Black Females' Perceptions of Their Social-Emotional Learning and the Inclusion of Counterspaces in Suburban High Schools

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which Black females agree they had the opportunity to learn about and are confident in their social-emotional skills; to assess the extent of representation for Black females in classroom experiences, library books and resources, school employees, and students at the high school they recently attended; and to gauge their level of agreement about the benefit of a counterspace designed for Black females being offered at the high school they most recently attended. An additional purpose was to determine the extent there is a relationship between Black females' agreement about the opportunity to learn social-emotional skills and their agreement about the benefits of a counterspace for Black females had been offered at the high school they most recently attended. The next purpose was to determine the extent there is a relationship between Black females' agreement about their confidence in their social-emotional skills and their agreement about the benefits of a counterspace for Black females had been offered at the high school they most recently attended. The final purpose was to determine the extent there is a relationship between Black females' agreement about the representation of Black females at the high school they most recently attended and their agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial. A quantitative research design utilizing survey methods was utilized to conduct this study. Seven research questions guided this study, and 33 hypothesis tests were conducted using the survey results from 21 participants. The results indicate that Black females are confident they learned how to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships. The results also indicate that Black females disagree that they were represented in the classroom experiences or school employees at the high

school they currently or recently attended. Furthermore, the results indicate that Black females agree or strongly agree that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial had it been offered at the high school they most recently attended. Implications for action include school administrators creating counterspaces for Black females in their schools and providing a supportive social-emotional component that is modified to accommodate Black females in suburban educational spaces. Recommendations for further research include expanding the study to other suburban areas, replicating the study to collect data from all females about their perceptions in suburban educational spaces, and examining the data in relation to various demographics, and replicating the study to add a qualitative component.

Dedication

This work is a love letter to 9-year-old Mallory Denise Clark. She was always looking for herself in every space and never saw any representation of herself in any space she was in. I hope that with my work and my research, she feels seen, heard, felt, and loved. When she wrote that she wanted to have a Doctorate in Educational Administration, she did not even know what that meant. But look, girl! We did it!

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To the 22 ladies who completed my survey: I am incredibly grateful for your participation. With your contribution, you have helped me add to the research pool that advances knowledge and promotes advocacy for the livelihood of Black girls, Black young ladies, and Black women in any space or counterspace we exist.

To Dad: you have always been there, and you have always been and continue to be supportive. You are one of my greatest gifts in this life! I literally would not be where I am today if it were not for your sacrifices. Your hard work and dedication have not gone unnoticed. I am forever indebted to you. I love you.

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Lastly, to little Mallory and other Black girls who are receiving their education from a predominately White institution: I see you. I hope this research also helps you to feel seen and supported. I hope this research highlights the urgency to create a counterspace in your educational space so you feel like you can breathe in and out the very essence of who you are without anyone feeling the need to police the way you look, the way you talk, or the way you move. Never let anyone dim your light or try to usurp your magic. You are incredible. I love us.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The educational experiences of Black females have been a topic of interest for researchers in recent years. In the past, researchers have focused on the experiences of Black females in urban areas (e.g., Annamma et al., 2019; Watson, 2016); however, the experiences of Black females in other areas have received less attention (Price, 2022). Leath et al. (2019) explained how the scholarly examination of discriminatory experiences faced by Black females within educational settings has received limited attention, as existing literature on females and gender dynamics in education frequently overlooks the experiences of females of color. Leath et al. (2019) further explained that "concern over the status of Black males in education (although important and warranted), along with Black girls' relatively higher academic achievement and attainment outcomes, can result in under examination of Black girls' educational processes" (pp. 1323-1324).

Compared with their White counterparts, the social-emotional experiences and opportunities for Black female students in suburban schools can vary significantly, resulting in Black females facing unique challenges in their educational experiences. For example, the results of a study by Crenshaw et al. (2015) indicated, "Black girls face a statistically greater chance of suspension and expulsion compared to other students of the same gender" (p. 25). In addition, a meta-ethnographic review conducted by Neal-Jackson (2018) "revealed that the young [Black] women experienced inequity at the hands of school officials who did not believe in their potential given narratives that situated them in disparaging ways" (p. 542). Neal-Jackson (2018) further explained, "Although the girls and young women held different ideas of themselves, the teachers'

narratives were critical to the academic opportunities, or lack thereof, that they were afforded" (p. 542). Gender, race, and social class collectively affect insights regarding Blackness and femininity (Morris, 2007), and consequently, Black females often have increased levels of psychological distress and poor self-concept in these suburban and predominantly White schools (Nash, 2009).

Furthermore, Black females in suburban areas may also face gendered stereotypes that can impact their educational experiences. For example, they may be perceived as "angry" or "aggressive" when they assert themselves in the classroom (Morris, 2007). These gendered stereotypes can lead to discipline disparities, where Black females are more likely to be punished more harshly for the same behaviors as their White peers (Crenshaw et al., 2015).

Riley (2021) shared statements from Black female students in the Kansas City metro area about their experiences in the suburban high schools they attended. One Black female student shared that her entire K-12 educational experience was plagued with the denial of her academic abilities, microaggressions, and changing her native communication style to fit in with the foreign social setting, all while attempting to conform to the environment (Riley, 2021). Another Black female student expressed the following, "Thanks to [my school], I am accustomed to a rigorous course load which has prepared me for college, but I also grew accustomed to stray comments about my skin and my hair" (Riley, 2021, p. 116). A Black female Vanderbilt College student who graduated from a Kansas City suburban high school said when interviewed, "If we want to improve our educational experience, I think we should really be thinking about opening up spaces that are for Black people specifically" (Riley, 2021, p. 118).

Background

Hill (2021) detailed how the inception of the United States education system continues to affect the current systemic patterns seen in education today. Hill (2021) pointed out, “In 1779, Thomas Jefferson proposed the ‘two track education system’—one for the labored and one for the learned… Access, educational quality, and school resources were segregated based on an inherently biased belief system” (p. 97). Hill (2021) also explained how *Plessy v. Ferguson* solidified a two-track education system by ruling that “segregated public facilities were legal, as long as the facilities for Blacks and Whites were equal (p. 97). Hill (2021) also emphasized that in this climate, “equality was purely subjective” (p. 97) and solely based on what the dominant culture believed was equal at the time, which consequently subjected Black students to six decades of inequality in the American educational system. Even with the landmark 1954 case of *Brown v. Board of Education* and forced integration, Black students were forced out of their established caring and supporting schooling spaces, and the Black community no longer had control over the education of their children (Hill, 2021). “Culturally relevant pedagogical practices” were demolished, thrusting Black students into “punitive, isolated, and remedial classrooms taught by White teachers who had no desire to focus on their needs” (Hill, 2021, p. 98).

Several landmark education policy changes geared toward improving the American educational system have been made since *Brown v. Board of Education* (Hill, 2021). Morris (2016) noted that the Brown decision ended *de jure* segregation, discrimination based on laws and official policies (Rothstein, 2018), but it did not address how persistent racism, xenophobia, and race-poverty would maintain *de facto*

segregation. For example, Brown did not address how increased racial isolation in neighborhoods would keep schools very segregated (Morris, 2016).

In the Kansas City metro area, the effects of residential segregation and redlining, "the practice of systematically denying various services (e.g., credit access) to residents of specific neighborhoods, often based on race/ethnicity and primarily within urban communities" (Egede et al., 2023, para. 2), still prominently impact the area (Mid-America Regional Council, 2023). Morris (2018) stated that "since the elimination of *de jure* segregation, Black girls have been subjected to harmful stereotypes about Black femininity that have at least shaped and at worst defined their experiences in classrooms and schools around the country" (p. 13).

