A Critical Comparative Case Study of Education Equity Policies Adopted by Cleveland Heights-University Heights and Shaker Heights City School Districts

A dissertation presented to

the faculty of

The Gladys W. and David H. Patton College of Education of Ohio University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education

Mario M. Clopton-Zymler

August 2022

This dissertation titled

A Critical Comparative Case Study of Education Equity Policies Adopted by Cleveland Heights-University Heights and Shaker Heights City School Districts

by

MARIO M. CLOPTON-ZYMLER

has been approved for

the Department of Educational Studies

and The Gladys W. and David H. Patton College of Education by

Charles L. Lowery

Associate Professor of Educational Studies

Sara Helfrich

Interim Dean, The Gladys W. and David H. Patton College of Education

Abstract

CLOPTON-ZYMLER, MARIO M., Ed.D., August 2022, Educational Leadership

A Critical Comparative Case Study of Education Equity Policies Adopted by Cleveland Heights-University Heights and Shaker Heights City School Districts

Director of Dissertation: Charles L. Lowery

When President Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) into law in 2015 it was intended to advance education equity by upholding key protections for America's most marginalized and high-need students. Local school districts, in the wake ESSA responded with local initiatives and policies aimed at addressing inequities in achievement, academic rigor, and allocation of resources. Because suburban school districts continue to employ predominantly White leaders and teachers while Black student populations grow equal to or beyond the White student population, a critical study of how school districts address race and equity is necessary. The purpose of this study was to understand the policy making process including the creation, adoption and implementation of education equity policies adopted by Cleveland Heights-University Heights, and Shaker Heights City School Districts, two suburban school districts in the inner-ring of Cleveland, Ohio where district leaders and the Board of Education have committed to systematically removing barriers to education, achievement, and opportunities for historically marginalized students.

Because critical race theory is a useful framework from which to discuss and research the prominence of race and racism in public policy, the researcher analyzed each policy with a critical race theory lens to understand how school districts attempt to

address systemic inequities through policy. The policies were compared to one another based on the quadrangulational comparison including sameness (similarity), sameniqueness (similarity, with particularity), uniquesameness (distinction with similarity), and uniqueness (distinction) between each of them. This research is both timely and beneficial to education leaders, teachers and policymakers who value a critical lens to understand the development of equity policy development at the local level of educational governance.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my mothers on earth and in heaven: Felicia, Lorraine, Christine, Roberta, and Carla. This dissertation is also dedicated to Bowser, my best friend and writing partner who left us during the writing of this manuscript. You're the best dog in heaven. Papa loves you, B.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my dissertation committee, Dr. Charles Lowery, Dr. Lisa Harrison, Dr. Emmanuel Jean-François, and Dr. Dwan Robinson for their diligent eyes, their willing and helpful spirits, and for their stewardship of quality scholarship.

Thank you to the school districts whose policies were analyzed in this study, Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District, and Shaker Heights City School District. Thank you to all the interview participants and the respective staff members who helped to organize interviews amid Covid-19 and the scheduling struggles the pandemic presented.

Thanks to my family and friends who supported me through this journey, especially my grandmother Lorraine, and my uncles Do-Dah, and Dion. Thank you to my late grandfather for buying me the car I needed to get to college. Thank you to my dog, Bowser who retired from his earthly duties right before I defended this dissertation. Finally, thank you to my husband, Ryan, who taught me the language of social justice and oppression and for inspiring me to bring that language and action to work with me.

Table of Contents

Page

List of Tables

Page

Chapter 1: Introduction

The education system in the United States is built upon and sustains historic inequities (Kozol, 2012; Lewis & Diamond, 2015; Noguera, 2009; Petrovich & Wells, 2005; Tatum, 2007), segregation (Delgado & Stefancic, 2013; DuBois, 1935; Heubert, 1999; Rothstein, 2021; Woodson, 1933), and systemic racism (Ogbu, 2003; Perry et al., 2003; Tatum, 2017) with a seeming regard for preserving the status quo (Chapman, 2013). The country upholds a core value of equality and equal justice under law (Drakeford, 2015). However, the lived reality in the United States today neither provides societal nor legal equality (Heubert, 1999; Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003). Moreover, the education system in the United States is not structured systemically to assure equity or equality in public education and was built to function in this way (Love, 2019; Pollock, 2008). *De jure* and *de facto* segregation in education has been the focus of many federal, state, and local laws and policies (Heubert, 1999; Meier & Rutherford, 2017).

The effort to identify and combat systemic racism and to equalize the educational experience for Black children in the United States has been called by many names and initiatives such as closing the achievement gap (Diamond, 2006; Noguera, 2009; Ogbu, 2003; Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003), closing the opportunity gap (Diamond, 2006; Scheurich et al., 2017), and providing an equal educational opportunity for all (No Child Left Behind [NCLB], 2001). Billions of dollars have been allocated to ensure equal access to education with inconsistent results (Heubert, 1999; Tillman & Scheurich, 2013). Understanding the why and how of the implementation of funding and policy initiatives is necessary to close the equity gaps and ensure an equitable education for all children in

the United States (Kozol, 2012). To what extent the explicit consideration of race exists in public school education equity policies adopted by school districts, must also be observed, and researched to inform the practices of policymakers. This researcher will analyze education equity policies in Ohio suburban public school districts for tenets of critical race theory including the prominence of race and racism, color-blindness, and interest convergence.

Some school districts across the United States recognize the systemic, curricular, and organizational barriers that exist within schools (Cooper, 1997; Ogbu, 2003; Santo et. al, 2019). Lewis-McCoy (2014) and Lewis and Diamond (2015) have studied well-resourced suburban school districts and the resistance of White families to attempts to racially integrate advanced and gifted programs. In addition, while White leaders and teachers acknowledge the need for a response to changing demographics the implementation of said changes often is done with resistance to meeting the needs of those traditionally kept out of White academic spaces (Irby et al., 2019). Equity-oriented leadership and policies are critical for Black students to achieve in suburban schools and this researcher posits that a closer look into Cleveland Heights-University Heights, Shaker Heights City School Districts may reveal common themes in how school district policymakers are approaching equity initiatives.

Problem Statement

Derrick Bell (1995) wrote, “There is, on the other hand, a depressingly strong and invariant correlation between resources and race in this country, and resources and success…” (p. 894). The need for this study stems from the inequities sustained over time

in suburban schools (Chapman, 2013; Ogbu, 2003; Tatum, 2017), Landmark U.S. Supreme Court cases (*Brown v. Board of Education,* 1954; *Green v. New Kent County School Board,* 1968; *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education,* 1971), and Acts of Congress (Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965; Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015; No Child Left Behind Act, 2001) have attempted to make systemic changes to address inequities in U.S. education and still inequities exist in academic achievement and opportunity for Black students (Heubert, 1999; Meier & Rutherford, 2017; Scheurich et al., 2017).

A gap exists in the current literature on qualitative studies critically analyzing educational equity policy in suburban public schools (Chapman, 2013; Diamond, 2006; Lac & Diamond, 2019; Ogbu, 2003; Skousen & Domangue, 2020). The available literature extensively chronicles the history and impact of segregation and inequality in schools, school integration, and the implementation of social justice and diversity in curriculum (Gorski & Pothini, 2018; Warren-Grice, 2017). Literature on the impact of inequities in schools (Cooper, 1997; Ogbu, 2003; Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003), education equity policies in higher education (Ching et al., 2020), as well as literature using critical policy analysis to provide counternarrative to a reform measure aimed at addressing systemic inequities (Mansfield & Thachik, 2016). However, there exists little research analyzing equity policies adopted by suburban school districts (Gorski & Pothini, 2018; Petrovich & Wells, 2005; Scheurich et al 2017).

Equity-oriented policies are critical for Black students to achieve in suburban schools (Irby et al., 2019). Conceptually, equity has been a common element in education

policies. However, for education systems to foster equity, the benefits of education must be distributed more fairly to Black students (Savage et al., 2013). And while equity is prevalent as a concept in education, equity often remains ill-defined in policies. First, several definitions of equity exist in social and political policy. The ideals of equity focus on the belief of egalitarianism, fairness, and justice in western liberal democracies. Nevertheless, what is equal, fair, or just is debatable and for some these concepts contradict one another (Savage et al., 2013). What is fair to one is not equal to another. And what is just for one group may be seen as injustice by another.

Exacerbating the issue of understanding equity is the prominence of race and racism whereby historical, social, structural, and institutional factors work to create barriers for marginalized communities. In addition, even with local, state, and federal education agencies working to address inequities, questions continue to remain about whether and in what ways equity policies are focused on Black and other marginalized student groups.

First, this researcher posited that local school district policies affect the education experience of public school students and should be analyzed and discussed. Second, in an effort to recognize and mend the wounds of inequity in educational opportunities for Black students in the United States, this researcher posited that education equity policies should be adopted by local Boards of Education. These policies should be created with certain tenets in mind including Black voices as a legitimate part of the policy development process, explicitly discuss race and racism, and avoid color blind language. These tenets are historically discussed in literature through the lens of critical race theory

(CRT) and this study engaged in a critical analysis of the policymaking process using a critical race theoretical lens.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this comparative case study was to glean understanding of policymaking process suburban school districts engaged in to create, adopt and implement an education equity policy so as to understand what problems the policies were intended to solve, how each policy was adopted, implemented and the impact of the implementation in the first two years following the adoption of the policy. This study examined each of the policies individually and comparatively and utilized a critical race theory framework to further understand how both case policies addressed the phenomenon of race.

The comparative analysis was done using quadrangulational comparative analysis framework because it offered a more in-depth comparative analysis of the policies that traditional frameworks used in comparative research may not be able to attain (Jean-Francois, 2020b). This method allowed for the analysis of the language found in the education equity policies of each school district.

Significance

This research was significant because only a small number of research studies, specifically case studies of locally adopted education policies exist. Second, the qualitative study of educational equity policy in suburban schools through a critical race theoretical lens adds to the current literature that discussed race and racism in suburban public schools. Santo et al. (2019), Huidor and Cooper (2010), and Ogbu (2003) have

studied schools across the United States that recognize the systemic, curricular, and organizational barriers that exist within their schools. Nevertheless, the research does not go as far as investigating equity policy language. In sum, it is hoped that the findings of this dissertation study will reveal aspects of equity policy language critically from which future researchers, educational leaders, educators, and policymakers can further develop equity policies that address race and racism in U.S. schools.

Research Questions

In this dissertation study, the prominence of race and racism in suburban school district education equity policies was examined. This researcher chose this focus to explicate suburban school districts understanding of the existence of race and racism in their policies. This inquiry is guided by the following questions:

1. What are the constructs of equity policies in Cleveland Heights-University Heights and Shaker Heights City School Districts?
2. In what ways has the policies language been successfully and unsuccessfully implemented?

Beneficiaries of the Study

Leonardo (2013) describes the benefits to applying CRT to issues in education when he noted:

> It suffices to say that race and racism are endemic to U.S. society. This does not suggest that racism is pandemic or out of control and cannot be ameliorated. CRT is precisely the intervention that aims to halt racism by highlighting its

> pedagogical dimensions and affirming an equally pedagogical solution rooted in anti-racism. (p. 12)

This study will benefit those in education leadership and policymaking as it demonstrated how critical race theory is a useful tool in policy analysis. The school districts whose policies are directly analyzed in this study should benefit from a critical perspective of their policy as well as from the comparison of their district policy to another district's policy. Since education policy impacts schools, teachers, and children (Edmondson, 2000) school stakeholders will benefit from this study and analysis of education equity policy.

Operational Definition of Key Terms

- centering in the margins: emphasizing the perspectives of marginalized groups, particularly viable, non-mainstream understandings of problems and reduce the possibility of developing perspective imbalances (Garces & Gordan da Cruz, 2017).
- colorblind: a lens of race that posits that by treating individuals without regard to race, ethnicity, skin-color, or culture, is akin to equality (Chapman & Donner, 2015).
- counterstorytelling: Counterstorytelling offers a perspective that pushes against dominant racial frames that often writes people of color into stories with negative connotation (Leonardo, 2013).
- critical policy analysis: This is the application of the central tenets of critical theory to the analysis of education policy within this case. Central to this form of

analysis is the posing of questions that examine the social, political, historic, and economic realities that shape a policy (Edmondson, 2000).

- critical race theory: Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a framework based out of legal scholarship while there are no definitive tenets associated with CRT there exists defining elements such as racism is endemic and deeply rooted legally and culturally and racism crosses epistemological boundaries. CRT offers a lens from which experiences counter to the dominant narrative may be uplifted and recognizes experiential knowledge of people of color (Crenshaw et al., 1995).
- discretionary space: moments that are not dictated by policies or curriculum but are places where conscious decisions are made, such as how to facilitate a discussion or how to manage a small classroom incident (Ball, 2020)
- EdChoice: The Educational Choice Scholarship (EdChoice) Program provides students from eligible public schools an opportunity to attend a private schools that has opted-in to the program (Ohio Department of Education, 2022).
- education equity: Policies, practices, and programs used to lower educational barriers and to improve the conditions for historically oppressed student populations to meet standardized expectations. This definition highlights the complexity that exists in the conditions necessary to achieve educational equity (Skrla et al., 2009).
- interest convergence: Interest convergence is the phenomenon between majority and minority groups that occurs when the benefits for the majority group increase

beyond the benefits for the marginalized group even if the reforms are intended for the minority or marginalized group (Chapman & Donner, 2015).

- intersectionality: Intersectionality is the difference between interconnectedness between differing identity markers which can further oppress or benefit a group or individual in search of equitable treatment (Chapman & Donner, 2015).
- policy: an intentional course of action taken by an entity in resolving an existing problem or proactively addressing the needs of the entity (Anderson, 2006).
- policy adoption: the third stage of the policy process wherein development of support for a specific proposal so a policy can be legitimized or authorized (Anderson, 2006).
- policy agenda: the first stage of the policy process wherein problems that receive the serious attention of public officials (Anderson, 2006).
- policy evaluation: the fifth stage of the policy process wherein efforts by the government to determine whether the policy was effective and why or why not (Anderson, 2006).
- policy formulation: the second stage of the policy process wherein development of acceptable proposed courses of action for dealing with a public problem (Anderson, 2006).
- policy implementation: the fourth stage of the policy process wherein application of the policy by the government's administrative machinery (Anderson, 2006).

- racial realism or the prominence of race: Racial realism is the belief that race and racism effect practices, policies and laws and that regardless of intent, these rules are administered with prejudice of people's racial biases (Bell, 1992).
- structural determinism: the conceptual understanding that a thought or generally shared practice will unconsciously determine societal outcomes (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).
- targeted universalism: a theory to effect programs by moving all groups towards a universal goal. that move all groups towards the universal goal (Powell et al., 2019).
- universal design for learning (UDL): a framework to optimize and improve instruction with research-based understandings into humans learning processes (CASR, 2022).
- voice: A prioritization of the lens of oppressed people and the favoring of the lived experiences of those from the margins of society. Recognizing that even though racialization divides groups according to socially assigned race, experiences of and responses to marginalization are not uniform (Ford & Airhihenbuwa, 2010).

Summary

Chapter one presented the context, construct, purpose, and significance for this study. This study is a comparative case study of the educational equity policies adopted by two Ohio suburban public school district Boards of Education. The research questions this study aims to answer concern the construct of the education equity policies as well as

the effects of the implementation of the two case policies. The research findings are discussed using critical race theory to examine race in the construct and implementation of the case policies.

Chapter two provides an overview of literature in the areas of policy, policy analysis, and education equity to connect current literature to the work of this study. Through the review of literature education inequitable practices will be discussed as well as contextual literature on the operational setting of suburbs and suburban schools in general and a more focused accounting of research studies completed for the Shaker Heights City School Districts will also be discussed in Chapter two. This researcher articulates how CRT is applicable as the theoretical framework for this study and also discusses the policy process as adapted by Anderson (2006) as the conceptual framework for this dissertation.

Chapter three discusses the methodology used to answer the research questions that guide this study. This chapter includes a discussion of the research design, operational settings, population and sampling sizes, instrumentation, data collection and data analysis processes as well as information on trustworthiness, triangulation, and protocols and ethical considerations.

Chapter four presents the findings from data collection of each case policy in four parts. Part one is findings from the Shaker Heights City Schools, part two is findings from Cleveland Heights-University Heights City Schools, and part three discusses cross-case findings, comparing the degrees between similarity and difference between the two

case policies, and part four discusses findings from both policies related to critical race theory.

Chapter five presents the discussion of the findings and includes implications and recommendations based on the findings. The limitations and delimitations of the study are presented along with recommendations for further research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This literature review begins with literature on public policy, the policymaking process, and policy transfer. Next literature on the two approaches to policy analysis are discussed. Then, a discussion of education inequitable practices that contextualizes educational inequities will follow along with literature of education equity practices in policy, policy analysis, and policy implementation. The final section of this literature review discusses the conceptual and theoretical frameworks for this study.

Public Policy

Anderson (2006) noted that public policies are created by the entities the various officials within government . The concept of public policy includes several implications that includes policy being defined as connecting intentional, goal-specific action, as opposed to indiscriminate behaviors or phenomenon, policies contain patterns of decisions that are made over time by officials rather than disconnected or unclear decisions, and public policies are responsive to claims for government to act or not act on an issue of public concern. Public policy is made of actions rather than intentions made by governments. Inaction can be a powerful form of policy making

Policy Process

Anderson (2006) defined policy formation, also known as the policy process, as the complete course in the creation, adoption, and implementation of a policy. Policy formulation is the creation of additional options for problem solving. The policy formation process includes dealing with policy problems, which are conditions that produce a need or disappointment from the stakeholders that government serves. Issues

are noticed by policymakers more often when they produce conditions of sufficient or consistent dissatisfaction among important or numerous stakeholders or when the problem has tractability to solution, this making the policymaker apt to produce results for the constituency group they serve.

Problems that metastasize into a policy issue or issues become part of a policy agenda wherein policymakers must act and pay attention to the concern at hand. A policy agenda is not precise or made up of fixed content (Anderson, 2006). However, a moment or opportunity does arise for an agenda to be acted on. John Kingdon (2001) held that agenda setting can be seen as three individual channels of action: problems, proposals, and politics. When these channels meet and reveal an opportunity for action that is when some matters reach policymakers agendas.

Kingdon (2001) and Anderson (2006) theorize on a phenomena that has been exemplified especially in race related or civil rights legislation. School desegregation, for example, was difficult to legislate because it was a problem that also faced great resistance from proponents of segregation and it took judicial action by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Brown* v. *Board of Education* (1954) to remedy the action. Also, the Civil Rights Act (1964) was moved along legislatively spurred in part by the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. Problems, in political systems, are not addressed solely on their merit, or detrimental impact on constituents. Political inertia or resistance to change as Kingdon (2004) described, is also part of the policymaking process.

The core of policy formulation is the creation of appropriate actions to address a concern (Anderson, 2006). Many policies are developed by agency officials and are often

designed to strengthen existing laws or policies. In legislative bodies, the actual writing of legislation is done by staff with the decision making officials giving policy directives that influence the rhetoric of the policy. Typically, interest or stakeholder groups are consulted or actively take part in the process of developing a policy.

In organizations where there the effect of impact of a policy extends broadly across an organization, decision makers often utilize the experience and expertise of organizational stakeholders in assisting in forming policy decision. The Hoy-Tarter Model of Shared Decision Making they noted that subordinates involved in the process of making decisions where they have some level of expertise and interest, their participation as part of the process will be more effective (Hoy & Miskel, 2005).

The U.S. Constitution made public schools a responsibility of each of the various state governments. The institutions that shape policy within state governments include state legislatures, state departments of education with the authority of the governor, and local boards of education. The federal government, by way of funding, also has considerable influence on the implementation of education systems in all the states.

Policy Transfer

Policy transfer has been used to study international education policy (Bache & Taylor, 2003; Forestier & Crossley, 2015; Barabasch et al., 2009) and comparative education policy in the context of policy borrowing (Auld & Morris, 2015) to discuss the process by which information from laws, policies, government or institutional action, concepts, and philosophies in one political entity is used in the improvement of similar structures within another entity (Benson, 2011; Dolowitz & Marsh, 2020). Authors of

comparative policy have demonstrated intrigue of policy transfer between states and cities. Transfer can be a volunteer act by rational actors within a specific context (Rose, 1991) or a coercive actions where a political entity forces another political to adopt a policy (Tran & Tuan, 2020).

Dolowitz and Marsh (1996) are considered as groundbreaking researchers in the conceptual understanding of policy transfer. They established a precedent that set the most widely cited definition of policy transfer. They codified the idea within a broader settings for policy formation in research literature by distinguishing policy transfer from similar concepts of policy sharing including policy diffusion, lesson drawing, and policy emulation. Their framework is structured by six questions:

- Why policymakers engage in policy transfer?
- Who are the essential individuals involved in policy transfer process?
- What is transferred?
- From where are lessons drawn?
- What are the different degrees of transfer?
- What restricts or facilitates the policy transfer process?
- How is the process of policy transfer process related to the success of failure of the policy? (Dolowitz & Marsh, 2020, p.8)

Policy transfer is used as a way for governments to expand their ability to solve problems. Groups utilizing policy transfer use this shortcut in policy development because they do not always have the expertise or knowledge base to resolve a problem or the organization does not want to ‘reinvent the wheel’ (Tran & Tuan, 2020; Stead et al.,

2008). “The most common explanation for the occurrence of policy transfer is microlevel dissatisfaction with existing policy systems identified through monitoring systems or broader policy evaluation frameworks provide opportunities structures for policy transfer to occur” (Evans, 2009, p.29).

Policy transfer is a helpful notion that transfers across different subject areas and contexts (Benson & Jordan, 2011). Elements of a policy are transferred include policy goals, structure and concepts, and negative lessons. Often hard transfers include policy instruments, institutional structures and programs are transferred between entities. Softer transfers include ideas, ideologies, and concepts (Benson & Jordan, 2011; Dolowitz & Marsh, 1996; Stone, 2004).

Policy learning is fundamental to policy transfer and is connected by how “institutional constraints” could be resolved (Tran & Tuan, 2020, p.119). Based on what elements of a policy is borrowed by the recipient new learning emerges as a result of policy transfer (Evans, 2009).

Traditional Policy Analysis

Public policy has many definitions and can span a broad terrain (Cibulka, 1995). Dye et al. (1992) defined public policy as what governments choose to act on. It is typical of governments to implement policy with the intention of resolving a problem or fulfilling values, a philosophy, or an idea (Cibulka, 1995). Policy study has historically been described as policy analysis, studies or research. The classifications of policy study are numerous and varied but most agree that policy generally is created to address social problems.

The traditional positivist approach to education policy analysis has been the dominant approach among researchers in education (Young & Diem, 2015). In a traditional policy analysis (TPA) approach, policymaking is considered a linear, intentional process where policymakers apply purpose and investigate the most optimal policy effects (Monkman & Hoffman, 2013). According to Diem et al. (2019) TPA approaches in education include the following four tenets:

1. In TPA, change or reform is usually viewed as an intentional process that can be managed or planned. This is the result of prioritizing the planning, adopting, implementing, examining and/or evaluating policy-related educational changes or reforms.
2. TPA frames research as goal driven, where rational actors weigh the cost, benefits, and outcomes of a given action or strategy.
3. TPA takes for granted that researchers can obtain, process, and analyze the knowledge necessary to make informed decisions between policy solutions.
4. TPA assumes that researchers can evaluate policy alternatives and express their evaluations to stakeholders in ways that can be used to identify and mitigate problems (p.4).

Critical Policy Analysis

Since the 1980s there has been an increase in researchers that use qualitative methods that have taken a critical look at policies and beliefs related with traditional research frameworks (Maxwell, 2004; Young, 1999; Scheurich, 1994). Critical policy

analysis (CPA) has contributed to the field of education whereby policies and practices can be understood from varied lens.

What separates CPA from TPA are the methods that used in applying critical perspectives and theoretical lenses (Diem et al., 2019). For example, Marshall (1998) used critical feminist policy analysis to argue for an expansion of research methodologies so that stronger policy centered on women prevailed in the field. Diem et al. (2019) developed the use of the critical perspective of policymaking as well as the reasoning that drives its use. CPA allows for an "equity-minded approach" that puts "race and the needs of racially minoritized students at the forefront" whereas traditional approaches to educational policy analysis can be theoretically narrow and may ignore or undervalue the experience of marginalized students for the sake of other potential costs and benefits (Ching et al., 2020, p.826).

CPA is an effective framework for investigating the policymaking process and the assumed impact of the policy. Given the complexity and the breadth of school functions necessary to address when developing an education equity policy, CPA scholars depend on several critical perspectives and methods in the investigation of their policy processes and policy impact (Diem & Young, 2015). CPA scholarly work is not homogenous but there are distinguishable themes. Diem et al. (2019) identified five themes including critical policy analysts interests in:

1. The difference between policy rhetoric and practiced reality.
2. Understanding the policy, its roots, and its development.

3. The distribution of power, resources, and knowledge and the creation of winners and losers.
4. Social stratification which focuses on the broader effect that a policy has on relationships of inequality and privilege (for example, how a policy reinforces or reproduces social injustice and inequalities).
5. The nature of resistance to dominance and oppression by members of non-dominant groups (p.6).

Critical approaches to policy research are progressively used in education research study with well-defined patterns of its use (Diem et al., 2014). Using CPA to analyze education equity policy addresses concerns that focus on race and the prominence of race in a field of research where more traditional aspects of policy analysis has been overwhelmingly utilized.

Education Inequities

The terms most commonly used when discussing the concept of education equity include achievement gap (Carter, 2005; Kozol, 2012; Lewis & Diamond, 2015; Love, 2019; Noguera, 2009; Ogbu, 2003; Perry et. al, 2003; Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003), opportunity gap (Diamond, 2006; Milner, 2012), desegregation (Diamond, 2006; Diamond et al., 2007; Du Bois, 1935; Heubert, 1999), resegregation (Boger & Orfield, ed., 2005; Tatum, 2007, 2017), and tracking (Chambers 2009; Petrovich & Wells, 2005; Skrla et al., 2009). The literature also discusses education inequity as related to the impact of culture in the disenfranchisement of students of color (Carter, 2005; Perry et.

al, 2003), curriculum and school frameworks (Scheurich et al., 2017; Love, 2019; and school funding and resources (Petrovich & Wells, 2005; Skrla et al., 2009).

Prudence Carter (2005) approached issues of educational equity from the lens of critiquing cultural paradigms. She noted that the danger of cultural-ecological theory was the creation of a master narrative attempting to speak for all people of color and asserts that the culture of the student has influence on how student engagement and achievement is discussed.

Brown vs. Board of Education

Essex (2019) identified elements for *de jure* segregation as being introduced or validated by government action, with an intention to effect discrimination, and results in the creation of increase of segregation. Domnwachukwu (2010) noted that to comprehend the meaning of educational equity is to investigate the arbitration of equality and equity in the legal system. *Brown* v. *Board of Education* (1954), was a landmark case whose outcome is well known in its efforts to desegregate schools in the United States. In this case, Reverend Oliver Brown was represented by the NAACP on behalf of his daughter Linda whose registration was denied at her neighborhood school because she was Black. The Court ruled that the separate but equal doctrine of *Plessy* v. *Ferguson* (1896) was unconstitutional striking a substantial blow to *de jure* segregation of schools. While the *Brown* decision was a landmark decision banning *de jure* segregation, the decision did not remove segregation completely from public schools. There was no guidance, or timeline given to indicate how and when desegregation should occur.

Jonathan Kozol (2012) chronicled several experiences in U.S. public schools. He observed classrooms, interviewed students, teachers, school administrators and school personnel. In his observations he witnessed gross disparities in the educational experience of the children he witnessed and interviewed. He saw mostly urban schools being understaffed, and overlooked. He wrote of the inequities in schools and the continued rationalization of the marginalization populations and the dissonance of the ideals equality espoused as American values. Kozol noted that historians have three distinguishable trends within the 20th century that relate to concerns of educational equity.

First, from the 1900s to the 1950s courts did not interfere when concerns about equity and discrimination were made against local governments. Second, from the *Brown* ruling to the 1970s, equity issues were more noticeable, although the emphasis was focused on issues of race and less on socioeconomics, and third, from early 1970s to present day, local control and the efficiency agenda is the prevalent issue in advancing inequity (Kozol, 1991).

Tracking

Equal access to education is subverted by the use of tracking in schools. As a practice, there are very few schools that can say they have no mechanism for grouping students based on some sort of ability grouping or track (Oakes, 1985; Southworth & Mickelson, 2007). Sorting students into groups based on ability is a practice whose academic literature can be traced back to the 1960s (Cicourel & Kitsuse, 1963; Oakes, 1985; Schafer et al., 1972).

The concept of placing students into groups based on academic achievement has been championed in education policy circles as well as in academic literature (Ansalone, 2010; Modica, 2015). For one, it makes logistical sense to have teachers that teach students who seemingly achieve or understand at similar levels to learn together (Oakes, 1985). For students, it is easy to school stakeholders to understand that high achieving students can be grouped together so that they achieve even more, and low achieving students can be grouped so that they can play catch-up without holding the high achieving students back.

Tracking, however, has exacerbated racial inequities in schools and has been utilized as a method to reduce access to a quality education to Black students (Ogbu, 2003). Racial disparities and lack of access to equal education opportunities have been noted in the literature including literature chronicling Black students educational experiences being negatively impacted by tracking practices in school (Carter, 2012; Modica, 2015; Oakes, 2005). Scholars have also written at length discussing schools acknowledgement of the ill-effects of tracking (Burris & Welner, 2005; Comer, 1988; Levin, 1987; Oakes & Sizer, 2004; Wells, 1998; Wells, & Serna, 2002; Wheelock, 1992). Detracking as part of an intentional equity-based program or policy has also been discussed (Alvarez & Mehan, 2006; Cooper, 1997; Wells et al., 1995).

Based on an extensive review of the literature on tracking practice and policies, three conclusions on the use of tracking can be surmised. First, tracking disparate impacts the educational experience and access to academic achievement for Black, Hispanic, and students who are poor. Second, research has concluded that while tracking practices may

have had some benefits on occasion as the assumed benefits of tracking are marginal and arguable or in cases not true. Third, the research has concluded that schools who detrack courses see an improvement in student achievement and learning for students (Alvarez, 2006; Diamond, 2006; Oakes, 1985; Ogbu, 2003)

The literature has revealed that tracking disparately impacts the educational experience and access to academic achievement for Black and Hispanic students. John B. Diamond (2006) draws on the case study of an integrated suburban school and notes that the integration of suburban schools can be superficial because of the racialized terrain that disadvantages Black students. Using the case of integrated suburban school district he outlines the sorting of students by race through their years in school. While most students begin schooling attending the same classes in the earlier grades, racial divides between Black and White students grow as students advance into the middle and upper grades. In the case school, students are assessed during 4th grade in mathematics and based on the test scores and teacher recommendations, the students are placed into different tracks. This test is pivotal in students attaining access to higher level coursework as the sequence of advanced mathematics in 5th grade is an essential path to advanced mathematics in the students later years. In 5th grade the majority of students in advanced courses are White and by 8th grade all of these students have taken algebra which enables the students to take more advanced coursework in high school. Diamond posits that the tracking of students into different educational environments is directly reflected in the students' high school achievement scores on standardized tests, demonstrating a disparity

that is associated with the differentiated tracking that occurred in the student's early years in school.

In a research study by Diamond, Lewis and Gordon (2007), they sought to discover whether an oppositional culture is likely to develop for Black students in segregated schools where it is perceived that White students have more educational opportunities. They found no evidence that supports the notion that Black students oppose school achievement. They noted that when students perceived that race-based tracking occurs in their schools they are aware of the disparities and lack of access between Black and White students.

