communities (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). In addition, studies have been published on the Harlem Children’s Zone, originally a 1990s one-block pilot program that sought to break cycles of intergenerational poverty by nesting wraparound place-based services in schools in an historically Black neighborhood. The Harlem Children’s Zone eventually grew to span over 100 blocks (Harlem Children’s Zone, n.d.). Promise Neighborhoods attempted to replicate and expand upon the Harlem Children’s Zone model (Bower & Rossi, 2019), which was a recent significant attempt at school-based education reparations for predominantly Black students.

Harlem Children’s Zone

The Harlem Children’s Zone (n.d.) and its long-time president, Geoffrey Canada, reached household name status in the education field following the award-winning 2010 Davis Guggenheim documentary, *Waiting for Superman*. Whereas Guggenheim’s film portrayed Harlem Children’s Zone in a positive, if not heroic, light, research has indicated the results of Harlem Children’s Zone are complicated. Fisher (2017) studied the foundations of the Harlem

Children's Zone model by conducting mixed methods research, including qualitative interviews with Harlem Children's Zone school employees and direct-action experimental research in which Fisher attempted to equip Harlem Children's Zone educators with school improvement tools, later codesigning a Harlem Children's Zone school reform model.

According to Fisher (2017), Harlem Children's Zone's birth-through-college model launched in 2004, later becoming a full Pre-Kindergarten–16 (PK–16) continuum framework emphasizing college and career readiness. Fisher identified three primary Harlem Children's Zone mechanisms driving early success: (a) strategic visioning (reforms that counteract poverty, trauma, and structural racism faced by central Harlem students); (b) school design (comprehensive structural reform increasing academic rigor, student engagement, integrated college and career readiness, smaller and more personalized learning, and cross-discipline integrated learning); and (c) school consolidation (merging PK–16 schools together in one building).

Despite early successes in academic achievement and evidence of increased rates of college preparedness and matriculation by Harlem Children's Zone students versus their non-Harlem Children's Zone peers, Fisher (2017) found some persisting ideological disagreements with the school's operations by students and the school community, including (a) skepticism among parents and guardians about their children's abilities to learn and achieve, (b) an inability to retain highly skilled teachers, (c) a lack of a coherent systems-wide approach to promoting college and career readiness, (d) an inconsistent use of the college and career readiness approach, and (e) the need for greater innovation by school faculty to address challenges. Fisher's study underscored the need for whole-child, wraparound reparations for Black students, as his research

demonstrated that Harlem Children's Zone education reforms can provide for early successes; however, school reform alone cannot repair the trauma of anti-Black oppression and systemic racism.

Harlem Children's Zone also faced significant skepticism about the replicability of its model. Love (2014) reported that the Harlem Children's Zone charter school model puts its schools directly at odds with teachers' unions. Love also reported that Harlem Children's Zone schools featured a 36% dropout rate, and a common critique of Canada was his purging of so-called underperforming students while touting a 100% graduation rate. Otterman (2010) also reported on community suspicion of the Harlem Children's Zone's funding relationships with private equity, including a \$20 million donation from Goldman Sachs in 2009 (versus a \$84 million operating budget) and two white billionaires from the financial industry, Stanley Druckenmiller and Kenneth Langone, sitting on the Harlem Children's Zone board. Financial institutions contribute significantly to wealth inequity oppressing the Black community; Harlem Children's Zone's relationship with Wall Street has contributed to bolstering the public reputation of structurally racist financial institutions. Diallo (2020) also noted the Harlem Children's Zone's lottery admission policies for charter schools called into question its accessibility; Diallo considered whether the entrance policy is equitable for Black families in poverty that the organization purports to serve.

Promise Neighborhoods

Based on the Harlem Children's Zone model and subsequent examples like the Pittsburgh Homewood Children's Village, former President Barack Obama initially directed federal investment in U.S. Department of Education-funded Promise Neighborhoods, which were

located in lower socioeconomic status neighborhoods in six cities (Bangs & Davis, 2015; Diallo, 2020). Starting in Oakland, Minneapolis, Chicago, Detroit, Newark, and Atlanta, Promise Neighborhoods were an attempt at government-funded, community-centric school and community revitalizations led by nonprofit or tribal support (Diallo, 2020).

McAfee and Torre (2015) performed qualitative and quantitative research on the impact of Promise Neighborhood funding in Chula Vista, California. McAfee and Torre's research revealed the Chula Vista Promise Neighborhood brought together community partners for coordinated supports for students that led to improved academic scores by students in Grades 3 through 6, a decrease in sixth-grade chronic absenteeism from 11% to 3.4%, an increase in the number of parents who read to their children at home, and an increased number of parent involvement at school. McAfee and Torre noted other Promise Neighborhoods experienced similar successes, including decreased transiency in Buffalo; the maintenance of academic proficiency during the summer, as opposed to summer learning loss, in Minneapolis; and an increase in student test scores in Los Angeles.

Masi's (2012) study of Promise Neighborhoods found they directly benefit students' health outcomes, as nurturing educational environments can have a significant effect on children's health. Shakesprere et al.'s (2020) qualitative case study on Promise Neighborhoods also found many used or built youth empowerment strategies such as mentorship, leadership development, and service-learning programs that reoriented traditional power dynamics by soliciting youth feedback in planning and decision making, including paid positions for youth.

Still, the Promise Neighborhoods movement was by no means been a panacea. Bower and Rossi's (2019) quantitative coding analysis of 18 implementation and 46 planning grant

applications for Promise Neighborhoods found greater emphasis on in-school factors but a failure to address other systemic issues leading to poverty that negatively affect academic performance. Bower and Rossi found the Promise Neighborhoods' grantees and applicants provided evidence, plans, or programs to address obesity, child care, improvement of employment status, preschool, tutoring, improved student attendance and parental involvement, and school summer programs. However, according to Bower and Rossi, there were far fewer plans to address other research-supported indicators of child success, including postnatal birth weight, child abuse and parental positive reinforcement of children, asset and wealth management strategies, advanced placement classes, the establishment of charter schools, or reduced teacher turnover. Bower and Rossi explained the lack of research-supported plans and programs to improve antipoverty efforts and academic performance was due to a few reasons, such as an emphasis on continuing previous initiatives over innovation, compliance with selection criteria for federal funding, leadership ability and governance structure, and the incentivization of majority education-focused initiatives due to grants stemming from the U.S. Department of Education.

Ultimately, the legacy of Promise Neighborhoods, including their failure to radically transform outcomes for Black Americans, are intrinsically tied to the deficiencies of the Harlem Children's Zone model upon which they were based. Among the deficiencies were (a) overreliance on charter schools and an adversarial relationship with teachers' unions (one of the most vital education community groups), (b) an acceptance of inherently racist and anti-Black standardized test scores as a measurement of school success, (c) federal underfunding resulting in a reliance on private sector funding (and thereby ceding of some levels of institutional

direction), and (d) opposition from political forces opposed to Black liberation (Bower & Rossi, 2019). These reasons led to the inability of Promise Neighborhoods to fulfill their promise to significantly improve the outcomes for lower socioeconomic youth or to revitalize Promise Neighborhood grantee neighborhoods.

According to Brown et al. (2017), funding for Promise Neighborhoods was cut by 18% (\$13 million) in former President Donald Trump's first budget. In 2020, Trump proposed to eliminate the entire remaining Promise Neighborhoods initiative, a \$78.3 million cut (Ujifusa, 2019, par. 6). President Joe Biden resurrected Promise Neighborhoods in 2021 on a significantly smaller scale (Office of Elementary & Secondary Education, 2022). In 2022, the Promise Neighborhood program was funded only \$18 million nationally in less than five neighborhoods (Kuykendall, 2022, par. 1). Some localized examples have continued, including California Promise Neighborhoods, though total funding is miniscule compared to Obama-era federal funding levels (End Child Poverty in California, 2019; Raya, 2022).

The model of Promise Neighborhoods may have had its theoretical flaws, but the dissolution of Promise Neighborhoods under the Trump administration precluded Promise Neighborhoods from building upon their successes and evolving into a truly transformational model. Moreover, the initial lack of federal funding forced Promise Neighborhoods to rely on private sector and single donations, ceding institutional authority to wealthy institutions and individuals, most of whom did not identify as Black. Promise Neighborhoods themselves were never intended as a Black reparations effort—the grants funded multicultural urban, rural, and tribal communities as opposed to explicitly Black communities—but nevertheless leave a legacy

of making only a small dent in deconstructing anti-Blackness, systemic racism, and historical oppression.

Reparations Initiatives in LA County

In addition to California Promise Neighborhood funds, LA County has attempted a few small-scale efforts at reparations-like efforts. In 2017, the Los Angeles Performance Partnership Pilot (LAP3) combined leadership and resources from the City of LA; LA County; LAUSD; LA Community College District; local California State Universities; the LA Chamber of Commerce; the LA Housing Service Agency; and over 50 local public, philanthropic, and community-based organizations to improve the social service delivery system and educational, workforce, housing, and social well-being outcomes for opportunity youth. *Opportunity youth* were defined as homeless youth, foster youth, youth in the juvenile justice system, and high school dropouts (Los Angeles Performance Partnership Pilot [LAP3], 2017). LAP3 sought to build a cross-systems response aiding disconnected youth through cross-sector strategic partnerships, work groups, infused resources, and policy action. Early successes included an inter-governmental commitment to longitudinal data, the removal of bureaucratic obstacles to systems integration, and increased private sector investment in public education (LAP3, 2017). However, despite broad-based intergovernmental collaboration, the LAP3 consortium was disbanded in 2020 at the end of its pilot period due to a lack of permanent funding.