Keels (2019) defined the term "counterspaces" as "safe spaces that simultaneously validate and critique one's interconnected self and group identity" (p. 14). Keels (2019) explained that counterspaces are "revolutionary settings embedded within larger settings and contexts. That is, they are pockets of resistance that may, to one extent or another, disrupt the dominant narrative of the larger setting and context" (p. 19). Counterspaces are explicitly created for people from marginalized groups; however, they can also accept people from privileged groups if they adhere to the principle of fostering adaptive responding, which is the set of emotional, psychological, and behavioral skills that enable people from marginalized groups to deal with and resist oppression (Keels, 2019). Additionally, Keels (2019) stated that "counterspaces can be ideational, relational, or physical spaces, and have academic, social, cultural, or political goals" (Keels, 2019, p. 31). Case and Hunter (2012) explained that members of counterspaces receive social

support from a community of people who can empathize with their experiences, contribute to a shared sense of safety, and help them feel less isolated in the setting.

According to Keels (2019), marginalized students encounter distinct identity-based obstacles that remind them of their social identities and impede their ability to participate equally with the rest of the student body. Addressing these challenges requires substantial psychological and emotional fortitude (Keels, 2019). Thus, providing counterspaces with social-emotional support using the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning's (CASEL's) social-emotional learning (SEL) framework could be beneficial as the foundation of counterspaces in suburban high schools. CASEL's (2020) SEL framework was created to "advance educational equity and excellence through authentic school-family-community partnerships to establish learning environments and experiences that feature trusting and collaborative relationships, rigorous and meaningful curriculum and instruction, and ongoing evaluation" (p. 1). CASEL has been at the forefront of the SEL movement ever since it initially coined the term over 20 years ago (CASEL, 2024). CASEL collaborates with policymakers, practitioners, and researchers to ensure that all individuals have access to high-quality, evidence-based SEL. Additionally, CASEL advances the field by addressing the most important concerns through performing, commissioning, and synthesizing academic research (CASEL, 2024). Five competencies make up the SEL framework: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2020).

Statement of the Problem

Maslow (as cited in Burleson & Thoron, 2014) taught that humans have specific needs to be met before others can be attained. Physiological and safety needs must be "adequately met" before students can focus on love and belongingness needs, and Maslow (as cited in Burleson & Thoron, 2014) described that when humans are denied belongingness and love, "they hunger for affectionate relationships with people or strive for a place within a group" (p. 2). However, the need to be loved and accepted by one's community is often just as vital as the need for food, water, and shelter (Burleson & Thoron, 2014). Morris (2022) challenged current educational spaces to become "locations of healing" so they can ultimately be "locations for learning" because "healing facilitates safety" (p. 19). Because students' brains are more open to learning new things and processing and forming ideas when they feel safe, when students feel unsafe, their brains are focused on keeping them safe from what they think is a danger or harm (Morris, 2022).

Qualitative studies have been conducted that reflect the Black female's experience in suburban educational spaces in higher education and on college campuses, outline the experience of Black students in suburban educational spaces, and account for Black students' experiences in urban and rural settings (e.g., Morris, 2012, 2016, 2018, 2022; Nash, 2009; Neal-Jackson, 2018; Price, 2022). Qualitative and mixed-method research has been conducted on the experiences of Black female students in predominantly White institutions (e.g., Andrews, 2009; Andrews et al., 2019; Fordham, 2016). However, there is limited quantitative research that focuses solely on the experiences of Black females in suburban high schools, especially with a social-emotional skill learning emphasis.

Purpose of the Study

The focus of this study was Black females who currently or recently attended a suburban high school in the Kansas City metro area. The first purpose of this study was to determine the extent Black females agreed they had the opportunity to learn social-emotional skills at the high school they most recently attended. The second purpose was to determine the extent Black females agree they are confident in their social-emotional skills. The third purpose was to determine the extent Black females agree they are represented at the high school they most recently attended. The fourth purpose was to determine the extent Black females agree that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial had it been offered at the high school they most recently attended. The fifth purpose was to determine the extent there is a relationship between Black females' agreement about the opportunity to learn social-emotional skills and their agreement about the benefits of a counterspace for Black females had it been offered at the high school they most recently attended. The sixth purpose was to determine the extent there is a relationship between Black females' agreement about their confidence in their social-emotional skills and their agreement about the benefits of a counterspace for Black females had it been offered at the high school they most recently attended. The seventh purpose was to determine the extent there is a relationship between Black females' agreement about the representation of Black females at the high school they most recently attended and their agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial.

Significance of the Study

This study significantly contributes to the field, as few quantitative studies have focused on Black females' educational experiences in suburban high school settings. There are few published studies that 1) are solely quantitative, 2) survey Black female students regarding their social-emotional well-being during their educational experience in suburban high schools, and 3) address the possible need for counterspaces for Black females in suburban schools. Therefore, the results of this study might provide the research field with more quantitative evidence for the importance of social-emotional support tailored for Black females in suburban educational settings. The significance of this study is to bring attention to the educational experience of Black female students by presenting the study's findings to the community in which the study was conducted. Furthermore, school systems across the United States can use these results to analyze their practices, modify them accordingly, and brainstorm ways to change current practices. To fully understand the status of Black females in suburban educational settings, this study was conducted in areas representative of the numerous Kansas City metro area suburban schools.

Delimitations

Lunenburg and Irby (2008) indicate that "delimitations are self-imposed boundaries set by the researcher on the purpose and scope of the study" (p. 134). The following are delimitations for this study:

1. The study was conducted using a Likert-type scale survey created by the researcher.

2. The survey participants identified as Black females, ages 18 and older, who currently or recently attended a suburban high school in the Kansas City metro area.

Assumptions

Per Lunenburg and Irby (2008), "assumptions are postulates, premises, and propositions that are accepted as operational for purposes of the research [, and] include the nature, analysis, and interpretation of the data" (p. 134). Assumptions made in the research process include the following:

1. The survey instrument accurately measured the variables in this study.
2. The participants answered the survey questions truthfully.
3. All participants understood the terms used in the survey questions.
4. All participants were born female or identified as female and Black.

Research Questions

The focus of the current study was to determine the extent Black females agree they had the opportunity to learn and are confident in their social-emotional skills, the extent of representation for Black females in their school climate, and the agreement about the benefits of a counterspace for Black females had been offered at the high school they most recently attended. Seven research questions were addressed in this study.

RQ1

To what extent do Black females agree they had the opportunity to learn social-emotional skills at the high school they most recently attended?

RQ2

To what extent do Black females agree they are confident in their social-emotional skills?

RQ3

To what extent do Black females agree they are represented at the high school they most recently attended?

RQ4

To what extent do Black females agree that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial had it been offered at the high school they most recently attended?

RQ5

To what extent is there a relationship between Black females' agreement about the opportunity to learn social-emotional skills and their agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial at the high school they most recently attended?

RQ6

To what extent is there a relationship between Black females' agreement about their confidence in their social-emotional skills and their agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial at the high school they most recently attended?

RQ7

To what extent is there a relationship between Black females' agreement about the representation of Black females at the high school they most recently attended and

their agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial?

Definition of Terms

This section provides definitions of terms used in this dissertation to assist the reader with comprehension of terms used in the research. The provided terms are listed in alphabetical order with citations.

Counterspace

Keels (2019) defined counterspaces as secure environments that both affirm and analyze one's interrelated sense of self and collective identity, fostering transformative development. Keels further explained, “Radical growth can be understood as the development of ideas and narratives that challenge dominant representations of and notions about their marginalized identities” (p. 2). Keels (2019) pointed out that counterspaces exist for many reasons, but moreover, they are intended to serve as “identity-conscious” and “identity-affirming” spaces for the students participating in them (p. 11). For the current study, counterspace was defined as a safe space where individuals with shared identities come together to promote self-perception, discuss experiences, and affirm their feelings as marginalized members of a school, business, church, or other organization.