John Ogbu (2003) in his book "Black American Students in an Affluent Suburb" has a chapter devoted to the concept of leveling which can be used as an alternative term for tracking. He described how and why Black students ended up in the various course levels offered as well as the impact of tracking on the achievement gap between Black and White students. Through student interviews Ogbu noted that the students recognize that course enrollment is determined at the upper elementary and middle schools. He offered data that showed an overwhelming disparity between Black and White students in high and low level courses. There are also observations of several different courses and levels in the schools and he reports differences in subject rigor, content and pacing.

The cases suggested differences in teacher instructional approaches, less intellectual involvement, and slower pacing at the lower class levels while upper level classes were rigorous and intellectually engaging. With Black students filling up the lower level courses and White students being the majority of the higher level courses,

Ogbu (2003) made the case that tracking was *de facto* along racial lines and not necessarily based on a student's ability. With Black students receiving a different and less advanced education the divide between Black and White achievement, a clear correlation between tracking and lower academic achievement by Black students emerged. Additional scholars have noted the disparate impact of tracking on Black students. There is widespread agreement that an essential component of the race achievement gap in is a disproportionate enrollment in remedial or lower-level courses compounded by an absence of Black students in higher-level courses (Lucas 1999, 2001; Oakes 2005; Wheelock 1992).

Researchers have also argued that in addition to being ineffectual academically for lower tracked students, tracking is socially and emotionally harmful and perpetuates inequality (Carter, 2012; Oakes, 2005). White students are disproportionately placed in higher tracked courses have highly qualified teachers, better classroom resources, and an enriched curriculum designed for postsecondary school preparation and therefore receive an advantage over Black students (Oakes, Gamoran & Page, 1992).

The Suburbs

In 1950, only one-fourth of all United States residents lived in a suburb but by 1990, more than half did (Kruse & Sugrue, 2006). The suburbs were not equally accessible to people of color by design and for many decades suburbs remained a space where predominantly white, middle to upper-middle class people could live and send their children to school. Suburban populations now feature much more ethnic and racial diversity. In 2010, for the first time the majority of Black, Latinx, Asian, and White

residents in the United States resided in suburbs and not metropolitan cities (Frey, 2015). Today, several suburbs have residents that are majority people of color (Cheng, 2013; Logan & Zhang, 2010; Lung-Amam, 2017).

The movement of people of color to the suburbs is leading to the diversification (Douds, 2021), integration (Cashin, 2001; Roisman, 2001) and desegregation (James, 1989; Kaeser, 2020) of suburban communities, which makes suburban schools an interesting location to discuss issues of race and racism in schools. Ferguson's (2007) research concerning racial and ethnic achievement disparities in places where schools are reputedly excellent supports the notion of suburbs revealed the need to increase and further study suburban schools.

Suburban Schools and Race

Diamond, Maddox, and Velazquez (2021) noted that most students in the United States attended a suburban school and yet a vast majority of education research focused on urban schools rather than suburban ones. They argue that suburban education spaces offered an opportunity to examine issues of resegregation, white supremacy, and economic inequality. They posit that a deeper theorizing on whiteness and racism is necessary to better understand how whiteness creates barriers for minoritized students. Finally, they noted that racial inequality is built on the foundation of suburbia and therefore understanding suburban schools necessitates an understanding of how race and place intersect.

Griffen and Greene (2019) studied a suburban school with a majority student of color population. Using a critical race theoretical framework, they examine the

implementation of equity and social justice initiatives among the staff, students, and community. The school leaders and teachers collaborated to conduct grassroots community oral histories and to propose a study abroad program. Through these programs the school was able to see improvements academically, socially, and behaviorally among students of color.

Irby et al. (2019) completed a composite of counternarratives using critical race theory to analyze a white suburban high school principal's perspective when dealing with racial conflict after enacting reforms to address her school's racial inequities. Their data suggested that white leaders in suburban schools should expect the possibility that they will face professional and personal resistance should they undertake racial equity reform.

John Ogbu's Study of Shaker Heights Schools

John Ogbu (2003) set out to discover why Black students in Shaker Heights performed low in academics and the reasoning behind Black students being disengaged from academic work. In his research he designated societal and school factors as system factors. He also discussed how minority community forces, beliefs, and behaviors regarding education influenced student's perceptions of schools. Because of the lack of investigation into community forces impact on Black student achievement and educational experiences, the research findings and analysis were focused on gleaning understanding about the community role in school achievement.

Based on his research findings Ogbu (2003) recommended to the Black community and Black families that they must assume a intentional role to increase the performance of Black students in academics. He wrote, "Although good teaching and

some changes in the educational process are important, the academic achievement gap is not likely to be closed by restructuring the educational system or by what the Shaker community and U.S. society at large can do for Black students" (p. 274). He concluded that based on the engagement and attentiveness in his research by the Black community during his research study there was no shortness of commitment and interest in the education of Black children by the Black community but this interest manifested itself in times of educational crisis. He makes six recommendations to the Black community in Shaker:

1. Establish a variety of supplementary after-school and weekend programs to increase its academic orientation and performance.
2. Develop a cultural context to increase the value of academic success and visibility of academically successful Black people as role models.
3. Establish an awards program that highlights academic achievement for Black students.
4. Teach Black children to separate the affective meaning of school curriculum, instructional practices and student learning behaviors from their pragmatic meaning.
5. Develop and institutionalize appropriate and effective parental educational strategies.
6. Teach children to work hard and persevere (pp. 274-281).

Ogbu offered the following recommendations to the school district:

1. Expand the use of the Minority Achievement Committee (MAC) Program.

2. Make a concerted effort to improve teacher's expectations of Black student achievement ability.
3. Work with churches and other organizations in the Black community to increase parent involvement, understanding of academic leveling and tracking, and how to monitor student work.
4. Every effort should be made to build and maintain trust between the community and schools (p.281-289).

Ronald Ferguson's Study of Shaker Heights Schools

Ferguson (2007) completed a quantitative case study that investigated the relationship between race, family background, attitudes, and behaviors were connected to achievement disparities among middle and high school students in Shaker Heights. The metric of achievement for his study was student's grade point average (GPA). He noted that while both White and Black student had both high and low GPAs, there was a GPA gap between the two student groups with the mean GPA of White students being B+ and C+ for Black students. He concluded that the gap between Black and White Shaker Heights students' GPA was more of skill gap than an effort gap and that to close the gap required additional supports and intentionally setting academic excellence as part of the culture for Black students along with new learning techniques and strategies for students.

In one of his findings Ferguson's discussed social isolation of Black students who took mostly advanced courses. From his analysis he found that Black males in AP and honors courses are socially isolated from other Black males and that they are more likely to be marginalized from the typical social interactions of students like copying a friends

homework (which he presented as a typical and acceptable academic survival strategy). He wrote, “Black students who take mostly honors and Advanced Placement classes risk social isolation. They may find themselves suspended between the Black and White communities—feeling fully connected too neither” (p.188).

His research conclusions included:

1. Some things that appear to be elements of the culture of Black youth are best understood nonracially.
2. Black students report spending as much time doing their homework as White student which suggested the reason behind Black students completing less homework may be an issue of skill or access to help at home than an issue of effort of caring less.
3. The percentage of students who reported peer pressure against hard work and academic competition is similar among Black and White students.
4. Black and White students were similarly happy with their teachers.
5. There was no statistically significant predictor of student’s GPA and a student’s belief that being tough contributes to popularity.
6. The average Black students in Shaker Heights is less well prepared than the average White student to do well in honors and AP courses.
7. Black students who take mostly honor and AP courses faced difficult time pressures and emotional stresses when they attempted to meet academic and social requirements.

In summary, Ferguson concluded there was no clear evidence that Black students were less dedicated to academic achievement, any less satisfied with school or any less interested in their studies than their White peers. Still, with the gap in GPA being one full letter grade, he suggested that the evidence pointed toward improvement in skills and learning techniques as the necessary focus to close the achievement gap.

John Ogbu (2003) concluded that culturally responsive pedagogy is problematic as a theory and because it implies that minority students can only be educated successfully if the education is tailored to their own indigenous pedagogical style. "But [culturally responsive pedagogy] cannot explain why immigrant minority students from Africa and Asia in Shaker Heights were doing better than Black Americans under the same conventional public school pedagogy" (p. 272). This is not to say student identity should not be recognized and celebrated in their learning environments.

Education Equity

Manza & Sauder (2009) defined equity as a state in which individuals share access to rights and opportunities equally. Educational equity policies pursue equity in education by way of a fairer distribution of access, opportunities, and resources including funding, qualified teachers, and educational facilities (Petrovich & Wells, 2005). Equity may be reframed in terms of equality of the education delivered, equality of education received, equality of funding, or equality of other inputs (Heubert, 1999). The Oregon Department of Education (2016) attributed to Noguera the definition of equity as "equality of opportunity with focus on outcomes and results, attention to addressing the

needs of all students, recognition that not all students are the same, and those with less will need more" (p.3)

To assist in finding significant terms related to educational equity this researcher turned to the definition from Skrla et al. (2009). They define educational equity as policies, practices, and programs that work to allow for equal educational opportunities, abolish educational barriers, and to make certain that historically oppressed student populations meet the same standards expected of all students. This definition highlights the complexity that exists in the conditions necessary to achieve educational equity.

Because education equity policy is typically adopted at the local school district level, the literature on the subject is limited. To know the scope of the amount of school districts that have adopted education equity policies nationwide would require researching each individual school district's policies. Because of this limitation, the literature and reporting of local school district Boards of Education adopting education equity policy is limited.

The Oregon Department of Education (2016), Oregon School Board Association, and local school districts in Oregon were early advocates for education equity to be recognized as essential to the educational experience of its students. Portland Public Schools (2011) adopted an education equity policy in 2011 and several other school districts adopted equity resolutions or set out to adopt policy language that recognized the importance of equitable practices in their schools.

Madison Metropolitan School District in Madison, Wisconsin adopted an education equity policy in 1994 that was revised in 2008 and 2017. The 2017 adoption

included language on the reporting on equity practices, and the creation and implementation of an equity tool.

The Ohio Department of Education (2019) defined equity as "each child [having] access to relevant and challenging academic experiences and educational resources necessary for success across race, gender, ethnicity, language, disability, family background and/or income" (p. 8). In Ohio, several school districts have adopted education equity policies or initiatives including the states most populated school districts: Cleveland, Columbus, and Cincinnati.

Educational equity is also widely used as a term to describe closing the achievement gap in testing between Black, Latinx, and White students. This understanding of equity is due in large part to its use and definition as part of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (Scheurich et al., 2017). Scheurich et al. (2017) suggested "The achievement gap on standardized tests increasingly is viewed as the most significant educational [equity] challenge facing American society in the twenty-first century" (p. 510).

Most discussions of equity from the U.S. Department of Education (2020) are mentioned indirectly as working to improve outcomes for underserved students and to ensure quality teaching in every classroom. This includes regulating academic standards and providing funding by way of grants to support Title I schools and initiatives under the auspices of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and other federal programs. In 2014, the U.S. Department of Education released a package of guidance and resource materials intended to ensure improved equity in schools.

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015) is the most recent act of Congress that significantly amends and legislates compulsory public education. Its passage replaced the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. ESSA, like NCLB, focused on educational outputs like academic achievement and teacher evaluation and includes language that mandates accountability systems and reports detailing how each State plans to reduce inequities (in the governments definition and context) in schools.

Implementing Equity Policies in Schools

Schools exist as part of a broader community and that context must be considered when discussing issues of race, inequity, and inequality (Lac & Diamond, 2019) and several studies have investigated equity policy in the context of public schools. The case by Lac and Diamond (2019) examined a book study on racial inequities in a suburban high school. It explores two teachers of color and their work for social justice at a school site with a predominantly White student population and staff. The case study emphasized the tension among school stakeholders working to discuss race in racially diverse schools.

Felix and Trinidad (2019) examined a California student equity policy for higher education. Using tenets of critical race theory, they highlight how reform revisions intentionally turned a race-conscious policy into an effort that benefitted all students. They conclude that to bring about racial equity, equity mindedness is needed among policymakers and implementers, and inequitable outcomes should not be the responsibility of the marginalized to fix.

Chapman and Donner (2015) used critical race theory to analyze charter school research that questioned the concept of marketplace theory as a practical strategy to create equitable education. Chapman (2013) used CRT to explain the predominance of race and racism in majority White suburban schools. Chapman noted, like Felix and Trinidad (2019), that schools cannot erase race and that the blame for inequities must be returned to the policymakers and educators that propagate systemic racism.

Analyzing Equity Policy

A gap exists in the current literature on education equity policy focused on U.S. public schools' equity policies. Several have researched education equity within policies in Australia using international organizational standards and efforts at promoting equity (Levin, 2003; Savage et al., 2013; Windle & Stratton, 2013).

A report written by Levin (2003) sought to provide a conceptual framework to discuss equity and policy in education which focused on historically marginalized groups. Levin discussed factors and limits of government policymaking and includes ideas that governments could use to address concerns, then outlines a protocol of methods to reduce inequity in learning.

Savage et al. (2013) examined how equity is included in new policies and how, in the context of marketization, equity initiatives have been implemented across education disciplines. They noted that while equity remains a prevalent education concept it is not effectively defined in policies. They explored the changes in rationale for equity being included in Australian education policy and utilizes ethnographic research to demonstrate how equity is implemented in two suburban schools. He argued that unequal local market

tailored their considerations and implementations of equity to the understood needs of their local community. This poses both advantages and also issues to consider for policymakers who seek to understand and to govern in the lens of education equity.

Windle and Stratton (2013) examined the enactment of equity practices in two school programs- the International Baccalaureate and the Round Square Schools. They argued that ethical consumption became an essential framework for schools to engage with issues of equity. International Baccalaureate and Round Square Schools programs incorporated social justice and environmental consciousness in their development of internal prerequisites for the global perspective from which they their students should aspire to understand. They identified how the experience of ethical consumption was reflected in the policies and practices of leading private schools and how this framing of equity obstructs inequalities in the resource distribution and access across different educational sites.

Several studies have been completed discussing equity in education policy domestically in the United States mostly in higher education (Bettis & Adams, 2003; Ching et al., 2020; Winkle-Wagner et al., 2014). Many studies used qualitative methods and employed critical theoretical frameworks for their investigations or research lens (Amiot et al., 2020; Bettis & Adams, 2013).

Bettis and Adams (2013), who are critical feminist policy researchers, completed a qualitative study highlighting the importance of peer-group affiliation in the development of adolescent girls and how their identity intersected with an equity policy and students who participated in cheerleading. They posited that although numerous

scholars have noted the importance of peer groups in adolescent's everyday lives, that point has been neglected in policy research.

Using a critical policy analysis and equity-mindedness framework, Ching et al. (2020) examined how the intended purpose and early operationalization of the California Community Colleges' Student Equity Policy (SEP) addressed racial equity. Findings showed that consideration for racial equity decreased over time in policy documents and varied in colleges' responses to the policy. They posited that despite being effectively a race-neutral policy, the SEP was a valuable policy response in reducing inequity because it assumed organizational-level changes were necessary for equity to exist systemically and insisted that institutions develop transformational processes to perpetuate systemic equity. With the findings of their study, they suggested that policymakers should work to ensure race and racial equity are centrally framed in equity policy.

Winkle-Wagner et al. (2014) demonstrated in their research findings that race did not appear in college admissions policy discourse in Texas implying that as policy becomes race neutral, discourse becomes colorblind and has the potential to disguise structural inequalities. They analyzed the policymaking process that led to the revisions of a state plan proposed to be a colorblind alternative to affirmative action. They discovered an abundance of evidence that the policy was not an appropriate replacement to address race-based affirmative action. As policy stakeholder's discourse remained race-neutral so did the discourse of larger social inequalities working to conceal and perpetuate those inequalities. Pollock (2004) revealed that deleting race from discourse was confusing and detrimental to the progress towards ending inequity.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was the policy process as presented by Anderson (2006). Policy development is a sequential five-step pattern of policy activities including problem identification and agenda setting, formulation, adoption, implementation, and evaluation. Within this framework the policy process becomes a political act that features conflict, negotiation, the wielding and exercising of power, bargaining, and compromise. This conceptual framework helped this researcher better understand the process of the creation, adoption, and implementation of the two case education equity policies for this study And also allowed for a critical policy analysis to be completed.

Theoretical Framework

Critical Race Theory

This study employed critical race theory (CRT) as a theoretical framework. As Leonardo (2013) discussed, the "critical" in critical race theory reveals a theoretical distinction between objectivity and neutrality. Whereas some might take the idea of something being critical as an affront or insult, the use of the word focuses in on the concept that neutrality and objectivity offer different possibilities. If objectivity is the ability to analyze social processes as they happen, then lack of neutrality is the ability to take a stand on social processes. A critical perspective is not intended to be commonsense thinking. Instead, it suggests that education as an institution should distinguish between the surface and substance of learning in an unequal and racialized context.

In the United States, CRT is the dominant framework for critical study of race and education (Leonardo, 2013). Critical theory perspectives recognize that revolutionizing a culture begins with the "radical assessment of it" (Bell, 1995, p.893). It is concerned with empowering human beings to go beyond the traditional constraints that are placed on them due to race, gender, and class (Fay, 1987). CRT provides a legal, historicized framework for the explanation and analysis of how policies and systemic practices reinforce inequalities in education settings to the detriment of people of color (Bell, 1995; Chapman & Donner, 2015; Griffen & Greene, 2019). It was built from critical legal studies and radical feminism of the 1970s and has become a movement to investigate and also to alter the relationship between race and power (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

CRT began as a legal framework from which race and racism could be discussed and eventually studied. The need for a critical perspective is evident in the reach of critical race theory beyond the United States. Beyond legal studies, there is little debate that CRT was introduced into the field of education by a publication of Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995). They asserted in the article that notwithstanding the prevalence of race in U.S. society as a topic of research study, it remained untheorized. The authors argued for a critical race theoretical lens in education like the critical race theoretical lens utilized in legal scholarship. They developed three propositions. First, race is of continuous significance in the United States. Second, U.S. society is based on property rights not on human rights. And third, the intersection of race and property establishes an analytical tool for understanding inequity. Whereas educators have commonly referenced

race as attached only to issues of curricular transformation as led by multiculturalism, CRT argues that race and racism are part of every aspect of education. (Leonardo, 2013).

As a theoretical lens, CRT provides a historical filter through which past and present contexts that create specific learning environments can be explicated and analyzed (Chapman, 2013). The literature has asserted that one of the intentions of CRT in education research is to examine issues of race, gender, and class in educational settings with focus on their historical and local contexts (Chapman, 2013; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Lynn, 2004; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). Applications of CRT have addressed educational equity through educational outcomes like closing the achievement and opportunity gaps between White and Black students. It is important to consider these dominant views stem from a long historical lens of majority White policymakers defining the problems and solutions on behalf of Black communities (Scheurich et al., 2017). Several scholars have employed critical race theory to frame how equity impacts the educational experience in U.S. schools.

Leonardo (2013) noted that CRT in education is an intervention working to end racism by highlighting its "pedagogical dimensions" and "affirms equally pedagogical solution rooted anti-racism" (p.12). As a tool for understanding how race permeates all aspects of education, CRT is a necessary framework from which its tenets illuminate for policymakers the prominence of race and racism in education policy.

Garces and Gordan da Cruz (2017) argued that effective advancement of marginalized communities required including the lessons learning from past civil rights successes while also recognizing and subverting how racism and oppression manifests

itself in modern U.S. society. Their analysis illuminated ways that education policy and practices abrogated progress for communities of color thus resulting in a period of "retrenchment and renewed forms of racism" (p. 323). They sought to advance an approach they term as a strategic racial equity framework borrowing from and combining concepts and strategies from critical race theory, racial literacy, intersectionality, opportunity hoarding, community organizing, and critical race praxis. They proposed three fundamental principles and weave examples of their application for K-12 and postsecondary practitioners to understand how these principles can be applied in different contexts.

The first of the principles is attending to dynamics of race, power, and identities. They posit**ed** that current education policy necessitated by Supreme Court cases that promote colorblind, race neutral policy and a move away from race, is illogical. To seek to impact and assess equity without recognizing race as significant further depends on inequities. They promoted racial literacy meaning to "not lose sight of race and to not only focus on race" (Garces & Gordan da Cruz, 2017, p. 331). Moreover, racial literacy demands power dynamics be assessed to determine the ways in which multifaceted sets of guidelines, laws, and practices, implicit and explicitly may affect oppressed groups' capacity to access opportunity and resources. Interest convergence and racial realism are CRT tenets that address this first principle.

Interest Convergence. Interest Convergence is a phenomenon where "the interest of Blacks in achieving racial equality will be accommodated only when it converges with the interests of Whites" (Bell, 1980, p. 523). This concept was born out of commentary

from the *Brown* v. *Board of Education* (Brown, 1954) decision. Professor Herbert Wechsler, who according to Bell (1980) was an "outstanding lawyer, a frequent advocate for civil rights causes, and a scholar of prestige and influence" (p.519), attempted to argue that the Brown decision could be justified on a racially neutral principle of freedom of association. Bell (2004) added that "even when interest convergence results in an effective racial remedy, that remedy will be abrogated at the point that policymakers fear the remedial policy is threatening the superior societal status of Whites, particularly those in the middle and upper classes" (p. 69).

Professor Charles Black, a leading constitutional law authority at the time of the *Brown* v. *Board of Education* decision, was also helpful in writing the legal brief for Linda Brown, the chief plaintiff of the Brown decision. He took Wechsler's challenge further, and in Bell's opinion, accurately viewing racial equity as the neutral principle which underlies the Brown decision. He argued that "when the directive of equality cannot be followed without displeasing the Whites, then something that can be called freedom of the Whites must be impaired" (Bell, 1980, p. 522). Black was concluding the very foundation of interest convergence was that White people, without an elevated level of racial consciousness, cannot envision the personal responsibility and surrender of racial privilege required for true equality to exist. Thus, Bell's concept of interest convergence was born from the conclusion that viewed Wechsler's attempt at arguing the validity of the Brown decision on neutral principles as effective in a positivist lens but in a reality that did not actually exist.

In the world as it exists racial remedies are not a tool for attaining equality, but rather, they exist as the manifestations of unspoken judicial conclusions that, if enforced, would advance, or at least not harm the interests of middle- and upper-class Whites (Bell, 1980). He backed this assertion in several contexts that have been examined by scholars (Guinier, 2004) including the alignment of interests in desegregation and the Cold War (Bell, 1980; Dudziak, 2011; Greenberg, 1994), and the rise of civil rights consciousness among Black people during World War II (Klarman, 1994; Lewis, 1991; Sosna, 1977).

The study of interest convergence in school policies that target inequities in the education experience for students may have been forged in the same context as the Brown decision. This means that regardless of the intention of the policy to remove barriers to learning for students, if the policy was intentionally or unintentionally framed to serve the interests of White people, equity would not be realized. Further racial literacy and understanding of dilemmas like interest convergence may not solve the issue of inequity directly but may help to develop an understanding for why attempts at reducing inequities feel less satisfying (Guinier, 2004).

Racial Realism. Racial realism, a central tenet of CRT (Chapman, 2013; Delgado, 1992; Delgado & Stefancic, 2003) is based on the concept of legal realist who view the law and courts as tools used to maintain the status quo and on occasion in no predictable manner serves the interests of oppressed people. Bell (1992b) claimed that racism was and would remain a prevalent part of society in the United States. Bell posited that Black people would never gain full equality in this country. Even the most monumental and successful efforts would produce no more than temporary peaks of

progress and short-lived victories that would succumb to racial patterns that maintain white dominance.

Rather than Black people continuing to return to a prejudiced system of laws and policies to seek relief from their oppression, Bell suggested that Black people narrow their focus and turn away from the idealism that racial equality can be realized. This change in mentality, he noted, required Black people to acknowledge the permanence of subordinate status, enabling the freedom to "imagine and implement racial strategies that can bring fulfillment and even triumph" (Bell, 1992b, p. 374).

Bell argued that there is power in acknowledging societal subordination because of the prominence and impenetrable nature of racial hierarchy, and that this realization can lead to policy and practice less likely to make conditions for the oppressed even worse. He also rejected the contention that marginalized people surrender to the reality of their insubordination, but instead reclaim the power and dignity taken away by oppression by confronting the permanence of racism.

Audre Lorde (1984) wrote that the master's tools would never dismantle the master's house. Bell's challenge in the light of Lorde's assertion was to forge new tools that would allow transcendence not through the hope of victory but through struggle (Abrams, 1991). As related to schools, research has recognized that race impacts the schooling experiences of Black students. The students in K-12 schools today experience the impact of the Brown (1954) decision and the interest convergence codified within the decision.

The legacy of desegregation policy and laws from the 1950s and afterwards continues to influence the education experiences of students in public schools. Racial realism has been and continues to be a tenet that frames the intersection of race and policy/law with policy and law (Bolgatz, 2020; Blaisdell, 2016; Chapman, 2013; Delgado, 1991).

Chapman (2013) did a critical race analysis of suburban schooling in the United States using tenets of CRT including racial realism to explain how federal education mandates sustained racially hostile environments for students of color in White suburban schools. In this qualitative study, the goal included changing various aspects of the schooling experience by identifying successful and unsuccessful policies and practices that affirm previous barriers or build new barriers to student learning. The study concluded that students of color remain affected by racist schooling practices due partly to colorblind discourse.

Rector-Aranda (2016) utilized racial realism to reveal implicit and explicit ways racial inequities are preserved in contemporary public school reform efforts. A connection was made to Bell's theory of racial realism as a tool for understanding the reality and perpetual nature of racism so scholars, activists, and communities can use the reality of racism as a form of empowerment in and of itself. Rector-Aranda concluded the study with several ways to push back against the racial discourse in education including a realistic approach to school discourse, policy, and practice.

Bolgatz (2020) completed an ethnographic study of the perspectives of Black on the curriculum a predominantly White urban independent elementary school (PWIS).

Racial realism was used as a lens to analyze the curriculum and the parents' perceptions of the curriculum. She noted that Black parents knowingly send their children to PWIS to reap the benefits of a school with access to privilege and Bolgatz argued that Black parents were invoking racial realism to mitigate the psychological cost for parents knowingly sending their children into PWIS.

The second principle requires the active naming and addressing of policies and practices that contributed to and perpetuated racial inequality including colorblindness, disparities in wealth, opportunity hoarding, and the impact of implicit bias on systems and structures. Their analysis focused on the significance of accessible language for identifying structures that perpetuated White privilege. Garces and Gordan da Cruz (2017) noted that colorblindness is racism manifested by an illusion that by ignoring race we can somehow end racism. Disparities in wealth and income along with racial segregation in housing and schools are connected to the inequitable distribution of resources across racial groups. They also connected this principle to policies and practices specifically within schools and posited that diversity-related policies focus on reducing between-school desegregation while within-school segregation persists by way of practices such as student tracking. They noted that desegregation alone is not effective and that it requires building relationships, networks, and understanding across racial lines. Finally, they connected race-based status beliefs and implicit bias as reinforcers of policies and practices that sustain perpetual racial inequalities. This second principle, rooted in racial realism, served as an additional example of how inequities were

perpetuated and, by naming those tactics, the further countering of racist narratives and structures in our society could be put into practice.

Centering the Margins. The third principle focused on the essential nature of empowering marginalized communities to insist on transformative policies in education. **T**hey integrated the philosophies of community-organizing theory (Alinsky, 1971) and social-capital theory (Coleman, 2000) to reduce the compromises that happen because of interest convergence. Garces and Gordan da Cruz (2017) noted:

> Generating power among marginalized communities to enact policy change can help those communities avoid giving up too much to align their interests with Whites" thus helping to frame policies in a manner that recognizes the strengths within communities of color and not just the disparities that impact them. This principle can be enacted when multiple marginalized communities organize to interrupt dominant discourses that perpetuate their marginalization **(**p. 336).

The racial equity framework of Garces and Gordan da Cruz is a manifestation of tenets within critical race theory including racial realism, interest convergence, and whiteness as property. Their framework was a valuable application of critical race theory that can be used in practice in U.S. public education. By illuminating strategies for making changes in educational policies and practices, they demonstrated how equity in schools may be realized.

Viewing issues of inequity in suburban schools through a critical race theoretical lens provides a historical filter for explicating present contexts that create the racially inequitable learning environments discussed in decades of literature (Chapman, 2013).

While this study will share many of the conclusions of previous others, it will move away from the focus of current literature to focus on how desegregated suburban school districts address education equity within district policy, and how the policies address race and racism with a critical lens.

Summary

The literature reviewed for this study has defined education equity in education research and in practice. Institutions have adopted education equity policies as a method of defining and attaining education equity within their schools. The analysis of education policies over time has been through a traditional lens. However, with the prominence of race and racism in U.S. schools, a review of literature has determined that a critical analysis of education equity policies is necessary and appropriate. It is essential to revealing societal and systemic barriers to equal access to quality education (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Critical race theory (CRT) is a lens from which a race and racism and be discussed and this review of literature has outlined CRT's foundation, framework, relevant contributors to scholarship employing CRT, as well tenets that reveal CRT through incidents involving race, power, and privilege.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

In this chapter, this researcher will provide an overview of the methodology and methods that were utilized in this dissertation study which involves an examination of policy documents and records related to the education equity policies of Ohio suburban public-school districts. The purpose of this research is to understand how the equity policies were developed and the emergence of race and racism within education equity policies. In this effort, this researcher previously articulated a rationale for understanding education equity policy from the critical perspective of race and racism. Because of the importance critical race theory (CRT) places on examining issues of race, gender, and class in educational settings, the strategic application of critical policy analysis (CPA) to education equity policy documents is an appropriate tool. In this chapter, this researcher articulate the specific research questions guiding this inquiry, then will discuss the appropriateness of qualitative inquiry for this study and will follow that with a discussion of the analytical strategy that will be applied in this study.

Research Design

This study was a qualitative comparative case study of two suburban public school district education equity policies. A critical policy analysis revealed the inclusion or exclusion of critical race theory tenets in one policy and compared to the other policy. Qualitative research is descriptive and explorative (Merriam, 1991) and provided for the necessary depth of investigation needed based on this study's research questions (Patton, 2015; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018). Case study design was a viable choice for doing

qualitative research and was the most appropriate method for this study (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Yin, 2018).

Paramount to the definitions of what encompasses qualitative research is the concept or assumption that everyone has a story to tell. Said another way, qualitative research is the investigation and description of people, places, and conversations (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006). Denzin and Lincoln (2018) in their evolving definition of qualitative inquiry noted that qualitative research is a positioned activity consisting of interpretive material and practices that reveal the world to a researcher. One of the concepts that makes qualitative research unique is that the methodology is not defined by the methods. Rather, qualitative research is defined by what methods lead a researcher to effectively experience or witness life. With the use of participant-observation, in-depth interviewing, open-ended questioning, and fieldwork an understanding may form. Bogdan and Biklen (2006) noted five features of qualitative research; it is naturalistic and inductive; it contains descriptive data; it is concerned with process; and it draws meaning.

Three key qualitative research methods include document analysis, observation, and interview. Documents are forms of data that can come in multiple forms and can be categorized as personal documents, official documents, and popular culture documents (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006). There are four manners of approaching documents; as a resource focused on what is in the document; how documents are used as a resource for purposeful ends; how the content of the document came to be; and with a focus on how documents function in and impact schemes of social interaction and organization (Silverman, 2017).

This study involved a cross-case analysis of two education equity policies. The evidence from multiple cases is more captivating (Herriott & Firestone, 1983). Comparative case study was an appropriate method for this study because it focused on real experiences data was collected from more than one source (Yin, 2018), and it helped this researcher to examine, compare, and contrast data from the two case policies, and to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the construct of the policies, the success of the implementation of the policies, and how these policies address race and racism.