In February 2021, the LAUSD Board of Education (Los Angeles Unified School District [LAUSD], n.d.-a) voted to terminate positions for one third of LA School Police Department officers (at the time, the largest independent school police department in United States) and divert \$25 million of those funds toward the district's Black Student Achievement Plan (BSAP;

Gomez, 2021, par. 24). Designed to address Black student academic performance, grow culturally responsive curriculum and instruction, increase nonprofit partnerships, and increase staffing in schools with large populations of Black students, the BSAP is led by a combination of LAUSD staff, schools, and a steering committee of nonprofit, union, parent, and student community members (LAUSD, n.d.-b). Within the 1st year of the program, BSAP provided schools with resources such as restorative justice teachers, school climate advocates, and psychiatric social workers while increasing the amount of culturally responsive literature and student empowerment opportunities (LAUSD, n.d.-b). Although the BSAP faces potential similar pitfalls as Harlem Children’s Zone due to its reliance on standardized test scores in measuring program success, thus far LAUSD has shown a commitment to BSAP through stable funding, including a \$24 million increase for the 2022–2023 school year (Palmer, 2021; Sequeira, 2022).

Meanwhile, the signing of California Assembly Bill 3121 (2020) and the subsequent establishment of the California Task Force to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans means reparations for Black Californians are being actively considered (California Office of the Attorney General, 2022). The task force’s interim report provided preliminary recommendations regarding Black student education, including:

- increased educational funding,
- elimination of racial bias in standardized testing,
- free tuition for California colleges and universities,
- funding for Black-led schools,
- culturally responsive teacher-credentialing standards,

- reduced school segregation through flexible school district boundaries,
- eased restrictions on inter-district transfers,
- monetary scholarships for higher education,
- racial audit of school disciplinary records and mandated racially equitable disciplinary practices,
- culturally responsive curriculum and ethnic studies,
- addition of a K–12 Black studies curriculum,
- support for culturally responsive teacher training, and
- improved educational access for incarcerated youth and adults. (California Office of the Attorney General, 2022)

The BSAP and California Reparations Task Force efforts remain preliminary and, as seen in the cases of the Harlem Children’s Zone and Promise Neighborhoods, the question remains whether funding will continue long enough to ensure long-term program effectiveness. As with many examples provided in this chapter, there is potential that another promise to the Black community will be underfunded, defunded, and ultimately unfulfilled. Those who oppose Black liberation will capitalize on any opportunity to argue for shifting priorities and reallocating funding elsewhere. As noted by the UCLA Center for Transformation of Schools (2021) report, the COVID-19 global pandemic has exacerbated existing hurdles for Black students. Yet, as political outrage over the murder of George Floyd and energy supporting the Black Lives Matter Movement wane, white supremacists will use the lingering economic effects of the pandemic as an excuse to undercut promising initiatives like the BSAP and California Reparations Task Force.

Regarding Curriculum

Although changing curriculum to be antiracist and culturally responsive for Black learners is an essential endeavor, especially for a potential education reparations effort, discussion of curricular theory extended beyond the scope of this study. Kunjufu's (2004) study of African American curriculum theory in multiple works should be referenced in future studies regarding the role of Afro-centric schooling and curriculum in an education reparations effort for Black youth. Excellent books on this topic include *Countering the Conspiracy to Destroy Black Boys* (Kunjufu, 2004), *Changing School Culture for Black Males* (Kunjufu, 2013), and a litany of other works by Kunjufu and other authors.

Conclusion

A genuine system of education reparations must be supported with holistic (beyond education) aims, permanently and equitably funded, and not undercut with unrealistic and racially biased criterion, like standardized test scores. An education reparations system should begin with popular education around past leadership and successful efforts led by the Black community, and include the full history of government interference directly contributing to those efforts' failures. Such historical perspective adds important context to contemporary and systemic racism faced by the Black community. The Black community has always had the answers; racism has not allowed those answers to flourish.

Furthermore, the findings of this literature review suggest that an education reparations system should rely upon the type of student, school, community, and policy supports named in historical reparations efforts. These supports may include:

- the economic reparations championed by the ESMRBPA and the Reparations Superfund;
- Black-led unions and civic associations;
- Black-led financial institutions and baby bonds;
- the rebuilding of Black economic zones like in Tulsa;
- equitable access to gifted and talented programs;
- decreased Black overrepresentation in special education and school disciplinary action;
- culturally relevant pedagogy and liberatory and emancipatory curricula;
- culturally responsive school leadership and pedagogical frameworks;
- increased numbers of Black educators and school leaders and elimination of barriers to hiring, retention, and promotion;
- Black-led, Afro-centric community schools; curriculum, pedagogy, and community resources echoing BPP-created schools;
- fully funded HBCUs and K–12 schools; comprehensive wraparound support programs;
- pregnancy, health, childcare, psychological, food, transportation, and clothing services;
- inter-governmental cooperation and longitudinal data;
- divestment from anti-Black oppressive institutions (e.g., police); and
- other potential components of an education reparations system.

The failures of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) (McNeal, 2009) and some foundational successes of the Harlem Children’s Zone (Fisher, 2017; Harlem Children’s Zone, n.d.) and Promise Neighborhoods (Bower & Rossi, 2019; McAfee & Torre, 2015) indicate that academic opportunity and culturally responsive pedagogy (Amiot et al., 2019; Horsford et al., 2011; Khalifa et al., 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Murff, 2020; Tillman, 2004) are essential to achieving a liberatory education for Black students (Ford & King, 2014). Socioemotional well-being, including the physical safety and interruption of the criminalization of Black students, must be prioritized (UCLA Center for the Transformation of Schools, 2019, 2021; Walker, 2014). Finally, a focus on health and development is necessary to ensure the whole-child success of Black early learners (Bower & Rossi, 2019; Masi, 2012).

There’s Nothing Wrong With the Black Community

Echoing Kunjufu’s (2012) book title that “there’s nothing wrong with Black students,” there also is nothing wrong with the Black community. This chapter outlined significant previous efforts toward Black liberation in general and educational contexts. Despite the incredible efforts of Black leaders, each of these efforts have been interrupted by systemic racism via the FBI; U.S. Department of Justice; the Internal Revenue Service; local police departments; majority-white state legislatures; private equity and financial institutions; and other institutions and acts of violence, terrorism, and state oppression. Still, this literature review evidenced how Black-led, Afrocentric efforts spanning from BPP community schools and HBCUs to the Harlem Children’s Zone and Promise Neighborhoods work well when funded equitably and allowed to evolve and thrive.

An education reparations system for Black youth does not need to rebuild a house already built by the Black community. Such a system needs to be equitably funded, and for racists and racist institutions to stop piercing its walls with bullet holes. As Kunjufu (2012) found, research showed there was nothing wrong with Black students when they were taught their culture and history in an Afrocentric curriculum, received instruction matching their learning styles, learned under teachers offering culturally relevant pedagogy, and can grow in Afrocentric self-esteem. The Black community and Black youth know what works. America must recognize and learn from Black history, listen to Black perspectives, equitably fund Black reparations initiatives, defeat racist opposition, and then move out of the way and let Black-led education reparations efforts succeed.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative research study conducted interviews of Los Angeles (LA) County Black education community members in determining what those most proximate to the needs and issues faced by Black students deemed as necessary components of a multiphase education reparations system, beginning with early learners. Black education community members were placed into three categories for analysis: (a) school employees (i.e., teachers, school leaders, and school systems administrators); (b) families (i.e., recent students, parents, and guardians); and (c) community leaders (i.e., nonprofit and community executives and managers, academics and researchers, and community organizers).

Research Questions

Qualitative interviews allowed for in-depth conversations with Black education community members, which informed the proposed design of a multiphase education reparations system policy campaign in LA County, beginning with early learners. Interviews were driven by the study's research questions:

1. Why do Black education community members believe an education reparations system should exist in Los Angeles County?
2. What do Black education community members in Los Angeles County believe are necessary components of an education reparations system for Black students, beginning with early learners?

Rationale for Qualitative Approach

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) defined *qualitative research* as “how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences,” with the purpose of qualitative research being to “achieve an understanding of how people make sense of their lives, delineate the process . . . of meaning-making, and describe how people interpret what they experience” (p. 15).

This qualitative study sought to expose historically racist and oppressive public education systems and to interrupt white supremacy through proposing a multiphase antiracist education reparations system, beginning with early learners. I delineated how racism has permeated the U.S. public education system, while uplifting the perspectives of Black community members affected by it, interpreting those experiences and the feedback given in qualitative research to propose an education reparations policy campaign model. For these reasons, qualitative research was the most appropriate avenue to address research questions.

Methodology

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), *grounded theory* is a qualitative research design in which the researcher, as the primary data collector and analyzer, “assumes an inductive stance and strives to derive meaning from the data” (p. 31). This study employed qualitative grounded theory to derive meaning from participant data in interviews to suggest a campaign model of education reparations policy introduction for Black youth, beginning with early learners, in LA County.

Participants

Within the three categories of education community members (i.e., school employees, families, and community leaders) this study leveraged and highlighted the expertise of people most proximate to the problem; community expertise and insight drove all aspects of this study, including its sampling method. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) described *network sampling* as a form of purposeful sampling that involves naming key participants who meet certain criteria, then asking those participants for referrals to future participants. Employing the network sampling method, I began with a few key participants identified from my existing knowledge and network, and then leveraged those network connections to identify additional participants. Specifically, my past involvement as a policy deputy for the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) Board of Education and my involvement in civil rights, civic, and political organizations allowed for a wide number of potential participants. All research participants were residents of LA County, California and no research was conducted prior to receiving Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval at Loyola Marymount University (LMU). Table 1 shows the demographic data of participants.

Table 1*Participant Demographic Data*

Name	Gender	Age	Job title	Research category
Aaron	Male	21	Recent student	Families
Alex	Male	27	Community organizer	Community leaders
Alice	Female	43	CEO/Parent/Educator	School employees/Families/Community leaders
Beatrice	Female	36	Parent/Chief of staff	Families/Community leaders
Huey	Male	30	Researcher	Community leaders
Kenneth	Male	21	Recent student/Community organizer	Families/Community leaders
Lauren	Nonbinary	38	Educator	School employees
Phil	Male	30	Policy leader	Community leaders
Sylvester	Male	36	Strategy leader	Community leaders

Note. $N = 9$. Participants were anonymized using pseudonyms.