Emotional Confidence

Lindenfield (2014) listed ways a person can demonstrate emotional confidence, including, but not limited to, the following:

> (a) free experience of a “full rich range of emotions from deep despair and gut anger to exhilarating joy and tender love without ever worrying that their heart

> will rule their head"; (b) independently able to control their emotional responses; (c) motivate themselves; (d) "express their feelings at the 'right' time and in the 'right' place, and to the 'right' person;" and (e) respond appropriately to others' emotional states. (pp. 10-11)

Relationship Skills

CASEL (2020) described relationship skills as "the abilities to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships and to effectively navigate settings with diverse individuals and groups" (p. 2). CASEL (2020) further explained that "this includes the capacities to communicate clearly, listen actively, cooperate, work collaboratively to problem solve and negotiate conflict constructively, navigate settings with differing social and cultural demands and opportunities, provide leadership, and seek or offer help when needed" (p. 2).

Responsible Decision-Making

CASEL (2020) explained responsible decision-making as "the ability to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations" (p. 2). CASEL (2020) further explained that "this includes the capacities to consider ethical standards and safety concerns, and to evaluate the benefits and consequences of various actions for personal, social, and collective well-being" (p. 2).

Self-Awareness

CASEL (2020) defined self-awareness as "the ability to understand one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior across contexts" (p. 2).

CASEL (2020) further explained that “this includes capacities to recognize one’s strengths and limitations with a well-grounded sense of confidence and purpose” (p. 2).

Self-Management

CASEL (2020) defined self-management as “the ability to manage one’s emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations and to achieve goals and aspirations” (p. 2). CASEL (2020) further explained that “this includes the capacities to delay gratification, manage stress, and feel motivation & agency to accomplish personal/collective goals” (p. 2).

Social Awareness

CASEL (2020) explained social awareness as “the ability to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, & contexts.” (p. 2). CASEL (2020) further explained that “this includes the capacities to feel compassion for others, understand broader historical and social norms for behavior in different settings, and recognize family, school, and community resources and supports” (p. 2).

Social Confidence

According to Rinehart (2003), a socially confident person is absent of social anxiety, has the “ability to act assertively,” has a “sense of self-efficacy regarding one’s social interactions,” and has a “tendency toward a more positive appraisal of social interactions” (p. ii).

Social-Emotional Framework

CASEL (2020) defined social and emotional learning as a process all young people and adults can use to advance and mature their skills in the following areas of

competency: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. The framework defines each competency and provides examples to apply in classroom, school, home, and community settings (CASEL, 2020). SEL promotes educational equity and excellence by fostering authentic school-family-community partnerships, fostering trusting learning environments, and implementing rigorous curriculum and evaluation (CASEL, 2020). It also intends to empower young people and adults to co-create thriving schools and contribute to safe, healthy communities (CASEL, 2020).

Suburban

Adapted from definitions used by the United States Census Bureau (2010) and the NCES (2006), for this study, suburban refers to a territory inside an urbanized area (50,000 or more people) and outside a principal city. All counties in the Kansas City metro area are statistically predominately White (Mid-America Regional Council [MARC], 2021).

Organization of the Study

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 provided the introduction, background, statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, delimitations, assumptions, research questions, the definition of terms, and an overview of the study. Chapter 2 presents an overview review of relevant literature. Chapter 3 details the methodology used to conduct the research. A discussion of the results of the study is found in Chapter 4. The final chapter includes a summary of the study, findings related to the literature, and the conclusions.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Chapter 2 includes a history of suburbanization in the United States and the Kansas City metro area and its impact on the social-emotional learning of Black females in suburban high schools. Additionally, provided in this chapter is an overview of the social-emotional learning framework, its competencies, and how its framework is utilized in schools. Furthermore, detailed in this chapter are the profound impact of social-emotional counterspaces on the educational experience of the Black female student in suburban schools, why providing social-emotional counterspaces for them in suburban high schools is vital to their educational experience, and existing literature that supports Black females' perceptions.

Suburbanization

Suburbanization refers to the expansion and reorganization of modern cities, driven by the migration of population, housing, and commercial activities to low-density settlements (Pieretti, 2014). Suburbanization became a significant dynamic in urban development in the late nineteenth century (Champion, 2003) and grew significantly after 1945, coinciding with the end of World War II (Jones, 2003). Upon their return, millions of veterans were eligible to receive benefits from the G.I. Bill, the Veterans Administration, and the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) to help pay for their schooling or purchase a home (Jones, 2003). A housing shortage still existed, leading to developers creating homes outside the urban core for those who could afford them (Jones, 2003). The housing development resulted in suburban areas housing one-third of the nation's population by 1960 (Jones, 2003).

Coinciding with the suburban residential explosion was the creation of laws that would exclude Black people from moving to suburban areas. During the 1940s, Blacks were excluded by *de facto* segregation and the FHA's practice of encouraging restrictive covenants in deeds that prohibited the sale of FHA-financed properties to Black people (Bondi, 1995). In a 1948 response, the U.S. Supreme Court declared these covenants unconstitutional in *Shelly v. Kraemer* (Bondi, 1995). As a result, the FHA drew red lines around predominantly Black inner-city neighborhoods on city maps and refused to insure loans for homes in those areas, citing a lack of "economic stability" and "protection from adverse conditions" (Bondi, 1995). The current residential segregation observed in all regions of the United States is not merely a result of individual choices or unintentional outcomes of well-intentioned laws and regulations. Instead, it is a direct consequence of deliberate state policies implemented to segregate metropolitan areas in the country. The policy was so systematic and aggressive that its effects persist in the present time (Rothstein, 2018). Thus, "without our government's purposeful imposition of racial segregation, the other causes—private prejudice, White flight, real estate steering, bank redlining, income differences, and self-segregation—still would have existed but with far less opportunity for expression" (Rothstein, 2018, pp. 5-6).

Regardless of the implementation of The Fair Housing Act of 1968, which was intended to eliminate housing discrimination, Black residents attempting to relocate to safer areas were often met with other roadblocks that prevented them from doing so, including other discriminatory legislation on local, state, and federal levels from the Internal Revenue Service, insurance companies, banks, thrift institutions, housing developer policies, homeowner groups, and the construction of the federal interstate

highway system (Rothstein, 2018). Black residents successfully purchasing property in suburban areas were even met with violence from their White counterparts, which included rock throwing, burning crosses on their front lawns, arson, and other violent acts, all without the protection of law enforcement (Rothstein, 2018).

Housing Implications in the Kansas City Metro Area

Gotham (2000) described how The Fair Housing Act of 1968 and the Section 235 Program had the opposite effect than its original intentions in the Kansas City metro area. The Section 235 program, a housing subsidy program that is part of the 1968 Fair Housing Act, was initially aimed to stimulate homeownership for non-Whites and people experiencing poverty (Gotham, 2000). However, in Kansas City, Missouri, it was found that most Black families were only able to purchase residences in urban regions experiencing racial transformation and enabling the great majority of White families to buy new homes in the suburbs (Gotham, 2000). Kansas City was identified "as one of the nation's hypersegregated metropolitan areas due to the high degree of segregation in housing patterns" (Gotham, 2000, p. 15). Recent data from the MARC (2023) website shows that the impacts from the housing practices described previously still impact the region today. Two factors remain as residual evidence: people of color continue to reside in areas of the region where poverty is also concentrated, and the 2020 Census reveals that lower-rated Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) neighborhoods in the Kansas City metro area continue to have lower property values, lower homeownership rates, and higher minority resident rates (MARC, 2023).