Qualitative research exists in many forms however, many researchers, despite the use of various methodological positions, have common values and hallmarks that make their research qualitative (Creswell & Poth. 2018; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Understanding and interpreting the social world from a lived experience and by accessing the perspectives of several members of a society or case (Glesne, 2016; Stake, 1995) are qualitative in nature.

Case Study

Case study is a multifaceted inquiry using qualitative methods with several sources from which data can be collected (Creswell & Poth. 2018; Merriam, 1991; Stake, 1995). It is an empirical inquiry that examines an experience within a realistic setting where context and phenomenon begins and ends is not obvious (Yin, 2018). Merriam (1991) noted that "there is no standard format for reporting case study research" (p. 193). With that in mind, Stake (1995) expectation of qualitative case studies included "thick description, experiential understanding, and multiple realities" (p. 43).

According to Yin (2018) case studies have five essential components to research design; a study's questions; its propositions; its unit(s) of analysis; the logic linking the data to the propositions; and the criteria for interpreting the findings. The study's questions directly guide the researcher towards the most relevant research strategy to be used. Case study research is appropriate to answer how and why questions. The second component directs attention to something needing examination within the scope of the study. The third component is to define what the case is—for example, whether it may be an individual, place, or document. Information collected for several documents as cases might be included as part of a multiple-case study. The fourth and fifth components represent the data analysis steps within case study and can be done in many ways. The idea behind the fourth component is to connect data collected either based on noted patterns or themes that appear as part of the evidence and then to determine criteria for interpreting said patterns or themes in a manner that allows for sufficient analysis. Case study research can be designed for both single- and multiple- case studies and can be utilized in qualitative and quantitative research. A comparative case study method is necessary when more than one case is studied as part of one study and has advantages and disadvantages.

Comparative Case Study

Comparative case studies examine two or more cases and produces more generalizable knowledge and seeks to answer how and why particular policies work or fail to work (Goodrick, 2004). Comparative study is the placing of data side-by-side and then the identification of similarities and differences between the aspects under

investigation (Charters & Hilton; 1989; Goodrick, 2004). Also, the essential value of comparative study is revealed by attempts to understand why the differences and similarities occurred and their importance to the phenomenon.

As noted by Bartlett and Vavrus (2017) comparative case study separates from established approaches. By way of process orientation, Maxwell (2013) contended that process approaches see the world from the lens of people, situations, events, and the processes that connect them. Bartlett and Vavrus claimed that comparative case study does not start with a bounded case and resists use of traditional case studies which consistently fails to distinguish phenomenon from perspective.

Another feature of comparative case study according to Bartlett and Vavrus (2017) is that it aims to understand and include ethnographic perspectives in the study. Finally, the comparative case study approach is informed by a critical theory and its concerns and assumptions about power and inequality. The comparative case study drives researchers to focus on discourse, position, and institutions as significant social and political actors within research.

Comparative case study is justified for use in research as it allows for the study of multi-site fieldwork as well as studies through and across sites. It allows for how and why questions about processes and outcomes to be considered and investigated and allows for investigation of one or more interventions implemented across contexts to be understood and reported (Goodrick, 2004; Bartlett and Vavrus, 2017).

Operational Setting

Unit of Analysis

Two education equity policies adopted by Cleveland Heights-University Heights and Shaker Heights City School Districts represent the units of analysis in this study. The selection criteria for selection of school districts for this study is presented as:

- Suburban Ohio school districts (school districts) where the term suburban is described by the Ohio Department of Education (ODE, 2021) typology of school districts;
- School districts that accommodate all grade levels of Pre-K through 12;
- School districts which are of different student populations;
- School districts with at least 1/3 of the student population identifying as Black or African American;
- School districts that have different socioeconomic classifications according to ODE; and
- School districts whose Board of Education adopted an education equity policy that have been adopted by an Ohio public school Board of Education (ODE, 2021).

Recognition of Indigenous Land

Burdick (2018) noted, the land where Cleveland Heights, University Heights, South Euclid, and Shaker Heights currently exists today was inhabited and cared for by the Erie Nation. These noted “masters of the south shore of Lake Erie” (pg. 1) lived primarily in long houses along the southern shore of Lake Erie. They were experts at

farming techniques for corn, squash, and beans. Their story and history is long and robust and ends in the 1650s when the Erie were led by their Queen Yagowania and warrior chief Ragnotha. The Erie engaged in a series of conflicts with neighboring nations, the Onodaga and Seneca until 1654 their opposition united with the other nations of the Iroquois Confederacy to fight the Erie. With their rivals armed with guns supplied by the Dutch and English, the Erie did not fare well in the conflict resulting in the Erie people being either killed, or having survived the conflict but scattering as refugees eventually being absorbed into other nations (Britannica, 2019).

A Brief History of Shaker Heights

Marshall (2006), Molyneaux & Sackman (1987), and Beduhn (1938) offered a comprehensive look into the history of Shaker Heights and its schools. Shaker Heights is an upper-middle class suburb outside of Cleveland, Ohio (Ogbu, 2003). The city takes its name from the religious group the Shakers, an offshoot of the Quakers that settled the land where Shaker Heights exists today, in the late nineteenth century. In 1912, the city was established as a village, and it officially became a chartered city in 1931.

Brothers Mantis James (M.J.) and Oris Paxton (O.P.) Van Swearingen founded and developed Shaker Heights into a residential suburb (Marshall, 2006). When they first began land development for residential living, they envisioned “a garden city of substantial homes that offered services demanded by prosperous residents and a school system of the highest standards” (Marshall, 2006, p. 45). The Van Swearingen brothers designed Shaker Heights intentionally ensuring not only quality homes but good schools and municipal services (Marshall, 2006). They invested a great deal of funding into

connecting Shaker Heights to downtown Cleveland by building a light rail system that increased Shaker Heights' marketability for the well-to-do people working in downtown Cleveland (Marshall, 2006).

Quality public and private schools were an essential part of designing Shaker Heights. The first school classes were held in the village hall until the construction of the village's first school in 1914. From its establishment, Shaker Schools offered innovative approaches to education (Beduhn ed.,1938). The intentional development of Shaker Heights as a suburb with all the amenities needed for a high quality of life, coupled with the vision of a first-class school district set the framework for the innovative and inclusive nature of the Shaker Schools of today.

Shaker Heights City School District

The first case, Shaker Heights City School District (Shaker Schools, 2021), is an economically diverse, racially desegregated suburban school district eastern suburb of Cleveland, Ohio. The school district spans across all the City of Shaker Heights and parts of the City of Cleveland. In 2021, 4,606 students were enrolled of which 45% identified as Black and 39% identified as White, 4% identified as Hispanic, 4% identified as Asian, and 8% identified as Multiracial. The school district educates grades Pre-Kindergarten to Twelve.

The mission of the school district is to "nurture, educate, and graduate students who are civic-minded and prepared to make ethical decisions, who are confident, competent communicators, skillful in problem solving, capable of creative thinking, who have a career motivation and a knowledge of global and multicultural society" (Shaker

Schools, 2014, p.3). The district is one of eight schools in North America to offer the International Baccalaureate (IB) program to students in all grade levels taking a holistic approach to education emphasizing global mindedness, and inquiry-based learning (Shaker Heights Schools, 2020). The school system prides itself on offering many excellent extracurricular, athletic, and arts programs. (Ogbu, 2003). Many graduates of the high school go to some of the best colleges and universities, several students are recognized as National Merit Scholarship finalists or semifinalists, and the district has been profiled many times for its innovative educational practices (Ogbu, 2003; Marshall, 2006). According to Ogbu (2003) it is because of these accolades that affluent people are attracted to live in Shaker Heights and are willing to pay what has been recorded as one of the highest property tax rates in Northeast Ohio (Bamforth, 2017). Over its lifetime the school constituency has changed due to the implementation of desegregation.

Black and Jewish people were prohibited from living in Shaker Heights through real estate covenants, one being called the Van Swearingen Covenant (Ogbu, 2003). By the late 1940s, the Supreme Court ruled that real estate covenants like the Van Swearingen Compact, were illegal and as a result Black families started to move from Cleveland into the Ludlow area of Shaker Heights (Glasner, 2008). The increasing desegregation of the city drew ire and at times violence from proponents of maintaining Shaker Heights as a White-only city including a bombing of the home of a prominent Black attorney in Shaker Heights (Marshall, 2006). The neighbors of this Black attorney rallied behind him and formed the Ludlow Community Association as a starting point to establish a stable diverse community. (Marshall, 2006). The issues of desegregation and

the diversity within the community also impacted the school districts increasingly diverse student population.

The literature on Shaker Heights discussed the challenge of the community and school district to desegregate its schools. Marshall (2006) described the Shaker Schools Plan of 1970 that detailed the way the school district would promote integration by changing the bus routes and the residency boundaries for each of the elementary schools. Ferguson et al. (2001) completed a quantitative study exploring race and achievement disparities in Shaker Heights. Ogbu (2003) also investigated the low achievement and performance of Black students. The superintendent at the time of this research study of the school district, Dr. David Glasner (2018), completed a quantitative dissertation study on the causal relationships between academic tracking structures at the middle school and achievement between white and Black students.

Shaker Heights Schools have commissioned efforted internally to address issues of Black achievement in the past. For example, Project ACHEVE, was established by the school board in 1996 to determine the nature and reasons for the achievement gap between White and Black students. The final report from the committee noted possible causes including societal or community-centered factors like lack of access to preschool, societal racism and bias, parent-centered factors like lack of parental involvement and low expectations of Black students coupled with high expectations of the school district, school-based factors like lack of efficient communication, tracking Black students into less challenging course work, and student-centered factors like negative peer pressure and a belief that academic success is “acting White”.

A Brief History of Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District

Cleveland Heights. During its more time as a suburb of Cleveland, Ohio, Morton (2005) noted Cleveland Heights has evolved from a rich and diverse history. Unlike Shaker Heights it was not intentionally planned as a suburb and instead was created and shaped by its natural topography above the City of Cleveland, by enterprising developers, elected officials and by its residents of many different backgrounds. Cleveland Heights emerged as an autonomous hamlet from the East Cleveland Township which was begotten from Western Reserve of Connecticut. In 1921, Cleveland Heights officially became a city and with growing population through the 1950s, suburban housing along the city's east side began to be developed along with new schools.

According to Tittle (1995) the first and most predominant non-indigenous inhabitants were of Anglo-Saxon descent and that continued until the suburban population expansion started to include Cleveland's Jewish immigrants. They helped to establish Cleveland Heights as a middle-class suburb and became the impetus for the founding of the neighboring suburb University Heights, which eventually joined Cleveland Heights in creating a consolidated school district after World War II. With the growth and prosperity of the Jewish population growing a strain of anti-Semitism began to rise in the city, especially noted in the high school. This partially contributed to the failure of a bond issue that proposed a second high school to meet the demand of the city's growing population.

Residents have taken great pride in Heights High School for its reputation of academic excellence. At one point "everyone new that Heights High graduates were

going somewhere" (p.2). Soon after the Soviet Union overtook the United States in the space race the national concern for math and science education prompted the addition of a new science and math classroom construction at the high school.

According to Kaeser (2020) The residents of Cleveland Heights established a culture of activism that continues today that works to challenge interests and groups that have, over time denied Black residents the right to live and learn in Cleveland Heights. She notes, "This first-ring suburb embodied many of my best hopes for a just and equitable society. It was integrated by race, religion, and class, and the civic culture expected involvement" (p. 12).

By the 1970s, black families mostly from Cleveland, started to flow into Cleveland Heights. The National Municipal League named Cleveland Heights an "All American City" because of its success with racial integration. The effects of racial prejudice were made evident in the demographics of the schools as many white residents began opting for private education within the city boundaries. By 1980, Black students made up more than 45% of the district's total enrollment.

The disparity between the persistent underachievement among Black students compared to the success of their white peers has been a source of concern for the school district and community-at-large. The school district named and addressed issues of equity, meaning the school had a duty to provide every student with the skills needed for a fair start in life (Tittle, 1995, p. 10)

University Heights. University Heights began as a village called Idlewood. The village was rural and only included six streets. In 1925 the name of the village was

officially changed to University Heights in honor of John Carroll University, an institution of higher education that exists within the boundaries of the village (City of University Heights, 2022).

Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District

The second case in this study is the education equity policy of Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District (CHUH, 2021), whose Board of Education adopted the policy in 2016. The school district spans across most of Cleveland Heights, a small section of the City of South Euclid and the City of University Heights, all eastern suburbs of Cleveland, Ohio. In 2021, the district had 4,850 students enrolled, of which 71% identify as Black and 17% identified as White, 4% identified as Hispanic, 2% identified as Asian, and 6% identified as Multiracial. The school district accommodates grades Pre-Kindergarten to twelve. (ODE, 2021). The mission of the school district is to "provide a challenging and engaging education to prepare all students to become responsible citizens and succeed in college and career" (CHUH, 2021, p.1).

Population, Sampling, and Sampling Size

Population of Actors

This researcher interviewed eight individuals for this study. Interview participants were selected based on criterion-based sampling (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2015). Because the intention of this research to understand how the equity policies were formed, interview participants were selected from those who had a direct role in the creation, adoption, and/or implementation of the education equity policy in each school district. It was necessary to interview the people who valued the work of education equity

to the point of being willing and active participants in the drafting of the policy itself. Teachers were selected as interview participants because of the importance of the teacher lens in education policy making. They are the gatekeepers of education equity policy implementation's impact on student learning, climate and culture. Their input into the successes and concerns about policy implementation are critical to understanding the impact of the equity efforts in the district. Administrators were selected for interview because of their role in managing the implementation of district policy across the school district. Board Members were interviewed because of their role in adopting the policy. While much of the work of drafting and adopting the education equity policy was done by non-Board members, it is the legal responsibility of the Board of Education to adopt and monitor the implementation of district policy. Interview participants who were students during the development of the policy are now alumni of the school district. Their perspective was invaluable because they were living the experience that everyone else was working to improve on their behalf. Community Members were selected for interview because of their relevant and valuable perspective as non-school employee advocates of the success of the schools and the equity policy.

Case Sampling Methods

Yin (2018) noted when using multiple-case design, researchers will encounter the question as to the number of cases that is deemed sufficient for a study. With sampling logic the typical criteria concerning sample size is irrelevant. Instead, Yin (2018) suggested researchers should think of the decision about sample size as a reflection of the amount of case replications that you would like to have in a study based on theoretical or

literal replication. A multiple-case study with a sample of two cases is adequate for empirical research.

Sampling in qualitative research includes boundary setting that define aspects of the case which are connected directly to the research questions and unveils the basic processes that are foundational to the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Sampling is crucial and may appear to look easy, but within any case there exists sub-settings of the case that can be investigated and may add a degree of difficulty (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Qualitative researchers typically work with small samples unlike quantitative researchers who aspire for large numbers to attain statistical significance. There are several sampling techniques for a qualitative researcher. Researchers might use one or more of these strategies in a single study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Of each of these techniques, the most appropriate for a critical analysis of various education equity policies is criterion sampling.

Criterion-based sampling is the review and study of all cases meeting a fixed criterion of importance (Patton, 2015; Suri, 2001). Most researchers employ criterion sampling by stating inclusion and exclusion criteria. It is essential to reflect critically and realistically on the criteria for methodological rigor (Suri, 2001).

The validity of qualitative research exists in the density of available information. Sample size in qualitative research depends on several factors because sampling, overtime and in the same site, reveals roles, interactions, sentiments, and can uncover more than just aspects of a particular site (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). With multiple-case studies researchers generalize based on an underlying theory not to the larger

universe of information (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Multiple-case sampling adds confidence to research findings by looking at many different cases for similarities and contrast, researchers reinforce the validity of research findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Case Sampling Method. Criterion-based sampling was used to select the two case policies for this study. A criterion-based sampling, which is a type of purposeful sampling, was useful in adding an important qualitative component to policy analysis (Patton, 2015). By nature of selecting cases based on predetermined criteria**,** a more in-depth comparison between policies, adopted at different sites with similar characteristics with similar policy objectives, could be understood.

Ohio Public Suburban Schools. Because of a gap in literature on suburban education equity policies (Chapman, 2013; Diamond, 2006; Ogbu, 2003; Lac & Diamond, 2019; Skousen & Domangue, 2020), this researcher adopted in the inclusion criteria that selected cases should be policies from suburban school districts. This researcher narrowed the sample size of school districts by interpreting data from the Ohio Department of Education (ODE, 2021). According to ODE, there are 126 school districts that are coded as Suburban. Within the typology of suburban districts, there are 77 suburban districts with low student poverty and average population size, and 46 suburban districts with very low student poverty and large student populations size (ODE, 2021).

This researcher then completed a document search for education equity policies located in each of the 127 suburban school districts online policy websites called

BoardDocs. A simple search for the phrase, education equity, in BoardDocs was used to reveal education equity policies in each school district.

Instrumentation

Chenail (2011) noted that instrumentation rigor and management of bias are a problem for qualitative researchers who use interview as a data collection method. Crafting effective open-ended questions takes practice therefore, careful consideration of interview questions is necessary. The instrument for the interviews in this study consisted of the researcher as interviewee, as well as the video communications application Microsoft Teams.

Data Collection

Evidence used in case studies can come from six sources including interviews, observations, archived records, participant-observation, and documents (Yin, 2018). This study used documentation, archival records, and interviews. Documentary information can take on many forms including but not limited to letters, emails, other communiques, agendas, meeting minutes, reports, proposals, strategic plans, and progress reports. Care was taken to assure that documents are accurate and lack bias. Documents played an essential role in this study, and archival records produced both quantitative and qualitative information.

Yin (2018) wrote, “One of the most important sources of case study information is the interview” (p. 84). Interviewing allows researchers to discover information about people that we cannot directly observe and to provide context to something a researcher may have observed. Interviews for qualitative research begins with the supposition that

other perspectives are important (Patton, 2015). Interviews take on several forms. In the open-ended interview, researchers ask participants for facts of the matter as well as respondents' opinions about the events. In the focused interview, a respondent is interviewed for a brief period and are more likely to be given predetermined questions to answer (Yin, 2018).

Documents are defined as a symbolic depiction that can be recognized or retrieved for analysis (Glesne, 2016). They can provide a spectrum of information or data. Bowen (2009) shaped a definition of documents by noting that they contain words and images that have been recorded without researcher interference. Silverman (2017) expanded on the definition adding documents contain more than just text and they can tell people what to do, instigate conflict, evoke emotions, and can trigger reactions far beyond the intention of the original document. A document can contain text, images, or some type of symbol. The elements of the document contain some sort of information or data that can be investigated and analyzed by a reader or researcher.

Document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing a document. It is a process of choosing, evaluating, and understanding data in the documents which is then organized into larger themes and categories (Bowen, 2009). Document analysis allows for in-depth discovery of lived experiences in the time of the document. A researcher could even go beyond the text and images immediately received by investigating why and how these documents form an essential part of the study (Silverman, 2017).

Bowen (2009) considered five functions of documentary material. First, documents provide background information as well as historical insight. Second,

documents can imply potential inquiries of areas in need of investigation. Third, documents provide additional and potentially enriching research data. Fourth, documents provide a means of following deviations from the norm. And finally, documents can be analyzed as a way of corroborating findings or to corroborate evidence from other sources. Document analysis provides historical insight, further explains the significance of specific case studies, and can help researchers draw conclusions from which understanding can be gleaned.

The point of all research designs according to Patton (2015) is to "do what makes sense and report fully on what was done, why it was done, and what the implications are for findings" (p. 92). Methodology works to inform the selection of methods as a tool in determining the design of the study; the question should determine the methodology. The nature of the data is at the heart of the distinction between quantitative and qualitative research. The research question is central to determining the method to address an inquiry in any research study (Patton, 2015; Punch & Oancea, 2014).

Interview Process

For this study, the researcher conducted focused interviews from various individuals who were part of the drafting and implementation of the education equity policies at various school sites. The data from interviews conducted will be triangulated with the text of the education equity policy, as well as additional artifacts, language, documents, and additional means by which the policies were developed. An open coding system was employed. There was no *a priori* code identification and data was emergently coded.

Each of the nine interviews whose demographics are seen in Table 1 for this research study was focused, meaning the same questions were asked to each interview participant. However, when a participant added additional revelations that deviated from the prescribed questions, they were given the freedom to do so and data from those tangents was also considered as viable for this study. This researcher used qualitative data analysis software, Nvivo, as a place to organize, store, and analyze interview data. Interviews were approximately one hour in length. The interview transcripts and field notes were transcribed within the Microsoft Teams software.

Table 1

Demographics of Interview Participants

Participant Code	Case
District Central Administrator	Shaker: 1 CH-UH: 1
Board of Education Members	Shaker: 1 CH-UH: 0
Counselors	Shaker: 1 CH-UH: 1
Teacher or Instructional Staff	Shaker: 1 CH-UH: 1
Students (Alumni)	Shaker: 1 CH-UH: 0
Community Members	Shaker: 1 CH-UH: 0

This case study was bounded by the formal initiation of the development of the education equity policies in both school districts. For Shaker Schools this means from the Superintendent's creation of the Equity Task Force in 2016. For CH-UH this means from the beginning of the 2014 strategic planning process in 2013. This researcher accessed

the education equity policies as adopted by each school district's Board of Education as the central documents of analysis. Because the education equity policies of the case school districts are public record, they were accessible through each of the district's online policy book. Additional data sources included policy supporting documents such as presentations, meeting minutes, agendas, and district policies that provided context into the creation and effect of the education equity policies.

Study Data Collection and Analysis

Documents were selected from district electronic sources using searches on key terms on each school district's media pages, official website, and BoardDocs. Dozens of documents specific to the education equity policies for each school district were reviewed beginning with each district's education equity policy. District-level documents were selected based on their direct applicability to the education equity efforts in each school district.

Reviewed documents indicated both significant and minor differences in the approaches taken by the two school districts to create, adopt, and implement the education equity policy. Shaker has several supportive documents that were available and easily accessible through the district website and public record archive. CH-UH had less material about the creation of the policy that was publicly available but did have adequate documents revealing information about the adoption and implementation of the policy. The level of policy related documents that were publicly available had a direct impact on this researcher approach to interviews in each school district. For example, because there

were less documents publicly available revealing information about the CH-UH policy development process, interview questions focused on the creation of the policy.

A total of nine interview participants were purposefully selected from school district policymakers, leaders, students, and community members responsible for the creation, adoption, and implementation of the policy. Six participants were from Shaker Heights and three participants were from CH-UH. With the primary source of data having been collected from supporting documents and archival material, interviews were used to both add to the data collected from document analysis and to clarify any misunderstandings or fill any gaps in information that the researcher had related to the policymaking process. When purposefully selecting CH-UH interview participants, fewer were necessary because over 18 hours of Board of Education meeting video footage including was publicly accessible through the district's website. This footage include valuable information from the Superintendent, Board members and community members who were directly involved in the process of creating the education equity policy. In Shaker, there were no archived video footage from Board members so this researcher depended on the documents made publicly available to understand the district's policymaking process. Interview participants were selected from stakeholders who had a direct role in the creation, adoption, and/or implementation of the education equity policy in each school district. See Table 2 for a summary of the data collected for analysis.

Table 2

Data Collected for Analysis

School District	Documents	Video Recordings	Interviews
Shaker	52	0	6 participants
CH-UH	43	18 hours	3 participants

Qualitative Data Saturation

The literature on what defines saturation as a method of data collection has several consistent features. Complete data collection is indicated by repetitiveness and redundancy in additional data to the point where the researcher feels that no added information can be attained, or the richness of the data has reached its limits (Creswell & Poth, 2018; O'Reilly & Parker, 2013; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Morse, 1995;).

Theoretical Saturation relies on constant comparisons (Bowen, 2008; O'Reilly & Parker, 2013). Creswell and Poth (2018) described saturation as gathering sufficient information to completely develop the model of the theory. They add that during the open coding process a researcher examines text for emergent themes until the point at which no added information provides additional insight into the category.

While saturation is an essential component of research with a grounded theory method, a wider application of its use as a term and concept has developed (Guest et al., 2020). There are other forms of saturation variations including data saturation, thematic saturation, and simply the term saturation (Bowen, 2008). Saturation should not be confused as being the point where no additional new ideas emerge, as is noted by Morse

(1995) and Marshall and Rossman (2016), but as an indicator that themes have been fully accounted for, variability between the categories has been explained, and the relationships between them have been evaluated for a theory emerge (Bowen, 2008; Green & Thorogood, 2004).

Researchers cease data collection when there is sufficient data to form a substantial theory that is not prejudiced by the quantity of data collected (Morse, 1995). According to Guest et al. (2020) the question of how many interviews is enough to attain data saturation has been the question of many research studies. The practice of interviewing until saturation has been recognized as a best practice but was not sufficient of a description for sample size. Morgan et al. (2002) completed a methodological study finding that five to six interviews produced most of the new information from data collected about environmental risks (Guest et al., 2020).

Quantitative science influences the research culture with an insistence with the idea that comprehensive understanding occurs typically with density and not necessarily depth of understanding (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013). Morse (1995) wrote, the quantity of data in a category is not as essential theoretically as is detailed description. Frequency counts are not important when it comes to saturation. In quantitative methods, statistical significance is foundational, and the distribution of data and frequency are key indicators of data worth analyzing. The outlier is noted as an anomaly that is to be ignored or discarded. In qualitative analysis the inverse applies whereas, the lesser noted or rare perspective in data collection may work to bring clarity into the entire data set.

However, because saturation has multiple meanings and limited transparency, its rigid application to all cases may unintentionally undermine the value of other research (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013). It should not be used ubiquitously for risk of "rendering the term meaningless to the qualitative research community (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013, p. 195).

To ensure data saturation researchers employ a technique prescribed by Francis et al. (2010) wherein they posit that researchers should specify *a priori* the requirements for what data saturation would be and to decide the requirements for discontinuing data collection after the initial sample is analyzed where no remaining themes are identified.

Another option to ensure data saturation is to employ the technique by Hagaman and Wutich (2017) where they focused on three constant themes that emerged from the data. By using the bootstrapping technique, they documented the average number of interviews required to observe three occurrences and to identify the three most prevalent themes in data collected. While their analysis does not directly answer the question of how many interviews are enough for saturation, their technique will provide for this study an additional cross-check against other methods like the one proposed by Francis et al. (2010). This technique can also provide better guidance for this study about the interview quantity necessary to identify reoccurring themes (Hagaman & Wutich, 2017).

Data Analysis and Coding Strategies

There are two approaches Yin (2018) mentioned that make case study data conducive to analysis. The first was to follow theoretical proposals that led to the case study. The second, was to cultivate a descriptive framing that organizes the case study.

This approach allows for complexity to be described and is used to recognize a pattern of complexity to be utilized to explicate the results of data that has been analyzed.

Yin (2018) noted that data analysis is the process of observing evidence to address the purpose of a study. For this study, cross-case synthesis, an especially relevant technique for a case study consisting of only two cases, was used. In cross-case synthesis, within-case patterns were initially identified. For this study, this meant finding codes that matched one another, or echoed similar sentiments. Only after the within-case codes were completed did the cross-case analysis begin.

Quadrangulational Analysis

This study used quadrangulational analysis to find the intersections between the two case education equity policies. The policies were analyzed using open-coding first, then by coding critical race theory (CRT) tenets found through a critical analysis within and between the policies. Then, the two case policies were compared based on CRT tenets present in each case's policy language. This enabled the researcher to understand how the two case policies addressed race and racism, articulate a critical understanding of public education's role in perpetuating systemic racism, and offers, by means of their education equity policy, a plan for removing barriers to equal educational access.

Using the traditional framework for comparative research consists of analyzing the likenesses and variances in at least two comparable units (Jean-Francois, 2020a). Gerring (2007) advocated for moving beyond conventional comparisons among cases to focus instead on specificities within a case. Ragin (2014) argued to shift comparisons to case instead of conducting variable-oriented research. Jean-Francois (2020b) explained

that the rationale for quadrangulational analysis suggests that by comparing what can be observed as distinct (uniqueness), what can be observed as similar (sameness), what can be observed as unique but with similarity (uniquesameness), and what can be observed as similar but with particularity (sameniqueness) "enables [expansion] beyond just similarities and differences to include the intersections between them" (p.4). A quadrangulational comparison involves at least two units of analysis and each unit is analyzed for its distinctiveness.

Uniqueness. By analyzing the uniqueness of a case, a researcher aims to describe what makes the case distinct. (Jean-Francois, 2020b). Jean-Francois outlined several questions to pose to find the uniqueness of a case:

1. Are there characteristics that are unique to one of the cases compared to the others?
2. Is there a case-specific portion of characteristics that are shared only by one case in comparison to the others?

Sameness. Sameness involves analyzing the similarities between two or more cases. Jean-Francois (2020b) outlined the following questions to consider when finding the sameness of a case:

1. Are there characteristics that are common in both or all cases?
2. Do universal characteristics exist between all cases regardless of their specificity?

Uniquesameness. This term refers to the intersection between significant characteristics of uniqueness and some lesser characteristics in at least two cases of a comparative analysis. The convergence between high level of similarity and dissimilarity

and vice versa is key to discovering uniquesameness. Jean-Francois (2020b) detailed the following questions to consider when analyzing uniquesameness:

1. Is there an intersection between sameness and distinctiveness?
2. Do characteristics that are distinct among cases exist while also holding some similarities?
3. Are there noticeable differences between the frequency or extent of a same characteristic within a similar case?

Sameniqueness. This term refers to the intersection between significant facets of sameness and lesser facts of uniqueness in comparative cases. Jean-Francois (2020b) detailed the following questions to consider when analyzing sameniqueness:
Are there characteristics among cases that are particularly similar, but distinct in some respects?

1. What are the similarities between the frequency or the extent of characteristic differences between cases that are being analyzed?

Within-Case Analysis

Data analysis first started with Shaker Schools. Data were uploaded in NVivo software as interview transcripts and documents were categorized and were separated by school district.

Coding on supporting documents occurred as part of the first cycle of coding. This researcher completed several close deductive readings of the education equity policy endeavoring to understand the construct of the policy, implementation requirements, and how the policies addressed race and racism. Once expressions of CRT in the policy were

coded in the policy, this researcher looked to supporting documents to add support to the overarching themes, CRT tenets, and constructs that were emerging from the initial policy analysis. In order to organize the development of the policy the policy process by Anderson (2006) was used.

The analysis of policy language gave insight into the difference between policy rhetoric and policy put into practice, understanding the policy origins and development process, resource distribution, and the impact of the policy on historically marginalized students and all students within the school district (Mansfield & Thachik, 2016).

Upon completion of the coding process, this researcher conducted interviews with various stakeholders about the education equity efforts in Shaker Schools. While questions were created prior to the interviews, emerging questions and clarifications were freely used to get a complete understanding of the participants understanding of the creation, adoption, and implementation of the education equity policy. The interviews were transcribed and coded for expressions of CRT constructs.

Data saturation was determined using a technique by researched when at least three overarching themes were discovered with at least three references in coded data, this researcher would employ a technique prescribed by Francis et al. (2010) wherein *a priori* criteria for what data saturation would be was established. This criteria included this researcher having a sufficient understanding of how the policy was created, what was the process of adopting the policy, and at least three key tenets of critical race theory in policy language having been sufficiently coded. The stopping criterion for the number of

consecutive interviews was determined *a priori* as when: (a) themes were echoed in at least two interviews, and (b) no new themes emerged from the most recent interview.

Cross-Case Analysis

When multiple cases are chosen, a thematic analysis also known as cross-case analysis is completed. If the intention of the within-case analysis is to provide an in-depth description of each case and themes within the case, then the cross-case analysis is completed to develop a complete understanding across all cases. For this study, a quadrangulational analysis was used to complete the cross-case analysis.