Setting

All interviews were conducted electronically via the Zoom video conferencing platform. Despite my preference for in-person communication, the decision to conduct all research online was made in respect to the ongoing COVID-19 global pandemic, as online communication allowed for the highest level of health and safety precautions and prevented unintentional harm to study participants through unintended coronavirus transmission. The Zoom video conferencing platform allowed for face-to-face interactions through computer video cameras, which mirrored an in-person experience.

Data Collection

Data in this research study were collected using qualitative interviews with nine total participants. Interviews were held in a one-to-one setting that allowed for maximum privacy and confidentiality.

Interviews

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) defined *semistructured interviews* as an interview type in which the format includes “a mix of more and less structured questions” ascertaining specific responses that allow the researcher to “respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic” (pp. 110–111). In this study, participants recruited through network sampling engaged in semistructured interviews with a predetermined question protocol used flexibly to discover meaning, intent, and research content within participant responses (see Appendix B). The semistructured interview format allowed for both specific responses to research questions and an exploration of topical data adjacent to research questions that arose during interviews. Only one meeting was conducted with interview participants; follow-up meetings were predetermined to be outside of the scope of this study but could be a feature of future studies. Interviews conducted via Zoom were recorded with participant permission and transcribed for accuracy.

Data Analysis Plan

Research data from interviews were individually coded and categorized thematically to find meaning, overlap, and instances of confirmation in answering the research questions. Categories were determined by the general responses participants gave when responding to interview questions about necessary components of an education reparations system; examples of thematic categories reached in the data include student supports, family supports, educational resources, and societal and policy reform resources. I performed coding using Microsoft Excel and stored the collected data collected in a secure, password-protected laptop that only I could

access. All interview video and audio recordings will be destroyed no later than 1 year after this dissertation is published, or earlier if requested by individual participants.

Validity, Trustworthiness, Limitations, and Delimitations

Data collected in participant interviews comprised a representative sample of the perspectives of Black education community members in LA County. However, because it was impossible to interview every Black education community member in the area, the number of participants stands as a limitation of this study. Furthermore, data collected from participants represent their perspectives only during the time frame of the research (i.e., 2022). Participants' views may shift with the evolution of research and information on reparations or education reparations programs, and with the evolution of societal perspectives and issues. Additionally, all data collected in this study were from community members in LA County, and the ability to transfer findings to another geographic location may be limited. The perspectives contained in this study may not directly extrapolate to other regions or cities.

To ensure the validity of data collected, I recorded and transcribed the content of each interview. These data were made available to members of the dissertation committee and the chair of the LMU School of Education doctoral program. The primary focus of this study was to elevate the perspectives of LA County Black education community members. Recognizing my positionality as a Korean American researcher amplifying the perspectives of Black community members, I took special care to represent the perspectives provided in research as accurately and thoroughly as possible.

In designing this study, I chose the population of LA County to align closely with the boundaries of the LAUSD (n.d.-a), the nation's second-largest school district and the largest

school district in the state of California. The racial/ethnic, socioeconomic, and geographic diversity of LAUSD's students, communities, and schools provided ample source material for nuanced study due to LAUSD's diversity of school type (e.g., traditional neighborhood, independent charter, district charter, pilot, single-gender academy, magnet, specialized). In LA County and its adjacent areas, there are other smaller school districts, some of which have higher or lower proportions of Black students; however, LAUSD (n.d.-a) has the most representative proportion of Black students in the region. By setting the regional boundaries of the study, the number of participants could be limited to only Black education community members in LA County.

As mentioned earlier, Zoom interviews were used in respect to safety precautions needed due to the ongoing COVID-19 global pandemic. Although in-person interviews would have provided for greater researcher–participant interaction, online tools did not significantly alter the content nor authenticity of participant responses.

Timeline

The introduction and literature review sections of this study were written in 2021 and early 2022. Specifically, the literature review was representative of academic research available prior to May 2022. The dissertation committee convened in May 2022 for the initial proposal defense, after which this study was submitted for IRB approval in June 2022. Following IRB approval, research was conducted in the months of September–October 2022. Data were analyzed from October–December 2022. A final draft of this dissertation was submitted in December 2022, and final defense occurred in January 2023.

Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the research questions, rationale for qualitative approach, and methodology employed in this study. The methodology section detailed researcher determinations for identifying participants, setting, and data collection, which included the specific methods used in qualitative, semistructured interviews. The chapter also detailed the data analysis plan, limitations, validity and trustworthiness, delimitations, and research timeline. A visual with overall participant demographic data was included in this chapter (see Table 1).

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Research leading to policy directed toward a certain community—in this case, the Black community—that does not involve genuine conversations and acknowledge the perspectives of the impacted community is faulty research that contributes, no matter how well intentioned, to systemic racism. Simply put, research and policy made for any minoritized community that does not involve them is inherently oppressive (Inclusive Research, 2021).

In this study, I committed from the start that all research would rely upon, center, and elevate the perspectives of the Black community; the following chapter demonstrates this objective. Through Zoom interviews with a cross-section of leaders and community members, I captured invaluable perspectives from Los Angeles (LA) County Black community members in answering my research questions:

1. Why do Black education community members believe an education reparations system should exist in Los Angeles County?
2. What do Black education community members in Los Angeles County believe should be necessary elements of an education reparations system for Black students, beginning with early learners?

Participant Narratives

An array of Black, LA County-dwelling participants diverse along lines of gender, age, and occupation were interviewed. Following participant research categories described in Chapter 3: Methodology, participants comprised school employees, families, and community leaders. Because identity is not static, multiple participants held identities in at least two research

categories (see Table 1). As the Black community is dynamic and nimble, multiple category identity categorization was welcome because it increased the thematic depth of perspectives in research data.

Aaron (Families)

As a current college student and recent graduate of LA County public schools, Aaron provided a perspective highly proximate to the current experiences of Black K–12 students. Aaron answered affirmatively that he identified as a community member in the education of Black students in LA County; however, his experience as the son of economic refugees from an African nation illuminated, regardless of family immigration timeline, that Black students encounter systemic racism and race-based discrimination in LA schools. Aaron provided a reminder that within the local Black community, diasporas and lived experiences beyond just descendants of U.S. slavery must be considered.

Aaron’s status as a current undergraduate student also illuminated the issues faced by Black students even after successfully completing their K–12 education. Grades 13–16 pose inherent challenges steeped in anti-Blackness (Luney, 2022). Aaron noted better preparation was necessary during K–12 years, and supports are needed afterward and throughout a Black young adult’s early career journey to ensure academic and life success.

Alex (Community Leaders)

Alex faced challenges inside school and at home during his challenging childhood. He overcame incredible odds to serve as an influential community organizer within a powerful local political institution. Alex’s story served as a cautionary tale that, when speaking of the experiences of Black children in LA County and beyond, researchers and policymakers must

steer clear of heroizing examples of overcoming adversity, and instead think deeply about why such adversity exists on a generational and systemic level. As a community organizer who for the past several years has partnered with several education organizations, including student-led advocacy groups focused on LAUSD policy change, Alex definitively viewed himself as a Black education community member.

Alice (School Employees, Families, Community Leaders)

Alice’s contributions to this study were invaluable due to her multiple identities as a former teacher and principal, role as a nonprofit education advocacy organization CEO, and a parent to a PreK-aged child in LA County. Among Alice’s many insightful responses, she mentioned the tension necessitating evolution in her past teacher and school leader training versus her recent study on the experiences and needs of Black students—all of which informed her current professional work and her parenting. Alice identified as a Black education community member, sharing, “I am a mother to a Black son who is school-aged, and I am an education advocate. That advocacy extends from students to underrepresented educators in California, particularly Black educators.”

Beatrice (Families, Community Leaders)

Similar to Alice, Beatrice’s multiple identities as a former government chief of staff and a current parent to a female, typically developing early learner provided multipronged, developed insights. As a multiracial Black resident of LA County, Beatrice was also able to speak to the issues faced by multiracial and multiethnic Black students inside and outside of school. Beatrice’s government work and local advocacy, which included serving on local municipal

commissions, political club boards, and in policy advocacy campaigns, also included education advocacy and education policy creation.

Huey (Community Leaders)

Huey was a current state government employee at the time of this study and was a former director and researcher of a think tank developing policy solutions to systemic injustice. A former struggling student, Huey reflected on how his journey could have been very different had he not had later pursued a graduate degree. Identifying firmly as a Black education community member, Huey reflected on the importance of revolutionizing the educational experience for Black students, sharing:

I've thought about this a lot. Now that I have a master's degree versus when I was failing out of high school and went to two community colleges. No one asks about that once you reach this point. Early childhood education is a great focal point because we know that's the foundation for the rest of your career . . . but we know that regardless of how smart you are or how much you outperform others, we know there are things that are pure signaling—the type of degree, field of study, things that have variables of exclusion that are typically reserved for white men.

Huey added he believes everyone should answer yes to the question of whether they are Black education community members, as everyone should be invested in the success of Black youth.

Kenneth (Families, Community Leaders)

Similar to Aaron, Kenneth was also a recent graduate of LA County K–12 public schools. Due to his age and multiple younger siblings who were students within the LA County K–12

schools at the time of this study, Kenneth identified deeply as a Black education community member and as a strong community member in South LA, which is comprised of historically Black neighborhoods. As a community organizer, Kenneth noted his daily work involves engaging with communities of color, holding conversations that allow him to develop an expertise in community need and offering policy solutions to solve local issues. Kenneth provided tremendous insight into both his own experiences and contrasting experiences with one of his siblings who had not had the same level of education and career success, saying:

The quality of education my sibling and I received was very different . . . my brother is a year younger than me, and I have dyslexia, but my reading comprehension is farther ahead than him. My brother is currently not doing that well. He has a low-paying job. I understood [the gap in educational experience] from an early age, and to see it play out now that I'm older, that's huge.

Kenneth reflected on how despite all his siblings growing up in poverty, the level of educational and social support services they received as children was highly divergent, and noted that divergence had or would directly impact their life outcomes as adults.