According to Norris and Baek (2016), Wyandotte County, Kansas, was greatly impacted by the HOLC lower-rated neighborhoods, and its residents fell victim to

redlining. The effects of the racialized HOLC assessments are felt by residents in the present day, as neighborhoods poorly rated experienced systematic disinvestment, resulting in housing declines and property value loss (Norris & Baek, 2016). In turn, not only has the housing aged and declined, but also the health of the minority and low-income residents has been greatly affected; these factors directly affect the quality of education for students living in this area (Norris & Baek, 2016). Developers like J.C. Nichols, the Kroh Brothers, Charles Vawter, and others placed racially restrictive covenants on new suburban neighborhoods that prohibited Blacks and other people of color from buying homes (Johnson County Museum, 2022). Greenlining usually required racially restricted covenants, home associations, and an extensive list of property restrictions, and even if they could afford a new home, redlined residents had few options (Johnson County Museum, 2022). In 1947, 96% of Johnson County suburban houses were reserved for White buyers, becoming the metro's most restricted community by 20% (Johnson County Museum, 2022).

Educational Implications

Most suburbs in the country's largest metropolitan areas still have a majority White student population. Suburban schools have a higher percentage of White students than urban schools, and the U.S. education system is becoming more segregated (Breslow et al., 2016; Chapman & Bhopal, 2019). Despite the discrepancy, researchers have found that "because the presence of racial minority students disrupts the racial and cultural homogeneity in these contexts, these students face particular academic and social challenges in these learning environments" (Chapman & Bhopal, 2019, p. 1111).

Most students in the United States attend suburban schools, yet scholarly education articles mostly target urban schools (Diamond et al., 2021). For instance, between 2000 and 2018, 80% of the articles published in the top five American Educational Research Association journals focused explicitly on urban schools, 11.7% on suburban schools, and 8% on rural schools (Diamond et al., 2021). The hyperfocus of urban school research is because many key educational issues—race and class disparities, demographic change, immigration, and English learning—are widely believed to be more acute in urban (and even rural) contexts rather than in suburban schools (Diamond et al., 2021).

Ultimately, the landscape of suburban schools is rapidly changing to closely resemble the racial makeup of the nation's public-school students (Stanford, 2023). The conventional perception of suburban areas as affluent, predominantly Caucasian enclaves is antiquated (Stanford, 2023). In order to guarantee fair and just provision of services, educators and policymakers need to change their perspectives (Stanford, 2023). The proportion of White students in suburban areas decreased from 55% in 2011 to 46% in 2022 (Stanford, 2023). Nevertheless, 22% of the individuals identified as Hispanic, 13% as Black, and 8% as Asian (Stanford, 2023). Suburban schools have encountered difficulties such as persistent absenteeism, diminishing academic performance, student psychological issues, and shortages in staff (Stanford, 2023). Suburban schools also experienced a significant decline in math performance in 2022, causing them to be on par with rural schools, which they had previously surpassed (Stanford, 2023).

Educational Implications in the Kansas City Metro Area

The education landscape of Kansas City Public Schools (KCPS) was forever shaped by one landmark case, *Missouri v. Jenkins* (Karst, 2000). A federal district court ordered the desegregation of the Kansas City school district, requiring the state of Missouri and the district to share the costs of the remedy (Karst, 2000). The court ordered the district's property tax levy to be increased to fund the desegregation remedy (Karst, 2000). The Supreme Court overturned the decision by ruling that the district court had misused its authority in imposing the tax (Karst, 2000). Justice Anthony Kennedy disagreed, arguing that the district court had the power to levy such a tax, as it would exceed the judicial power established in Article III of the Constitution (Karst, 2000). Judge Kennedy suggested that the desegregation of schools could have been accomplished without requiring funding beyond the district's current means (Karst, 2000). The case was later reopened in 1995, and despite the school district's desires, the state asserted that all remnants of the former segregated system had been eradicated, resulting in the federal district court refusing to rescind its order with a 5-4 vote (Hall & Ely, 2009). It was argued that the primary objective of the desegregation order was to attract White pupils from outside the predominantly minority KCPS, thereby increasing racial integration in KCPS (Missouri v. Jenkins). The court concluded that because the district court had only found unlawful segregation within the Kansas City school district, it lacked the authority to devise a remedy to increase interdistrict desegregation (Missouri v. Jenkins).

According to George (2021), KCPS remains predominately Black, and the state's withdrawal of financial support from Black communities has led to a continuous scarcity

of resources in these schools, resulting in intensified educational disparities affecting Black children in Kansas City. George (2021) further expressed that these educational disparities deepened during the pandemic, exposing other systemic inequalities, such as the lack of home internet access for online instruction, resulting in many students' learning loss. According to George (2021), 32% of homes east of Troost do not have an internet connection, and 26% do not have a computer.

Rury (2019) pointed out that although the majority of the Kansas City metro area's child poverty is concentrated in the Kansas City, Missouri School District, Kansas City, Kansas also has a sizeable amount of child poverty. Due in large part to significantly greater levels of residential segregation, Black residents in this area have historically experienced more deprivation than most Whites and other minority groups, and this has persisted into the twenty-first century (Rury, 2019).

Analyzing the scores of the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) exam, a grade level assessment used to measure students' academic performance against the Missouri learning standards, quantitatively exposes the educational disparity in the Kansas City metro area (Hill, 2021). According to a report prepared by Sireno and Bates (2022), the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant disruptive effect on all student learning; however, there was a stark decrease in proficiency for Black students statewide (Sireno & Bates, 2022) and in the Kansas City metro area (Hill, 2021). In 2019, Black students in Missouri were 21% proficient or above on the MAP exam, and in 2021, they were only 15% proficient, compared to their White counterparts, who were 50% proficient in 2019 and 46% proficient in 2021 (Sireno & Bates, 2022). Likewise, a summary of the educational data from Kansas City metro area schools uncovers alarming parallels: Black

students are positioned at the bottom of the academic ladder in each system, and a comprehensive solution to address this issue has yet to be developed (Hill, 2021).

On the other side of the state line, Kansas school districts have been unable to effectively address the widening achievement gaps and improve results for minority and low-income students despite receiving $3.8 billion in at-risk money from Kansas taxpayers since 2015 (Trabert, 2023). Simultaneously, achievement gaps for Kansas students still exist despite numerous Kansas school districts implementing diversity, equity, and inclusion training to enhance outcomes for minority students and narrow achievement gaps (Trabert, 2023). Kansas City Kansas Public Schools exhibits significantly lower state assessment scores compared to neighboring districts, encompassing all student populations as well as each subgroup (Dorsey, 2022). In KCK, 64% of students performed below grade level in math, and 54.8% performed below grade level in reading (Dorsey, 2022). In mathematics, 74.8% of Black students performed below grade level, and in reading, 62.7% of Black students performed below grade level (Dorsey, 2022). These numbers are much higher than those of all neighboring districts (Dorsey, 2022). Ultimately, the situation is significantly worse for Black students, and since The Kansas public school system maintains structural segregation—a kind of educational redlining—remains prevalent and is shielded by stringent school district boundaries (Dorsey, 2022).

Suburban Educational Experience of Black Female Students

The study of school-based discrimination experiences of Black females is limited due to their often exclusion based on the scholarly research on girls and the mechanisms of gender in education (Leath et al., 2019). Likewise, “concern over the status of Black

males in education (although important and warranted), along with Black girls' relatively higher academic achievement and attainment outcomes, can result in under examination of Black girls' educational processes" (Leath et al., 2019, pp. 1323-1324). Furthermore, for these reasons, the following section illustrates the state of Black female representation in the educational space, including their classroom experiences, books and resources in the library, teacher representation, and student representation.