Quadranguational analysis will begin identifying the uniqueness, sameness, uniquesameness, and sameniqueness of the education equity policies. Because any policy is an “authoritative allocation of values" (Ball, 1990, p.3) and eventually involves issues of power, a critical analysis as opposed to a functionalist analysis, was used in this study.

First, this researcher identified what codes from the within-case analysis of each of the policies connect or differ by creating quadrangulational analysis codes. Data for the quadrangulational analysis were coded in four groups based on sameness, uniqueness, sameniqueness, and uniquesameness. Based on the coding data of each of the policies individually as well as the data coding from the comparison of the two cases, a findings report was shared in Chapter 4 of the dissertation.

The writer of a research study needs to address important issues and considerations to demonstrate that the study is well thought out, is built to withstand scrutiny from criteria for good research practices and can be implemented with ethical mindedness (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). In qualitative study researchers do not aim to

ensure objectivity. Moving towards authenticity and trustworthiness brings a researcher to the credibility necessary to conduct research (Patton, 2015).

Trustworthiness/Reliability

The data included documents, interviews, and observation of past meetings wherein the equity policy was drafted, thus proving a measure of validity through triangulation. Triangulation, or "support for a finding by showing that independent measures of it agree with it or, at least, do not contradict it" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 266) through documents, observations, and interviews, will be corroborated to ensure that coding and themes are well supported (Edmondson, 2020).

Questions one asks about validity, reliability, objectivity, and generalizability are at the center of trustworthiness. In qualitative inquiry further acts of credibility are necessary to support data being collected. Lincoln and Guba (1985) offer a set of procedures to ensure trustworthiness. For validity they suggested qualitative researchers engage in prolonged engagement, member checks and discuss findings with peers to ensure the analysis is analyses are substantiated in the context of the data.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) also critiqued the notion that objectivity is possible and argued for other methods of capturing the utility qualitative inquiry. Objectivity has been considered the strength of scientific method and part of the difficulty of the term used in qualitative inquiry is that absolute objectivity ignores the intrinsically social nature and human reasons for research (Patton, 2015).

To ensure trustworthiness a hybrid model of content analysis and textual analysis performed through a multi-step review of the education equity policies and filtering the

text of the policy to find the uniqueness, sameness, sameniqueness, and uniquesameness was used.

Positionality

I have spent my professional career teaching as a public school music teacher. I've taught grade 5 to 12 and have had experience as elementary and middle school administrator. My experience and connection with the research problem at hand meets at the intersection of my identity as a queer, Black teacher who has worked for two of the school sites that are part of this study; Cleveland Heights-University Heights and Shaker Heights City School Districts.

Because I have professional experiences with two of the school districts including currently being employed by Shaker Heights Schools, efforts will be made to bracket my interpretation of analyzed data but I also recognize that my lens cannot be fully shaded from the analysis process. I also live in Cleveland Heights. In the pursuit of clarity by understanding the policies analyzed for this study, it is my hope that, districts across Ohio and the United States, may benefit from a critical perspective on how policies address issues of inequities in our public schools.

Research Protocol and Ethical Considerations

First, this researcher obtained Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval before conducting this research study. While the school districts were named in this study, the confidentiality of interview participants remained confidential. A consent letter outlining the intended goals, timelines, and data collection procedures was provided to all interviewees. The data, time, and location was recorded as part of the case protocol. The

interviews were recorded and transcribed on Microsoft Teams. Prior to each interview, this researcher reviewed the consent form and ask each participant if they have any questions prior to the interview commencing. The researcher explained the purpose of the research to each of the participants as well as any potential benefits and made them aware that they will be provided an alias to protect their identity and that were free to withdraw their participation at any stage of the research with no risk or consequence to them.

Limitations of the Study

There are no perfect research designs and limitations are a part of the reality of research design (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Further, limitations allow for researchers to set boundaries on what their proposal is and what it is not (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The intention of this research was to understand of how school districts addressed education equity through policy. The understanding and revelations that were discussed focused on offering a glimpse into suburban school district's efforts to remove barriers to education equity. There were two limitations to this research.

The first pertains to interview participants being voluntary. Interviewees had the right to withdraw their participation from this study at any time and some did elect to not participate. This limited access to information and perspectives about the case policies access to interview participants and may prolong that only certain stakeholders would have. Second, the on-going Covid-19 pandemic impacted scheduling of interviews a well as the timeline of this research study due to the constraints of the health and wellness of the researcher as well as participants and the impact of Covid-19 on their personal or professional lives. Population was also a limitation to the study because not many school

districts in Ohio have adopted an education equity policy and this limited the sample selection. While there are several school districts who have initiated the process for developing policies that address inequities or issues of race in the experience of their students (Bay Village City School District, 2020; Beachwood City School District 2020; Bedford City School District, 2021; Hilliard City School District, 2021) there are a limited number of Ohio suburban school districts whose Board of Education has adopted education equity policies. While this case study can be done with two cases (Marshall & Rossman, 2016), the sample size of policies from which to choose is limiting. Also, The as related to the Shaker Board of Education, meetings were not audio or video recorded so there is no archival documents that can provide further insight into the discussion of the policy.

Delimitations of the Study

The time frame for this study begins with the formal processes initiated by school districts to create their education equity policy and concludes at the end of the second academic year following the adoption of the policy. For CH-UH this research study is bounded to school year 2013-2014 through school year 2018-2019. For Shaker this research study is bounded to school year 2014-2015 through school year 2020-2021. Only Ohio suburban school districts whose Board of Education have adopted an education equity policy were included in this study. Those selected to participate in interviews consisted of stakeholders who were part of the creation, adoption, or implementation of the case policies.

Summary

This chapter detailed the methodology for this research study which is a comparative case study of two education equity policies from Ohio suburban school districts. The population and sample sizes of the cases and the interview participants and the rationale for selecting the cases was explicated. The data collection, analysis and coding processes and justifications for the methods selected for this study were discussed along with the trustworthiness, positionality, research protocols, ethical considerations, limitations and delimitations of the study were discussed.

Gleaning understanding of school district education equity policies and what problems the policies were intended to solve, will benefit future researchers, educational leaders, educators, and policymakers as they endeavor to create and implement their equity policies. How each policy addresses the prominence of race and racism, as well as interest convergence, will further the understanding of how critical race theory can be utilized in the creation of public education policy. The next chapter will reveal the findings of this study that were discovered using the methodology prescribed in Chapter three.

Chapter 4: Findings

Introduction

This chapter builds on the body of research focused on education equity policy. Findings for this comparative case study included data collected from interviews and analysis of publicly available supporting documents. Combined, this data has been analyzed and categorized into themes and understanding of how the two case policies were constructed and to glean understanding within and between the two cases about the success of policy implementation. This analysis is limited to the time frame of the strategic planning periods that eventually lead to the adoption of each case education equity policy. This strategic planning period begins in 2014 and 2015 for Shaker Heights City Schools (Shaker) and Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District (CH-UH) respectively.

The findings of this dissertation are organized as follows. First, this researcher details the data collection and analysis processes used to report the findings of this study. Part One focuses on the creation, adoption, and implementation of the Shaker policy including a reporting of the policy construct and language. Part Two focuses on the creation, adoption, and implementation of the CH-UH policy including a reporting of the policy construct and language. Part Three reports the cross-case findings with the policy construct and language being reported based on the four elements of quadrangulational separately, the cross-case findings for the policy process are reported as a narrative combining the four elements and discussing the sameness, uniquesameness, sameniqueness, and uniqueness interconnectedly Part Four of this chapter discusses

findings related to tenets of critical race theory first reporting including emerging themes from the Shaker policy then reporting emerging themes from the CH-UH policy, and concluding with cross-case findings related to critical race theory.

Part 1: Shaker Heights Education Equity Policy

This section of the study will reveal findings from the analysis of the Shaker Heights Education Equity Policy. The first section focuses on the background of the policy including the impetus and justification for the policy needing to be created. Next, a section that discusses the adoption of the policy, the policy construct and language, and a reporting of the implementation of the policy is discussed.

Creating the Policy: Policy Agenda and Formulation

To understand the Shaker education equity policy, it is necessary to understand the impetus behind the policy as well as the process for creating the policy. While the policy was formally adopted by the Board of Education the in-depth work of data collection and analysis, potential policy language and the unpacking of roles and responsibilities that would be included in the policy was completed by a committee of school district stakeholders called the Equity Task Force (ETF). This group was comprised of instructional staff, building and district administrators, parents, alumni, and paid consultants. While district administrators and Board of Education members were part of the policy committee, they participated as equal members of the committee. The district employed the service of consultants who guided the work of the ETF, assisted the group with the development of policy language, and provided structural support for events and activities sponsored by the ETF.

The district strategic plan was the district's chosen medium to describe the specifics of the policy implementations and measures of accountability As evident in

documents collected for this study, the policy served as a framework for implementation rather than a document that had resolute action steps.

Strategic Planning and Equity Task Force

2014-2019 Strategic Plan. The 2014-2019 Strategic Plan (Shaker Schools, 2014) was adopted by the Board of Education in June 2014. It promoted equity for all students by ensuring all staff have high expectations and focusing resources on a high quality education experience.

2016 Equity Task Force Creation. In a December 2016 memo, the superintendent of schools announced that the administration had taken its first steps to build an equity task force (ETF) (Shaker Schools, 2017). The superintendent charged the ETF with exploring the assets and challenges of embracing and moving toward equity for all students with a focus on removing barriers to student success and helping children of all races and life experiences achieve at high levels. Ultimately, the goal of the group was to draft an education equity policy and establish an action plan to implement the policy (Shaker Schools, 2016a). The group would be tasked with defining what equity means within the Shaker Schools and to evaluate equity as it related to racial disparity and achievement gaps, underrepresentation of minorities in advanced-level course, educator workforce diversity, gifted education programs, international families, LGBTQ community, and special education programs (Shaker Schools, 2016a). They were tasked with studying data, engaging with a variety of stakeholders to inform the creation of the equity policy. The initial group contained 22 members who signed up for a two-year

term. The ETF included eleven educators (including teachers, administrators, and support staff), nine community members and two students.

2017 Equity Task Force Work. The Task Force started meeting in 2017. Superintendent Dr. Gregory Hutchings, Jr. selected community members Rev. Colin Jones and Lisa Vahey to co-chair the ETF. The superintendent, his Chief of Staff and the ETF co-chairs "steered the ship" and led the work of the group (Interview Participant A, February 28, 2022). An estimated 80 community members and staff applied to serve on the ETF. The group initiated its work by reviewing literature and media including Pollock's (2008) "Everyday Antiracism", Singleton's (2015) "Courageous Conversations About Race", Ogbu's (2013) "Black American students in an affluent suburb: a study of academic disengagement", and Ferguson's (2001) "A Diagnostic Analysis of Black-White GPA Disparities in Shaker Heights, Ohio". Initial meetings were focused on learning about Shaker's history and building trust within the group. They also invited guests who could share insight into their perspective about race and equity in Shaker Schools.

At the October 2017 meeting, the ETF was given a brief introduction to the International Baccalaureate (IB) which is the district's curriculum framework. The IB is a core part of the Shaker Schools academic environment and to understand equity, It was necessary for the ETF to have an understanding of what an IB education was in a Shaker context.

At the November 2017 meeting the ETF agenda included analysis and synthesis of student academic achievement data from student MAP assessments scores ranging

from years 2015 through 2017. The data was disaggregated by race, economic status, and by IEP status. For several months, the group brought in many individuals who have been active in the Shaker community and instrumental in race and equity work. The ETF started working with Erica Merritt and Adele DiMarco of the Equius Group, a consultant that was hired to deepen the groups shared understanding and leadership capacity around the dynamics of race and racism, empower and support the group's community engagement design, and to guide the group through creating an equity-conscious culture in Shaker Schools. Interview participant A noted "while on the Equity Task Force, we received a lot of professional learning on what it means to be equitable. Some had a background in the field and then there were others who were just really good natured and good intended."

2018 Equity Task Force Work. In 2018, the work of the ETF was shaped as an essential part of the district's strategic planning process. The group spent time deepening their understanding of equity for policymaking purposes. The ETF reviewed other equity policies from Madison (Wisconsin) Metropolitan School District City Schools, and Ohio districts including Canton City Schools, Cleveland Heights-University Heights, and Cincinnati.

The ETF committed to the shared language of "equity not equality" and "targeted universalism" as it related to their broadening understanding of education equity. Interview Participant A, corroborated by Participants B and C, said that the Shaker equity policy was created in part by taking "bits and pieces" from other policies and merging them together. Interview Participant A said that "at the administration building we

literally cut pieces of each of those [policies] that we liked. And then, looked at what universalism means here at Shaker and what that looks like. And so originally we said, there's going to be all of these targeted groups that have been marginalized not just by race, and by gender, by religion, by orientation."

The group also agreed on the scope of influence the policy should have on the district and agreed that the policy should affect the distribution of resources and funds in the school district. The ETF agreed to leave the words deleveling or tracking out of the policy language for fear that it would raise undue concern because those terms were unfamiliar to the general public at the time.

Eventually an ETF policy drafting sub-group was formed that, with the help of Kenna Haycox from the Ohio School Board Association, created a draft of a policy. They also worked to promote their own work and built a communication team to develop tools to move equity conversations forward. They devised talking points to build on their common language for talking about equity in the community. The ETF made certain that there was an opportunity to report out to the various stakeholders of the district on the progress of their work.

The first reading of the final draft of the policy was at the December 2018 meeting where the ETF members were thanked for their efforts by the Board of Education.

Adopting the Policy

The Shaker Schools (2019a) Education Equity Policy was adopted on February 12, 2019 and was revised on November 7, 2019. The policy received its legally required

three readings in front of the Board of Education. The education equity policy was introduced to the Board of Education along with a series of policies in need of updating and consideration by the Board of Education. While the minutes for each of the policy readings indicate that the Board asked questions and had discussion of about the policies under consideration, there were no indications of any questions or discussions specific to the education equity policy. The meetings were not audio or video recorded so there is no archival documents that can provide further insight into the discussion of the policy. What is apparent is that the policy construct and language as recommended by the Equity Task Force was what was presented to the Board at each of policy readings. The policy was adopted as recommended by the Equity Task Force and was later revised to delete gender binary language.

Policy Construct and Language

The policy is titled Education Equity and is structured with four overarching sections: an introduction, a declaration and commitment to guiding principles, accountability metrics and goals, and definitions. It is identified as Policy AEB using the Shaker Schools policy coding system meaning it is filed under Section A of Board policy called Foundations and Basic Commitment and Sub-Section E called School District Goals and Objectives. It is the second of two policies in its sub-section, so it is identified with a B in the policy code system. It is cross-referenced in five other policies: (a) Policy AE- School District Goals and Objectives, (b) Policy AEA- Psychological Principles of Learning, (c) Policy AFE- Evaluation of Instructional Programs, (d) Policy AFI- Evaluation of Educational Resources, (e) Policy JB- Equal Educational Opportunities.

The policy set only two time-related boundaries. First, beginning in the 2019-2020 school year, the Board and the Superintendent or designee will adopt goals and metrics that correspond to the policy and second, the reporting on the progress of equity implementation should be incorporated into the annually prepared budget and Human Resources report.

The policy language is mostly derived from other adopted school district education equity policies. Interview Participant E noted that the Equity Task Force used Equity policies from Oregon and Madison, Wisconsin as "mentor policies" from which the Shaker Heights equity policy rhetoric was inspired. After comparing the Madison policy language with the Shaker Heights policy language, there is evidence that most Shaker Heights policy language is directly copied or paraphrased from the Madison policy language.

District Beliefs and Vision

The Board of Education beliefs that "all students deserve to be academically challenged in a safe and supportive learning environment in which they feel a sense of belonging" and " that expanding opportunities for students who have been historically marginalized will enrich the overall development of all students." (Shaker Schools, 2019a, p.1). The policy articulated a vision by the district for all students to achieve and exceed at high levels.

The Shaker Schools mission and core values focus heavily on the concept of excellence for its students. The policy articulated the concept that the district believes true excellence for itself when all students are exceeding universally high goals,

committed to the success of every student, and articulated this belief in alignment with the District's aspirations of excellence, equity and exploration (Shaker Schools, 2019a).

The concepts of fairness and justice as a value of the school district and as part of their definitional framework of education equity echoed throughout the policy. When the policy declared that equity does not mean equal and that reallocation of resources in an targeted manner, aims to address systemic and historical for historically marginalized populations, the policy justifies the uneven redistribution of resources under a theory of universalism. The concept that giving a specific group, building, or individual more resources has universal benefits is attributed to the concepts of fairness. The policy mentioned the concept of justice several times but its addition always accompanies the words fair or inclusion for example, fair and just. Justice and fairness are related terms with distinctions understandings between the terms.

This policy expressed the district's core value for student success with several equity approaches: a) the allocation of support and resources; b) unique and individual strengths and needs academically, emotionally, mentally, physically and socially; c) budgeting processes; d) policy development; e) expanding student opportunity.

Education Equity

The Board of Education declared through the adoption of the education equity policy that it would promote education equity for all students through the allocation of resources, budgeting, and development of Board policies. The policy defined education equity as an "intentional distribution of district resources amongst schools, students, and staff based on what each needs to achieve universal goals" (Shaker Schools, 2016, p.1). It

based the concept of education equity on principles of fairness and justice in allocating resources, opportunity, and the treatment and success of students (Skrla et al., 2009).

The policy discourse set up a framework and working definition of education equity as including an "intentional distribution of district resources, money, programs, curriculum, staff time, expertise, skills, experience, professional learning, information, facilities and materials and services such as technology, food service, and transportation among schools and groups of people within the school district" (Shaker Schools, 2016, p.1) This working definition aimed at eliminating educational barriers, provide equal educational opportunities, and addressed how the district would work to ensure historically marginalized student populations met the same standards expected of all students.

However, the policy rhetoric was not explicit in the implementation of the guiding principles. For example, the policy noted that the district aspired towards eliminating education barriers but did not articulate any steps towards this end. The policy mentioned expanding opportunities for historically marginalized students, but contained no actionable steps towards that end.

Resource Allocation

This policy promoted educational equity for all students in the district through the allocation of resources and opportunities under a theoretical concept called targeted universalism (Powell et al., 2019). When applied to the academic setting the policy noted that while all school-based programs must be accessible to all students, some programs could be targeted to provide specific supports for select students. The district posited that

by utilizing targeted universalism as a theoretical practice, support for targeted groups of students to support their achievement of universal high goals could be given.

Implementing the Policy

Structures and Systems

In December 2019 the Equity Policy Implementation Team (EIAT) was selected and met for the first time. The selection team consisted of the newly appointed Dr. David Glasner, Erica Merritt, the Family and Community Engagement Coordinator Keith Langford, and Chief Academic Officer Marla Robinson. The team members were selected based on interest, specific skill sets, racial and gender diversity and representation of the Shaker Heights neighborhoods. The purpose of the (EIAT) was to serve as thought partners with District leadership as they work to operationalize the Education Equity Policy. There was an application process wherein 25 members were selected from 137 applicants consisting of one Board of Education member, educators (teachers, administrators, support staff), community members and students. Only two members of the Equity Task Force were selected to participate in the Implementation Advisory Team (Shaker Schools, 2019a). Based on accounts from Interview Participant A, B, and C the central office administration decided to narrow the implementation group down to central office employees and leaders. Later an Equity Advisory and Action Team was created to serve as thought partners with the district leadership as they work to implement the policy.

Shaker Schools Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI).

The Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion was created when Shaker Schools named Dr. JeffriAnne Wilder as its first Executive Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. Her hiring officially created a department of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion for Shaker Schools. Part of Dr. Wilder's goal was to bring the district and community together and work on introducing the lens of equity to the work of the district. Dr. Wilder stepped down from her role in summer of 2021 but before doing so, hired a DEI Learning Specialist and Coordinator who added more capacity for the work of the DEI office. In Fall 2022, Dr. Lawrence Burnley was hired as Chief Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Officer.

Learning Specialist

The first DEI Learning Specialist position was created to support professional development, training, and learning in all schools and levels. This position worked collaboratively with the teachers and administrators to develop and implement curriculum based diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, and worked to give the learning and teaching staff culturally proficient, relevant, anti-racist teaching strategies.

Organizational Restructuring

With the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion was created the district reorganized existing programs focused on race and diversity to serve under the supervision of the DEI Office. The DEI Office newly included the Student Group of Race Relations (SGORR), MAC (Minority Achievement Committee) Scholars and MAC Sister Scholars programs as well as the Shaker Heights High School Bridges Program. The

Family and Community Engagement (FACE) Department was also placed into the DEI Office along with its coordinator position. The FACE program became more localized in each school with the creation of a FACE Representative at each school. These representatives spent time making meaningful connections with parents and family members, connecting them to resources necessary to meet essential needs like finding coats, boots, hats, and gloves for students in the winter time or providing gift cards for groceries, and helping families with finding resources for housing assistance.

Black Teacher Task Force. In 2019, The Black Teacher Task Force (BTTF) was formed to provide a safe space for Black Teachers. The BTTF addressed the mental wellbeing and work environment of Black teachers by seeking to understand school climate and using their understanding to remove barriers that lead to the marginalization of Black teachers'. The group is called on to establish and maintain mentoring processes for staff, assist in the recruitment and interviewing of Black teachers and staff, and provide the district administration data on work environment based on climate surveys completed by Black teachers. The group is led by the DEI Learning Coordinator and an elementary classroom teacher, both of whom are Black women.

MAC Scholars. The MAC Scholars program focused on improving the academic achievement of Black students and was previously offered to middle and high school students. With the implementation of the education equity policy the MAC Scholars program became part of the DEI Office, a district-wide MAC Scholars coordinator position was created, and the MAC Scholars program was extended to include

elementary school students including students as young as third grade. Each school has an advisor that facilitates meetings at least once a month.

Equity Initiatives

Shaker Rising

In the Summer of 2020, the superintendent announced an equity-focused initiative called “Shaker Rising”. The Office of DEI along with the district’s Learning and Teaching Department partnered to take preliminary steps to eliminate racially segregated classes, consolidate leveled classes for students in Grades 7-12 , and partner with community and national partners on further training and professional learning. The district also implemented a video series that addressed community concerns and questions about their de-tracking and deleveling efforts.

Educational Equity Fund

The Shaker Schools Foundation (SSF) supported district students with community resources and funding to enhance the student experience in and outside of the classroom. The SSF created a fund focused on ensuring all Shaker students have what they needed to learn including technology and equipment, and mentoring. This initiative has funded several projects that support student such as academic enrichment including supporting student travel internationally, giving students resources to attend STEM camps and other educational enrichment opportunities. Project CREATE, a project that taught high school students to design, create and sell merchandise as they took part in creating a t-shirt business, an initiative that added books to school libraries that were representative of the diversity of the student population, and supporting programs like the Girls in STEM

speaker series and the Girls Who Code initiative all were initiatives funded by the SSF Education Equity Fund.

Black Student Excellence

In September 2019, the newly the superintendent announced two areas of focus for the school district: Black student excellence and school climate and culture. He noted that the areas of focus were in alignment with the equity policy and that the focus came with a goal of increasing the percentage of Black students who meet or exceed grade-level standards in literacy and math. To help achieve the goal he identified broad areas for change but no specific changes in practices were mentioned. The focus on Black excellence was framed as advancing equity and excellence for all students in the District in order to address critical feedback. Dr. Wilder noted in a presentation to the Board of Education in January 2021 that Black excellence has been historically ignored and data indicated that there were current instructional practices and trends that created inequities along Black and White racial lines.

The Shaker Schools were granted funding totaling $117,494 for an initiative called Black Excellence and Inclusion in Mathematics by the Ohio Collaborative for Educating Remotely and Transforming Schools. The grant funded a de-tracking lab pilot project focused on math instruction in grades 7-9 working to identify intervention tools and strategies to support learning. A grant steering committee was created wherein a detracking team was created including International Baccalaureate Coordinators, instructional coaches, teachers, and secondary level school math department chairs.

Shaker implemented its education equity policy through a strategic plan

adopted by the Board of Education in March 2020. Goal two was intended to "advance educational equity by disrupting and removing institutional structures and practices which have historically been associated with racism, oppression and other forms of marginalization" (Shaker Schools, 2021, p.1).

Equity Salons. In Fall 2019 the school district started Equity Salons which was a meeting of community members, parents, and staff to engage in conversations around equity in the school and neighborhoods. There were four sessions held with participants working in small groups both in public places and private homes. The Equity Salons focused around conversations about participants perspectives on what an equitable and inclusive community looks like, what assets can be identified, and what barriers may exist.

Leading Equity Cohorts

The Board of Education, Superintendent, and other district leaders gathered in small cohorts to learn, engage, and explore concepts focused on race, and other dimensions of diversity. The intention was to equity them to examine and address issues through an equity lens.

Disruptions to Equity Implementation

Leadership Changes. Dr. Gregory Hutchings, Shaker superintendent who championed the work of equity as part of his administration announced that he would be not be returning to Shaker as superintendent for the 2018-2019 school year. This presented a particular challenge to Equity Task Force members who felt that with Hutchings not at the helm the work of adopting the equity policy would be adversely

affected. Interview Participant A said “A friend told me that Greg was a finalist for the Alexandria job and I was like, ‘we have to get this policy passed because if he leaves, it’s never going to happen

Instruction

International Baccalaureate and Equity

International Baccalaureate served a critical role in the operationalization of equity policy. Part of the method of implementing equity instructional practices in the district was considering how to re-establish past practices in an equity lens. The IB is an equity-based instructional framework so part of the work in implementing the equity policy was re-envisioning the previous work of IB unit planning, staffing, and assessment in the lens of equity. Prior to the equity policy, IB Coordinators at each elementary school taught design lessons only to students who were identified as gifted. After the implementation of the policy, the decision was made to engage all students and all K-8 students in design learning. A critical part of the IB curriculum is the development of units of inquiry through a unit planner template that includes all the necessary elements of an IB inquiry-based unit of instruction. The unit planner template which all elementary schools use to develop units went through an equity analysis including a review of curriculum and resources. An opportunity for teachers to reflect on diversity, equity, and inclusion practices was added to the unit planner template.

Universal Design for Learning and Differentiation. Starting in the 2020-2021 school year, Universal Design for Learning (UDL) was reinforced as an equity instructional tool across all grade levels. Emphasis was made on the differences between

differentiation and UDL. Teachers were given opportunities to implement UDL practices in units of inquiry prior to the start of the school year.

Bridges for Mathematics and Literacy Supports. The Shaker Schools adopted the Bridges for Mathematics curriculum for K-4 schools to shift instructional practices, entry points, supports and styles for math instruction. The Windows and Mirrors initiative by the Shaker Schools Foundation expanded literature choices in all elementary schools to include more racial, ethnic, and gender diversity. The district hired literacy specialists to focus on the science of reading with at-risk students. They offered individualized and small group services that pushed into classrooms and also as necessary pulled students out of their classrooms for literacy services. They gathered and reported data on students who performed below grade level and performed tier two literacy interventions.

Deleveling. Prior to de-leveling, the high school and middle school had multiple levels of rigor available for coursework. There was a core or college-prep level, honors-level, and AP courses where available. Historically, the majority of Black students were enrolled in core-level courses. The Covid-19 pandemic required the district to get creative with how classes were created due to the need to hold courses virtually. The district decided that the middle school and high school would eliminate honors and core level courses and instead merge them into grade-level sections, and all 7th grader students will take Pre-Algebra. 8th grade students would continue to be divided into leveled math courses. Staff were trained in an extended professional learning period prior to the start of school on Universal Design for Learning practices where students, assessed on the same universal standards would be given multiple mediums and methods of instruction to meet

mastery of targeted standards that teacher-based teams would determine were the most essential to assess.

Covid-19 Pandemic. In March 2020, the Shaker Heights City School District, along with all Ohio schools closed school buildings due to the spread of Covid-19. Instruction remained virtual through the end of the 2019-2020 school year. The district's Educational Equity Implementation Advisory Team continued to meet regarding how to address equity policy implementation considering the challenges of moving school to online platforms. To prepare for the 2020-2021 School Year, the district created a learning and teaching plan where they included educational equity as one of their guiding principles in decision making.

Professional Learning and Equity Training

In the wake of the adoption of the education equity policy, the district leadership engaged several out-of-district consultants to assist in the implementation of equity-focused professional learning first for district leadership and then for instructional and operations staff. In 2020, the school district hired the Executive Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion who led the district's equity-focused professional learning. The session offered a review into Shaker's 60 year history grappling with diversity, equity, and inclusion issues. This training was all done via Zoom due to the Covid-19 pandemic. She set the agenda for the year including the concept of shifting the narrative to the growing anti-racist ideology, building allyship, self-help steps, challenges and resources, and cultivating student activism.

The 2020-2021 school year started with professional learning centered around building and sustaining high expectations and achievement for all students. The district contracted with West Wind, a consultant service that customized supports to schools with equity professional learning and organizational management to lead the equity trainings in the district.

The August 2021 professional learning sessions focused on recognizing discretionary space, how to honor Black excellence, dignity and respect towards students, belonging, listening compared to understanding, language and code switching, and implicit and explicit bias in instruction and behavior practices. Furthermore, West Wind guided the district leadership in developing a method for summarizing and sharing the progression towards improving the implementation of equitable practices. This equity improvement cycle included having principals select members to be part of school-based equity teams, building team culture, identifying a specific equity focus area, articulating a vision of equity, collecting data and diagnosing underlying causes of gaps between vision and reality, planning, implementing, and reflecting on initiatives to address systemic gaps.

The January 2022 professional learning included whole group presentations with small breakout opportunities for conversations focused on exploring self- racial identities and understanding microaggressions. Building Equity Teams met to discuss plans and goals and in particular, the work of either setting up or reviewing findings from equity instructional rounds occurred. Instructional teams met to review unit planners and to analyze their work with an equity lens by asking the following questions:

- Which voices of marginalized groups are represented in this unit, and how are they represented?
- How are curriculum materials used to show diverse perspectives of marginalized cultures, gender, class, etc.?
- What evidence of activities lead students towards thinking about issues of equity, including race, gender, lifestyle, social justice, implicit bias, current events, etc.?
- What biases were presented in the unit, and how were they addressed?
- What diverse types of instruction styles throughout this unit allowed for a more equitable environment?

Equity Instructional Rounds. In the 2021-2022 school year, the instructional rounds process was revised to be more equity focused. Each school in the district participated in equity instructional rounds. In partnership with the district's equity consultant, each school created a team made up of instructional leaders, instructional staff, and students who would receive training on doing equity-focused instructional rounds. The findings from the equity rounds from across the school district were documented to inform decisions about the implementation of equity-focused goals in each building.

Summary

This section of the study included findings in the policy formation process of the Shaker Heights City School District Educational Equity Policy. Data was collected from document analysis, archival analysis, and interview participants. First, this researcher reported findings on the policy agenda and policy formulation steps of the policy process. This included data that revealed how the equity policy was created, what was the problem

and impetus of the policy and what was proposed to be done to solve the problem. Next further context into how the policy was drafted and edited was considered in the policy adoption section.

The equity policy was created by the Equity Task Force who used policy language inspired by the Madison Metropolitan School District Education Equity Policy. The policy was presented to the Board over the course of the three formal readings of the policy at public meetings. No editing or the document took place during the three readings. Board members were given the opportunity to ask questions about the policy but the policy language as it was recommended by the Equity Task Force remained the same. The policy was adopted unanimously by the Board of Education.

The implementation of the policy included progress on the action goals prescribed in the policy. The Covid-19 pandemic had an impact on the implementation of this policy although the district used its equity policy as a lens from which to respond to the crisis in its early stages and throughout the pandemic. The work of implementing the equity policy is included as part of the district's strategic planning and has continued despite administration and Board member turnover.