Lauren (School Employees)

Lauren identified as a nonbinary educator, and worked at a higher education institution at the time of this study. Of all interview participants, Lauren was the only one who did not initially respond affirmatively that they identified as a Black education community member. Lauren explained they do not directly participate in K–12 education and, therefore, felt less connected, but, as an educator, noted they do train some students who may later work in K–12 systems, so they viewed themselves as a tangential education community member. Despite this caveat,

Lauren offered compelling insights from an educator’s perspective as to what a holistic and revolutionary system of education, perhaps funded in part by education reparations, can and should be for Black student success.

Phil (Community Leaders)

As a policy leader at a private sector organizer, Phil added a business perspective to the conversation of education reparations. Phil’s insights as a 30-year-old professional who was educated in affluent LA schools provided a nuanced understanding that, despite the level of a school’s resources, unjustifiable discrepancies persist in the educational experiences of Black children in LA County versus their white peers. Phil identified strongly as a Black education community member, both from the lens of a community leader and via familial ties, as his nephew attends a K–12 in LA County.

Sylvester (Community Leaders)

A midcareer strategy leader at a private sector organization, Sylvester’s past experience included community organizing and education policy work, which made his perspective on education reparations another invaluable asset to this study. Phil identified strongly as a Black education community member, speaking in our interview from his policy experience to advocate for holistic community solutions exceeding the physical boundaries of classroom walls. Phil’s focus and specificity regarding scale, scope, and implementation contributed greatly to this study.

Necessity of an Education Reparations System

In alignment with the first research question, participants were asked if they believed an education reparations system for Black students should exist in LA County, and to explain the

reasons behind their answers. Justifications for the necessity of an education reparations system for Black students were as myriad as the instances of structural and institutional racism embedded in the history of public education. Specifically, in the LA County context, participants coalesced around three key themes: (a) over-policing and criminalization of Black students, (b) the U.S. history of racist and unjust policies, and (c) inequitable educational experiences for Black youth. Interestingly, some participants also offered responses as to why an education reparations system should not exist, or at minimum be approached cautiously.

Over-Policing and Criminalization

Although affluent white community members who have not experienced adverse interactions with law enforcement may rebuff at slogans such as #defundthepolice or #banpoliceassociations, every participant in this study mentioned the effect of policing on the LA County Black community, naming its negative impacts on educational outcomes. In their responses, participants spoke about police harassment both inside and outside of schools, the criminalization of Black youth that begins in schools (at times involving school resource officers), and unequal policing leading to mass incarceration, which dramatically impacts Black familial stability and structure. Sylvester shared, “There are connections between our education and criminal justice systems that are the same throughout—a through line between how we perceive and value Black bodies in comparison with others that is the underpinning of our nation.”

Kenneth mentioned this through line exists even within early education, including the way that Black students are treated and disciplined. He shared, “I saw a video of a 7-year-old

Black child being removed in handcuffs. We need people who are equipped to handle young Black learners and their trauma. No one should be calling the police on a young Black child.”

Huey offered an innovative solution including divestment from the school-to-prison pipeline while simultaneously increasing investment in Black student communities, saying:

On the local or state level, we should use resources previously used to exacerbate negative outcomes for Black folks—the most expensive and obvious culprit being the criminal legal system—and take that money and reinvest in Black student achievement.

Participants at all levels of age, gender, and profession agreed unanimously that both school and municipal law enforcement continue to have an overwhelmingly negative effect on Black communities.

Historically Racist and Unjust Policies

In addition to over-policing and the criminalization of Black youth, nearly every participant mentioned the U.S. history of racist and unjust policies—and in the process, named nearly every sector of daily life and interaction with government as embedded with race-based bias—as a core reason why education reparations are necessary. Participants noted the unimpeded and continuing history of systemic racism against the Black community, from colonialism and slavery, to fugitive slave laws to Jim Crow laws, to segregation and criminal justice policies. Huey stated the educational context is especially important to consider, saying, “Education has been a primary driver of class division and economic opportunity in our country, largely at the expense—intentional or unintentional—of Black folks.”

Within the LA County context, participants mentioned the effects of anti-Black employment policies that have contributed to disparate levels of community wealth. Participants

also named housing policies as a key driver of systemic racism, including redlining, loan discrimination, and gentrification. Moreover, individual participants named specific policies that warrant community reparations, including environmental injustice and pollution and the mass introduction of narcotics into Black neighborhoods. Kenneth shared:

Historically we've been forced into neighborhoods. There's a lack of green spaces. The conditions make our neighborhoods not only difficult to learn, but to grow up to be a good citizen or contribute to society equally. Drugs were introduced into our neighborhoods and destabilized them. If Black students are to learn, there need to be reparations.

The accumulated effect of these policies has been generational, according to Sylvester, who shared, "We have to think—how have those who came before us been disadvantaged? How has that had an effect on my grandparents, my parents, and me?"

Lauren added academic research in higher education supports the policies and justifications that participants named, sharing:

Given the historical, psychological, and social context, in courses on Black Los Angeles history we talk about the resource deprivation that's happened to African American youth in LA. Not just due to segregation but also [modern-day] discriminatory practices like real estate and police harassment.

Inequitable Educational Experiences

A majority of participants mentioned inequitable educational experiences for Black youth as a key rationale for the necessity of an education reparations system. Participants' responses in this area ranged from naming under-resourced schools in Black neighborhoods to inequitable

rates of Black student achievement, along with overrepresentation of Black youth in special education programs and school-based microaggressions levied at Black students.

Aaron shared the purpose of public education should be preparing students for success in the adult world, and noted LA County schools have historically failed Black students in that regard. He shared, “Black people have borne the brunt of anti-Black policies. We need to think about education and how we prepare Black students, and what’s in their arsenal for interacting with the world.” Alice mentioned a specific discriminatory practice still occurring within LA public schools: the overidentification of Black students for special education services. She shared:

I do believe an education reparations system should exist, based on historical data around Black student achievement and behavioral outcomes, specifically around suspension and expulsion rates and the overidentification of Black students for special education. Some of the behaviors interpreted as being in need of special education may be being misread due to a lack of culturally responsive teaching in classrooms.

Phil mentioned the need for resource accessibility for Black students and their families, arguing the current system of education funding in California, which funds schools based on average daily attendance rather than direct per-pupil funding, is more educator and school focused than child focused. Phil expressed regret that Black families who may not have the resources or life flexibility to devote time to educational advocacy may get lost in the system.

Still, Beatrice noted due to the history of inequitable schooling for Black students in LA County, reformation of resource distribution or even increased school funding are alone not enough to solve greater societal problems caused by systemic and social racism and

discrimination, which Black children face regularly. Beatrice said, “Even if I had the most money and put my kid in a liberal arts private school and everything that’s supposed to be advantageous for them, I still feel there’s a disadvantage in the Black lived experience.”

Hesitations Around Reparations

Despite receiving support from all participants, the conversation around reparations was not monolithic and possessed many nuanced perspectives. Most participants pushed for an all-encompassing system beyond mere educational resources. Still, two participants expressed some reservations regarding a potential education reparations system.

Despite supporting the concept of an education reparations system, Beatrice expressed reservations built around societal perception and the potential impact of anti-reparations protests—driven by anti-Black white supremacy—that could present difficult countereffects to reparations efforts. She shared:

My hesitancy is perception—people asking why we deserve an advantage, if we should all be equal. Everything goes back to inequity, and how do we close that gap? We have to be intentional, deliberate, and it has to be measurable.

Meanwhile, Huey’s reservations were not about whether an effort should or could occur given current societal dynamics. Rather, Huey considered whether a localized reparations effort was the right course of action versus federal legislation, due to potential complications as recently seen in a statewide effort at reparations for Black Californians by the California Reparations Task Force, which has struggled to identify to whom reparations should be owed. Huey also wondered about the legality of reparations in California due to voter-approved

Proposition 209 (1996; Pfeffinger et al., 2017), which made race-based policy illegal. Huey shared:

I think it's always a federal conversation with reparations. The largest funder of education is the U.S. Department of Education. Reparations using this kind of framework calls into question the legacy of our country, and not just the legacy of our state. As we've seen with the California Reparations Task Force, there are some challenges at handling this at a state or local level. Does what we do in California or LA County become the model for the country? Is it adequate? Does the redress depend on the harm? . . . I would be reticent to go too deeply on a local level and potentially do harm to what needs to happen at a federal level.

Huey also advocated against the California Reparations Task Force's decision to draw lines based on ancestry in delivering reparations, noting California features the nation's largest Black immigrant population who have also encountered disproportionate harm under discriminatory and racist local policies. As such, Huey suggested avoiding naming the program "reparations" due to the word's inherent ties with slavery. Huey suggested a reparations framework tied to enrichment, empowerment, social equity, Black equity, or Black student achievement, rather than the frame of reparations.

Components of an Education Reparations System

Participants were asked to name specific components they hoped would be included in a multiphase education reparations system for Black youth, beginning with early learners ages 0–8, in LA County. Participants provided diverse and specific responses that I have grouped into four themes: student supports, family supports, educational resources, and societal and policy

reforms. Many potential components of an education reparations system were named by multiple participants. Most notably, five or more participants named necessary components of an education reparations system, including: (a) access to free and healthy food for both students and their families; (b) racially conscious and responsive education curriculum; (c) reconsidered school discipline policies and an end to the criminalization of Black students; (d) racially conscious and responsive teacher training; (e) mental health supports, including counselors and social workers for students and their families; and (f) increased general funding for schools. Due to the qualitative nature of this study and its emphasis on the importance of authentically conveying the holistic perspectives of Black community members, this section shares all the ideas named by participants, which are represented in Table 2.