Classroom Experiences

"Schools are a microcosm of society" (LoGalbo, 2023, p. 20). The prevailing cultural influence in the majority of suburban schools is White culture, making it crucial to examine the context of primarily White institutions concerning Black students (Chambers et al., 2014). Suburban American schools are firmly rooted in White culture, as the clear majority of educators are White (LoGalbo, 2023). Moreover, to the detriment of the Black female student, the school environment has been significantly impacted by societal perceptions of Black females, which have manifested themselves in the form of treatment and discipline (Billingsley, 2018). Black females are also often subjected to microaggressions, which are "subtle insults (verbal, nonverbal, and/or visual) directed toward people of color, often automatically or unconsciously" (Solorzano et al., 2000, p. 60).

Academic Disparities. According to Brown (2020), Black students face unique academic challenges and typically achieve lower academic achievement than their White counterparts. Extensive documentation exists regarding the disparity in educational achievement and attainment between Black and White individuals (Archer-Banks & Behar-Horenstein, 2012; Ogbu, 2003). Empirical investigations revealed that instructors'

expectations are often lower for Black females than for White females, and as a result, White teachers tended to criticize the attitudes and behaviors of Black females harshly or unfavorably, ultimately affecting their social identity and self-concept (Anderson, 2020). Numerous disadvantages experienced by Black students at the secondary level have been documented by researchers, encompassing aspects such as course placement, disciplinary measures, and college readiness (Archer-Banks & Behar-Horenstein, 2012). One hypothesis that has persisted since the late 1960s posits that the substandard academic achievement of Black students can be attributed to conflicts and disparities between Black and White American cultures (Ogbu, 2003).

Nevertheless, for Black females to be successful academically, they must contend with racial and gender discrimination, in addition to bias from school personnel (Archer-Banks & Behar-Horenstein, 2012). However, it has been documented that one coping mechanism Black females use as a self-protective response to deal with stress from racial and gendered experiences is to disengage with educational activities (Keels, 2019), exasperating academic disparities.

The well-documented disparity between the privileged knowledge, skills, language, and dispositions of White students in school settings and those experienced by non-dominant populations in their home environments is a significant factor in the ongoing inequities that plague our public schools (Joseph et al., 2016). The failure to address these issues, despite a national tendency toward colorblind racism, perpetuates racism and racist outcomes (Joseph et al., 2016). The prevailing colorblind culture observed in our educational institutions, policies, and methods of teacher preparation

sustains the advantage of whiteness and encourages discriminatory behaviors (Joseph et al., 2016).

Teacher referrals for gifted programs are more likely to favor White students, affecting Black females' representation in gifted programs (LoGalbo, 2023). It has been found that Black students face underrepresentation in gifted education due to barriers like teacher referrals, differential assessment performance, outdated policies, and social-emotional concerns (LoGalbo, 2023). Additionally, while Black students are underrepresented in gifted and talented programs offered by schools, they are over-represented in special education programs (Tabron & Chambers, 2019).

Despite these barriers, scholars have emphasized how Black female students express themselves in reaction to their schools' social and institutional structures and cultures, which differ according to the influence of socioeconomic class, gender, race, and ethnicity (Andrews, 2009). This more recent corpus of studies focuses on the capacity of Black female high achievers to keep their racial and ethnic identities while achieving academic success, as these students have figured out how to be both "ethnic" and accomplished simultaneously (Andrews, 2009). Additionally, it has been found that Black females who have acquired the ability to objectively engage with individuals from the dominant group while also acknowledging and affirming their own group's identity tend to experience higher levels of self-esteem (Anderson, 2020).

Disciplinary Disparities. Negative stereotypes that characterize Black women as asexual, lustful, irrational, and submissive have been perpetuated so often that people tend to accept them as inevitable, normal, and natural (Toliver, 2018). Scholars have endeavored to deconstruct these oppressive portrayals in favor of a more nuanced

understanding of Black womanhood (Toliver, 2018). However, the negative portrayal of Black female existence is so embedded in American culture that negative stereotypes still haunt a variety of publications, including books, magazines, music videos, and movies (Toliver, 2018). Many academics have maintained that stereotypes that produce harmful limitations and blatant misrepresentations of Black female identities also mislead society's perception of Black females (Toliver, 2018). Due to these misconceptions of Black girlhood, Black womanhood and Black girlhood are interchangeable, resulting in a type of age compression where young Black females are compared more to adults than to children (Toliver, 2018). In a study on the adultification of Black females, Epstein et al. (2017) revealed disturbing disparities in the disciplinary inequalities in the school system and beyond due to adultification, which is defined as "a social or cultural stereotype that is based on how adults perceive children in the absence of knowledge of children's behavior and verbalizations" (p. 4). The results of the study revealed that as young as five years old, Black females were found to be perceived as older, possessing a greater understanding of mature subjects, such as sexuality, and being more inclined to take on adult duties and obligations than their age-appropriate expectations (Epstein et al., 2017). As a consequence of adultification, Black females are more likely to be kicked out of school for subjective reasons like disobeying the rules, acting badly, or third-degree assault, which are determined by school personnel's judgment (Epstein et al., 2017). Bottiani et al.'s (2018) findings suggested that cultural norms, biases, race, ethnicity, culture, and gender can lead to disparities in exclusionary disciplinary actions. Morris (2018) described how Black females internalize this:

> As children or adults, Black girls are treated as if they are supposed to 'know better' or at least 'act like' they know…Black women and girls in America are subjected to dormant assumptions about their sexuality, their 'anger' or their 'attitude.' They have long understood that their way of engaging with the world- how they talk, how they walk, how they wear their hair, or how they hold their bodies- is subject to scrutiny, especially by those in positions of relative power. They feel the gaze. They intuit its presence. They live with this knowledge in their bodies and subconsciously wrestle with every personal critique of how they navigate their environments. (pp. 34-35)

When an educational institution primarily relies on exclusionary disciplinary actions, the potential for implementing alternative forms of accountability becomes constrained (Morris, 2019). The nomenclature and physical architecture of school infrastructure and atmosphere may resemble criminal legal systems (Morris, 2019). Under the cover of safety and racial neutrality, schools have adopted strict punishment measures that disproportionately affect Black adolescents, intercepting youth at pivotal moments in their lives (Cumi et al., 2017). The phrase "school-to-prison pipeline" frequently describes this issue (Cumi et al., 2017). Throughout the United States, there exists a notable disparity in the inclusion of Black females in restorative practices and disciplinary alternatives, as they are often deemed to exhibit more defiance or willful disruption within the educational setting based on subjective evaluations (Morris, 2019).

The implementation of school discipline has been utilized to suppress the energy and liveliness of Black girls, resulting in a deliberate suppression of their inner core and can have enduring consequences on the psychological and spiritual welfare of Black

females, even without physical confinement (Hines & Wilmot, 2018). Black females who survive life-threatening confrontations with educators, school resource officers, and administrators may be confined to classrooms that serve as metaphorical prisons, suppressing their freedom, resilience, and happiness (Hines & Wilmot, 2018).

Martin (2022) interviewed Black students attending suburban schools in the Kansas City metro area for an article about racial bullying. One Black female student reported that when she was in kindergarten, she had a meltdown in the classroom, which resulted in seven police officers escorting her to the principal's office. She reported that she experienced other traumatic experiences in school, "a place that was supposed to be safe" (Martin, 2022, para. 5). Appleseed Network (2020) analyzed in-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions, and expulsions data for Black females in the state of Kansas. Appleseed Network (2020) found that "Black female students were roughly 6.2 times more likely to be disciplined than White female students" (pp. 1-2). In Kansas alone, Black females were "4.3 times more likely to receive at least one in-school suspension, 8.3 times more likely to receive at least one out of school suspension, and 13.8 times more likely to be expelled" compared to their White female counterparts (Appleseed Network, 2020, p. 5). Because excluding Black females from school has negative effects on their social lives, it is essential to find ways to fix and lessen unfair ways of disciplining students (Blake et al., 2010).