Part 2: Cleveland Heights-University Heights Education Equity Policy

Creating the Policy: Policy Agenda and Formulation

It was Dr. Talisa Dixon, the former superintendent of Cleveland Heights-University Heights School District (CH-UH), that championed using an equity lens from which all work in the district could be understood and implemented. Her administration responded to needs expressed by community members, staff, and students who called for honest conversations about race, inequity, and bias and action. In an interview for the Institute for Educational Leadership (2018) Dr. Dixon said "my first year [as superintendent] we had a group of students to present at the board and two students and one of them specifically stated, he didn't know he could take AP courses. He always wondered why certain classes had majority white students. So I said, how can we say that we embrace diversity?"

Dr. Dixon noted in an interview that upon her arrival as superintendent she noticed two school districts within the district. One school district was the district that served the majority Black student population, and the other part of the district was like a private school experience for more affluent, White families. In a podcast for Frontline Education (2020) Dr. Dixon said, "it was a little joke in the district, from other non-district officials, that parents could ask to have a private school experience within this district. By that they mean, if parents chose us, they could do our gifted program, and our AP program — we have a phenomenal instrumental and vocal music program — and have access to that, and not pay what you would pay for a private school." She also mentioned witnessing the use of performance-based grouping in elementary schools and

identifying it as tracking with remedial classes and small groups more often than not comprised of mostly, if not all Black students. Along with some institutional inequities in instruction and learning, Dr. Dixon recognized as a leader, that the organizational structure of the district was not effective and exacerbating the inequities to the point where school district parents knew that if they wanted their child to have a good education experience that they would to be enrolled in gifted services from the district. Often, the most qualified and experienced teachers were given AP courses to teach leaving a gap in quality instruction for Black students who were typically not enrolled in advanced coursework.

Dr. Dixon recognized glaring systemic inequities in organizational structure, instruction and curricular practices and strategies, an inequivalence in access to quality and experience teachers for all students, and a sense that based on race, class, and affluence, students were witnessing two different education systems within the Cleveland Heights-University Heights School District.

Strategic Planning

The district used strategic planning that addressed education equity goals and objectives even before the adoption of the education equity policy. The 2015-2020 Strategic Plan was adopted by the Board of Education on August 4, 2015, nearly one year before the education equity policy was adopted. One of the five strategic goals focused on the district educational approach including equity, empowerment, and opportunities. This goal included six objectives all of which would eventually be echoed in the education equity policy language.

According to Interview Participant H, the strategic planning process has been essential to the work of continuous improvement in removing inequities from the education experience of CH-UH students. Strategic planning has also been used to stave off naysayers or those who don't see the long-term benefit to an equity lens for the school district. For district leadership, the strategic plan afforded a way to hold all levels and positions in the district accountable to the policy. Interview Participant H said "the point of the strategic plan, is that it has key performance indicators that are attached to it. Now staff can look at it any say 'I can see myself in this and how I fit. Like, how do I play a role in my building meeting the 91% attendance rate. How do I pay a role in kids grades?' Moreover, Dr. Dixon used the strategic planning process to codify a district-wide effort to address the inequities she and many in the community had witnessed. But she shared with the Board that , "it was not enough to have a strategic plan. "I think the [strategic plan] is a great start, but I believe we need to have something that will outlive the plan." Policies, she added, would outlive the "revolving door of superintendents" (Frontline Education, 2018). What she did next was report to the Board that she would be proposing an equity policy for their consideration.

Dr. Dixon reported that the conversations about adopting an equity policy were tough conversations. She said,

> Because those conversations were clearly about one set of data, and belief, whereas with the strategic plan, we were able to have various conversations around various topics. So, operational resources, your staff, your parents… but when you talk about equity, it's a deeper conversation. It's about people's beliefs

in their actions. I always tell a quote. I can't think of his name, but it was a quote he always said: "What you permit, you promote." I say that to the community all the time. What we permit to happen in this district, we are promoting it if no one says anything. We had clear evidence that there was some sort of tracking that was happening, not intentionally, I don't believe … I think it was just something that was happening. We had evidence that we were not doing a good job placing teachers with students with the most need, et cetera. How do we put something in place that addresses that? There were conversations about some students coming from various backgrounds, and the data showed that our White students were outperforming our black students. Well, why is that? Are White students smarter than Black students? Well, do you believe that White students are smarter than Black students? Let's talk about that. The data shows that the White students are outperforming the Black students. Well, okay, we're looking at the data, so do you think that data is expressed that way because one set of students are born smarter than another set of students? Those are real conversations that we had to have it: why is it? We had to look at ourselves, and look at our beliefs, and have an understanding that students are coming to us from various backgrounds. Now, we do need help from our peers. We recognize that, but those were some of the conversations that we had with our board members, looking at the data, having those tough conversations about race, class, our beliefs, and being able to say we may not agree on everything, but we do agree that we want the best educational experience for our kids in this community. If that means that we have to have a

> policy that will allow us to have some check and balances, then that is the right thing to do. (Frontline Education, 2018)

Dr. Dixon noted that as a leader she didn't want to be a leader that made decisions based only on what she saw and experienced. She wanted to be certain that various stakeholders looked at data and that there were plenty of opportunities for conversations about what needed to change and why. Dr. Dixon said "I made sure that my approach was the right approach to be inclusive for everyone to have a dialogue about what was happening, and why change was needed."

Dr. Dixon's first steps was to use the power of storytelling to create an environment wherein we tell the stories of those who may have been effected by the inequities in the education experience. First, using data to support her decision, she ended the performance-based grouping that was occurring in the district. She noted "it was taught, I had to have conversations with majority, White families in some sense—kids who were benefiting from those classes, and they wanted their students to be in classrooms with minority students. However, they didn't want to be in classrooms with disruptive minority students, and they believed that certain kids with certain backgrounds were disruptive in the classroom, and took away from the learning of their kids" (Frontline Education, 2018).

2014-2015 Equity Task Force. The Equity Task Force which consisted of district teachers, administrators, community members, and college professors was established in 2014 to assist in the development of the Strategic Plan Goal II: Education,

Empowerment, and Opportunity. Their task was to look at data and to examine the performance of students of color against the level of performance in the state.

Policy Drafting. According to Interview Participant G, the policy was drafted primarily by Superintendent Dixon. Using her network of educational leaders and think-tanks she discovered some educational equity policies that were already adopted by Boards of Education across the country. From there, she selected the education equity policy from Portland Public Schools in Portland, Oregon, as the exemplary policy that would be used in CH-UH. The district leadership made additional comments and suggestions as to what needed to be included in the policy. Specifically, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Dr. Sandy Womack, was Dr. Dixon's primary partner in crafting the equity policy. According to Interview Participant H, Dr. Womack, in his role as Director of Curriculum and Instruction was responsible for supervising the Principals. And the rationale behind Dr. Womack being a partner in drafting the education equity policy was that he would be responsible for the implementation of the policy in the schools by way of the Principals. Ultimately a draft would be presented to the Board of Education primarily drafted by the team effort of Dr. Dixon and Dr. Womack.

Adopting the Policy

The Cleveland Heights-University Heights Board of Education members who adopted the policy included Kal Zucker (White cisgender man) who served as president of the Board of Education, Ronald Register (Black cisgender man) who served as vice-president of the Board of Education, James Posch (White cisgender man), Beverly Wright (Black cisgender woman), and Eric Silverman (White cisgender man). The

process of adopting the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Education Equity Policy included three formal required readings of the policy required by state law at three public Board of Education meetings on June 21, 2016, July 22, 2016 and August 2, 2016. The Board of Education adopted the policy along with several other policies requiring updating.

The First Reading

The Superintendent presented to the Board a policy draft modeled after the education equity policy for Portland Public Schools in Portland, Oregon. The first policy draft was named as a racial educational equity policy. One Board member had asked if there was a sample policy that could be referenced from Neola, an organization the district contracts with for policy development services. With Neola having no educational equity policy for the Superintendent to reference, she shared copies of other education equity policies adopted by school districts. Also, Dr. Dixon presented to the Board a spreadsheet that compiled MSAN (Minority Student Achievement Network) districts that currently have education equity policy, equity professional development in place, an equity committee or task force, or if the districts have committed any district staff positions that are focused on equity. She highlighted that in the network of MSAN districts, of which, CH-UH is a member, even if a district doesn't have an equity policy, they have a dedicated equity department.

It was clear throughout the data collected for this case that Dr. Dixon was the education equity policies primary advocate. She provided supplemental policies as exemplars and was forthcoming in noting that the first policy draft echoed the Portland

Public Schools equity policy but she encouraged the Board to look at the supplemental policies for language they may be more amenable to should they have reservations about the language Portland policy.

The Superintendent argued that the policy was a natural progression from the work the Board of Education adopted as part of its 2015-2020 Strategic Plan. The Superintendent emphasized repeatedly over the course of discussion that the equity policy was in alignment with the previously adopted strategic plan goals and objectives. The policy draft presented by Dr. Dixon transferred language from the Portland Public Schools education equity policy but also was adapted to align with the definition of education equity that the CH-UH Board of Education adopted in the 2015-2020 Strategic Plan. She also highlighted how each of the action steps in the draft education equity policy aligned with the goals noted in the strategic plan.

The Board Response to the Policy Draft. Discussion from the Board included concerns about policy rhetoric and word choice, the potential adverse impact of the education equity policy on high achievers, the data used to inform the need for the policy, this policy's impact on resource allocation, and how the Board members would hold each other accountable to community concerns surrounding issues of race, racism, and the inequities that had been shared about the education experience in the school district.

Hiring Discrimination Concerns. Mr. Posch conceptually agreed with the vision behind the policy. He addressed concerns he had with hiring and staff implications in the policy language that noted the district would actively strive to diversify the teacher and administrator workforce to reflect the diversity of our student body. He suggested the in

order to implement this policy directive that the district would need to select candidates based on identity which could lead to employment discrimination. Dr. Dixon's response was in four part. First, she made it clear that it was not the intent of the educational equity policy to promote discriminatory hiring practices and suggests if the wording of the policy suggests any discriminatory practices it should be changed to reflect the authentic purpose of equitable staffing and intentional recruitment strategies. Second, she made clear that the policy was needed to make certain the district would develop intentional human resources practices and structures. Third, she used storytelling and connected a student's experience to support the need for intentional staffing practices. Dr. Dixon said

> For example, during our strategic planning process, [a Black student] asked, "why don't we have any teachers in our district that looked like me?" [It is a] very valid question. We didn't have an answer for her. So, does that mean we're not looking at teachers from different backgrounds to put in front our of students that look like them? Are we being intentional, when we are we recruiting? We had no answer for her. So [the policy] doesn't say we're going to discriminate against any group people but it says were going to recognize that we serve a population that doesn't look like other places and that we need to be more intentional about recruiting teachers... So this policy is not intended to discriminate against any person.

Finally, Dr. Dixon reiterated that the draft policy language had already been adopted in Portland and was in effect therefore implying that the language meets legal threshold for fair hiring practices.

Mr. Posch made several points that focused around the protection of whiteness. He argued that this type of policy language gives people the ability to discriminate against White teachers. He also made an argument that teachers not earning positions by merit alone leaves room for discrimination.

Facilities and Resource Allocation Concerns. Mr. Posch also made a statement about how the policy could potentially impact facilities planning. He said,

> I think when we look at the two middle schools right now, the Monticello building, in my opinion, is a far superior building than the Roxboro building. You can say that the kids attending Monticello are in a better building. Are they more privileged than the kids that are attending at Roxboro? And the way that I suspect our project is going to run, we will be able to make up some differences here and there but still, people are going to feel there are inequities in those buildings unless you make two identical buildings, that look the same that have the same hallways and same corridors. We can't afford that.

Dr. Dixon responded to Mr. Posch by noting there were perceived inequities in the district and some perceived inequities are a result of the district's own practices. She argued that these perceived inequities continued to exist because the district had no structures in place to ensure equitable distribution of resources. She noted

> For example, during the most recent layoffs the majority of the teachers laid off came from the schools with the most need. Why is that? Because we have our more experienced teachers at our schools that are achieving. How did that happen? It had to happen somehow. So we need look at our practices. We've had

> one particular building that the majority of our teachers who were not evaluated effectively were traditionally sent to this particular school. So, when I did my research they were right. So those are some of our own practices. When we look at why do we have pre-schools at certain building? So [equity] helps us look through a lens to see what are some of our own practices and beliefs about what are kid's needs. Where do we need pre-schools, where do we need foreign language classes? All of these things can happen when we are intentional at looking at the data and finding out what does the data suggest. How are we giving out our general fund money? Why? Why is that? How do we make decisions about which schools receive grant funds…Some of our practices we've done to ourselves because we have not been looking through an equity lens. And that's why during strategic planning, it was overwhelming. The reason why we have an equity goal is because the community was adamant about it.

Mr. Silverman also made the argument that if the district spent resources on music and the an equity model of resource allocation could shift resources away from successful programs to focus on those students who are most in need. He made the argument that giving every student what they needed could potentially make less resources available for high achieving students.

Mr. Register, a long-time Black school board member asked for clarification about the action goal that noted the district would create multiple pathways to success to meet the needs of a diverse student population. Dr. Womack responded with an argument

for how education equity via multiple pathways to student success, would help to get the schools out of EdChoice status.

Discomfort with the Word Race. Mr. Silverman noted he was uncomfortable with the title of the policy being 'racial educational equity' and preferred the phrase 'educational equity' because from his lens, the perception of inequities in the district predates the issues of race that exist today. He also used this story to underscore his point,

> If we're talking about equity, the history, and perception of inequities in this district goes back before when we used to have the rich junior high, the middle class junior high and the Jewish junior high. The perception of Roxboro being 'manna from heaven' and Monticello being horrible has to do with perceptions that predate racial demographics being an issue.

Mr. Silverman added a story of a Black Assistant Superintendent who assumed that he, as a White Jewish student, went to Wiley or Roxboro when he actually went to Monticello and how that assumption is the reason why the policy, if it addressed inequities, should not be limited to racial equity. He poses the question "are we talking equity or are we talking racial equity? I actually prefer when we are talking equity it's resource allocation."

Equity at the Expense of High-Achievers. Another theme that emerged from the Board discussion concerning the draft equity policy was how this policy would be implemented without adversely impacting the successful programs currently in place. Mr. Posch said, "I see where you are trying to go with this [equity policy] and its great. I'm worried about whether in order to implement this if other programs have to suffer.

Dr. Dixon responded,

> We can continue doing our programs as we have been. We don't need an equity policy to support what is already working. We will do that regardless. What this policy does is get serious about looking at our practices and putting our procedures in a framework about what we've known. We have inequities that we have not addressed in a strategic manner. We have a strategic plan with equity goals, we defined what education equity is, I think the next step is to adopt the policy. But I only want us to adopt the policy that we are comfortable with. I don't want to rush.

Mr. Posch responded,

> I don't want us to slow down. A policy should give you teeth, and to work with those with labor. The issue though is that we have high performing kids and those kids are thriving in the district. We have great programs where kids right now that are thriving. Those are kids that are high achievers, I'd like to be known as a district, where if you stick with us, you're going to be on top. I don't think it matters what color your skin is. I just don't think it matters. Because I think when you come in here and people are equal, you can get any kid to succeed. I just don't want the kids who are high-achievers to suffer. And I think when you put so much emphasis on a policy. I think there is an element of "something has to give" to get everybody [succeeding].

Mr. Register responded in disagreement.

> I disagree with you, Jim. I think that we have students we have been supporting in terms of their high performance, my sense is we know how to do that, and we have no reason to stop doing that. There would be no reason to take resources from the things that got us there. But, I think the issue is how do we get the resources to the kids who aren't there yet. Two other things. I think that we talk about this in terms of race because what we seen in this district has been directly related to race. And I think that us making a statement about race is an important statement that needs to be made. This has to do not just with the school district but the community that we are in. We need to be bold enough to take the step and say were going to put a stake in the ground and dig in.

Using Data to Support the Need for Policy. Mr. Silverman made an argument about wanting to see new data from the school districts with equity policies. And wanted to know if CH-UH had the same disparities in academic performance as other systems who have equity initiatives because the policy draft noted that the district would acknowledge that student achievement data from school districts across the country also reveal similar patterns of disparity. This exchange Silverman and Register along with Director of Curriculum and Instruction Dr. Womack underscored White resistance to owning up to the inequities that exist as part of the school district, and highlights three Black school leaders reminding everyone of the data that shows clear trends of inequity and achievement gaps in the district.

Mr. Silverman: I'm very curious to see, the systems we are examining, what I'm looking at is, basically, I'm lazy. What I want us to find out is whose got the secret sauce."

Mr. Register: Nobody has the secret sauce. And you are being lazy. There is enough evidence if you look at the literature that says this is something that school districts across this country are dealing with.

Mr. Silverman: When I said I'm lazy what I'm looking to see is who is doing better.

Mr. Register: Nobody is doing better, Eric.

Mr. Silverman: I'm looking for data and if I'm supposed to sign off on something or support something I need some information on how I'm stacking up against other systems otherwise I'm operating in a vacuum.

Dr. Womack: Cincinnati is one of the highest performing urban school districts in the state. It has outperformed several suburbs. Their policy, may not be as aggressive as Portland. Portland has had equity policies in place for quite a while. Looking at the policy it may take some time to figure out which policy actually works. But I'm a pretty simple man and my grandfather used to make things pretty simple to me. He used to say, 'Son if you buy a Rolls Royce and it gets a flat tire, what are you going to do? Fix the flat tire. The engine is working, the body looks great, everything is fine.' We're not going to change AVID or MSAN or MSSP or Power of the Pen, or Science Olympiad or students traveling to foreign countries. We're not doing that, we want all our kids to do that, we're not

decreasing the arts, we're trying to focus on this area where we know we have some significant deficiencies. Every building in our district other than Canterbury has an F on gap closing. And in order to decrease those F's sometimes it's 30-35 kids that will close that gap number. So those things that are working, those instructional program are things we want to see all of our buildings use. I don't want Dr. Dixon to take the brunt because I was aggressive with the policy.

Dr. Dixon: We're a team, Sandy and I know, Eric, you've been asking for data but I think data from other districts does us no service. We let our district data guide our decision making. Some of those other districts, it may seem like it's easy to get their data. I've talked to several of those superintendents about certain data that they don't release. That's why were in the MSAN network, we've sent administrators to AVID conferences. The MSAN conference was where I learned about the equal opportunity grant.

Mr. Posch: Please don't get the impression that concept and vision that we've laid out I think we're all in favor of it in a big, big way. I think the way that it is put into words is the push back that you're getting from Eric and I.

In summary, the concerns from the Board included potential hiring discrimination, discomfort with the use of the word 'racial', achieving equity at the expense of high-achieving students and what data was appropriate for evaluating the need for the equity policy. The suggested edits from the Board of Education included replacing the phrase racial educational equity with educational equity, adding language that requires all staff to be accountable to this policy, considering different language for the

section regarding hiring practices, and to have policy reviewed by the legal team to ensure it meets legal requirements.

The Second Reading

The Board members opted to have questions and clarifications answered via email and one on one individual meetings with the Superintendent.

The Third Reading

The third and final reading of the policy included the final version of the policy language that would eventually be adopted later in the meeting. Board member Eric Silverman raised two concerns. The first focused on the adoption of an equity analysis tool as part of the policy action steps. He noted he was uncomfortable committing to a tool but not knowing what the tool is going to be. He also voiced concern about the phrase in the policy that said race must cease to be a predictor of student achievement and success. He noted, "As a White Jewish male, I'm offended, I don't believe race is a predictor of success." The Board president, Kal Zucker and Board member James Posch then offered some context noting that it is on the adults who are providing the education to be sure that we understand that different people come with different challenges no matter what their race, and that historically race has been an indication of success in achievement data in the district. The policy was then voted on and adopted unanimously.

Policy Construct and Language

The policy is titled Education Equity and is structured with three overarching sections: an introduction, a declaration establishing goals and definitions. The Education Equity Policy is identified as Policy 4122.03 using the CH-UH policy coding system

meaning it is filed under Section 4000 of Board policy called Classified Staff. It is the fourth of four policies in sub-section 4122 which includes nondiscrimination and equal employment opportunity, nondiscrimination based on genetic information of employees drug-free workplace, and prohibition on disability discrimination policies. It is not cross-referenced in other policies.

District Beliefs and Vision

In the introduction, Connections and Edition of District Beliefs and Vision. The policy rhetoric mentioned aspirations including the mission, vision, and core values of the district. The mission was inserted directly into the introduction section of the policy verbatim. The district expanded on its mission to add their belief in every student having the potential to meet their highest potential and that it was the right of every student to have an equitable educational experience. This final statement is the first mention of equity in the policy and introduced education equity as the central concept of the policy.

The policy rhetoric added context to the district's aspirations in the lens of education equity by asserting that the disparities between state assessment data were at odds with the district belief that all students can achieve and that a student whose "history and culture are celebrated could learn better and be more successful that a student who is forced to overcome cultural barriers" (CH-UH, 2016, p.1).

Learning Environment

The next section of the policy defined education equity in relationship to the concept of equality, noting that equity goes "beyond principles of equality, an environment where all students are treated the same, to an environment that is barrier-free

with all students regardless of race, class or other personal characteristics have the opportunity to benefit equally from their education" (CH-UH, 2016, p.1).

Reporting and Accountability

The accountability section of the policy describes the actions the superintendent must take and corresponding metrics that Board will enforce related to the implementation education equity policy.

The policy set two time-related boundaries: a) "the superintendent will present an action plan to implement policy goals A through F within six months of the adoption of the policy" and b) "after the first report the superintendent will report on the progress of each goal at least twice a year, and will provide the Board with updated action plans each year thereafter" (CH-UH, 2016, p.2).

Implementing the Policy

Equity Task Force

The CH-UH Equity Task Force (ETF) started with the development of the CH-UH 2015 Strategic Plan. The group was tasked with strategically improving educational outcomes for all students. Their approach integrated knowledge of the history of marginalization and moved away from a deficit-based model to a more asset-based model of thinking and understanding of social identity. The mission of the ETF was to seek to "create educational equity to raise achievement for all, especially for students of color, by building awareness and celebrating culture and differences, and providing differentiated resources (CH-UH, 2022, p.1)." The mission also noted that the "responsibility for disparity rests with adults, not children" (CH-UH, 2022, p.1). The vision of the ETF

included the notion that race had to cease being a predictor of student achievement. The ETF has had 15-25 members and generally met once a month as a full group. Several committees have been formed that meet more often between meetings.

2016 Equity Task Force. The group expanded membership using a standard application process and also expanded its scope focusing on training school personnel in culturally responsive teaching. The ETF, led by Dr. Sandy Womack, Director of Principal Leadership and Development introduced Team Leaders that included superintendent Dr. Talisa Dixon, five teachers, Joyce Bukovac, James Kravitz, Melissa Strouth, Cheryl Walton, and Shawn Washington, two school principals ,Rachael Coleman and Dr. Michael Jenkins, college professor and community member Dr. Theron Ford, community nonprofit executive director Krista Hawthorne, and CH-UH district parent engagement specialist Lisa Hunt. The ETF, at its first report out to the Board of Education recommended the use of LEAD (Leadership for Equity Assessment and Development) Tool to analyze the equity policy.

The group did some professional learning at the Social Justice Institute in Rootstown and worked with others and learned about an approach to equity implementation called the Four Cornerstones Approach to Equity created by the Integrated Comprehensive Systems for Equity.

Structures and Systems

The CH-UH school district chose not to create an equity focused office or department to operationalized their equity policy. Instead, the work of education equity implementation was shared among the various department and administrative leaders.

Each cabinet member was responsible for the implementation of the equity policy using the strategic plan as a guide to assure that all their work is done through an equity lens. The Superintendent utilized the Equity Task Force to fulfills the equity policy reporting requirements in the policy so whenever the Superintendent provided a formal update on equity work, the ETF membership also presents its updates and work to the Board of Education.

Equity Analysis Tool

The ETF chose the LEAD (Leadership for Equity Assessment and Development) Tool, a professional growth tool with research-based equitable practices and corresponding rubrics. Developed by the Oregon Leadership Network, this tool was selected because of its ability to engage various stakeholders in assessing strengths, challenges, and progress made in equity plan implementation. The ETF aligned the LEAD Tool Constructs with the CH-UH equity policy goals. All of the policy goals aligned with at least one of the LEAD Tool constructs.

In 2017, the ETF focused its implementation work on the first LEAD Tool Construct which included engaging in self-reflection and equity for growth. At the April 2017 ETF report to the Board of Education, the ETF announced it had trained school personnel including media specialists/librarians, in-school suspension leaders, building leadership team members, all security monitors, one middle school staff, and one elementary school staff. The training focused on self-identity. The group also announced a five-year plan for itself. Year 1 focused on LEAD Tool Construct 1 and 6, Year 2 focused on Construct 1 and 2, Year 3 focused on Construct 4 and 5, Year 4 focused on

Construct 3, and Year 5 focused on Construct 8. The ETF made clear there was discussion on the lens of teachers, school administrators, parents, and community members.

The Equity Task Force gave one of the bi-annual updates required by the policy to the Board of Education on April 17, 2018 at a public meeting. Dr. Womack led the presentation along with three other ETF team leaders. The meeting focused on providing an update on the district's equity work. The update began by connecting the ETF's work to the requirements of the policy and strategic plan. Equity work in the district is connected to strategic goal two of the plan. The update started with background information into how the educational equity policy was created and adopted. The 2018 update to the Board of Education included two new members Dan Heintz and Malia Lewis who started their new term on the Board of Education January 2018 (a third new member was elected also but was absent from this meeting).

The ETF first reminded the Board about the function and purpose of the equity analysis tool as a resource to aid in reviewing programs and practices while allowing multiple stakeholders into the work of implementing the policy. They noted that the EFT used the LEAD tools rubric ratings to determine where additional resources may be needed to effectively implement the policy.

Next, the ETF reported on the LEAD Tool constructs that guided the work of the ETF for the 2017-2018 School Year. The first focus was building a vision of equity and the second was partnering with families and communities. The ETF noted that they assessed the district using the corresponding rubric for each construct and a survey of

stakeholders. The survey method consisted of participants using a Likert scale to support the statements from the rubric that best described their current practices. The participants did not have the rubric categories noted above while they completed the survey. Table 3 summarizes the outcome of the LEAD tool analysis originally reported in a presentation by the Equity Task Force (CH-UH, 2018).

Table 3

CH-UH LEAD Tool Results

LEAD Tool Construct: Constructing and Enacting Equity Vision Survey responses: 104 Survey dates: 12/6/2017- 2/28/2019		
Area of Focus	Most selected survey descriptor	Rubric Level
Inclusive Practice	The vision is developed based on primarily on leadership's own views	Little or No Equitable Practice
Collective Ownership	Leadership does not examine whether non-dominant voices in the school community are heard, valued, or shape the vision	Emerging Equitable Practice
Collective Responsibility	Leadership does not examine whether non-dominant voices in the school community are heard, valued, or shape the vision	Proficient Equitable Practice
LEAD Tool Construct: Collaborating with Families and Communities Survey responses: 87 Survey dates: 12/6/2017- 2/28/2019		
Evidence of Collaboration	Leadership has an open door policy for families and is receptive to partnering with community organizations to address the needs of students. Leadership uses appropriate communication to share ways families and community partners can support the school's agenda at home or outside the classroom	Emerging Equitable Practice
Community Capacity And Responsibility	Leadership provides opportunities for diverse parents to improve their parenting skills and better support learning at home	Emerging Equitable Practice
Culturally Responsive Communication	Leadership talks about the need to build understanding of the diversity of values, practices, and social and cultural capital in the school community	Emerging Equitable Practice

The ETF distributed the tool to school principals and in turn asked those leaders to share the survey with faculty and staff in their buildings. The ETF reported that they themselves took the raw data from the surveys and decided which rubric level fit the general consensus of the survey data. The group noted the survey population size was too small and additional outreach to stakeholders was necessary in order to get a complete understanding of the district's progress towards attaining the top rubric rating for each construct. One of the Board members asked about the use of the word leadership and whether or not the rubrics that were focused on teaching staff or students. The ETF responded that the rubric did not define leadership and through internal dialogue among the group decided the keep the language of leadership and to allow the participant to see leadership in the context of the survey through their own lens.

Through the rubric, the ETF was able to see deficiencies and strengths in the district implementation of equity policy. It was noted by Dr. Womack that the least successful category included inclusive practices which meant the district needed to do better at broadening the scope of contribution into the equity work beyond a single leader such as the superintendent or a building principal or an entity such as the ETF. Moving forward the ETF decided that it needed to expand its capacity to develop trainers beyond the ETF to include more teachers, staff and students in substantive roles in the district's equity work. There were more favorable results for the construct focused on collaborating with families partly because the district invested in a family engagement specialists and intentional trainings for community member groups such as parent groups.

Moving forward, the ETF updated its five-year plan by scaling back the timeline that was presented a year prior. The group also announced that the work on the first construct of self-identity needed to proceed into Year 2 because not all staff members had the opportunity to engage in those first construct trainings. Also, the ETF reported that the identity trainings were well attended and that it was necessary to take on a less ambitious plan so that more self-identity work could happen. Year 1 (2016-2017) focused on LEAD Tool Construct 1 and 6, Year 2 (2017-2018) focused on Construct 7 and 2, Year 3 (2018-2019) focused on Construct 4 and 5, Year 4 (2019-2020) focused on Construct 3, and Year 5 focused on Construct 8.

Instruction

Gap Closing. CH-UH has reported some gap closing following the adoption of the equity policy according to Interview Participant H "we are seeing some closing of our gap in some metrics but because of the pandemic some gaps. The district highlighted student chronic absenteeism as a barrier to learning and has implemented plans to monitor attendance and implement plans to improve student attendance. The district leadership team has worked to pinpoint where the schools are at in attendance, what is habitual truancy look like for us, what chronic absenteeism looks like, and how are we working to use the resources that we have to impact those things from a tiered approach. The principals did attendance planning and set improving student attendance as a metric towards closing the achievement gap."

The district worked to improve direct instruction as a gap closing method. Interview Participant H said "if students aren't actively engaged and excited about what

I'm doing as a teacher then [attendance] is impacted. We have to make sure that we're doing the engagement piece [in instruction] and make sure that students want to come back to school every day.

Curriculum and Instruction. One of the inequities that was documented by the district included the contrast in Black students enrolled in AP courses compared to the Black student population in the high school. According to the district equity audit, between 2018 and 2021, Black student enrollment in AP courses went from 42% to 71%. In 2021, Black students were enrolled in all AP course offerings except French Language 4 and Spanish Language 5. In 2018, two classes had more Black students than White students and by 2021, five classes had more Black students than White students. The number of courses where Black student enrollment was equal or higher than White student enrollment increased from one course to six courses. According to Interview Participant G and as seen in Table 4, the increase in Black student population in AP courses was the result of a concerted effort by the high school to seek out Black students who would be successful in AP courses (CH-UH, 2022).

Table 4

AP Course Enrollment

Course Name	2018-2019 Black | White Student Enrollment	2020-2021 Black. | White Student Enrollment
AP Biology 2 AP Environmental Science AP Physics C: Mechanics	18|19 16|19 1|9	28|9 28|32 3|8
AP Calculus AB AP Macro Economics AP Micro Economics AP Statistics AP Calculus BC	6|9 3|7 3|7 16|24 Not offered	9|12 18|22 20|24 15|21 0|9
AP French 4 AP Spanish 4 AP Spanish 5	0|2 1|11 0|1	Not offered 14|8 0|1
AP Government AP Psychology AP U.S. History	80|40 13|16 38|46	78|39 Not offered 36|35
AP Language and Literature AP Literature and Composition	33|25 24|26	65|33 31|40
AP Studio Art: Drawing	5|6	1|5

AP Course Enrollment. The lack of Black students enrolled in AP courses was one of the first challenges identified and remediated as part of the CH-UH focus on equity. Using resources from Equal Opportunity Schools, an organization whose mission is to ensure students of color and low-income students have equitable access to

America's most academically intense coursework, the superintendent and the district partnered with the organization to work with high school teachers to identify students who had demonstrated interest in taking an AP course. According to Interview Participant G, Counselors used PSAT scores to show Black students that they had the potential to succeed in AP courses. Through conversations, surveys, and programs like a summer AP bootcamp and AP pep rallies student enrollment in AP courses started to increase.