Table 2*Participants' Desired Components of an Education Reparations System*

Theme	Description of component (number of participants who named component)
Student supports	Clothing (2)
Student supports	College counseling (2)
Student supports	Digital literacy, technology access, wi-fi access (2)
Student supports	Monetary scholarships (2)
Student supports	Clean water (1)
Student supports	Ending dress codes (1)
Student supports	Mentoring programs (1)
Family supports	Healthy food (7)
Family supports	Mental health supports, counseling, availability of social workers (5)
Family supports	Career support, including Black business accelerator projects and higher wages (4)
Family supports	Childcare (4)
Family supports	Racially conscious healthcare access, including increased number of Black doctors and Black representation in medical diagrams (3)
Family supports	Parent education classes with participation incentives (2)
Family supports	Racially conscious pre and neo natal services (2)
Family supports	Transportation access (2)
Family supports	Universal basic income and other financial supports, including tax credits (2)
Family supports	Financial literacy courses, Black-owned and operated banks (1)
Educational resources	Racially conscious curriculum (6)
Educational resources	Rethinking school discipline and stopping the criminalization of Black students (6)
Educational resources	Increased school general funding for school resources, including more play space (5)
Educational resources	Racially conscious teacher training (5)
Educational resources	Access to high-quality, free PreK education, including fairly compensated educators (4)
Educational resources	Experiential learning, including field trips and international travel (4)
Educational resources	High-quality education access, including community schools (4)
Educational resources	Arts and music education (3)
Educational resources	Increased number of Black teachers and principals (3)
Educational resources	Afterschool programs (2)
Educational resources	Racially conscious audit of school systems (1)
Societal and policy reforms	Decreased violence in Black neighborhoods and common-sense safety measures like speed bumps (3)
Societal and policy reforms	Nondiscriminatory home-buying practices, affordable housing, and housing stipends (3)
Societal and policy reforms	Public apologies for slavery and racist policies (3)
Societal and policy reforms	Defunding the police and law enforcement reform (2)
Societal and policy reforms	Environmental justice policies (1)

Student Supports

Multiple participants named direct resources for students as essential components of an education reparations system. Such resources included basic needs like access to affordable or free clothing, access to clean water, and digital access, which included the availability of wi-fi, technology products like laptop computers, and digital literacy courses. Huey emphasized the need for technological resources as restorative resources, mentioning the importance of “digital equity, universal broadband at home, and digital tools.”

Aaron spoke about how such access was an essential component of a 21st-century career-ready education while also restorative in reversing past economic disenfranchisement, saying:

We need to make sure in a reparations project that the education that Black students receive recognizes that our labor has been exploited in high growth industries like cotton, tobacco, and the automobile industry. So [a reparations-infused] education should prepare us for high growth industries like technology.

Other components named by participants were in-school support based, including career preparation via college counseling and monetary scholarships, and mentoring programs throughout K–12 education. Aaron mentioned ending school policies that can inflict psychological harm on Black students (e.g., dress codes), saying:

I have heard a lot of anti-Black attitudes toward urban wear. School dress codes are something we need to do away with if we’re charging the school district with reparations. Dress codes sexualize young Black women who are already incredibly sexualized at a young age, more than young white women.

Family Supports

Other than educational resources, participants most identified family supports as essential to a reparations system. Similar to direct student supports, family supports included basic needs such as subsidized or free food and access to healthy food, access to transportation for both students and their families, and monetary support through a variety of means that could include universal basic income or family tax credits. Such family supports will have direct benefits to the educational progress of students, according to Huey, who urged the reparations conversation to think beyond simple solutions and instead think holistically about what is needed for children to arrive healthily at school—a task that far exceeds academic measures. Lauren advocated for tying historical injustices into current and future supports, weaving in the history of oppression with efforts toward liberation. They shared:

A holistic, full effort food program should be named after the Black Panther Party's food program that was destroyed by the Federal Bureau of Investigation to make it culturally relevant. I would call it the Bunchy Carter Education Reparations Reform Program.

Along with basic needs, several participants mentioned significant burdens placed on Black parents beginning as early as the prenatal period, and the need for a reparations program to address these systemic challenges. Many of the suggested family supports involved adult education, including parenting education with funding incentives for participants, financial literacy courses, and career support courses. Other components named by participants were directly tied to the day-to-day sociological, psychological, and economic struggles experienced by Black parents, including the need for free and available childcare, accelerator projects for Black-owned businesses, and higher wages. An education reparations system should be all

encompassing and take care of not just students, but families, according to Phil, who shared, “The benefit of education reparations must extend to the entire household because learning goes beyond the classroom.”

Five participants mentioned the need for mental health supports, counselors, and psychiatric social workers who can assist with mental health challenges faced by Black students and their families and exacerbated by systemic racism. Alex spoke courageously about mental health challenges within his own family and provided the perspective that generational trauma can have an outsized effect on a Black child’s ability to focus and learn, saying:

I first experienced depression around the age of 7. I didn’t want to be in the situation I was in and ultimately didn’t want to be living. I didn’t have any resources at the time. If I had had a social worker to talk to and work through the things I didn’t understand, that would have been a life-saving resource.

Participants noted trauma accumulated even prior to birth and advocated for family supports that involved changing social structures through policy, work, and structural reform. These supports included racially conscious prenatal and neonatal services that are responsive to the needs of Black families. Participants also mentioned access to racially conscious health care including greater numbers of Black doctors possessing cultural context, and financial institutions owned by Black individuals operating outside of the current financial system’s racial bias.

Holistic changes in the healthcare system are necessary to ensure Black students can arrive to school healthy and stay that way throughout their academic careers. Beatrice brought up the lack of racial consciousness in hospitals she experienced during her recent childbirth experience, sharing:

A physician not too long ago created the first Black prenatal diagram. We're in an era in which we're shocked and excited about something that should be normal, but it's not. We need to visually see ourselves—on television, in diagrams, in the language we use . . . colonialism is embedded in American language and culture. From the language people use, to television programming, to toys my daughter plays with, I look for opportunities for empowerment, but I often see things that aren't projecting an image inclusive to her or the Black community. This starts with the hospital diagrams I see, who is staffing the hospital, and etc. Is there a Black medical school with Black professors and Black study groups? A full system needs to be diverse and that includes strong Black representation.

Beyond health care representation, Phil mentioned free or subsidized, equitable access to low-cost, high-quality health care as an essential component of an education reparations system, saying, "If a 4-year-old is trying to learn their ABCs but is also dealing with a grandparent who is sick because they are rationing their insulin, that's a level of trauma they shouldn't have to experience."

Educational Resources

Every participant named at least one essential educational resource component of a multiphase reparations system for Black youth, beginning with early learners. Creating a system capable of reversing centuries-long aggression toward the Black community requires substantial funding; as such, many participants named the need for increased and specialized educational funding. Some examples of increased funding needs included (a) general school funding; (b) funding for play spaces to foster creativity; (c) funding for arts and music education programs; (d) funding for free and high-quality afterschool programs; and (e) funding for experiential

learning, such as field trips, international travel, and other types of world exposure necessary for the development of a worldly perspective and well-rounded education.

Lauren suggested educational funding is necessary on a granular level (e.g., ensuring there are enough brown crayons so Black children can draw themselves), an instructional level (e.g., ensuring Black children are portrayed in coloring books, textbooks, and other literature), and a systemic level, which includes redesigning curriculum and teaching practices to ensure Black learners are able to practice innovation. Lauren pondered, “How can we instill imagination, exploration, and creativity, and make those the pillars of an education reparations program, rather than just giving back due to educational inequity? It should be about learning and the holistic being of children.”

Sylvester added the opportunity to explore and create can extend beyond the classroom and into future career preparation, asking:

How do we give children the agency and autonomy to discover interests and provide the support to explore those further? Externships? Work at small businesses? Developing hard skills in the real-world versus simply going to school to learn those skills is a more practical approach.

Almost every participant mentioned specific components of an education reparations system that are necessary prerequisites to implementing an explorative or creative curriculum. Suggested components included access to a high-quality education in multiple forms (including community schools, or other types of schools accessible via student-tied, per-pupil education funding), free and accessible high-quality PreK education with properly compensated educators,

racially conscious and culturally responsive teacher training, racially conscious and culturally responsive curriculum, and an increased number of Black teachers and school leaders.

Multiple participants named specific education policy reforms they believed would increase the accessibility of these components. Aaron mentioned prioritizing Black student welfare and success as a category rather than dehumanizing quantitative measures like standardized tests. Sylvester echoed this sentiment, questioning the curriculum standards movement's impact on Black learners and saying:

I question grade-level standards because it brings into question the pacing of how people learn, and that should be up to where the kids are at a point in time. We need more flexibility and adaptability. Historically, Black and Indigenous communities learn from an ecosystem of learning—a more organic model.

Multiple participants advocated for a model of Black student empowerment through reimagined teaching approaches and culturally responsive curriculum reform. Beatrice noted student empowerment begins with instilling self-confidence in Black students while reversing negative stereotypes about the ability of Black students to learn, adding:

Systems continue to challenge Black students' self-confidence and self-value. We need to give them a sense of performance and confidence. . . . I want access to a high-level curriculum that allows kids to catch up instead of assuming they can't.

Culturally responsive curricular inclusion means, according to Aaron, ensuring Black students learn about Black history well before high school, and as in-depth as the advanced placement African American history course typically reserved for advanced high school students. Kenneth added the teaching of Black history needs to include realistic and relevant insights into

the Black experience, including the long-term effects of slavery on Black families. Lauren said such instruction is even more meaningful when it includes the context of how discriminatory policies impact students' individual cultural location and socioeconomic status on a specific and relatable level, even down to the history of the anti-Blackness in students' school geographic locales.

Even while offering realistic perspectives about challenges faced due to structural and systemic racism, Lauren cautioned against too great of a focus on negative approaches, advocating against teaching enslavement or oppression but rather empowerment through the teaching of Black heroes and African continental history. Kenneth echoed Lauren's comments, asking, "Where can I see my ancestry [in curriculum]? When we're learning about the history of Black people in this country, it's through the lens of being a victim or overcoming hardship. We need to acknowledge Black heroes and heroines."

The intended effect of Black empowerment-centered curriculum should be, according to Alex, schooling that makes Black students believe they can do anything. Providing a culturally responsive and affirming curriculum necessitates having properly trained educators. Whereas, as multiple participants noted, such a necessity includes increasing the number of Black educators and school leaders, it also requires reforming the teacher training process and rooting implicit and systemic bias out of teacher training programs. Alice reflected on her own experience, sharing:

As a teacher and school leader, I've had to disrupt some of what I was taught in my education programs about how to teach and disrupt internalized oppression. I've been

taught that Black students are of need, and recognized later how that mindset is rooted in white supremacy culture.