To Black females, "school becomes an inhospitable place where Black girls receive mixed messages about femininity and goodness and are held to unreasonable standards" (Andrews et al., 2019, pp. 2531-2532). Black females are frequently confined to environments that fail to adequately foster their academic and personal growth (Kaur,

2020). However, when confronting these discipline disparities, Bottiani et al. (2018) note that White educators often experience discomfort when it comes to addressing issues related to racism, impeding progress in efforts to narrow the discipline disparity gap.

Books and Resources in the Library and the Classroom

Unsurprisingly, educational institutions significantly impact Black females' life trajectories (Morris, 2018). Prior study results provided evidence that public schools can frequently create oppressive environments for Black and Brown students since they are typically subjected to the implicit biases of teachers and encounter curriculum and teaching methods that fail to address their social, emotional, cultural, and intellectual requirements (Kelly, 2020). Using "counter-hegemonic and abolitionist literacy practices" that prioritize the inclusion of Black females in the curriculum is crucial for their academic success and overall well-being within the educational system (Anderson, 2022, p. 22). Research findings have demonstrated that Black females exhibit significant literacy skills beyond formal educational settings (Anderson, 2022). Yet, the elementary and secondary school curricula often fail to consider Black females' unique needs and experiences (Morris, 2018).

Textbooks are the primary resource for instructing students (Haynes et al., 2016). However, recent criticism has focused on the prominence of Western European life histories in textbooks, casting a shadow on others (Haynes et al., 2016). For example, American history textbooks often contain sanitized dialogue surrounding the colonization of the United States, highlighting Columbus's discovery of North America and establishing Western European culture as the official culture (Haynes et al., 2016). Numerous scholarly investigations conducted in the past 30 years have examined the

representation of women in mainstream texts (Schocker & Woyshner, 2013). The findings of these studies have provided evidence that a limited number of women are consistently featured, and the portrayals of these women tend to align with conservative political ideologies (Schocker & Woyshner, 2013). The aforementioned analyses indicate that Black women are largely underrepresented in mainstream U.S. high school history textbooks, aligning with previous research on the absence of diversity in educational materials (Schocker & Woyshner, 2013). The school curriculum, influenced by predominantly White pedagogy and framework, has prioritized Eurocentric ideals and images (Hill, 2023). The prioritization of Eurocentric ideals and images in the curriculum has impacted how Black female students perceive the type of learning that is regarded as most significant in classroom circumstances (Hill, 2023). When Black students are repeatedly placed in school settings that prioritize and promote the study of White history and narratives, the history and tales of Black communities and individuals are suppressed and downplayed (Hill, 2023). Black female students have not been exposed to educational settings that have traditionally supported and honored their own historical experiences and representation in the curriculum (Hill, 2023).

As a result, White female educators who use Eurocentric literature as a universal subject routinely overlook the reading habits and literacy skills of Black females in the classroom (Anderson, 2022). Thus, a change in the reading curriculum and teaching methods can only happen when experts and teachers explore the inexplicable fact that Black females do poorly in reading tests even though they love reading and have literacy-rich lives (Anderson, 2022). A big part of this confusion comes from the fact that Black females find it hard to connect the reading and writing habits they use every day, which

are shaped by their culture and identity, with the reading and writing rules they need to follow in school to be proficient and successful (Anderson, 2022). The results of a 2018 analysis of children's books indicate that there were more children's novels with animal and other non-human characters than all other sorts of visible minorities combined (Lewis, 2023). Concurrently, White children were featured in half of all the children's novels reviewed (Lewis, 2023). The portrayal of individuals in literature, especially the roles they assume, can significantly influence children's perceptions of the roles they and others can or cannot assume (Adukia et al., 2021). In light of enduring racial and gender disparities within society, as well as the significant role that identity and representation play in shaping ideas, goals, academic dedication, and achievements, these portrayals serve as a crucial avenue via which core societal inequities can be either confronted, perpetuated, or solidified (Adukia et al., 2021).

In 2020, the literacy rate for females in the United States was 53.7 %, which was 21.6 % lower than the literacy rate for males, which stood at 75.3 % (Lueken et al., 2022). Research emphasizes that Black women who do not acquire fundamental literacy skills during their formative years within the public education system "have less opportunity for intellectual advancement, creating a vulnerable multi-generational situation for women when they become mothers and cannot help their own children to learn to read and write" (Lueken et al., 2022, p. 1). Offspring of individuals with low literacy are highly probable (72%) to possess even lower levels of reading proficiency (Lueken et al., 2022). Therefore, the issue with Black females and literacy skills underscores the ongoing need for the American education system to address the political

and pedagogical barriers that hinder the attainment of liberation from this enduring struggle.

Rodick (2023) pointed out that progress in expanding the range of subjects taught and increasing the level of intellectual challenge has been sluggish and unfinished. The majority of schools in the United States lack a curriculum that accurately represents the diverse backgrounds of its students or delves into a wide range of opinions regarding our intricate U.S. history (Rodick, 2023). Black history is allocated a mere 8% of the overall class time in most history classrooms (Rodick, 2023). Efforts have been made by publishers, state boards, districts, and educators to enhance inclusivity in curricula. However, a significant amount of work remains to ensure that all students receive a comprehensive and intellectually challenging education that adequately prepares them for higher education and beyond (Rodick, 2023). Currently, there are restrictions in 18 states regarding the discussion of race and gender identity in schools (Rodick, 2023). The rationale behind censorship in these jurisdictions is that education has exceeded acceptable limits—that K-12 education exhibits excessive diversity and includes several opinions, particularly those that contradict conservative rhetoric (Rodick, 2023).

If schools use curricula that omit the existence of Black females from the bold account of American exceptionalism, they are tacitly formulating a narrative of marginalization (Morris, 2018). This exclusion narrative raises questions about how Black females situate themselves as Americans and global citizens (Morris, 2018). The inclusion of Black females in educational materials is critical to their well-being and academic success (Anderson, 2022). The curriculum should, above all, incorporate culturally sensitive instruction that honors the diversity of cultural identities. Contextual

learning, a communal and cultural library, and the development of teacher-student relationships should all be included (Skeffrey, 2022). However, despite scholarly efforts, the lack of adequate representation of Black intellectualism and dedication to education in K-20 curricula and education studies continues to exist (Andrews, 2019).

Teacher Representation

Teachers who support and encourage students, especially when they face problems, can significantly improve their academic performance, motivation, and self-perception (Cumi et al., 2017). This positive correlation exists between students' perceptions of teacher support and expectations and their overall academic performance (Cumi et al., 2017). Educators are often the "first responders to students in crisis," requiring them to embrace the whole child in holistic learning, "not only subject matter but also who they are and what they contribute to their communities," and to foster positive learning communities, it is crucial to have at least one adult on campus as a "safe person" for students, who can support them during crises and collaborate with educators to promote inclusion (Morris, 2022, p. 7). Black students who experienced excellent social interactions ascribed them to their teacher's unwavering dedication to fostering relationships (Elliott-Schrimmer, 2023). Ultimately, cultivating strong teacher-student and student-student relationships is crucial for fostering a sense of belonging among Black students in the AP English class (Elliott-Schrimmer, 2023.)