But then, in the first few weeks of school as students started to take the AP courses, the students became overwhelmed and began to drop the courses. Dr. Dixon said, "We had to go back and say to the teachers, 'let's not set up a system where kids now are intimidated and afraid, because we have to set a system to build then up, and tell them that they have every right to be in those classes, and they have the potential to do just as well as their White peers" (Frontline Education, 2018). The school district recognized there had to be more conversations, training, and development of instructional practices for AP teachers along with an assessment of equitable staffing to ensure that the teachers with the best fit are teaching more diverse classes.

Social Emotional Support for Students. Another focus in closing the achievement gap focused on the redistribution of resources for social, emotional, and mental health skills. Interview Participant H emphasized the importance of ensuring the students had trusted adults in the room. "So we have really focused a lot on who are trusted adults in our building." Participant G has stated that the focus on the racial aspect of the achievement gap and recognizing implicit bias has provided a foundation from

which other marginalized issues have been discussed. He said, “This might be the first time the Black community is really starting to think about mental health. I think we're starting to get to this ideology of if [something] effects Black students we should discuss it, I don't know if it's working as well. But because of the work we’re doing, we're having these all these talks about anxiety or having these talks about depression and were having these talks about consent and things like that, and that's not exactly racial. But I think it is kind of a spin off from the work of fixing racism and I've seen a lot of the focus on dealing with other parts of Black student’s experiences like discussing anxiety, positively help our students.”

Professional Learning and Staff Training

Implicit Bias Training. The CH-UH education equity policy rhetoric asserted “the District shall give all staff and students the opportunity to understand the impact of their own identity on themselves and others” (CH-UH, 2016, p.2). This policy directive has been implemented by way of implicit bias training for all staff members employed by the district. According to the ETF, 208 people participated in self-identity trainings, 73 participated in stereotypes and microaggression trainings, and 81 participated in a training focused on the history of marginalization by the end of the 2017-2018 school year. Interview Participant G noted that “implicit bias training has been really strong. I think we really attacked ideas students and staff may have internally like girls not being as good in science and math. People have had to reckon with the fact that those ideas come from your implicit bias. People pick up these ideas throughout their lives and learn

it and they have no idea how they learned it or how to unlearn it." Interview Participant H noted how there was some staff discomfort at the start of staff trainings. She said,

> So I can say when we first started people were uncomfortable. There was some pushback. There were some tears. Now people are very open, very honest about it, because now it is a part of our culture to examine bias. Effective strategic planning has been essential to embedding recognition of bias into the culture of the schools.

Instructional Practices. An essential part of the impact of the education equity policy implementation is the necessary adoption of equitable instructional practices. The policy rhetoric noted that "the District shall provide every student with equitable access to high quality and culturally relevant instruction, curriculum, support, facilities and other educational resources" (CH-UH, 2016, p.1). The district operationalized this policy language in the development and implementation of multi-tiered systems for research-based, data-driven and differentiated instruction and Instructional practices. Curriculum realignment, review and amendment of grading and assessment policies, consistent training instructional practices such as the implementations of universal design for learning strategies has all followed the adoption and implementation of the policy.

Human Resources Practices and Staff Recruitment

The CH-UH Equity Policy discussed staffing as follows "the District shall actively work to achieve equivalence among schools in teachers, administrators, and other staff; an equitable distribution of staff across schools, e.g. such as in years of experience; and equivalence among schools in the provision of curriculum materials and

instructional supplies" (CH-UH, 2016, p.1). The district operationalized this policy rhetoric in its strategic plan.

Interview Participant G, when asked about staffing talked about how he saw the need for not just diversity, but a need for more Black men in instructional staff positions specifically. He said,

> Our Black girls have Black women teachers, Our White boys and a girls have White men and women teachers. What I always note to people is that in a school of nearly 1600 high school students we have only one core teacher who is a Black man, and I think I can probably count on my hands number of Black men who are teachers in this entire school district.

Interview Participant G also noted that he saw the lack of representation impacting how the students saw themselves as it relates to academics.

> I think the reason why a lot of our boys want to be athletes is because every day after school they go to practice and their coaches are Black males. They see themselves doing that and then academically they go the entire day and they see nobody that looks like them teaching academics. Now they have a gym teacher and we do a good job of hiring [Black] administrators. We have at the moment only one, but over our time we've had quite a few Black male administrators. But when it actually comes to teaching core subjects, we're lacking.

Equity Initiatives

Gear Up. Gear Up (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) was a grant-funded program that follows a cohort of students from 7th grade

through their first year after graduating from high school. The intent of the program was to increase college attendance and retention rates. The program, in practice, filled gaps in the skills and information that students need to be college-ready including increasing discussions and visits of college and increased focus on the skills and coursework necessary to be college-ready. CH-UH Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Robert Swaggard said in as district website article, "Something as simple as knowing how to log into and use Naviance, the college and career preparation site available to all district students, or as meaningful as math tutoring so students have a better shot of passing Algebra 1, are all part of the program" (CH-UH, 2020, p.1).

Interview Participant G noted that Black students have seen academic success with this program and that it served as a safe space for students to connect with Black adults who have the compassion as well as the tangible tools to help them towards their goals.

Participant G said,

> There are now four aides through the program: two Black women and two Black men. They set up shop in our schools and their job is to interact with any and every student they can get. And it has been ready dope because the aides have been a safe space for our Black students. So the fact that I will be sitting with my students and they ask me "hey can you help me sign-up for the SATs?" I'll be like "yes, but I have someone better" and then I'll walk them to the room and they come back like "they loved me and I got signed up for the SAT. They told me to come back for the Math tutoring". That makes me know that even if this wasn't a

concerted effort through the equity policy, it is still a program that is allowing students to access opportunities they need to get closer to the high school finish line and beyond.

Summary

This section of the study included findings in the policy formation process of the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District Educational Equity Policy. Data was collected from document analysis, archival analysis, and interview participants. First, there was a look into the policy agenda and policy formulation steps of the policy process which included data revealing aspects of how the equity policy was created, what was the problem and impetus of the policy and what was proposed to be done to solve the problem. Next, further context into how the policy was drafted and edited was considered in the policy adoption section. The policy was presented to the Board and it was formally reviewed three times. Despite several objections to policy language focusing on issues of race and racism, the majority of the language and several edits and adaptations based on Board feedback, The policy was adopted unanimously by the Board of Education.

The implementation of the policy reported in this study included the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 academic years progress on the action goals prescribed in the policy. The implementation of the policy included several gap closing measures such as improving Black student enrollment in AP courses, revising and updating instructional practices and improving school attendance. The implementation of the policy was operationalized in the district's strategic plan.

Part 3: Cross-Case Findings

The cross-case analysis in this study was based on an analysis of the individual case policies. The cross-case findings reported emergent themes discovered in the within-case analysis of each policy will be used to report the sameness (similarity), sameniqueness (similarity with particularity), uniquesameness (uniqueness with particularity, and uniqueness (particularity) of each case.

Policy Language and Rhetoric

Sameness in Policy Language and Rhetoric

CH-UH and Shaker's education equity policies are similar in construct and language. Both policies connected district aspirations, mission, vision, and belief statements to the work of education equity, thus connecting the values of the school district with the justifications and purpose of the policy.

Both cases explained how the purpose and impact of the policy connected to the mission, vision, values, and beliefs of the school district. Both districts were committed to the success of every student, both districts used words like excellence, rigorous, challenging, engaging to describe the educational experience they aspired to provide students. The policies also discussed the need for learning environments to be supportive and free of barriers or discrimination. The policies both mention high quality education that prepares them for post-secondary studies, careers, and positive and active members of society.

Defining and Contextualizing Education Equity. Both policies are titled as education equity policies. The two case policies conceptualized education equity in

similar ways. First, each policy espoused commitments to high-quality education for all students, then provided some recognition of inequities that prevented all students from achieving the high-quality education, and then both policies introduced the idea of education equity as a remedy for the inequities. The second conceptualization of equity within the policy came with a connection between student identity and student success. Both policies noted that education equity would be achieved when student success was not predictable based on student identity and that resources needed to be distributed based on need rather than a degree of equivalence among groups, buildings, or locations. In contextualizing equity as the differentiation of resources based on need, both districts acknowledged the recognition of inequities in identity, race, and racism that further provided context into why the policy was necessary.

Recognition and Disruption of Inequities. Both policies recognized how historical, systemic, and structural inequalities have impacted historically marginalized populations. Both policies sought to disrupt inequities through the reallocation of resources, expanding opportunities and access for students, and by instituting targeted intervention, programs, and decision-making to attain the universally rigorous expectations espoused in both district's mission, values, and beliefs.

The reallocation of resources and equitable budgeting considerations were a cornerstone of the process to disrupt inequities in both school districts. Both policies recognized that to overcome resource inequities there resource allocation would need to be based on need. Both policies also distinguished what constitutes a resource. Shaker's policy defined the term 'resource' as including "money, programs and curriculum, staff

time, expertise, skills, experience and professional learning, information, facilities and materials and services such as technology, food service, and transportation" (Shaker Schools, 2016, p.2). CH-UH did not directly define resources but based on policy rhetoric the district's definition of resources aligned with Shaker.

Both policies discussed a need to improve or change instructional practices to meet the individual needs of students. The CH-UH policy discussed equitable access to high quality instruction and Shaker discussed promoting equity to meet the District's vision for all students to achieve and exceed at high levels. Both policies also echoed the concept of Universal Design for Learning in their policy rhetoric with the CH-UH policy setting a goal of creating multiple paths to meet the needs of diverse student populations and communities.

Accountability and Policy Evaluation. Both policies provided requirements for measuring the success of implementation of the policy, a process outlining how the district administration should report progress to the Board of Education and required the development of instrumentation used to evaluate the effectiveness and implementation of each policy. Both cases discussed the relationship and differences between Board of Education and district administration responsibilities. They both noted that the Board would hold the district administration responsible for the executing and implementation of the policy. They both required metrics and measurable progress. The equity tool that is described in each policy is meant to provide a consistent method to review programs, practices, and procedures to ensure and promote equity. Both policies required annual reports on the progress of implementation.

Policy Impact. Both policies mention multiple times in different wording that education equity despite targeting resources based on need, was beneficial to all students and to the community.

Uniqueness in Policy Language and Rhetoric

Both education equity policies both sought to end inequities and remove barriers to equal educational opportunities for students. In adopting this policy, the districts both fundamentally altered the lens from which decision-making occurred. While both policies put into place instructional, budgetary, and operational changes from which this policy was implemented, the policies took two distinct pathways in describing the need for the policy, naming, and discussion of those in the student population who were affected by inequities, theoretical approaches to education equity, and in the very definitions of education equity.

The Policy Describes School District Mission, Values, and Beliefs. Two sub-themes revealed uniqueness particular to the individual case policies: environment and the right to equitable education. In the Shaker policy there was an aspiration for a barrier-free environment that was free of bullying and harassment. In the CH-UH policy, the policy required the welcoming and empowerment of students and families from underrepresented families or families or color in district decision making. The CH-UH policy also uplifted the belief that every student had a right to an equitable education.

Defining and Contextualizing Education Equity. Both case policies shared many similarities that were outlined in the a previous section of this chapter. There was one unique aspect of the CH-UH policy definition and framing of education equity and

that is the explicit mention of race. The CH-UH policy conceptualized education equity as fostering a barrier-free environment where all students, regardless of their race, class or other personal characteristics, could benefit equally from their education. The Shaker policy's definition and conceptualization of equity does not explicitly mention race but instead uses more general language by using the phrase 'historically marginalized.'

Recognition and Disruption of Inequities. CH-UH set a goal to achieve equivalence in the allocation of staff by working to achieve an equitable distribution of staff across schools as an equity resource. Shaker's policy mentioned professional learning as a resource. The CH-UH policy had as an action step the necessity to give staff and students an opportunity to understand the impact of their identity on themselves and others.

One of the action steps in the CH-UH equity policy noted that the district would include additional partners who have "culturally-specific expertise" (CH-UH, 2016, p.1). The implications of this policy language committed the district to moving beyond internal resources to implement the policy.

The CH-UH policy mentioned partnership in two different contexts. The first focused on partnering with stakeholders who have demonstrated culturally specific expertise. The second mentioned families of the district's students as being empowered to serve as partners in the education of students, school planning and District decision making.

The CH-UH policy mentioned expert stakeholders, empowering community as partners in the education of students, the celebration and appreciation of student heritage

and cultural barriers, as well as students and families whose first language may not be English as part of its rhetoric in developing a more equitable education experience for students and families. The Shaker policy discussed student and family characteristics including "race, color, national origin, citizenship status, ancestry, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, economic status, marital status, pregnancy, age, disability or military status" (Shaker Schools, 2016, p.1).

A unique aspect of the CH-UH equity policy was the focus on the achievement gap between White students and students of color. Closing the racial achievement gap while also raising achievement for all students was a CH-UH district priority. The policy recognized achievement data from across the country revealed similar patterns and gaps as CH-UH had reported and recognized the gap in achievement success on state assessments as being at odds with what students could achieve. Another unique aspect of the CH-UH equity policy was the inclusion of language that required opportunities for students and staff to understand the impact of their own identity on themselves and others.

A unique aspect of the Shaker equity policy not found in the CH-UH policy was the focus on targeted universalism in policy language. The policy rhetoric noted that targeted universalism would guide Shaker's equity work. The policy defined the terms 'targeted' and 'universalism' along with the term 'targeted universalism' as part of the policy. Targeted universalism served as a sort of the policy theoretical underpinning.

Accountability and Policy Evaluation. A unique aspect of the CH-UH policy was its policy evaluation requirements. The policy required a biannual report on the

district's progress in achieving the goals outlined in the policy and also required updated policy action plans annually.

Policy Impact. While both the CH-UH and Shaker policies noted in their own ways that education equity benefits all students, the Shaker policy uniquely justified the rationale for equitable distribution of resources, expanded opportunities, and increased support for historically marginalized students because in the end (and without having to say it) even White students or non-marginalized student populations would benefit from the policy.

Uniquesameness in Policy Language and Rhetoric

Both the Shaker and CH-UH education equity policies sought to interrupt inequities both systemic and historical. However, the way in which each policy identified individuals and groups adversely impacted by systemic inequities was unique.

The Policy Describes School District Mission, Values, and Beliefs. Each policy uniquely discussed the ideal learning environment for their respective school district. CH-UH discussed fostering a barrier-free environment and Shaker discussed an environment free of bullying, harassment, and discrimination. While each school districts language was different they both uplifted an environment where students could be nurtured and succeed.

Defining and Contextualizing Education Equity. While both policies addressed education equity, there are distinctions and characteristics specific to each education equity policy. The CH-UH policy discussed education equity as a concept. First it defined equity by comparing it to equally saying "the concept of educational equity goes beyond

general principles of equality – where all students are treated the same – to fostering a barrier-free environment where all students, regardless of their race, class or other personal characteristics, have the opportunity to benefit equally from their education" (CH-UH, 2016, p.1). Shaker defined education equity as the "intentional distribution of District resources amongst schools, students and staff based on what each needs to achieve universal goals (Shaker Schools, 2019, p.1).

Recognition and Disruption of Inequities. The CH-UH mentions race out of the context of other protected classes while the Shaker mentions race more broadly, amid other protected classes and generally as a historically marginalized population.

Accountability and Policy Evaluation. The CH-UH policy noted that every staff member was responsible for the success and achievement of all students. The Shaker policy focused more on the changes to, and expectations of the district administration and the Board of Education. However, because of the broad nature of the policy and the several departments and divisions that were impacted by the policy, both districts committed to the systemic changes necessary that would affect how all staff see their role and responsibility.

Policy Impact. The policy language for the CH-UH policy focused on closing the achievement gap between White students and students of color. While the Shaker policy did not mention the achievement gap explicitly, both policies recognize equity as being a separation of assumed and actual student success from student identity.

Sameniqueness Policy Language and Rhetoric

It should be noted that both policies were almost entirely copied from other education equity policies. The Shaker policy is paraphrased or direct language from the education equity policy from the Madison Metropolitan School District in Madison, Wisconsin, and the CH-UH equity policy was a near direct of the Portland Public Schools of Portland, Oregon.

The Policy Describes School District Mission, Values, and Beliefs. The CH-UH and Shaker policies both address responsibility but in different ways. The Shaker policy included a section titled 'roles and responsibilities' that spelled out the roles and responsibilities between the Board of Education and the school district administration as their functions related to the policy. The CH-UH policy, however, discussed responsibility in a more philosophical manner having said twice in the policy rhetoric that the responsibility of disparities in education rested with adults and not children, and that it was the responsibility of district staff to end disparities by increasing opportunity and support for students.

Defining and contextualizing education equity. Both case policies operationalized equity using resource allocation, budgeting, revised and improved instructional practices, and human resources management. The CH-UH policy went into more detail and articulated specific goals, especially in staffing and professional learning. The addition of requirements to evaluate equivalence among the schools in distribution of staff specifically was distinct from the Shaker policy in that did not mention the distribution of staff.

Recognition and Disruption of Inequities. Both case policies recognized inequities, mention race and/or racism to varying degrees, and discussed the intentional or unintended trend of student success and student identity. The discussion of structural inequities in the CH-UH policy was focused on race, explicitly mentions students of color, while Shaker takes broader scope with terms such as historically marginalized student populations.

Accountability and Policy Evaluation. Both case policies mentioned measurable goals and metrics in evaluating the progress of implementation. Progress reporting was required at least annually, and both policies required the use of an equity analysis tool to evaluate programs, procedures, and processes district-wide. The way in which each policy detailed how the tool would be used has some particularity. Both The CH-UH equity analysis tool was used to review existing and new policies, programs, and procedures. The Shaker equity analysis tool was used to measure intentionality of district programs and activities and how those programs meet the needs of students.

Policy Impact. There is a shared rejection of continuing practices that perpetuate inequities in each of the case policies. The CH-UH policy noted in the introductory section there was recognition of the achievement gap and a rejection of the systems that perpetuated inequities. The Shaker policy discussed the ‘disruption’ of societal and historical inequities.

Policy Agenda and Formulation

Problem and Impetus for Policy Agenda

In the policymaking process the first stage is agenda setting wherein an issue is revealed and public officials begin to pay attention to an issue (Anderson, 2006). Based on the findings, the problem that is shared between the two school districts were both identified by various stakeholders including students, teachers, administration leadership and community members. In CH-UH, the problem was based on systemic and structural practices that have created barriers to Black students experiencing the same quality of education as their White peers. There was a recorded history of tracking Black students into remedial or less advanced course work, and there was a significant achievement gap between Black and White students. In Shaker, there were documented barriers for Black students enrollment in advanced coursework and other accounts of racial discrimination that have been shared by students, community members, and by the findings of research teams led by Ogbu (2003) and Ferguson (2021).

The superintendents of each school district used their combined personal experience and data informed evidence of inequities as the impetus for change. Both districts committed to equity by way of their strategic planning process and used the results of stakeholder feedback to announce viable action sets to address the inequities. Both the Shaker and CH-UH Board of Education already had strategic plan equity goals and objectives and the superintendents invoked those goals and objective to move towards writing an equity policy. The difference in strategy came in how the policy would be formed. Shaker's superintendent chose to empower the Equity Task Force to

draft the policy while CH-UH's superintendent drafted the policy internally within the administration.

Equity Task Force

Both school districts utilized a stakeholder committee to inform the work of education equity within the school district. While Shaker and CH-UH both utilized the name Equity Task Force (ETF) for their equity-focused committees, each group served different functions as related to the formulation of the policy. The Shaker ETF was tasked with drafting an education equity policy to recommend to the Board of Education. The group had a broad mandate to define what equity means within the Shaker Schools, and to evaluate equity as related to racial disparity, achievement gaps, underrepresentation of minorities in advanced-level course, educator work force diversity, gifted education programs, international families, LGBTQ community, and special education programs.

The CH-UH ETF was also created prior to the adoption of the education equity policy but had no formal role in formulating the policy. Instead, the CH-UH ETF was established to help develop Strategic Plan Goal II. Their task was to analyze district data focused around the academic performance of students of color compared to state academic performance. One of the essential suggestions coming from the ETF was the recommendation that an equity policy should be established focused on closing the achievement gap. Their mission was to be an advisory group that worked to implement the education equity policy and equity focused strategic goals and objectives.

Both groups were made of various school personnel including teachers, principals, district leadership, and community members. They both had leadership

structures, met monthly and divided the work of the whole group into smaller sub-committees. A key difference in leadership structure between the ETF committees was that the co-chairs were non-district personnel community members that were selected by the superintendent in Shaker while the CH-UH Equity Task Force is led by school district personnel.

The CH-UH ETF was established and remained an entity throughout the creation, implementation, and adoption of the equity policy and the Shaker ETF was dissolved after the adoption of the education equity policy. After the adoption of the Shaker policy, the superintendent empaneled the Equity Implementation Team and then after that he created the Equity Advisory and Action Team to assist with the implementation and operationalization of the policy.

Policy Adoption

The case policies share sameniqueness in membership as each Board of Education has five members elected to four-year terms. At the time of the adoption of the policy, the CH-UH Board of Education had three White members all of whom were white men and two Black members. The Shaker Board of Education had three White members including two men and one woman and two Black members both who were women.

Both cases were adopted in similar ways. Because both case policies are formal policies that were adopted by Boards of Education, a legally required process governed the adoption of each policy. Both policies were required to have three readings at public Board of Education meetings and were required to be passed by a majority vote. Both school districts elected to adopt their education equity policy with a package of other

policies that required adoption or revision. What is ‘samenique’ about the CH-UH process of adopting the policy compared to Shaker was that there was much more Board member input into the editing of the policy during the three readings process. Shaker’s Board members asked questions and clarifications about the language of the policy but no revisions of the policy occurred during the three formal readings. More specifically, the CH-UH policy was revised to meet the standards of comforts of two White Board members who shared concerns about the impact of education equity on high achieving students, and the other who shared concerns about the policy being too focused around issues of race.

Policy Implementation

Implementation Committees

Elements of sameness and sameniqueness existed between the case policies and their implementation processes. Once each case policy was adopted by their respective Boards of Education, the district administrations both started a process of implementation that consisted of developing a team of stakeholders to work together to operationalize the policy. Shaker dissolved the Equity Task Force, which was the committee that drafted the policy, and created the Equity Implementation Team from selected candidates through an application process. In CH-UH, the team of school personnel that created the strategic planning goal focused around equity would eventually become the Equity Task Force that would work to implement the policy. Both of these implementation committees were led by district administrators but had others who served in leadership roles.

What was unique about the CH-UH Equity Task Force (ETF) was that it was directly involved in the operationalization of the policy. Team members led workshops, trainings, and professional learning opportunities for district staff. The CH-UH ETF developed its own mission and vision and had a community-facing presence. The Shaker Equity Implementation Team served mostly in an advisory capacity to the district administration. They had an advisory role in the interview process of the district's Executive Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

Organizational Restructuring

One unique aspect of the way in which CH-UH implemented the equity policy was that the district administration chose not to create an equity focused office. Shaker decided to create a new department within the administration that had a cabinet-level director and who reported to the Superintendent as well as a staff including a Learning Specialist and a Coordinator. This department, however, would not be official operationalized until summer of 2020. The initial work of operationalizing the policy was led by the Chief of Staff with assistance from leaders and coordinators from various departments, consultants, and the Equity Implementation Team.

CH-UH also operationalized the equity policy with a cabinet-level director, the Director of School Leadership, as the district official that would lead the work of implementing the policy. In CH-UH, the superintendent remained part of the implementation committee and in Shaker, the superintendent did take an active role in selecting the implementation committee but did not participate as an official member.

Professional Learning and Equity Trainings

Both CH-UH and Shaker started to train staff within a year of the adoption of the policy starting first with district and school level leaders then followed by instructional and operations staff. At the professional learning days prior to the start of the school year, both districts reserved time for equity-focused training. Both school districts offered time during professional learning sessions to read and review the equity policy, remind employees of the policies alignment with the strategic plan, mission, and values. The professional learning experiences of both case policies started with self-reflection on self-identity, the identity of others, bias, and creating a culture of respect towards students. CH-UH used the words and phrases like implicit and explicit bias, self-identity, and marginalization first offering a historical perspective on the marginalization of people of color and then connecting participants personal experiences and perceptions of others. Shaker also focused on implicit, and explicit bias, self-identity, and marginalization. Anti-racist ideology, and discretionary space. The frequency of the professional learning for both school districts included an equity-focused session in the days prior to the start of school in the fall, and various building level trainings and a district wide session in the winter or spring.

Instruction

Shaker's equity-focused implementation in instructional practices included deleveling classes for middle and high school math and literacy courses, adopting a universal design for learning framework, and implementing a universal math curriculum.

The district, having the International Baccalaureate (IB) framework as part of the educational experience, used the equity policy to center IB as an equity-focused framework from which all initiatives in learning and teaching should be based. The district made clear that the two pillars of its learning and teaching were the equity policy and the IB. CH-UHs equity-focused implementation in instructional practices included focusing on monitoring and strategically closing the achievement gap, increasing Black student enrollment in AP courses and working. By focusing their efforts on conversations, trainings on implicit bias and working to intentionally recruit and retain Black students in AP courses, CH-UH operationalized achievement gap closing which was an essential component of its equity policy.

Summary

The CH-UH and Shaker education equity policies were adopted to address structural inequities learning and teaching, curriculum, budgeting, resource allocation, special education and gifted services, Board-Superintendent relationships, policy, and decision-making processes demonstrated that while the two districts defined education equity in similar ways, the policy language indicated distinct approaches to attaining education equity.

Part 4: Findings Related to Critical Race Theory

Introduction

The purpose of this section is to reexamine the case policies and the policymaking process through the lens of critical race theory (CRT). Close readings of the policy language with the CRT tenets offers an alternative perspective for the creation, adoption, and implementation of the education equity policies in Shaker Heights City School District (Shaker) and Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District (CH-UH). The coding framework seen in Table 5 defines CRT tenets and each tenets application in this study. The findings for both districts will be reported together.

Table 5

Coding Framework for Equity and Critical Race Theory Tenets

Coding construct	Definition of coding terms	Case study application
Education Equity	Policies, practices, and programs that work to eliminate educational barriers, provide equal educational opportunities, and to make certain that historically marginalized student populations meet the same standards expected of all students.	Any reference to the word equity or a phrase that addresses any part of the education equity definition.
Interest convergence	The dynamic where the advantages for a majority group increase beyond the gains of a marginalized group even when the reforms are seen as benefitting the marginalized group.	References make to insinuate the equity policy will benefit all students.
Prominence of Race and Racism	The belief that race and racism influence the understanding of policies and laws and that, regardless of intent, the ways in which these rules are implemented are prejudiced by people's perceptions and performance of race.	Any reference acknowledging the systemic nature of race.
Structural Determinism	The concept that a mode of thought or widely shared practices significantly determine social outcomes, typically without conscious knowledge	References to practices that place a group at a disadvantage i.e. resource allocation, opportunities, budget, academic achievement.
Colorblind Language	A lens of race positing that by treating individuals without regard race, ethnicity, skin-color, or culture is akin to equality. precludes explicit examination of racism's potential contributions to inequities.	Inexplicit references and expressions of race and ethnicity within the policy language.

Note. The citations for definitions used for the coding construct are all available in the Operational Definitions section in Chapter 1.

Shaker Heights City School District

Emerging Themes from the Policy

The purpose of this section is to report the themes and concepts that emerged from a close text analysis of the education equity policy. Upon analysis of the Shaker Schools Education Equity Policy and interview comments several themes and concepts emerged. This section examined the policy narrative through the lens of critical race theory (CRT). A thorough reading of the text with the CRT framework as a lens from which to analyze the narrative revealed distinct themes that offer alternative assessments and explanations for the policy.

This analysis assists in answering the research question: What are the constructs of equity policies in Cleveland Heights-University Heights and Shaker Heights City School Districts?

Distribution of Resources

The policy discourse emphasized the importance of the operationalization aspect of policy implementation, more than reciting mandates and action-based resolutions. The policy detailed guiding principles that restructured how the district allocated resources. The policy was explicit in its declaration that equity does not mean equal and that resources would be distributed based on specific needs, intentionally targeting buildings, locations or groups of students or staff. The policy noted that resources would be distributed on the merit of equity and not equality meaning district resources could be distributed based on the needs of students or staff. The policy language reticulated that resource distribution should provide for every student to access to high-quality education

even when resources are distributed unequally. In addition to emphasizing a new way of thinking of allocating resources across the district, the policy also discussed the importance of including the budgetary process.

Decision-Making. The policy placed the responsibility of policy implementation on the district administration. The administration was tasked with the creation and implementation of equity-based practices. This included developing accountability methods that would assess alignment of the district policy implementation with the principles articulated in the equity policy.

This policy discourse articulated required actions of both the Board of Education and the District administration as related to the purpose of attaining education equity. In the Shaker School district, the Board-Administration relationship is articulated in Board policy supported by state law that says the enactment of policies is the most important function of the Board and the execution of the Board adopted policies is the function of the Superintendent as the Board's executive officer (Ohio Rev. Code, 1995; Shaker Schools, 2015).

The district administration was responsible for making recommendations to the Board based on the guiding principles of the education equity policy, recommended a tool/method to the Board by which the district can assess alignment of recommendations with the guiding principles, and reported on the progress of equity implementation in the annually prepared budget and Human Resources report.

Interest Convergence

The qualifier ‘all’, ‘every’ or ‘each’ student was applied in more than half of references to students. This focus on the policy benefits for all students was consistent throughout the document. For example, the use of the phrase ‘all students’ ‘every student’ or ‘each student’ (or a derivative of those phrases appears in the policy language in 19 of 35 references to students in the policy language. The policymakers decided to focus on all students, universal outcomes, and expectations but missed the opportunity to say with a clear voice that race and racism has played an integral role in the district’s understanding of why student success can be determined by a student’s race.

The policy detailed how some resources could be distributed universally and some could be targeted to a specific location or group of people in the district. It also noted how education equity works to intentionally distribute resources based on need and to achieve universal goals. It noted that school-based programs and opportunities should be targeted for the support of select students and yet must still be accessible to all students.

The policy discourse focused on the importance of education equity benefiting all students even adopting a theoretical underpinning called “targeted universalism” which espouses universal benefits by targeting interventions and support for students.

The policy was clear in defining the intended outcome of the policy being that students’ identities would not predetermine or predict the students’ success in school. The policy language did so by focusing policy language on equity initiatives being a benefit to all students. The district rationalized the potential for unequal treatment and resource allocation.

> Some resources may be distributed in a universal manner; however, other resources may be targeted to a particular building, location or group of students or staff and continues to emphasize that even if resources are systemically differentiated in its distribution, that every student should be provided equitable access. The recurring message that the policy, even while recognizing systemic inequities that negatively impacted marginalized student populations, was still meant to benefit all students (Shaker Schools, 2019a, p.1).