Alice also shared how existing educational tools are at times indirectly or directly manipulated to oppress Black students. In reflecting on the disproportionately high rates of identification of Black children for special education services, she commented:

I want to make sure [in an education reparations system] we're never using the need for socio-emotional learning as a way to regulate certain behaviors or "fix" Black children, without thinking through systemic reasons why we are seeing what we are seeing.

Simultaneous with curricular reform, participants shared the school-to-prison pipeline must be disrupted by ending the criminalization of Black students via suspension, expulsion, and racially biased school disciplinary policies. Disrupting the school-to-prison pipeline also includes defunding school resource officer positions, which have largely reinforced Black student suspension, expulsion, and criminalization. Alice shared the criminalization of Black students contributes directly to a mentality of personal brokenness. Transforming a school site and its curriculum will not transform the Black student experience if those students are traumatized by adults within.

Societal and Policy Reforms

In addition to student and family supports, multiple participants named societal and policy reforms that should be incorporated into a larger education reparations system. Such reforms included defunding the police and police reform, mandating nondiscriminatory home-buying practices, expanding the availability of and ensuring equitable access to affordable housing, providing stipends to offset the cost of housing, decreasing violence in Black

neighborhoods through safety measures typically reserved for white and affluent neighborhoods (such as speed bumps), and introducing environmental justice measures.

Huey described the importance of including these components in an education reparations system, sharing:

To provide the best learning environment for kids in mostly Black and Indigenous neighborhoods, we need to ask, “Is the reparations system situated next to oil drilling? Is it where asthma rates are higher?” And are we thinking about this in a truly reparative and restorative framework, or are we thinking only of education?

Such a shift in thinking from simply plugging visible holes (e.g., disparate rates of educational access and achievement) to societal consciousness of historical harm must be an intentional process. Alice advocated for public apology for historical and contemporary injustice, and the desire for restorative justice as a fundamental first step, saying:

The core of anti-Blackness is the idea and belief that Black people are not being discriminated against. Before we get to reparations, or as part of it, we need to admit that harm was done. Truth and reconciliation are important. We need to address the ground water issues, because the ground water in this pond is making all of us sick.

Though public apology would be hollow without accompaniment by transformational resources, it would provide unity and societal awakening that could propel an education reparations effort. Alex noted the importance of the Black community uniting to support youth and alleviate crisis conditions. Uniting around a common cause in partnership with adequate and meaningful resources can lead to the sharing of language, tools, and self-advocacy resources that,

as Kenneth shared, can be used to triumph over systems set up fundamentally to disenfranchise the Black community.

Design and Implementation of an Education Reparations Policy Campaign

Although participants largely agreed upon component categories of an education reparations system, ideas around how to design and implement such a system were diverse. Regarding the forum of policy introduction, participants differed on whether the system should begin as a federal, state, municipal, and/or school board policy item.

Participants also shared differing ideas about legal and procedural steps necessary to ensure an education reparations system in LA County does not face later court challenges. Alice noted Proposition 209 (1996) made race-based policy in the state of California illegal and suggested reparations would not be possible in LA County without first repealing Proposition 209 (1996). Alex suggested a reparations effort could be instituted via a public ballot measure, which could help procure funding for the program through tax increases. Phil viewed reparations as a trans-political effort that should benefit all Black individuals, sharing,

I don't see the issue of education reparations through a traditional lens of liberal or conservative politics or policies. . . . It needs to be extended to all African Americans in LA County. It shouldn't be adjusted based on household income. Just because someone is ahead now doesn't mean they weren't behind at some point.

Other participants questioned whether an education reparations system could be limited to only the education field or policy introduced at the school board level. Sylvester added, "I struggle with the concept of a reparations system within education [only] because it's broader than that. It's hard to silo on education."

Culturally Relevant Leadership and The Importance of Authentic Community

Engagement

Horsford et al.'s (2011) culturally relevant leadership theory espouses that education community members cannot focus solely on the education field, but that education lives within a societal context and therefore the political context must be considered. In recognizing this political context, education community members must advocate for systems-level change, including policy reform that addresses and reverses systemic racism and oppression. The participants interviewed in this study all embraced culturally relevant leadership in their responses, and I embraced culturally relevant leadership in using the data collected to propose a culturally relevant policy campaign model.

Although participants offered differing views on the political and procedural mechanisms necessary to introduce an education reparations policy campaign, nearly all participants agreed that authentic community and family engagement and intentional coalition building are necessary in all phases of the campaign, including during policy design, prior and during introduction, during advocacy for policy passage, and in implementation. Culturally relevant leadership must include authentic community organizing that seeks to understand and incorporate cultural perspectives from the community (Horsford et al., 2011).

Due to the gravity of such a large campaign which, as Huey asserted, calls into question the legacy of the United States, participants agreed community organizing needs to be centered. Alex suggested the effort be led by a steering committee of Black leaders. Lauren called for initial focus groups, followed by a task force that connects with well-resourced budget makers and program designers during the policy design process. Lauren also advocated for the inclusion

of students, especially older high school students who may have more nuanced views on educational needs and could possibly advise on curriculum creation. Phil mentioned the need for the inclusion of nonprofit and community-based organizations, saying:

[The reparations effort] needs to be led by third party service providers. Some people have a natural distrust of the government. The same entity that has law enforcement who are terrorizing some communities, people are being asked to rely on for social services.

For policy formation, passage, implementation, and continued development, data should be found in community conversations via efforts such as canvassing, focus groups, and community events. Researchers and policy makers should not be outsiders, but rather members of the Black community with shared lived experiences. Kenneth noted how community-driven policy avoids the pitfalls of co-option and manipulation, saying:

A lot of Black families in LA have been here for generations. They have knowledge and a lot of history tied to this and they know what they need. Deep canvassing, talking in depth with these communities, and ensuring they are being fairly compensated for their contributions too—making sure this work is not extractive—is all important.

In addition to student and family engagement, participants suggested an authentic community organizing campaign should include private sector engagement, a public marketing campaign for awareness, nonprofit organization inclusion and engagement, cross-racial allyship and joint advocacy, and school-level engagement, especially with teachers and principals. Additionally, some participants mentioned research-based components of policy design, including a county-wide systems audit of the harm caused by government and education

departments, and ongoing program evaluation and future research regarding education reparations policy effectiveness after its passage.

Summary

This chapter shared the responses of nine participants in qualitative interviews regarding their perspectives on a potential multiphase education reparations system for Black youth in LA County, beginning with early learners. Profiles were given of the participants, all of whom identified as Black education community members in LA County and who were diverse along lines of age, gender, and occupation.

Participants overwhelmingly agreed an education reparations system is necessary and provided historical and societal rationale that fell into three central themes: (a) over-policing and criminalization of Black students, (b) a history of racist and unjust policies, and (c) inequitable educational experiences. Although some participants had hesitations about pursuing such a large-scale effort, all agreed the current educational system needs radical reforming to root out its continuing legacy of anti-Blackness and institutional racism. Police harassment, mass incarceration, and the criminalization of Black students were the most offered reasons by participants for why an education reparations system is necessary.

Participants' responses regarding potential components of an education reparations system fell into four categories: student supports, family supports, educational resources, and societal and policy reforms. In each respective category, the components for which participants most commonly advocated were: (a) equitable access to free, healthy and high-quality food (student supports); (b) equitable access to mental health supports, counseling, and social workers for both students and their families (family supports); (c) racially conscious and culturally

responsive education curriculum and rethinking school discipline, including the ending of the criminalization of Black students (educational resources); and (d) the need for a public apology to the Black community for historical wrongs, a decrease of violence in Black neighborhoods through safety measures often reserved for white and affluent neighborhoods, and the installation of mandatory nondiscriminatory home-buying practices partnered with equitable access to affordable housing and stipends for housing (societal and policy reforms).

Participants differed in their ideas as to which government entity would be best for introduction of an education reparations policy, whether at a federal, state, municipal, or school board level. Still, nearly all participants agreed community engagement involving all Black education community members and coalition building efforts should be considered essential at every stage of policy development and implementation. Participants were clear that this process should be led by individuals and leaders from the Black community.

In following Horsford et al.'s (2011) culturally relevant leadership theory, the following chapter directly sources participants' responses in proposing a policy campaign model based in authentic community engagement that will seek to secure the passage of comprehensive education reparations policies in LA County. This campaign will build upon the perspectives and ideas of participants in this study, while also delineating how more and new perspectives from the local Black community should and will be incorporated.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Chapter 1 of this study introduced the concept of reparations within an educational context and Chapter 2 analyzed historical precedent, including recent developments, regarding examples of reparations-like educational efforts. Setting Horsford et al.'s (2011) culturally relevant leadership framework and Delgado (1995) and Ladson-Billings's (1998, 2005) critical race theory (CRT) as the theoretical framework for this study, I proposed that culturally relevant leadership necessitates active policy change, and the only policy change adequate for addressing historical harm due to systemic racism and white supremacy is reparations for the Black community, including Black students.

Chapter 3 explained the methodology of this study, which employed qualitative interviews with Black education community members to discover their views on the necessity of education reparations and potential components of an education reparations system. Chapter 4 reported the findings of interviews with nine Black education community members in Los Angeles (LA) County, detailing their responses to open-ended inquiries deriving from my research questions. Finally, this chapter discusses those findings, reiterates the significance of this study, and names future implications and opportunities for further research.

This study began with two research questions, which have been answered:

1. Why do Black education community members believe an education reparations system should exist in Los Angeles County?

2. What do Black education community members in Los Angeles County believe should be necessary elements of an education reparations system for Black students, beginning with early learners?

Necessity of an Education Reparations System

All participants agreed education reparations policies are necessary to address historical and ongoing anti-Blackness and systemic racism directed toward Black students in LA County schools. Primary reasons why participants agreed education reparations are necessary were the over-policing and criminalization of Black students, historical oppressive policies from slavery through modern-day discriminatory laws, and long-term inequitable educational experiences. In this study, Black education community members spoke loudly and clearly: Reparations are long overdue and necessary to correct historical wrongs levied against Black students and the broader Black community.