However, in schools, "African American students rarely walk into a classroom and have a teacher of the same race" (LoGalbo, 2023, pp. 20-21). The findings of a National Teacher and Principal Survey conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (2021) showed that in the 2020-2021 school year, 91.3% of Missouri full-time

and part-time public school teachers were White and non-Hispanic, 1% were Hispanic (of any race), 4.6% were Black and non-Hispanic, 1.7% were two or more races and non-Hispanic, and less than 1% were Asian and non-Hispanic, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, non-Hispanic and American Indian/Alaska Native, non-Hispanic. The same survey results indicate that in the 2020-2021 school year, 92.3% of Kansas full-time and part-time public-school teachers were White and non-Hispanic, 4.2% were Hispanic (of any race), 1.4% were Black and non-Hispanic, and less than 1% were Asian and non-Hispanic, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, non-Hispanic, two or more races and non-Hispanic, and American Indian/Alaska Native, non-Hispanic (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021). Teacher-student racial matching is associated with gains in student achievement, reductions in absences and suspensions, a decrease in high school dropouts, and improvements in college enrollment (Scherer & Cleveland, 2022). Because Black students' academic performance is significantly influenced by their relationships with teachers, cultural conflicts in the student-teacher relationship can be problematic, leading to more criticism and less teacher support (Morris, 2018). Nevertheless, White instructors who possess limited prior experience or comprehensive multicultural training are more likely to instruct Black youth (Leath et al., 2019). Yet, in Elliott-Schrimmer's (2023) study, Black students disclosed that being taught by a teacher who is at a more advanced stage in their White identity development fosters an atmosphere that enhances their likelihood of achieving success (Elliott-Schrimmer, 2023). While everyone should also strive to comprehend their own racial identity, it is crucial for teachers to have a deep understanding of the intricacies of racism and to constantly educate themselves on how to actively oppose racism (Elliott-Schrimmer, 2023).

Since scholarly concern has centered around Blackness and masculinity, there is much to learn about the Black female's educational experience (Morris, 2007). Because of this, Morris (2007) emphasized the importance of the intersectionality theory and how it can assist in understanding the multidimensional depth of the Black female's educational experience. Morris (2007) defined intersectionality as the "combinations, or intersections, of important modes of social advantage and disadvantage" (p. 491) and denotes that people experience modalities such as race, class, and gender in varied degrees and combinations, thus affecting the environmental experience. Accordingly, "in many schools, Black girls learn that to succeed, they must reform their self-presentation to be more like their (real or imagined) White, middle-class counterparts" (Ispa-Landa, 2013, p. 221). "Consequently, students whose cultural experiences are different from the teachers may not be able to use them as a resource if the educators operate from their own cultural ways of knowing" (Brown, 2020, p. 24). Cultural conflicts can lead to an oppositional environment where educators attempt to implement their cultural norms onto students while students resist their attempts to control them (Brown, 2020). Furthermore, the lack of understanding of Black female challenges in school settings leads to "mischaracterizations of their attitudes, abilities, achievements, and overall existence" (Andrews et al., 2019, p. 2532). Given the distinct intersections of race, gender, class, and ability that Black females occupy, it is imperative to direct attention toward their experiences, mainly how educators see their aptitude and potential (Anderson, 2020).

In its broadest meaning, language is the most prevalent kind of symbolic violence and serves as the domain in which suffering is not alone misidentified but is also acknowledged and valued within society (Fordham, 2016). According to Frederic's

(2022) observations, educators made inaccurate assessments of Black females when they openly expressed themselves using a linguistic and cultural style that they deemed natural and genuine to them. Also, the assertiveness displayed by young Black females in their speech or mannerisms was frequently seen by teachers as lacking in refinement, confrontational, or disobedient (Frederic, 2022). As a result, Black females were often denied the opportunity to fully explore and embrace their true growth into womanhood due to the scrutiny and questioning of their own identities (Frederic, 2022). The efforts made by Black females to express their perspectives were frequently misinterpreted or disregarded, leading certain educators to perceive them as lacking intelligence and incapable of engaging in insightful discussions (Frederic, 2022). However, it is important to recognize that the unique experiences and linguistic choices of Black females should not be viewed negatively or disapproved of by educators and fellow students (Frederic, 2022).

Scherer and Cleveland (2022) conducted a study with middle school students in Boston and found that matching Black female students with approximately one additional Black female teacher resulted in a reduction of their absence for the year by almost 4.2%. The researchers also found that demographic matching enhances individual motivation and interpersonal dynamics among students (Scherer & Cleveland, 2022). Students may have improved outcomes when they are exposed to a professional staff that is more diverse (Scherer & Cleveland, 2022).

According to Hubbard (2005), who examined highly successful Black students enrolled in an Advancement Via Individual Determination program at a public high school, Black females reported discriminatory behavior from their school counselors.

Many individuals reported that a counselor persistently informed them that they would not gain admission to a prestigious university by providing them with information about vocational schools or community colleges instead of guiding them toward four-year universities (Hubbard, 2005). Ultimately, school counselors who do not give Black females the information and opportunities to enroll in all colleges contribute to these unfair policies and have an impact on Black females' chances of gaining college admission (Archer-Banks & Behar-Horenstein, 2012).

Student Representation

U.S. scholars argue that racial diversity enhances Black students' engagement in predominantly White institutions despite potential positive outcomes for racial minorities (Chapman & Bhopal, 2019). Frankenberg et al. (2019) reported that in 2016, suburban schools in major metropolitan areas had only 47% White students, a 10-percentage point decline in a decade; about one-seventh were Black; and one-fourth were Latino. Nationally, White students now make up less than half of public-school enrollment, a decrease of eight percentage points from 2006, yet remain the most segregated group (Frankenberg et al., 2019). White students, despite decreasing population, still attend schools with nearly seven out of 10 classmates being White, despite less segregation with same-race peers (Frankenberg et al., 2019). Cobb (2023) conducted a study that compared statistics in three districts in the Kansas City metro area. Cobb (2023) compared the minority enrollment of KCPS (89%) and Raytown Schools (75%) to the minority enrollment of Lee's Summit Schools (26%) and found that KCPS and Raytown School District serve the majority of minority students. Segregation is still prevalent, with Black and Latinx students attending non-White schools while White students attended

White-majority schools (Frankenberg et al., 2019). According to the survey results from Harvard University, parents who are White and come from privileged backgrounds evaluated the quality of a school based on the number of other White, advantaged parents who enroll their children in that particular institution (Samuels, 2020). Integrated schools are often perceived as academically substandard despite the paradoxical acknowledgment by parents of their inherent worth in a conceptual sense (Samuels, 2020).

Within a school context, it is common for peer networks of the same race to congregate in particular physical areas (Carter, 2007). In educational environments where racial desegregation has taken place, Black adolescents not only experience racism and engage in self-reflection over their identity, but their White peers, even if they are not directly responsible for perpetuating racism, also lack the necessary preparation to provide helpful responses (Carter, 2007). Furthermore, "many elementary schools have self-contained classrooms where children of varying performance levels learn together, [and] many middle and secondary schools assign students to different subject levels based on their perceived ability, a practice known as tracking" (Tatum, 2017, p. 159). Although administrators may argue that these processes are fair and unbiased, there is often a noticeable racial pattern in the assignment of pupils, resulting in a system that provides certain advantages (Tatum, 2017). According to Keels (2019), Black females are cognizant of the influence that their White counterparts exert on them to think, act, and interact per preconceived notions regarding the nature of Black womanhood.

Therefore, Black students have had to rely on each other to obtain the essential support they need (Carter, 2007). This form of support manifests as racial clustering in specific physical regions inside a school. Despite this, all students have the capacity to

actively contribute towards reducing the sense of marginalization experienced by Black female students (Jones-Malone, 2011). This contribution can be achieved by cultivating an awareness of the social and academic challenges prevalent by simply learning about the environment (Jones-Malone, 2011).