According to this policy, to provide an equitable experience for all students is to make it possible for every student to succeed. Why? The over reliance of the interest and benefit to all students in the policy converges with the interests and benefit of the policy for Black students. It was evident in the intention of the policymakers, the foundational research, and discussions prior to policy drafting, that this policy was meant to improve the education experience for Black students. Nevertheless, the policy language is decidedly limited in addressing issues of race, racism, Blackness, or color on its own without qualifications or equivocations.

Colorblind Rhetoric

The policy discourse noted that achieving equity meant students' identities would not predetermine or predict school success and also recognized historical and continuing structural inequities and declared the intention to disrupt societal and historical inequities. The overgeneralization of the phrase historically marginalized students diminished the policies impact on Black students.

In an effort to be inclusive of all identities and characteristics, the district's efforts created more space for whiteness instead of amplifying and uplifting historically marginalized students. This removed the focus from the most historically documented cases of inequities including racial disparities and the underrepresentation of Black students in advanced-level courses, and created a policy that did not address those disparities. From the beginning of the work of the policy, the Equity Task Force, who drafted the policy, decided the interest of Black students or a focus on race was too narrow. Interview Participant A said "I think the policy was trying to encompass a lot of marginalized groups, so they didn't want to focus on race and racism in language. But I think they put it as marginalized groups' historically marginalized groups, meaning Black and Brown."

Discovering racial inequities is not a new development for Shaker Schools. John Ogbu (2003) found racial in his research that mostly Black students were enrolled in lower-level classes and mostly White students were enrolled in higher-level classes. He noted that school officials in Shaker Heights were fully aware that Black students were not performing academically as well as White students. The district, through their own internal data as presented to the Equity Task Force, concluded there were gaps in achievement compounded and student testimonials supported by observational data have supported teacher and systemic racial bias as being a key factor. So why, when the district has all the data and information necessary to address the issue head on, did they choose to not name Black students or racism directly in their policy? Mansfield and Thachik (2016) suggested in a similar policy analysis that this was interest convergence

in practice. The repeated assurance that this policy benefits all students, was an attempt to appeal to the broader community, and, perhaps subliminally, was an attempt to prevent White community members from questioning the value of the policy by making clear that the policy would not take anything away from the privileged population of the district. The policy language, if worded differently and intended differently could have been a powerful tool to require the exploration of how the intersections of Blackness with other identities could be leveraged to achieve equity for Black students.

Replacing Equity with Equality

The policy discourse stated in several ways, that equity does not mean equal and that resource allocation will be targeted in order to meet specific needs. Focusing resources toward a specific group based on need is a part of equity. However, the policy language was crafted so in a way that lessoned the impact on Black students. For example, the policy said, school-based programs and opportunities should be accessible to all students, but can, and should, be targeted to provide specific supports for select students to succeed. The history of Shaker Heights is one where certain parents of privileged status, whiteness, or wealth were able to advocate for the programs and opportunities for their child. The equity policy discourse codified a parents ability to enroll their child in a program or opportunity specifically created to benefit the success of Black students; if the white student was also part of the Shaker defined list of historically marginalized students.

For example, the Bridge's Program at the High School was created to increase the number of Black students in Advanced Placement classes. The program first targeted

A.P. U.S. History (APUSH) Black student enrollment. First, there was a concerted effort to schedule Black students into APUSH. Once students were enrolled, the student cohort participated in a two-week summer program with added support meetings and events during the school year. The program interconnected schools programs and instructional strategies to increase student success with note taking and writing skills, provided the necessary tools, and dedicated attention for Black students to succeed and stay in APUSH. The first year of Bridges, in 2016, there was a marginal increase and much higher retention in Advanced Placement (AP) scores for Black students. In school year 2017-2018, the Black student population doubled and Black student retention increased. The program expanded to include Pre-AP Math and English course for rising 9th and 10th graders. Interview Participant B noted that the first year after the Bridge's program, there were many more Black students in A.P. U.S. History, Black students were staying in the course and not dropping, and there was even a culture of perseverance created for the students because they knew that they were supported. He added that the students felt like they could not drop because they had familiar faces in the class with them and they knew the Bridges cohort and teachers supported them. However, the Bridge's program was eventually made accessible to non-Black students. Interview Participant B said,

> There was pressure from various white parents to make the Bridge's program available to more than just Black students. Therefore, the administration did it. See, Shaker wants to embed equality within our equity practices. For example, we meet monthly with the Bridges students. We have lunch with them, we address some things and talk about different topics that are sensitive to the Black student

> experience. Moreover, when I signed up for this, I thought I was meeting with Black kids to help Black kids. However, eventually any student that could claim underrepresentation was allowed to participate and I saw the Black kids become marginalized in the space that was created for them to thrive and feel free. You can now be White, have an IEP, and participate in Bridges. You can have a 504 or be Asian and be in Bridges. I keep raising this issue as problematic. I want to talk about things that pertain to Black students because they have a unique experience in the classroom. But then I have a White student in Bridges and he is there because he has an IEP. Now, he is getting more support than the Black students because now not only are his challenges addressed via the implementation of his IEP he's now also getting what we are giving the students in the Bridges program and in addition to that, the Black students in the Bridges program no longer get the experience they should have because it is no longer a space for them to address their issues. Therefore, the White student's presence has diminished the experience for the Black students. And we now have to accommodate the White student in a space that was meant for Black students to be able to get what they need in order to succeed in primarily White populated classes. So now, Bridges is supposed to serve any student that is underrepresented. Now, the White student with the IEP gets the same services as a student who is Black. You know what that is? Equality.

Further, there is no direct mention of Black students in this policy although based on the priorities of the district as noted in the 2014-2019 Strategic Plan; it could be

assumed that race and achievement gap were the focus of this policy and a fundamental part of the purpose for the creation of the document. The strategic plan introduction stated "However, for others, the Shaker Experience is not currently providing sufficient rigor and engagement for success in college and careers. Specifically, we see achievement gaps between Black students and those of other races; between students who are economically disadvantaged and those who are not; between students with disabilities and students who are not disabled. We also need to continue to stretch students who are already achieving at high levels and students "in the middle." (Shaker Schools, 2014, p.10)

Historically, the achievement gap has been a phrase that education scholars or policymakers used when discussing historically marginalized students in public education (Diamond, 2006; Noguera, 2009; Ogbu, 2003; Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003). The phrase 'achievement gap' did not appear in the policy language. The policy discourse by way of its definition of equity also alluded to the achievement gap in its emphasis on achieving equity meaning students' identities did not predetermine or predict school success.

The policy discussed historical and current systemic inequities as the problem of practice that resulted in disparate outcomes for marginalized student populations (Shaker Schools 2019a, p.1) but focused most of its attention, at least in policy rhetoric, on the benefits to all students seemingly connected to the district's core commitment to the success of every student.

Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District

Emerging Themes

Upon analysis of the Cleveland Heights-University Heights (CH-UH) Education Equity Policy and interview comments several themes and concepts emerged. Examination of the policies revealed several critical race theory themes. This analysis assists in answering the research question: What are the constructs of equity policies in Cleveland Heights-University Heights and Shaker Heights City School Districts?

Interest Convergence: Equity Must Benefit All

The CH-UH (2016) policy sought to change CH-UH practices to achieve and maintain educational equity. The policy was intended to benefit all students and mentions students 35 times in the language of the policy. Several times in the policy the phrase "all students" was accompanied by a recognition of race or students of color needing to be impacted by the policy. According to this policy, educational equity goes beyond general principles of equality where every student is treated the same but goes beyond that understanding to where all students are learning in a barrier-free environment where all students, regardless of their race, class, or identity can have the opportunity to benefit equally from their education. In the district's conceptualization of education equity through this policy, they emphasize access to educational opportunities and achievement and benefits for all students, along with the entire community.

Community Engagement: Welcoming and Empowering Students, Families, and the Community

Goal F of the CH-UH (2016) policy rhetoric focused on how the policy should affect the experience of students, families, and the community while interacting with the school district. The policy activated students and families as essential partners in planning, district decision-making and in the education of students. Furthermore, this goal called for the creation of welcoming environments that were reflective of the ethnic diversity of the student and community population. This goal could be cross-referenced back to the policy language in the introduction of the document that noted "a student whose history and heritage are appreciated and celebrated will learn better…" (p.1).

Equity: Defining and Framing the Concept of Education Equity

The CH-UH (2016) policy rhetoric conceptually defined equity in comparison to equality. According to the CH-UH conceptualization, whereas in an equal environment all students are treated the same, an equitable environment is one where equality is not based on how a student is treated but instead, equality rests in each student's opportunity to access the benefits of their education. The district based its concept of education of the idea where race, class, and identity should not influence a student's ability to succeed.

The policy inserted education equity in policies, practices, programs, personnel and resources of the school district for the effect of access to educational opportunity and achievement. Achieving education equity was noted in the policy rhetoric in two key outcomes (CH-UH, 2016). First, closing the achievement gap between White students

and students of color while raising achievement for all students and second, race must cease to be a predictor of student achievement and success (CH-UH, 2016).

The Prominence of Race and Racism

The theme of the prominence of race and racism emerged from both the policy analysis and interviews. When asked about how race and racism is discussed as it related to the equity policy, interview participants had varied responses. Interview Participant G, a Black male teacher who was part of the Equity Task Force (ETF) noted that while the implementation of the policy by way of the work of the ETF addressed race and racism, there was still hesitance surrounding the discussion of race. He said "we got into it at full speeds and really adopted the phrase 'anti-racism'. However, in a professional setting it is hard because we do not want to call anybody a racist. That is not even the point or the agenda. The idea is, we have some cultural issues that we know are bogging down our students. We know that academically there is this gap, and we know that somehow the environment and our [staff] are playing a part. So how are we going to hit that target? And sometimes I feel like we dance around the issue still.

When asked about how the equity work has encourage the discussion of race and racism, Participant G mentioned that White staff members engagement in the discussion of race and racism was dependent on their engagement in the equity work. Whereas people of color, specifically Black folks, whether engaged in the formal work on equity implementation or not are gaining insights and taking moments of reflection on their own biases. "I think it's starting to make Black students and staff look at things differently. Those people who are investing in the work are trying to look at where our biases are and

to see how, even in my Black skin or even in my Hispanic skin, I perpetuate racism and then how can I do the work to change."

Centering the Margins: Improving the Educational Experience for Students and Families of Color

Race was mentioned in an inclusive manner such as in phrases like 'regardless of their race' or 'students of all races'. Race was also mentioned in the policy rhetoric's discussion of the achievement gap, and as a "predictor of student achievement and success" (CH-UH, 2016, p.1). The phrase 'students of color' was mentioned explicitly in the policy language discussing the "disparity between White students and students of color" and while discussing the differentiation of "resources to support the success of all students, including students of color" (CH-UH, 2016, p.1).

This policy made the closing of the achievement gap the district's top priority and that disparity could only be discussed by mentioning race, and the disparity between White students and students of color. It added a call to create an environment that was welcoming and empowering to underrepresented families of color, which further emphasized that this policy was meant to positively affect the educational experience for a specific set of people who have been historically marginalized. The explicit nature of the inclusion of underrepresented people of color (in the context of school planning and district decision-making) and in the explicit use of race to highlight the disparate experience for students of color provided an understanding around what this policy aimed to accomplish.

Summary

This section of the study revealed findings related to tenets of critical race theory and revealed, through document analysis and interview participants, emergent critical themes including interest convergence, colorblindness, the pervasiveness of racism, and whiteness as property within the language of the two case policies. Discovering the connections of policy language and policymaking to critical race theory, allows for further discussion and conclusions to be made based on the implications of the critical and traditional findings discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Recommendations

Summary of Study

This research study was a comparative case study analysis of the education equity policies of Shaker Heights (Shaker Schools) and Cleveland Heights-University Heights (CH-UH) City School District. In this study, this researcher discovered how two suburban public school districts addressed education equity in policy. The comparative analysis focused on the language and rhetoric of the case policies as adopted by each respective Board of Education using critical race theory as a lens from which to understand and compare each policy. This chapter is organized to provide a summary of the research study to and discuss the findings presented in the previous chapter. It also offers implications for action and recommendations for future research.

While some school districts have implemented education equity policies there is a gap in literature on the study of how those policies came to exist. The purpose of this comparative case study was to glean understanding of the construct of two school district education equity policies and to gain understanding of how the districts addressed the problem of inequity in education. Using a critical race theoretical lens allowed this researcher to examine the policy making process, and examine the individuals and systems involved in the policy making process.

Specifically, the study was guided by the following questions:

1. What are the constructs of the equity policies in Cleveland Heights-University Heights and Shaker Heights City School Districts?

2. In what ways has the policy language been successfully and unsuccessfully implemented?

This study was a comparative case study, which made for a viable choice for qualitative research and was the most appropriate method for this study. Document analysis, archival research, and interview are three key qualitative research methods and were utilized in this research study. The comparison of the two case policies allowed for this researcher to examine, compare, and contrast data and obtain an understanding of how these policies address race and racism.

The units of analysis for this study were the two education equity policies adopted by the Cleveland Heights-University Heights and Shaker Heights City School Districts. Both case policies come from school districts that have been classified as suburbs by the Ohio Department of Education. The study of suburban school districts are essential to the literature on race and racism as suburban Black populations in school districts increase. It should also be noted that these school districts both have Black student populations that are disproportionate to the Black resident population of the school district. This means more and more Black students are being educated by the school district while an increasing number of White families remain in these communities while opting not to use the public schools.

Data collection included documents from school district public records, Board of Education meeting minutes, agendas, video recordings, and presentations. School district communications as well as publicly available interviews and news articles were used as part of the data collected for this study. This researcher also interviewed eight

participants with two being involved in the creation, adoption and implementation of the CH-UH policy and six being involved in the Shaker policy. Although each participant had valuable insight to add about the individual policies, data collected from the interviews revealed findings that applied across and between cases. Interview participants were selected with criterion-based sampling.

Policy analysis was completed in two parts. The first part was a within-case analysis of each case policy with a deductive approach. The Shaker policy was analyzed first and then the CH-UH policy was analyzed. First, this researcher completed several deep readings of the Shaker education equity policy using a codebook that included codes typical in critical policy analysis themes and tenets of critical race theory. Next, the creation, adoption, and implementation construct of the policy was investigated through document analysis and research of archival records. Interviews were conducted for additional emergent findings about the case policies, to triangulate and confirm findings from the initial policy analysis and research on the policy making process, and to discuss their perceptions and experiences as related to the implementation of the education equity policies.

Once the within-case analysis for each policy was completed, this researcher identified codes in each policy that held a connection between similarities or differences among the codes. Based on the degree of difference or similarity between the cases, the codes were labeled as having sameness, sameniqueness, uniquesameness, or uniqueness. The report of the within-case analyses of each case included findings on the creation, adoption, and implementation of the policy. The cross-case analysis included findings on

quadrangulational similarities and difference of the policy rhetoric and language. The findings on the comparison between the case policy creation, adoption, and implementation are discussed as well.

Through this study, data examined revealed three major findings:

1. Policymakers are willing to sacrifice racial justice for inclusion, equity does not come at the expense of excellence, although this argument has and will continue to been used to protect the interest of White people and property.
2. Policy transfer can support the argument for and justification of policies necessary to improve the Black experience in schools. However, policy transfer will not protect a policy from being weakened for the sake of the comfort of White people.
3. Policy language intended to improve the Black experience in schools should clearly mention Black persons and people in the text of the policy.

These findings are supported by data provided in Chapter 4 and offers implications for the creation, adoption and implementation of education equity policy at the school board of education level of governance.

Discussion

This section will reintroduce and address the research questions and will discuss the major findings using relevant literature. Implications for practitioners and recommendations for future researcher are also discussed. Recommendations are offered based on the discussion of the major findings

Based on the first research question that guided this study, data from this research found that the construct of both case policies are what Anderson (2006) would call

substantive policies. The policies both presented a problem of practice and they both included action items that detail what the district would do to attain education equity in their respective schools, and there exists measures of accountability and reporting of metrics about the progress of the implementation of the policy. Both policies were created through a policymaking process that included establishing a problem, agenda, drafting and adoption, implementation and evaluation of the equity policy.

Implication One

Based on the findings, this research found that involving a more historically oppressed stakeholders in the drafting and recommendation of the policy can empower stakeholders to push the boundaries of comfort of policymakers who may be hesitant to adopt race-based policies. As Anderson (2006) noted, the policy process helps emphasize relationships among the participants in policymaking. The two case policies, at different points, involved input from various stakeholders that would be impacted by the policy. The Shaker policy was recommended by a stakeholder committee that represented a diverse cross section of the school district employment, age, racial, and gender demographics. The CH-UH policy was drafted and recommended by the superintendent and the Director of School Leadership. From a critical lens, this allowed for the Board of Education to critique and edit the policy based on their perceptions of what language they would be comfortable supporting.

As Garces and da Cruz (2017) noted, “Generating power among marginalized communities to enact policy change can help communities of color avoid giving up too much to align their interests with Whites” (p.336). Empowering more Black communities

members to take part in the policy drafting process has the power to build social capital among marginalized communities and makes the policy making process stronger because more voices impacted by the success or failure of the policy are part of the process.

Recommendation One

School leadership should empower stakeholders to take part in every aspect of the policy process. The voices of those the policy is meant to serve is essential to the policies credibility and impact (Mansfield & Thachik, 2016). When the policymaking entity is representative of a community of people, it is essential to the core foundation of the policy that there be a diverse cross-section of people affected by the policy included in the policymaking process (Mystal, 2022).

The Shaker policy, because it was recommended by a committee including the voice of historically marginalized staff, students, and community members and had much more value to the Board of Education members, none of whom took part in the policy drafting process. In addition, the work of the Equity Task Force (ETF) was reported at monthly Board meetings with ETF members present at the meetings to provide and show support for their work. While the CH-UH policy was adopted unanimously, its language was weakened to appease the concerns of White men on the Board of Education. For example, instead of adopting a policy of 'racial educational equity', the title of the policy was edited to just 'educational equity'. The CH-UH superintendent had to remind the Board that community members wanted an equity policy that focused on the inequities experienced by Black students. Had there been a similar committee of stakeholders that concluded that it was important to the impact of the policy that 'racial' be included as

part of the policy language, there may have been more pressure on the Board members as policymakers to maintain the language that was recommended to them. By keeping the drafting of the policy a task of central administration employees, the Board maintained a level of authority over the content of the policy that would have been reduced in comparison to a diverse stakeholder group of employees and constituents.

Implication Two

Based on the findings, this research study found that if given the option of naming or not naming race and racism explicitly in the text of the policy, policymakers should choose to explicitly name racism as a root cause of inequity. Shaker, in its policy, attempted to include many protected classes beyond the scope of race in their policy. The rationale reported during the policy drafting process included an attempt to recognize that inequities exist in the schools beyond race and that students within identities such as gender, disability, sexual orientation were also harmed by inequity, and thus, the equity policy should include those identities as well. McLaren (1994) calls this critical multiculturalism and noted that rather than obscuring the racial realities of school settings where whiteness is influential, educators must recognize how race is exists in schools. Only when race and racism are openly discussed will schools develop a more equitable environment (Banks, 1997). The findings of this study found that at various points in the policy development process when the comfort level or security of whiteness was perceived to be threatened the reaction was to either change the language being used or to make the initiative open to more students. Originally, the Bridges program at the high school was offered to Black students as a way to increase participation in the AP U.S.

History course. The cohort of students would depend on each other for comradery and academic support. But interpretation of the equity policy allowed for non-Black students who qualified under non-race based protected classes to participate in the Bridges program. According to an interview participant, students reported feeling like a space that was intended to be safe for Black students to openly learn and socialize was being reclaimed by White students. Colorblind discourse, such as including White students as part of protected classes in a program intended to help Black students makes it that much more difficult for the Black students to fully take advantage of the program.

Bell (1992) noted explicitly that we must continue to address the reality that we live in a society where racism is institutionalized and with this understanding, in order to advance civil rights required a realistic understanding of the permanence of race (Garces & da Cruz, 2017). In the pursuit of including many, the policy further excluded Black students. As Chapman (2013) reported, colorblindness ultimately served to exacerbate, not alleviate issues of race and racism for students of color in a context where whiteness still holds power and access to opportunities.

Shaker as a community has had generations of discussions on how to deal with issues of race and racism. Both Ogbu (2003) and Ferguson (2007) have concluded that there has been race-based discrimination historically and in the modern context of the schools and yet with all of the research, community conversations, Black excellence initiatives, and programs intended to reduce disparities between White and Black students, the district would have been better off focusing its equity policy on Black students: the most historically aggrieved student population. Through the intersectionality

of the Black experience, other marginalized identities could have been recognized. Black students are also Black women, or Black men who have IEPs and 504s, Black girls who are non-gender conforming, Black students from a lower income neighborhood. Through the lens of race, intersectionality provides a useful lens for developing racial literacy (Núñez, 2014) and could serve as another lens to extend racial justice and realize visions of equity. By simply presenting other marginalized identities alongside race, racism, and white supremacy will continue to flourish.

Recommendation Two

Policymakers should adopt racial educational equity policies that explicitly address race and racism even if it makes White people uncomfortable. It is a better practice to offer in policy language direct and honest language regarding the issues of race. Not doing so sustains white supremacy and white privilege because in obfuscating the mentioning of racism for the direct influence of renaming of race in a policy, the interests of the White people remains the central focus. Whiteness will be centered unless an intentional effort is made to uncenter it. However, the policymaking process, even at the local level, is a political process and that often means the influence of White and/or influential communities take precedent over the interests of Black people. To curb dissent to more powerful examinations of race and racism, policymakers must spend time.

As Tittle (1995), Kaeser (2020), Ogbu (2003) and Ferguson (2007) have demonstrated in their work studying and chronicling the racism and inequities in Shaker and in the community that makes up the CH-UH School District, students understand the

racial dynamics that exists in the schools and while they may not have they language to talk about tracking, they know it occurs.

Students should be an essential part of the evaluation process of the policy and implementation effort. They are and have been made to feel uncomfortable talking about issues of race and racism because they must be both a victim of and the expert in their racial identities. So, policymakers should make Black student voice a larger part of the policy drafting and implementation process. As Chapman (2013) reported, race is an unsafe space for students. When policymakers attempt to ignore race or when they address issues of race and racism without properly naming and centering racism in the solutions, or when policymakers attempt to make the conversation about race more palatable and less uncomfortable for White stakeholders, they take away the power that an anti-racist proactive recognition of race and racism could be the betterment of the students who experience the impact of racism every day.

It is important that policymakers include policy language that is authentic to the needs of the students that unequivocally addresses issues and problems that the policy attempts to address. Policy success is not inevitable with the use of policy transfer (Dolowitz & Marsh, 2000). Instead for example, effort should be made to ensure that the language used in the policy address issues of race and racism directly and explicitly. If there is an achievement gap between White and Black students, and historical data supports that historical and systemic inequities has exacerbated the gap, then the policy language should say so unequivocally. Using phrases like ‘historically marginalized’ or even ‘students of color’ for that matter paints too broad a brush and has the potential to

erase Black students from receiving much needed reprieve from the inequities they endure both in school and society.

For Shaker, in an attempt to be inclusive erased Blackness from their educational equity policy. This phenomenon echoed the impact of intersectional invisibility discussed by Coles and Pasek (2020) who specifically focused on Black women living at the intersection of sexism and racism and how they are harmed when their identity as Black women is not recognized.

Data from both school districts do not find extreme gaps in achievement or access to opportunities for all students of color. Only Black students are unequivocally the most negatively impacted racial identity. The CH-UH policy recognizes the disparity between White and Black students and the Shaker policy does not mention Black identity at all. The findings of this study showed that the mention of White and Black racial disparities was a point of contention for the CH-UH Board of Education. At least one Board member tried to push back several times against the idea that the academic disparities were based on more than just race and goes beyond Blackness and Whiteness. But they had the conversations albeit tough and contentious and uncomfortable. This, openness would turn out to be a solid foundation for CH-UH to grow its efforts in education equity and to attain more buy-in from stakeholders on the viability of their efforts.

Implication Three

This study found that voluntary policy transfer, being the intentional transfer of policy language from one institutions policy to a new institution's policy, was utilized in the creation of both case policies. Both case policies were adopted primarily having

borrowed policy language from other previously adopted policies. The Shaker Heights policy was modeled from the Madison, Wisconsin Metropolitan School District education equity policy and the CH-UH policy was modeled after the Portland, Oregon Public School racial educational equity policy. Both policies as discussed by Evans and Davies (1999) were examples of voluntary policy transfers and went through levels of the policy transfer process they describe. Policy transfer as a method of improving policy is common and can assist in the creation of a successful policy in other institutions.

Policy transfer has traditionally been discussed in research discussing the sharing or lesson borrowing of policymakers at the international for national level (Evans & Davies, 1999). It is a concept that moves across disciplines and contexts. Policy transfer is used as a method to ensure policy success. Because policy language is adopted by another institution the presumption is that similar language taken into the context of a new organization will be just as effective.

The question and determination as to whether the two case policies of this study were effective is not the intention of this research study. And because the scope of the findings focused on only the first two academic years following the formal adoption of each case policy, a determination of policy effectiveness would be best suited for future research. However, there is a basis for discussing whether the policy language was success in spurring the implementation and operationalization of the policy.

By borrowing from and adding on to Dolowitz and Marsh's (2000) framing of successful policy transfer, as being the extent to which the policy achieves the intended goals set by the policymakers and/or the perception of success by the key stakeholders,

one could call both policy transfers a success. Both case policies were adopted and from the language of the policy, a plan for implementation was created and executed by district administration. And at the conclusion of year two following the adoption of the policy, both school districts had successfully initiated the implementation of policy goals, there had been updates and reports to the respective Boards of Education, and there was work being done to include community members in engaging in conversations about equity, race, and racism. This is not, however, due solely to successfully drafted policy language. This is mostly due to having an administration that supports the implementation of the equity policy. The policy language in both cases leave room for interpretation that could impede future implementation based on future policymakers general feelings towards race and racism, the financial health of each school district, or the will of the staff to implement new equity-focused practices. Based on the findings of this study, the use policy transfer while effective in some regards, was ineffective in others.

Dolowitz and Marsh (2000) offer three possible factors that could have a significant impact on policy failure. The first is uninformed transfer where the receiving institution does not have sufficient information about how the policy is operated in the original institution. Next is incomplete transfer, where essential elements of what made the policy a success in the originating entity may not end up transferred. The third is inappropriate transfer where attention is not given to the various contexts in the transfer of the policy between institutions. As it relates to this study, there is evidence of incomplete transfer based on findings of this study.

As related to incomplete transfer, the CH-UH policy was edited to not include the word ‘racial’ for the racial educational equity policy. The exclusion of this word was at the request of a Board member who was uncomfortable with the use of the word racial and made a potentially powerful tool in fighting racism more colorblind and less powerful. In Shaker, their exemplar policy from Madison, Wisconsin named race and socioeconomic disparities. The Shaker policy added national origin, citizenship, ancestry, religion, sexual orientation and gender identity, marital status, pregnancy, age, disability, and military status. With this language, a future administration or Board of Education that is less enthusiastic about discussing race and racism could focus on any identity other than race and could also work to assure the intersections of race and the other protected classes maintain a focus on the later and de-emphasize the former.

Recommendation Three

If policymakers choose policy transfer or policy convergence as tools in creating a policy, they should make certain that the language they chose speaks explicitly to the problems and agenda setting that make the policy drafting possible. Furthermore, policy transfer, especially concerning issues of race and racism, should speak to the inherent problems the new policy will be created to solve.

When engaging in policy transfer focused around issues of race or racism and its impact on an institution racial literacy should be the aim. Garces and da Cruz (2017) describes racial literacy as simultaneously not losing sight of race while also not focusing only on race. This understanding leads to intersectionality that can work to empower the examination of the dimensions of race and other identities rather than potentially working

to pit race and other identities against one another in policy language. This nuance is essential and requires policy rhetoric to be intentionally drafted to counter colorblind language. If equity policy is developed actively naming social and historical contexts that shaped the need for the policy, makes explicit the advantages afforded to White people based on the social and historical contexts, laws and policies, and current events that perpetuate inequity, and names privilege then colorblindness as a manifestation of racism can be stymie in the policymaking process (Garces and da Cruz, 2017). When engaging in policy transfer, especially when the policy focuses on countering race and racism, if the originating policy active names and addresses contributors to inequity in an authentic way, the transferred policy language should echo those sentiments in just as explicit and authentic manner as the originating policy.

Implication Four

Based on the findings in this study, both case policies employed the use of an equity analysis tool as part of the policy language. This tool was intended to serve as a method of evaluation and accountability in the implementation of the education equity policies. Both policies use the language of the equity analysis tool being intended to be used to ensure the promotion of equity in policies, programs, professional development, and procedures.

In the first two years of the implementation of the policy, CH-UH used the LEAD (Leadership for Equity Assessment and Development) Tool as its equity analysis tool. The five constructs that made up the tool evaluated existing and new policies and practices in a meaningful and effective manner. The district administration started using

the LEAD Tool to demonstrate progress on equity policy goals, develop a five year plan of action steps aligned to the LEAD Tool rubric to continue operationalizing the equity policy, and to evaluate staff trainings and workshops by way of staff surveys. The district also used data from a survey framed using the LEAD tool as a baseline for how equitable current practice, procedures, and policies were.

Shaker did not implement an equity analysis tool within the two year after the adoption of the policy and while they did complete a progress report on implementation of the strategic plan which include equity goals, there was no evaluative tool used to inform decision making about the equity policy specifically.

Recommendation Four

Policymakers should have an equity analysis tool identified for intended use prior to the formal adoption of the policy or should include language in the policy that sets a timeline for the selection and use of an analysis tool. In the case of the Shaker policy which was adopted in February 2019, any equity work the first academic year following the adoption of the policy (2019-2020) was interrupted by the change of superintendent and the Covid-19 pandemic. The implementation of the equity policy during the 2020-2021 school year was also greatly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Implications for Practitioners

To community members, this study demonstrated how important it is for communities to elect Board of Education members who value equity, who understand the systemic nature and permanence of racism in our schools, and the inequities caused as a result of generations of unaddressed inequities. It is important to elect Black members

and others from marginalized populations who will work to remove barriers, and remind Board colleagues who echo colorblind, privileged or white supremacist rhetoric that their role is to ensure the education of the most marginalized of the student population is just as good as the education for the well connected, wealthy, or privileged populations of the schools.

Board of Education members, it is imperative that you hold district administrator accountable to making equity a lived reality as an approach to learning and the distribution of resources within your school district. The findings of this study have concluded that it is always a better practice to include various stakeholders and community members in the policymaking process. More importantly, it is important when adopting policy focused on removing barriers, or addressing race, class, gender or any other identity that the most marginalized voices impacted by the policy are authentically included in the development and implementation of the policy.

To superintendents, district leadership, and building principals, it is essential for you to remain unneutral when it comes to addressing issues of race and racism. You must be brave on behalf of your students who learn under the societal burden of racism and other forms of oppression. You must be willing to speak up against those who deny racisms impact on the education of Black students, and must also have the courage to do so time and time again. As was discovered in this study, the superintendents and cabinet leadership were leading the work of creating the policy and fully supported its implementation. In this case, both superintendents, and the district leaders they designated to lead the work of building the policy were Black, and well versed in the data

that supported the need for the policy.

It is easier to stay silent, and one could argue it is safer. After all, the political climate of the community or the opinions and perspectives of other fellow Board of Education members may impede the work of removing barriers or recognizing racial inequities and may work to flat out ban the discussion of race, racism or other so called divisive topics. Stand bravely and fight for your students with research-based practices, and by cultivating meaningful relationships in the community surrounding your school.

On a more technical note, this study also revealed the importance of including effective accountability measures prior to the adoption of the policy that measure not only the progress of the implementation but also the impact of implementation on students.