Components of an Education Reparations System

This study employed a community organizing lens in advocating for policy creation stemming from the communities it impacts. Participants, all of whom identified as Black education community members, responded to research questions from their professional expertise and lived experiences in the communities who would be impacted by a multiphase education reparations policy for Black youth, beginning with early learners. As such, it is crucial that future program design includes all components named in the research interviews, rather than subjectively selecting components based on determinations not informed by community input.

Participants named four major categories of components for an education reparations system: student supports, family supports, educational resources, and societal and policy

reforms. In each category, participants described multiple components, which were detailed in Chapter 4 of this study (see Table 2). These named components echoed elements of historical reparations-like efforts that established Black community-led and proposed solutions.

Design of an Education Reparations Policy Campaign

Participants did not reach consensus on the government entity in which an education reparations policy initiative should be introduced, mentioning amongst several ideas a potential state-wide campaign to repeal California Proposition 209 (1996) or an LA County ballot initiative. Participants also expressed differing views as to whether policy efforts should be focused on the federal, state, municipal, or school board levels. Further research through community organizing in the Black community by Black organizers is needed to codify ideas into a targeted policy campaign.

However, participants did overwhelmingly agree genuine community engagement that is not extractive but supportive and inclusive (including incentives and/or compensation for community involvement) is the most important strategy for initiating an education reparations policy campaign in LA County. The policy campaign model I propose in this chapter outlines a potential community organizing campaign, rather than a prescriptive draft of potential education reparations legislation, which should be created within the organizing campaign.

According to participants, a community outreach campaign should include engaging students, families, teachers, school leaders, business leaders, faith leaders, and other leaders in the Black community, along with cross-racial allies. Participants defined genuine community engagement as meeting Black community members where they are (e.g., their homes, schools, and the places they visit), along with working to build and rebuild trust that has been eroded

through years of anti-Black racism in schools and in government entities. Building public trust in an education reparations effort should include neighborhood canvassing, community meetings, and implementation of policies or distribution of future resources by nonprofit or community organizations instead of through government administration. Participant data confirmed findings from McNeal's (2009) study on the inadequacy of post-*Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) public education for Black students, Walker (2014) and UCLA Center for the Transformation of Schools' (2019) findings on Black student overrepresentation in school discipline, research from Ladson-Billings (1995), Murff (2020), and Gershenson et al. (2021) on the importance of culturally relevant pedagogy and the effectiveness of Black teachers, and Khalifa et al. (2016) and Amiot et al.'s (2019) findings on the importance of culturally responsive school leadership based in CRT.

Moreover, participants' responses reflected the importance of Black student empowerment, student self-discovery, the accurate teaching of historical oppression, rejection of high-stakes standardized testing, the teaching of Black history, the freedom of learning exploration, wraparound services that care for the entire child and their family, restorative justice practices, culturally responsive pedagogy, and the need to ensure students' parents can find meaningful employment; all of these responses echoed Afrocentric practices that the Black Panther Party (BPP) used in the early 1970s in BPP community schools (Abioye, 2021). That the BPP was infiltrated and ultimately destroyed through state repression by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Internal Revenue Service (IRS), local police departments, district attorney offices, and other government institutions further evidences that the Black community has had the answers on how to elevate the Black community for generations, but the forces of systemic

racism and white supremacy have continuously deconstructed brilliant, Black-led community efforts (Farnia, 2017).

Building a Research-Informed Policy Campaign Model

Horsford et al.'s (2011) culturally relevant leadership framework promotes a “movement toward culturally relevant leadership [through] a deeper conscious of the politics, race, culture, and difference in educational contexts” (p. 600). This study sought to explore that deeper consciousness through an investigation of the factors necessary to grow public schools in LA County that provide an Afrocentric, culturally relevant experience for Black students. Such factors include redress for historical wrongs through a broader system of education reparations.

The following policy campaign model is not meant to be prescriptive, but rather a suggestion built upon numerous past historical examples of Black-led reparations efforts and participants' responses in this study (see Table 3), with a primary goal of eventual cross-sectional reparations policies for all Black individuals in LA County. Participants themselves acted as culturally relevant leaders in this study when sharing their knowledge, insights, and experiences toward the creation of a policy campaign model that can address historical oppression.

Table 3*Education Reparations for Los Angeles County Black Youth Policy Campaign Model*

Stage	Activity	Community members included	Intended outcome
1	Community convening I	Research participants, elected officials, students, school employees, school leaders, community leaders, academic leaders, families, and others who identify as Black education community members	Gauging community appetite for a broad-based reparations effort and determining body for policy entry or legal mechanism for introduction (e.g., Proposition 209 (1996) repeal, ballot measure, legislative effort) identifying lead organizers
1	Community canvassing	Black neighborhood residents, community members not involved in community convening	Collect data for inclusion in policy design (reparations system components)
1	Policy design	Organizers, in partnership with community organizations	Develop a legally-sound policy model for introduction
1	Community convening II	All community members involved thus far, in addition to other interested parties and allies	Develop extra-community political will for policy campaign by demonstrating strength of coalition
1	Policy campaign	All community members, organizers, and eligible voters	Convince elected officials with jurisdiction or voters to approve policy; passage of policy into law
2	Establish task force	Lead organizers, key community leaders, content experts	Develop a feasible model for policy implementation
2	Research and evaluation	Lead organizers, academic researchers, context experts, and government bureaucrats	Study the impact of the policy, assess opportunities for improvement and whether additional resources are needed
2	Inform community	Lead organizers, community members, strategic allies	Share the impact of the policy, name challenges and difficulties; build foundation for continued advocacy throughout implementation phase
2	Community convening III	All community members involved thus far, in addition to other interested parties and allies	Recreate extra-community political will for expansion and deepening financial investment in program by again demonstrating strength of coalition
3	Repeat Stages 1–2	All community members involved thus far, plus new organizers, leaders, and allies	Continue developing leaders and growing coalition, building extra-community political will, and identifying new resources

Note. Adapted from *Rules for Radicals: A Pragmatic Primer for Realistic Radicals* by S. D. Alinsky, 1971, Random House; *Toward Liberation: Black Organizing on the Path to Power* by Community Change, 2020, <https://communitychange.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/CC-Reinvestment-Case-for-Support-single.pdf>; and *How to be an Antiracist* by I. X. Kendi, 2019, One World.

The policy campaign model in Table 3 accomplishes the most important element of policy design and implementation as identified by participants: authentic community engagement. The design is grounded in both participants' input and in community organizing best practices (Alinsky, 1971; Community Change, 2020; Kendi, 2019). Informed by future community input, the model should not be viewed as unchangeable, prescriptive, nor inflexibly

linear. During Stages 1 through 3, inevitable challenges will arise, including shifts in non-Black allies' attention and willingness to advocate in solidarity, transitions in organizing leadership, transitions (and elections and reelections) in key elected official allies, and unpredictable changes in the availability of government and private funding. In the life cycle of policy, maintaining momentum is only possible through a process of organizing, reorganizing, and reorganizing again and again, which necessitates constant conversation and partnership with community members (Alinsky, 1971).

In addition, community needs as identified by participants as potential components of an education reparations system will inevitably shift given the success or lack of success of this policy campaign. Political and societal change, technological development, and other factors will create new needs that will need to be addressed in the future by reparations policies. The continued existence of systemic racism and white supremacy will only further compound and add to the harm that necessitates reparations. These inevitabilities further emphasize the importance of continual community organizing at all levels of policy development.

Implications and Recommendations for Future Research

This study focused on developing a policy model for a multiphase education reparations system for Black youth, beginning with early learners ages 0–8, in LA County. In qualitative, semistructured interviews, participants articulated the needs of Black students, beginning with early learners, and their families both inside and outside of schools. Although much of the data collected around necessary components of an education reparations program are not germane to only the experiences of early learners, participants provided suggestions as to how to build the building blocks of a foundation for Black student success during early years. A second research

phase focused on ages 9–18 should include research on how to maintain early years’ success once established, and also how to address the challenges faced by Black youth in middle and high school years.

This study advocated for reparations at all levels of childhood and adulthood for Black residents of LA County, regardless of family lineage or migration timeline. Due to this study’s focus on early learners, additional research should be conducted to determine the needs of Black learners ages 9–18, and Black adults over the age of 18. Such research should be conducted in both an academic context and within the community organizing conducted in the aforementioned policy campaign.

Due to the limited number of participants in this study, additional research interviews should focus on confirming or disconfirming and expanding upon the perspectives presented. Given the overwhelming support for reparations within the Black community historically and by participants in this study, I expect in future studies the need for education reparations will be confirmed. Future participants will add ideas for potential education reparations system components and fresh ideas for policy design and implementation.

Historical Context and the Present Moment

As evidenced in this study’s literature review, members of the Black community have made voluminous efforts at achieving reparations or reparations-like programs which, in each instance, have shown early success before being destroyed, coopted, or gutted by the forces of white supremacy, oftentimes through state repression (Abioye, 2021; Adams & Tucker, 2022; Berry, 2006; Hunter, 2018; Perry, 2010). No one in the Black community should be faulted for skepticism around potential success of a new effort in LA County—it is more than reasonable

that Trumpist white supremacy has renewed a strong sense of Afro-pessimism (Pinn, 2020). It is highly understandable why some Black individuals are left theorizing insurrection as a form of historical frustration-venting redress, echoing the state repression doled out against the Black community in Tulsa (Messer et al., 2018).

Still, a lot has changed in the reparations conversation in recent years. The California Reparations Task Force has held multiple public hearings and will make their final recommendations in July 2023 (Fry, 2023, par. 1). In January 2022, Evanston, Illinois, issued its first installments of \$25,000 housing reparations to Black residents under its tax-funded Reparations Fund—the first city in the United States to pay reparations to Black residents (Jones, 2022, par. 2). Since 2020, reparations programs have been approved in Asheville, North Carolina; Elaine, Arkansas; Amherst, Massachusetts; and St. Petersburg, Florida (Davis, 2023). These developments are promising, but each of these programs is hardly adequate to close racial wealth gaps or to provide redress for generational harm due to systemic racism. The San Francisco African American Reparations Advisory Committee’s 2023 proposal for a one-time payment of \$5 million to all eligible Black residents may be closer in scale to adequacy, but even that proposal sets strict historical eligibility requirements tied to either evidence of past redress in family history or long-term residency requirements (Chavez & Gamble, 2023, par. 6).