Recommendations for Further Research

It is recommended that more education equity policies be analyzed and compared across Ohio, the United States, and internationally. A delimitation of this study was to only investigate the first two years of implementation of the policy. A future research study should evaluate the implementation of each case policy beyond year two. This would enhance the scope of understanding as to the success of policy implementation.

Again, the population for interviewees were primarily made of adult staff members involved in the creation of the policy. A future study might explore the experiences of students and how the implementation has affected their educational experience. There is potential for more research both qualitative and quantitative on the

trends of student population in AP courses following the adoption of the equity policy. There should also be an investigation into the effectiveness of the deleveling of classes.

There also should be further research into the impact of policy transfer and policy convergence on local laws and policies. Most of the research on policy transfer speaks to international policy. Both case policies in this study were created having borrowed language from existing local policies and there is a need to understand how this transfer of rhetoric from one school district to another impacts the advancement of education policy.

Studies could be done using a research design other than case study, or qualitative methods. And, more critical approaches to policy analysis should be applied to future research study.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to understand from a critical lens how education equity policies were created, adopted, and implemented in a suburban school setting. Using a qualitative approach for this study, this researcher utilized document analysis, interviews, and archival records as techniques to gather data. The data collected were organized into themes and analyzed. This study was conceptually framed using policy process adapted by Anderson (2006) that showed the sequential pattern of activities that a policy-in-the-making follows. Both Shaker Heights and Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School Districts adopted processes that fit into the policy process framework and allowed for this researcher to glean understanding of how the policy came to be, what policy language was drafted to address the problems it was intended to solve,

and what tools such as policy transfer was used to craft the language of the policy, and how effective was the implementation of the policy in the first two years of its implementation.

The findings of this research were discussed through critical policy analysis and using the theoretical framework of critical race theory as the lens from which implications and recommendations were discussed.

According to Charles Willie (2006), “Education should focus neither on cultivating excellence at the expense of equity nor on cultivating equity at the expense of equity. In a well-ordered society, the goal of education is to seek both excellence and equity because they are complementary”(p. 16). The intent of this study was to glean understanding as to how two schools attempted to seek both excellence and equity using policy as the vehicle to spur systemic change.

References

Abrams, W. (1991). A reply to Derrick Bell's racial realism. *Connecticut Law Review*, *24*(2), 517–526.

Alinsky, S. D. (1971). *Rules for radicals: A practical primer for realistic radicals* (1st ed.). Random House.

Amiot, M. N., Mayer-Glenn, J., & Parker, L. (2020). Applied critical race theory: Educational leadership actions for student equity. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, *23*(2), 200–220. https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2019.1599342

Anderson, J. E., Brady, D., Bullock, C., & Stewart, J. (1984). *Public policy and politics in America* (2nd ed). Brooks/Cole Pub. Co.

Anderson, J. E. (2006). *Public policymaking: An introduction* (6th ed). Houghton Mifflin.

Auld, E., & Morris, P. (2014). Comparative education, the 'new paradigm' and policy borrowing: Constructing knowledge for educational reform. *Comparative Education*, *50*(2), 129–155. https://doi.org/10.1080/03050068.2013.826497

Bache, I., & Taylor, A. (2003). The politics of policy persistence: Reconstructing higher education in Kosovo. *Journal of Public Policy*, *23*(3), 279–300. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0143814X03003131

Ball, S. J. (1995). *Politics and policy making in education: Explorations in policy sociology* (Reprinted). Routledge.

Banks, J. A. (1997). *Educating citizens in a multicultural society. Multicultural Education Series*. Teachers College Press.

Barabasch, A., Huang, S., & Lawson, R. (2009). Planned policy transfer: The impact of the German model on Chinese vocational education. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, *39*(1), 5–20. https://doi.org/10.1080/03057920802265566

Bay Village City School District (2020). *Bay Village City Schools Board of Education Resolution of commitment to equity and excellence in education*. https://go.boarddocs.com/oh/bvcsd/Board.nsf/Public#

Bartlett, L., & Vavrus, F. (2017). Comparative case studies. *Educação & Realidade*, *42*, 899–920. https://doi.org/10.1590/2175-623668636

Beachwood City School District (2020). *Beachwood Schools anti-racism statement of conviction and action*. https://go.boarddocs.com/oh/bcsoh/Board.nsf/vpublic?open#

Bedford City School District (2021). *Ensuring equity and excellence in education*, Policy 2260.05. https://go.boarddocs.com/oh/bedford/Board.nsf/Public#

Benson, D., & Jordan, A. (2011). What have we learned from policy transfer research? Dolowitz and Marsh Revisited. *Political Studies Review*, *9*(3), 366–378. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1478-9302.2011.00240.x

Bell, D. A. (1980). Brown v. Board of Education and the interest-convergence dilemma. *Harvard Law Review*, *93*(3), 518–533. https://doi.org/10.2307/1340546

Ball, D. (2020). *Get up stand up: fighting systemic injustice through teaching*. TeachingWorks Virtual Summer Institute.

Bell, D. A. (1992). *Faces at the bottom of the well: The permanence of racism*. Basic Books.

Bell, D. (1992). Racial realism. *Connecticut Law Review*, *24*(2), 363–380.

Bell, D. A. (1995). Who's afraid of critical race theory. *University of Illinois Law Review*, *1995*, 893.

Bell, D. (2004). *Silent covenants: Brown v. Board of Education and the unfulfilled hopes for racial reform*. Oxford University Press.

Benson, D., & Jordan, A. (2011). What have we learned from policy transfer research? Dolowitz and Marsh revisited. *Political Studies Review*, *9*(3), 366–378. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1478-9302.2011.00240.x

Bettis, P. J., & Adams, N. G. (2003). The Power of the preps and a cheerleading equity policy. *Sociology of Education*, *76*(2), 128–142. https://doi.org/10.2307/3090273

Blair, E. (2015). A reflexive exploration of two qualitative data coding techniques. *Journal of Methods and Measurement in the Social Sciences*, *6*(1), Article 1. https://doi.org/10.2458/v6i1.18772

Blaisdell, B. (2016). Exorcising the racism phantasm: Racial realism in educational research. *The Urban Review*, *48*(2), 285–310. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-016-0354-0

Bogdan, R., & Biklen, S. K. (1998). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods* (3rd ed). Allyn and Bacon.

Bolgatz, J. (2020). Black parents' perspectives on instruction: Racial realism at a predominantly White, independent, urban elementary school. *Urban Education*. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085920914378

Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal*, *9*(2), 27–40. https://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ0902027

Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopedia (2019, January 2). Erie. Encyclopedia Britannica. https://www.britannica.com/topic/Erie-people

Brown v. Board of Education, 347 U.S. 483 (1954). https://www.oyez.org/cases/1940-1955/347us483

CAST. (2022). *About universal design for learning*. CAST. https://www.cast.org/impact/universal-design-for-learning-udl

Cashin, S. (2001). Middle-class black suburbs and the state of integration: A post-integrationist vision for metropolitan America. *Georgetown Law Faculty Publications and Other Works*. https://scholarship.law.georgetown.edu/facpub/520

Chapman, T. K. (2013). You can't erase race! Using CRT to explain the presence of race and racism in majority white suburban schools. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, *34*(4), 611–627. https://doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2013.822619

Chapman, T. K., & Donnor, J. K. (2015). Critical race theory and the proliferation of U.S. charter schools. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, *48*(1), 137–157. https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2015.991670

Charters, A. N., & Hilton, R. J. (Eds.). (1989). *Landmarks in international adult education: A comparative analysis*. Routledge.

Chenail, R. J. (2011). Interviewing the investigator: Strategies for addressing instrumentation and researcher bias concerns in qualitative research. *Qualitative Report*, *16*(1), 255–262.

Cheng, W. (2013). The Changs next door to the Diazes: Suburban racial formation in Los Angeles's San Gabriel Valley. Journal of Urban History, 39(1), 15–35. https://doi.org/10.1177/0096144212463548

Ching, C. D., Felix, E. R., Fernandez Castro, M., & Trinidad, A. (2020). Achieving racial equity from the bottom-up? The student equity policy in the California Community Colleges. *Educational Policy*, *34*(6), 819–863. https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904818802092

City of University Heights. (2022). *The City's History*. https://www.universityheights.com/history/

Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District. (2015). *Aspirations*. chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/viewer.html?pdfurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.chuh.org%2FDownloads%2FCHUH%25208-18-15%2520Aspirations-Revised%2520per%2520TD-(Revised-CLEAN)2.pdf&clen=106283&chunk=true

Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District. (2015). *5-Year Strategic Plan*. https://www.chuh.org/2015MeetingDocs.aspx

Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District (2016). *Educational Equity*, Policy 4122.03. https://go.boarddocs.com/oh/chuh/Board.nsf/Public#

Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District. (2017). *Equity Task Force*. chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.chuh.org/Downloads/ed-services-news-nov20172.pdf

Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District. (2016, June 27). *CHUH Board of Education Meeting—June 21, 2016*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nfn439OYIUM

Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District. (2018, April 17). *Equity Task Force Presentation*. http://go.boarddocs.com/oh/chuh/Board.nsf/goto?open&id=AXSHYT4AD2C9

Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District. (2020). *Heights Freshmen GEAR UP for college readiness*. https://www.chuh.org/protected/ArticleView.aspx?iid=6GAPA02&dasi=3Y2I

Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District. (2021). *Overview*. https://www.chuh.org/Overview.aspx

Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District. (2022). *CH-UH equity audit.* https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1RyV1MJQ1PFhOpzfuQkZ5Dd6LKuxHiIbNnv2jkIx6rDM/edit#gid=37301570

Cibulka, J. (1995). Policy analysis and the study of the politics of education. In J. D. Scribner & D. H. Layton (Eds.), *The Study of Educational Politics* (pp. 105–125). Falmer Press. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED393216

Coleman, J. S. (2000). *Foundations of social theory* (3. print). Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Press.

Coles, S. M., & Pasek, J. (2020). Intersectional invisibility revisited: How group prototypes lead to the erasure and exclusion of Black women. *Translational Issues in Psychological Science*, *6*(4), 314–324. https://doi.org/10.1037/tps0000256

Cooper, R. (1997). *Detracking in a racially mixed, Urban High School. Report No. 12*. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED407478

Crenshaw, K., Gotanda, N., Peller, G., & Thomas, K. (Eds.). (1995). *Critical race theory: The key writings that formed the movement*. New Press.

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (Fourth edition). Sage.

Delgado, R. (1992). Derrick Bell's racial realism: comment on white optimism and black despair. Connecticut Law Review, 24(2), 527-532.

Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2012). *Critical race theory: An introduction* (2nd ed). New York University Press.

Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (Eds.). (2013). *Critical race theory: The cutting edge* (Third edition). Temple University Press.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2018). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (Fifth edition). Sage.

Diamond, J. B. (2006). Still separate and unequal: Examining race, opportunity, and school achievement in "integrated" suburbs. *The Journal of Negro Education*, *75*(3), 495–505.

Diem, S., & Young, M. D. (2015). Considering critical turns in research on educational leadership and policy. *International Journal of Educational Management*, *29*(7), 838–850. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEM-05-2015-0060

Diem, S., Young, M. D., & Sampson, C. (2019). Where critical policy meets the politics of education: An introduction. *Educational Policy*, *33*(1), 3–15. https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904818807317

DiTomaso, N. (2013). *The American non-dilemma: Racial inequality without racism*. Russell Sage Foundation. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7758/9781610447898

Dolowitz, D., & Marsh, D. (1996). Who learns what from whom: A review of the policy transfer literature. *Political Studies*, *44*(2), 343–357. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9248.1996.tb00334.x

Dolowitz, D. P., & Marsh, D. (2000). Learning from abroad: The role of policy transfer in contemporary policy-making. *Governance*, *13*(1), 5–23. https://doi.org/10.1111/0952-1895.00121

Douds, K. W. (2021). The diversity contract: Constructing racial harmony in a diverse American suburb. *American Journal of Sociology*, *126*(6), 1347–1388. https://doi.org/10.1086/714499

Dudziak, M. L. (2011). *Cold War civil rights: Race and the image of American democracy*. Princeton Univ. Press.

Drakeford, L. D. (Ed.). (2015). *The race controversy in American education*. ABC-CLIO.

Du Bois, W. E. B. D. (1935). Does the Negro need separate schools? *The Journal of Negro Education*, *4*(3), 328. https://doi.org/10.2307/2291871

Dudziak, M. L. (2011). *Cold War civil rights: Race and the image of American democracy*. Princeton Univ. Press.

Dye, T. R., Derthick, M., Dror, Y., Hadwiger, D. F., Hicks, A., Mills, M. K., & Nagel, S. (1992). Expanding perspectives in policy studies and the policy studies organization. *Policy Studies Journal*, *20*(2), 312–320. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1541-0072.1992.tb00158.x

Eagleton, T. (1997). *The illusions of postmodernism*. Blackwell Publishers.

Easton, D. (1965). *A systems analysis of political life*. Wiley.

Elementary and Secondary Education Act, 20 U.S.C. § 6301 (1965). https://www2.ed.gov/documents/essa-act-of-1965.pdf

Erlandson, D. A., Harris, Edward L., Skipper, Barbara L., & Allen, Steve D. (Eds.). (1993). *Doing naturalistic inquiry: A guide to methods*. Sage.

Evans, M. (2009). Policy transfer in critical perspective. *Policy Studies*, *30*(3), 243–268. https://doi.org/10.1080/01442870902863828

Evans, M., & Davies, J. (1999). Understanding policy transfer: A multi-level, multi-disciplinary perspective. *Public Administration*, *77*(2), 361–385. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9299.00158

Every Student Succeeds Act, 20 U.S.C. § 6301 (2015). https://www.congress.gov/114/plaws/publ95/PLAW-114publ95.pdf

Fay, B. (1987). *Critical social science: Liberation and its limits*. Cornell University Press.

Forestier, K., & Crossley, M. (2015). International education policy transfer – borrowing both ways: The Hong Kong and England experience. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, *45*(5), 664–685. https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2014.928508

Felix, E. R., & Trinidad, A. (2020). The decentralization of race: Tracing the dilution of racial equity in educational policy. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *33*(4), 465–490. https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2019.1681538

Francis, J. J., Johnston, M., Robertson, C., Glidewell, L., Entwistle, V., Eccles, M. P., & Grimshaw, J. M. (2010). What is an adequate sample size? Operationalising data saturation for theory-based interview studies. *Psychology & Health*, *25*(10), 1229–1245.

Frey, W. H. (2001). The rise of melting-pot suburbs. *Brookings*. https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2015/05/26/the-rise-of-melting-pot-suburbs/

Galvin, R. (2015). How many interviews are enough? Do qualitative interviews in building energy consumption research produce reliable knowledge? *Journal of Building Engineering*, 11.

Garces, L. M., & Gordon da Cruz, C. (2017). A strategic racial equity framework. *Peabody Journal of Education*, *92*(3), 322–342. https://doi.org/10.1080/0161956X.2017.1325592

Gerring, J. (2007). Case study research: Principles and practices. *Cambridge University Press*, 279.

Glesne, C. (2016). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction*. Pearson.

Goodrick, D. (2014). *Comparative Case Studies* (Methodological Briefs: Impact Evaluation 9). UNICEF Office of Research, Florence. https://www.unicef-irc.org/KM/IE/impact_9.php

Gorski, P. C., & Pothini, S. G. (2018). *Case studies on diversity and social justice education* (2nd ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351142526

Green, J., & Thorogood, N. (2004). *Qualitative methods for health research*. SAGE Publications.

Green v. New Kent County School Board, 391 U.S. 430 (1968). https://www.oyez.org/cases/1967/695

Greenberg, J. (1994). *Crusaders in the courts: How a dedicated band of lawyers fought for the civil rights revolution*. BasicBooks.

Griffen, A., & Greene, N. (2019). *An Urban-defined school implements a grassroots oral history course and study abroad program for social justice equity, social consciousness, and student advocacy*. *3*.

Guest, G., Namey, E., & Chen, M. (2020). A simple method to assess and report thematic saturation in qualitative research. *PLOS ONE*, *15*(5), e0232076. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0232076

Guinier, L. (2004). From racial liberalism to racial literacy: Brown v. Board of Education and the interest-divergence dilemma. *Journal of American History*, *91*(1), 92–118. https://doi.org/10.2307/3659616

Hagaman, A. K., & Wutich, A. (2017). How many interviews are enough to identify metathemes in multisited and cross-cultural research? Another perspective on Guest, Bunce, and Johnson's (2006) landmark study. *Field Methods*, *29*(1), 23–41. https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X16640447

Herriott, R. E., & Firestone, W. A. (1983). Multisite qualitative policy research: Optimizing description and generalizability. *Educational Researcher*, *12*(2), 14–19. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X012002014

Heubert, J. P. (Ed.). (1999). *Law and school reform: Six strategies for promoting educational equity*. Yale University Press.

Hilliard City School District (2021). Equity & diversity 3-year strategic action plan overview. https://www.hilliardschools.org/wp-content/uploads/Equity_Diversity_Action_Plan.pdf

Huidor, O., & Cooper, R. (2010). Examining the socio-cultural dimension of schooling in a racially integrated school. *Education and Urban Society*, *42*(2), 143–167. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013124509350047

Irby, D. J., Drame, E., Clough, C., & Croom, M. (2019). "Sometimes things get worse before they get better": A counter-narrative of White suburban school leadership for racial equity. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, *18*(2), 195–209. https://doi.org/10.1080/15700763.2019.1611869

Institute for Educational Leadership. (2018). *Rise up for equity: Cleveland Heights – University Heights equity policy*. Retrieved July 7, 2022, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y-MXkXXY_0s

James, O., & Lodge, M. (2003). The limitations of "policy transfer" and "lesson drawing" for public policy research. *Political Studies Review*, *1*(2), 179–193.

Jean-Francois, E. (2020a). Influence of comparative education on comparative adult education research and practice. *Hessische Blätter Für Volksbildung*, *2*, 41–54. https://doi.org/10.3278/HBV2002W004

Jean-Francois, E. (2020b). Quadrangulational comparison for glocal sustainability studies. *Social Science & Medicine*.

Kozol, J. (2012). *Savage inequalities: Children in America's schools* (1st Broadway Paperbacks ed). Broadway Paperbacks.

Klarman, M. J. (1994). Brown, racial change, and the civil rights movement. *Virginia Law Review*, *80*(1), 7–150. https://doi.org/10.2307/1073592

Kruse, Kevin Michael, and Thomas J. Sugrue, editors. *The New Suburban History*. University of Chicago Press, 2006.

Lac, V., & Diamond, J. (2019). Working for racial equity at the margins: Teacher-leaders facilitate a book study on race in a predominantly White suburban high school.

Journal of Cases in Educational Leadership, *22*(2), 54–67. https://doi.org/10.1177/1555458919833107

Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate, W. F. (1995). Toward a critical race theory of education. *Teachers College Record*, *97*(1), 47–68.

Leonardo, Z. (2013). *Race frameworks: A multidimensional theory of racism and education*. Teachers College.

Levin, B. (2003). *Approaches to equity in policy for lifelong learning. Education and Training Policy Division*. Education and Training Policy Division, OECD.

Lewis, A. E., & Diamond, J. B. (2015). *Despite the best intentions: How racial inequality thrives in good schools*. Oxford University Press.

Lewis, E. (1991). *In their own interests: Race, class, and power in twentieth-century Norfolk, Virginia*. Univ. of California Press.

Lewis-McCoy, R. L. (2014). *Inequality in the promised land: Race, resources, and suburban schooling*. Stanford University Press.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage Publications.

Logan, J. R., & Zhang, C. (2010a). Global neighborhoods: New pathways to diversity and separation. *American Journal of Sociology*, *115*(4), 1069–1109. https://doi.org/10.1086/649498

Love, B. L. (2019). *We want to do more than survive: Abolitionist teaching and the pursuit of educational freedom*. Beacon Press.

Lorde, A. (1984). *Sister outsider: Essays and speeches*. Crossing Press, c2007.

Lung-Amam, W. S. (2017). *Trespassers? Asian Americans and the battle for suburbia*. University of California Press.

Lynn, M. (2004). Inserting the 'race' into critical pedagogy: an analysis of 'race-based epistemologies.' *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, *36*(2), 153–165. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-5812.2004.00058.x

Mansfield, K., & Thachik, S. (2016). A critical policy analysis of Texas' Closing the Gaps 2015. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, *24*, 3. https://doi.org/10.14507/epaa.24.1991

Manza, J., & Sauder, M. (2009). *Inequality and society: Social science perspectives on social stratification* (1st ed). Norton.

Marshall, B. T. (2006). *Shaker Heights*. Arcadia Pub.

Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (2016). *Designing qualitative research* (Sixth edition). SAGE.

Maxwell, J. A. (2013). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (3rd ed). SAGE Publications.

Meier, K. J., & Rutherford, A. (2017). *The politics of African-American education: Representation, partisanship, and educational equity*. Cambridge University Press.

Merriam, S. B. (1991). *Case study research in education: A qualitative approach.* Jossey-Bass.

Monkman, K., & Hoffman, L. (2013). Girls' education: The power of policy discourse. *Theory and Research in Education*, *11*(1), 63–84. https://doi.org/10.1177/1477878512468384

Morgan, M., Gibbs, S., Maxwell, K., & Britten, N. (2002). Hearing children's voices: Methodological issues in conducting focus groups with children aged 7-11 years. *Qualitative Research*, *2*(1), 5–20. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794102002001636

Morse, J. M. (1995). The significance of saturation. *Qualitative Health Research*, *5*(2), 147–149. https://doi.org/10.1177/104973239500500201

Mosby, C. (2017). Equity task force appointed in Shaker Heights Schools. *Patch.com*. https://patch.com/ohio/shakerheights/equity-task-force-appointed-shaker-heights-schools

Mystal, E. (2022). *Allow me to retort: A black guy's guide to the Constitution*. The New Press.

No Child Left Behind Act, Pub. L. No. 107–110, § 101 (2001). https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/PLAW-107publ110/pdf/PLAW-107publ110.pdf

Noguera, P. (2009). *The trouble with black boys: And other reflections on race, equity, and the future of public education*. Jossey-Bass ; John Wiley [distributor].

Núñez, A.-M. (2014). Employing multilevel intersectionality in educational research: Latino identities, contexts, and college access. *Educational Researcher*. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X14522320

Ogbu, J. U. (2003). *Black American students in an affluent suburb: A study of academic disengagement*. L. Erlbaum Associates.

Ohio Department of Education. (2019). *Ohio's Strategic Plan for Education*. https://education.ohio.gov/About/EachChildOurFuture

Ohio Department of Education. (2021). *Typology of Ohio School Districts*. https://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Data/Frequently-Requested-Data/Typology-of-Ohio-School-Districts

Ohio Department of Education. (2022) *EdChoice Scholarship Program*. https://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Other-Resources/Scholarships/EdChoice-Scholarship-Program

Oregon Department of Education. (2016). *Equity resource guide: Oregon Charter Schools*. chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.oregon.gov/ode/learning-options/schooltypes/charter/Documents/2016-equity-resource-guide.pdf

O'Reilly, M., & Parker, N. (2013). 'Unsatisfactory saturation': A critical exploration of the notion of saturated sample sizes in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, *13*(2), 190–197. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794112446106

Othering and Belonging Institute. (2019). *Targeted Universalism*. https://belonging.berkeley.edu/targeted-universalism

Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practice* (Fourth edition). SAGE Publications, Inc.

Perry, T., Steele, C., & Hilliard, A. G. (2003). *Young, gifted, and Black: Promoting high achievement among African-American students*. Beacon Press.

Petrovich, J., & Wells, A. S. (Eds.). (2005). *Bringing equity back: Research for a new era in American educational policy*. Teachers College Press.

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

Pollock, M. (Ed.). (2008). *Everyday antiracism: Getting real about race in school*. New Press : Distributed by W.W. Norton & Co.

Powell, J. A., Ake, W., & Menendian, S. (2019). *Targeted Universalism: Policy & practice*. https://escholarship.org/uc/item/9sm8b0q8

Punch, K., & Oancea, A. (2014). *Introduction to research methods in education* (Second edition). Sage.

Racial Equity Tools. (n.d.). *Glossary*. Racial Equity Tools. Retrieved February 18, 2022, from https://www.racialequitytools.org/glossary

Ragin, C. C. (2014). *The comparative method: Moving beyond qualitative and quantitative strategies* ([2nd ed.] with a new introduction). University of California press.

Rector-Aranda, A. (2016). School norms and reforms, critical race theory, and the fairytale of equitable education. *Critical Questions in Education*, *7*(1), 1–16.

Roisman, F. (2001). Opening the suburbs to racial integration: Lessons for the 21st century. *Western New England Law Review*, *23*(1), 65. https://digitalcommons.law.wne.edu/lawreview/vol23/iss1/3

Rose, R. (1991). What is lesson-drawing? *Journal of Public Policy*, *11*(1), 1–2. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0143814X00004906

Rothstein, R. (2021). Suppressed history: The intentional segregation of America's cities. *American Educator*, *45*(1), 32–37.

Santo, R., DeLyser, L. A., Ahn, J., Pellicone, A., Aguiar, J., & Wortel-London, S. (2019). Equity in the who, how and what of computer science education: K-12 school district conceptualizations of equity in 'CS for All' initiatives. *2019 Research on Equity and Sustained Participation in Engineering, Computing, and Technology (RESPECT)*, 1–8. https://doi.org/10.1109/RESPECT46404.2019.8985901

Savage, G. C., Sellar, S., & Gorur, R. (2013). Equity and marketisation: Emerging policies and practices in Australian education. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, *34*(2), 161–169. https://doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2013.770244

Schafer, W. E. (1970). Programmed for social class: Tracking in high school. *Society*, *7*(12), 39–46. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02908811

Scheurich, J. J., Bonds, V. L., Phelps-Moultrie, J. A., Currie, B. J., Crayton, T. A., Elfreich, A. M., Bhathena, C. D., Kyser, T. S., & Williams, N. A. (2017). An initial exploration of a community-based framework for educational equity with explicated exemplars. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, *20*(4), 508–526. https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2017.1299123

Shaker Heights City School District (2014). *Shaker Heights Schools Strategic Plan 2014-2019*. https://issuu.com/shakerschools/docs/shcsd_strategicplan2017_flipbook

Shaker Heights City School District (2017). *Board Packet October 30 to November 3*. https://go.boarddocs.com/oh/shaker/Board.nsf/files/ASRSXB72C08E/$file/Board%20Packet%20%20Week%20of%20October%2030%20to%20November%203%2C%202017.pdf

Shaker Heights City School District (2018). *Board Packet May 21 to May 25*. https://go.boarddocs.com/oh/shaker/Board.nsf/files/AZ54KD74CF14/$file/Board%20Packet%20%20Week%20of%20May%2021%20to%20May%2025%2C%202018.pdf

Shaker Heights City School District (2018b). *Board Packet August 27 to August 31*. https://go.boarddocs.com/oh/shaker/Board.nsf/files/B46VQF78BB2D/$file/Board%20Packet%20%20Week%20of%20August%2027%20to%20August%2031.pdf

Shaker Heights City School District (2019a). *Educational Equity*, Policy AEB. https://go.boarddocs.com/oh/shaker/Board.nsf/Public#

Shaker Heights City School District (2019b). *Strategic Plan Metrics*. https://www.shaker.org/Downloads/18-19%20Annual%20Report%20Tables.pdf

Shaker Heights City School District. (2020). *Shaker Heights Schools Strategic Plan 2020-2025.* https://issuu.com/shakerschools/docs/2021_spannualreport

Shaker Heights City School District (2021). *2020-2021 Strategic Plan Annual Report*. https://issuu.com/shakerschools/docs/2021_spannualreport

Silverman, D. (2017). *Doing qualitative research* (Fifth edition). SAGE Publications Ltd.

Singleton, G. E. (2015). *Courageous conversations about race: A field guide for achieving equity in schools* (Second edition). Corwin, A SAGE Company.

Skousen, J. D., & Domangue, E. (2020). Leadership for social justice in high-poverty schools: Exploration of equity and fundraising in an urban-suburban School. *Journal of Cases in Educational Leadership*, *23*(1), 93–110. https://doi.org/10.1177/1555458919883320

Skrla, L., McKenzie, K. B., & Scheurich, J. J. (2009). *Using equity audits to create equitable and excellent schools*. Corwin ; National Association of Secondary School Principals ; NSDC.

Sofaer, S. (2002). Qualitative research methods. *International Journal for Quality in Health Care*, *14*(4), 329–336.

Solorzano, D. G., & Yosso, T. J. (2001). Critical race and LatCrit theory and method: Counter-storytelling. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *14*(4), 471–495. https://doi.org/10.1080/09518390110063365

Sosna, M. (1977). *In search of the silent South: Southern liberals and the race issue*. Columbia University Press.

Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Sage.

Stead, D., de Jong, M., & Reinholde, I. (2008). Urban transport policy transfer in Central and Eastern Europe. *DisP - The Planning Review*, *44*(172), 62–73. https://doi.org/10.1080/02513625.2008.10557003

Stone, D. (2004). Transfer agents and global networks in the 'transnationalization' of policy. *Journal of European Public Policy*, *11*(3), 545–566. https://doi.org/10.1080/1350176041000169429 1

Stone, D. (2012). *Policy paradox: The art of political decision making* (3rd ed). W.W. Norton & Co.

Stuart, M. (1998). *Struggle for Integration*. http://www.stuartmathfilms.com/det_struggle.html

Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education, 02 U.S. 1 (1971). https://www.oyez.org/cases/1970/281

Tatum, B. D. (2007). *Can we talk about race? And other conversations in an era of school resegregation* (1st ed). Beacon Press.

Tatum, B. D. (2017). *"Why are all the black kids sitting together in the cafeteria?": And other conversations about race* (Third trade paperback edition). Basic Books.

Thernstrom, A. M., & Thernstrom, S. (2003). *No excuses: Closing the racial gap in learning*. Simon & Schuster.

Tran, T., & Tuan, L. (2020). Policy transfer into flood management in the Vietnamese Mekong Delta: A North Vam Nao study. *International Journal of Water Resources Development*, *36/1*, 106–126.

Tillman, L. C., & Scheurich, J. J. (Eds.). (2013). *Handbook of research on educational leadership for equity and diversity*. Routledge.

Tilly, C. (1984). *Big structures, large processes, huge comparisons*. Russell Sage Foundation.

Tittle, D. (1995). *Welcome to Heights High: The crippling politics of restructuring America's public schools*. Ohio State University Press.

U.S. Department of Education. (2020). *Equity of Opportunity*. https://www.ed.gov/equity

Warren-Grice, A. (2017). Advocacy for equity: Extending culturally relevant pedagogy in predominantly White suburban schools. *Teachers College Record*, *119*(1). http://www.tcrecord.org.proxy.library.ohio.edu/library/content.asp?contentid=21733

Windle, J., & Stratton, G. (2013). Equity for sale: Ethical consumption in a school-choice regime. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, *34*(2), 202–213. https://doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2013.770247

Winkle-Wagner, R., Sulè, V. T., & Maramba, D. C. (2014). When race disappears: College admissions policy discourse in the State of Texas. *Educational Policy*, *28*(4), 516–546. https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904812465114

Woodson, C. G. (2010). *The mis-education of the Negro*. SoHo Books.

Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (Sixth edition). Sage.

Appendix A: Interview Questions Guide

What was your role in the adoption of the education equity policy?

In your opinion, what was the impetus for the need to adopt the education equity policy?

Was there any aversion to mentioning race or racism in the equity policy?

The policy uses targeted universalism as its theoretical underpinning. Do you recall how the group arrived at it being the best option to include in our work?

What grants were applied for and received for DEI Work?

In your opinion, does policy language define education equity accurately?

With an adequate recognition of race/ racism? How? If not, why?

Thesis and Dissertation Services