Meanwhile, support for Black reparations from non-Black communities may be at its highest level to date. In December 2022, 76 Asian American organizations submitted a letter to the Biden administration urging the creation of a presidential commission to study Black reparations (Samson, 2022, par. 1-2). According to Pew Research Center data, 68% of Asian American and 60% of Hispanic adults expressed support for the Black Lives Matter movement –

with support remaining unchanged from 2020 to 2021 even after George Floyd protests subsided (Pew Research Center, 2021, p. 1, cited in Horowitz, 2021, par. 2). Anecdotally, I have observed in LA County how shifting demographics in immigration with greater numbers of second-generation children of immigrants in the United States have led to increased consciousness and support for cross-racial solidarity movements, including in the Asian American community.

These shifting demographics and advances in non-Black support create urgency for reparations movements in this moment; my positionality as an Asian American researcher indicates as such, as I have observed firsthand support for Black reparations hitherto unprecedented in my own community. This support also creates an opportunity for expansive work beyond limitations. The California Reparations Task Force's recent ruling exclusively tying reparations to descendants of slaves is too limited in scope during a period of support that may not return for a generation (Kalish, 2022). The time to act is now, and time for reparations is long overdue.

Addressing Potential Detractions

As noted in Chapter 4, some participants expressed hesitations around a comprehensive education reparations effort. These hesitations included concerns over public pushback and anti-Black protests, concerns over public perception, and concerns that an inadequate education reparations effort might be viewed as definitive reparation for slavery and discrimination, making future efforts more difficult.

These concerns are understandable. As evidenced in this study's literature review, the U.S. history of anti-Black racism and oppression has consistently included lofty promises made to Black communities that were reversed or left unfulfilled (Burnette, 2020; Coates, 2014;

Cooper, 2012; Franklin, 2012; Harris, 2020; Kelleher, 2019; McNeal, 2009; Messer et. al, 2018; Robinson, 2001). Furthermore, it is understandable why participants would want to extricate themselves completely from the U.S. public education system (through vouchers, charter schools, or independent Black student-only segregated schools) which functionally has served as the school-to-prison pipeline for Black youth.

Still, the overwhelming majority of participants in this study not only believed an education reparations effort in LA County is necessary, but argued such an effort must occur with immediacy. Skepticism, where it exists within the Black community, can be interpreted as symbolic of the litany of unfulfilled promises to the Black community; these unfulfilled promises include (a) the state prevention of a national pension program for Black individuals via the Ex-Slave Mutual Relief, Bounty, and Pension Association (Berry, 2006); (b) the failure of upholding the 1865 Special Field Orders No. 15's 40 acres promise (Perry, 2010); (c) the empty 1868 40 acres and a mule Republican campaign promise (Perry, 2010); (d) financial losses after the U.S. government's allowance of the failure of the Black-led Freedmen's Bank (Hunter, 2018); (e) the failure of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) to create equitable schools; (f) the systemic underfunding of historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs; Adams & Tucker, 2022); (g) Trump-era defunding of Promise Neighborhoods (Brown et al., 2017); and (g) many other examples of promises made but not rendered to Black Americans.

In participant responses in this study, Black education community members did not ask for anything more than the fulfillment of past unfulfilled promises, such as:

- developing economic reparations in the form of national pensions (Berry, 2006), a Reparations Superfund (Franklin, 2012), baby bonds or individual trusts (Hamilton & Darity, 2010), or direct payments (Hunter, 2018);
 - establishing pro-Black employment policies, including the closing of pay disparities (Malveaux, 2022);
 - disrupting school disciplinary policies and the criminalization of Black students (Walker, 2014);
 - hiring more Black teachers (Murff, 2020) and hiring, promoting, and retaining more Black principals (Tillman, 2004);
 - practicing culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995) culturally responsive school leadership (Khalifa et al., 2016), and CRT in schools (Amiot et al., 2019);
 - engaging in culturally relevant and antiracist pedagogy (Horsford et al., 2011);
 - providing equitable funding for HBCUs (Adams & Tucker, 2022);
 - defunding school police departments that criminalize Black students (Gomez, 2021);
- and
- cultivating full-scale community and student supports such as free food, free medical care, mental health supports, family job supports, the teaching of Black history, the teaching of oppression, restorative justice, student empowerment, rejection of high-stakes testing, explorative learning, rejection of classroom management principles, emphases on self-discovery and critical thinking, dual language immersion, and other practices established in BPP community schools (Abioye, 2021).

The Black community knows what works, and there is nothing wrong with the Black community. What is wrong are the forces of white supremacy, grounded in systemic racism and state repression, that have sought to and successfully interrupted every successful or potentially successful effort toward Black liberation and community success. For a reparations program for Black students and adults to be successful in LA County, racism and white supremacy must be repudiated and defeated at all costs.

Epilogue: The Finish Is the Start

From the beginning, this dissertation project was many things at once—a political statement, an attempt at allyship and solidarity, a passion project, and more. Regardless, I finish this project with the determination of what it will not be: the end.

As multiple participants noted, community research (especially when studying a community that is not one's own) that only identifies problems but does not work toward solving those problems is exploitive. After publication of this dissertation, I intend to partner with research participants and other Black education community members in organizing a community convening (i.e., the first step in the proposed policy campaign model; see Table 3) in which I will share the results of this study while transitioning organizing leadership of this project to Black organizers and community leaders.

As an Asian American, I know it is not my place to lead the policy campaign toward passage of an education reparations system for Black youth, beginning with early learners, in LA County. However, I am deeply committed, in both research and personal context, to ensuring that reparations are achieved for Black Americans of all ages, in all cities, and that such efforts continue until the Black community reaches satisfaction with historical redress, confidence in the

elimination of systemic racism and of barriers to Black success, and until we as a nation can proclaim without hesitation that the United States is a place where every Black individual can live a thriving life of happiness and self-fulfillment.

I hope through my future efforts in solidarity toward racial justice, I can make the family and descendants of Rainey Bethea proud. This dissertation only marks a new beginning on that journey.

APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Hello,

I hope this email finds you well!

I am writing to invite you to participate in a doctoral dissertation research study entitled, “Education Reparations: A Community-Driven Model of Reparations for Black Early Learners in Los Angeles.” This purpose of this study is to discover community ideas on how to build a system of education reparations in LA County for Black early learners (ages 0-8) through interviews, focus groups, and surveys of Black education stakeholders, and then to operationalize those stakeholders’ recommendations into a community-driven policy proposal.

As a Korean American researcher who supports reparations in all forms (not only in the education field), I am very intentionally not inserting my own ideas, but rather elevating *your* ideas into a policy proposal that can be actually implemented in LA. This is action research; it is an honor to have the support and encouragement of many, including my dissertation chair Dr. Marne Campbell (Chair of LMU’s African American Studies Department) in undertaking this research with care and intentionality.

If you decide to participate in this study, you will participate in: a 30–45-minute individual interview in which I will ask you eight open-ended questions about your views on education reparations and what elements an education reparations system should include. Interviews will be held over Zoom.

If you have any questions, please feel free to reply to this email. You may also contact my advisor at xxxxx@lmu.edu with any questions.

If you would like to sign up to participate in an interview, please utilize the virtual calendar link in my signature below to sign up.

Thank you in advance for your support of this important and meaningful project!

Andrew Murphy
Doctoral Student, School of Education
Loyola Marymount University
xxxxx@lion.lmu.edu
(XXX) XXX-XXXX
<Virtual Calendar Link>

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Introduction:

1. Hello, my name is Andrew Murphy, and I am a current Doctorate in Education student at Loyola Marymount University. Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed for my doctoral dissertation, entitled: “Education Reparations: A Community Driven Model of Reparations for Black Early Learners in Los Angeles.” These interviews form the core research I will conduct to discover and operationalize community-based ideas in designing a multi-phased policy campaign model for education reparations for Black youth, beginning with early learners ages 0-8, in Los Angeles County.

During this interview, I’ll ask you to share with me your perspectives on the need for education reparations, what elements such a system should include, and your perspectives on how such a system might be designed. These questions are not intended to be intrusive or make you feel uncomfortable, but if I ask a question that you do not wish to answer, please tell me and we will skip that question.

I anticipate this interview will take approximately 30-45 minutes. I would like to record this interview in order to ensure that your responses are accurately represented in my research. However, all recordings will be anonymous, securely stored on my password-protected laptop, and will be deleted no later than 1 year after my dissertation is published. Do I have your consent to begin recording this interview?

Your participation will be kept confidential and anonymous. Within the dissertation, I will not use your real name and will pseudonyms to protect your confidentiality. Please note that individual responses will not be shared externally and are only used for research purposes. I will also leave space for questions at the end of this interview. A few initial questions will ask you for demographic information, which I will anonymize when writing my dissertation.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

2. To begin, can you please share your pseudonym (fictional name), gender, and gender pronouns?

3. What is your age, job title, and organization?

4. Do you consider yourself a stakeholder in the education of Black students in Los Angeles County? If so, why? If not, why not?

Understanding Black education community members’ perspectives:

5. Now let's dive into the core questions of my research. First, do you believe that an education reparations system for Black students should exist in Los Angeles County? If so, why? If not, why not?

6. If an education reparations system for Black early learners, ages 0-8, did exist, what elements do you believe should be included?

7. Incorporating those elements, how should such an education reparations system for Black early learners be designed?

Conclusion:

8. What else would you like to share about your perspective on education reparations for Black early learners? Please feel free to share any thoughts not captured in this interview/focus group thus far.

9. Thank you for your time and your thoughtful responses. My next step is to transcribe this conversation so I can use it in my data set for analysis. Is it okay if I reach out to you if I have questions or need clarifications about this conversation?

10. Thank you again. If you think of any questions or have any concerns, please don't hesitate to contact me at any point. I truly appreciate your time and look forward to sharing the results of this study once completed.

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