Black Females' Perceptions of Suburban High Schools

Eggleston and Miranda (2009) conducted a qualitative study at a large Midwestern high school about the impact of the residential region (predominantly White suburban or predominantly Black urban). Eleven Black female students were interviewed regarding their perspectives of race and how it shapes their understanding of what it means to be a Black woman. Students expressed that they felt that while most of the teachers were supportive, some Black students did not respect the teachers and could not expect reciprocation (Eggleston & Miranda, 2009). All students agreed that they would like to see more teachers of color and felt that they could not connect as well to someone of another race (Eggleston & Miranda, 2009). Furthermore, students felt that by participating in Advanced Placement courses and some extracurricular activities, their Black peers would view them as being White or there are no other Black females involved (Eggleston & Miranda, 2009). Students expressed that there was a lack of representation of Black culture in their schools, and support for Black issues was non-existent (Eggleston & Miranda, 2009). The students also expressed the different expectations of behavior in school and from their families, stereotypes, difficulties having friends of different races, and having dating issues (Eggleston & Miranda, 2009).

Marsh (2013) interviewed nine Black females who were seniors at a science and math focused high school in a suburb on a college campus in the western region of the

United States. The study participants preserved a portion of their “Blackness” identity by actively searching out homogeneous, predominately Black social groups while accommodating school-mandated multicultural work groups (Marsh, 2013). The students established a unique collegial network that integrated gender and race in order to maintain their dual identities, showing that despite being in an interracial environment, a space was created for them to express their Blackness as young women (Marsh, 2013). Participation in and membership in social organizations preserved these young women’s “Blackness” and femininity (Marsh, 2013). The conscious interaction and communal support that these students cultivated contribute to a reduction in psychological issues and an improvement in their psychological well-being (Marsh, 2013).

Neal-Jackson (2018) conducted a meta-ethnographic review of the experiences of K-12 Black female students. Black female students frequently encounter diminished expectations from school administrators and educators, who presume their ethnicity and gender result in limited academic capabilities (Neal-Jackson, 2018). Despite their enrollment in advanced courses, Black female students perceive themselves as being unjustly disadvantaged in their quest for academic and professional achievement (Neal-Jackson, 2018). In order to bolster their drive, certain individuals establish academic communities with fellow Black female students who possess the same ambitions (Neal-Jackson, 2018). Nevertheless, creating and sustaining these networks might prove challenging as a result of strained social dynamics with peers, perceived social groups, and divergent attitudes toward education (Neal-Jackson, 2018). Certain students choose to engage in academic communities to minimize social interaction and the spread of rumors during study periods (Neal-Jackson, 2018). Notwithstanding these obstacles,

Black female students highly esteem education as a vehicle for self-improvement, the well-being of their families, and the advancement of their communities (Neal-Jackson, 2018). School officials frequently perceive the conduct of Black female students through the lens of stereotypes, disregarding their academic requirements and neglecting their ethnic identities (Neal-Jackson, 2018). Students also voiced discontent with a curriculum that fails to integrate Black culture or history (Neal-Jackson, 2018).

Billingsley (2018) conducted a qualitative study examining the experiences of Black female students attending predominately White schools in the suburbs of St. Louis as desegregation students in the Voluntary Inter-District Choice Corporation (VICC). According to Billingsley (2018), the VICC program is in charge of overseeing the operation of the metropolitan area desegregation program, facilitating transfers of city students to suburban school districts and suburban students to city magnet schools. Out of the 10 girls interviewed, most of them reported being consistently asked by other members of their school community if they lived within the school district boundaries and reported being irritated by the frequency of others asking (Billingsley, 2018). The girls belonged to the school community but were receiving messages from other members of the school community that they did not belong there (Billingsley, 2018).

All girls expressed that they believed their future was positively impacted by attending a predominately White school because of the activities and classes for students that would prepare them for college (Billingsley, 2018). Their families knew how difficult it was for their daughters as minority members of the student population but felt the “pros outweighed the cons, especially since lots of schools have problems” (Billingsley, 2018, p. 99). Each girl felt she had been subjected to prejudice due to the

perception that their White peers were more privileged and experienced greater authority and opportunities, including experiencing the use of racist language and microaggressions from their peers (Billingsley, 2018). The girls also talked about shifting their identities based on their environment, utilizing codeswitching, while actively searching for affinity while being the only Black student or part of a few in their classes and afterschool activities (Billingsley, 2018). All girls spoke about the lack of representation in the teaching staff and how they needed teachers who looked like them (Billingsley, 2018). They also spoke about unfair disciplinary processes and consequences, citing that they felt targeted and under surveillance (Billingsley, 2018).

One participant in this study was a member of a group at her school geared toward Black girls and led by two Black female educators (Billingsley, 2018). She expressed that the group served as a safe space where she and other group members were open to speaking about any topic of choice and not be judged (Billingsley, 2018). She also expressed that she did not believe that the group was a part of the school because it was not a "high level activity" like football or soccer (Billingsley, 2018, p. 116).

Social-Emotional Learning Framework

The CASEL Organization is a non-profit created in 1994 to integrate excellent, data-supported SEL into the curriculum from pre-kindergarten through secondary school (CASEL, 2023b). CASEL partners co-authored a book to define SEL for educators as a guideline to integrate SEL into the existing curriculum (CASEL, 2023b). By 2004, Illinois became the first state to adopt SEL standards, tools to implement SEL in schools were released in 2006, and the first legislative act to support SEL implementation in schools was introduced in 2009 (CASEL, 2023b). In 2020, the framework was updated to

emphasize that equality and excellence are crucial practices when implementing SEL curriculums and that the framework applies to all students regardless of color, ethnicity, socioeconomic situation, learning ability, immigration status, English proficiency, gender identity, or sexual orientation (CASEL, 2023b).

In a recent meta-analysis conducted by Cipriano et al. (2023), indications of improved school climate, student engagement, and teacher-student relationships have been found in schools after the administration of SEL programs. Students also experienced improved academic achievement, social-emotional skills, attitudes, and peer relationships (Cipriano et al., 2023). Overall, the researchers found significant evidence supporting the efficacy of SEL interventions for students in schools across the globe (Cipriano et al., 2023).

Although SEL has been one of the most prominent educational trends since 2013, more recently, it has been an explosive point in cultural conflicts (Barshay, 2023). Proponents of social-emotional learning have cited hundreds of studies demonstrating that SEL instruction boosts student well-being and academic achievement (Barshay, 2023). The findings from Barshay's (2023) meta-analysis indicate that SEL programs in schools worked well, and they also widened the definition of social and emotional learning to include even more skills unrelated to schoolwork.

One of the significant criticisms was that White psychologists were using SEL lessons in an attempt to improve the lives of Black and Brown students instead of changing the racist structures that kept all students from succeeding (Barshay, 2023). Parent groups and some legislators blame schools for threatening student privacy and exploiting SEL to advance progressive views on race, gender, and sexuality (Field, 2022).

Additional criticism of SEL programs is from other legislators saying that more time should be spent catching students up academically and saying there is no time in the school day for SEL and academic work (Field, 2022).

Missouri is the most recent state to face strong opposition to its plans to teach SEL in schools after adopting K-12 SEL standards to combat classroom misbehavior (Stanford & Prothero, 2023). After submitting the proposed guidelines to the public for feedback, the public expressed concern in the comments that SEL could be used to justify diversity, equity, and inclusion curricula, permit schools to interfere with parental responsibilities, and require teachers to practice psychology without a license (Stanford & Prothero, 2023). After over 2,000 public submissions revealed SEL uncertainty and concerns, state education authorities cut back and reinterpreted the planned social-emotional learning requirements as a non-binding, optional framework (Stanford & Prothero, 2023). SEL supporters, including many teachers, say that addressing students' social and emotional needs now can speed academic recovery by improving stress management and teacher-student connections (Field, 2022). SEL supporters also claim that confusion with academic jargon can unintentionally cause misunderstanding when referring to components of SEL (Field, 2022; Stanford & Prothero, 2023). Ultimately, CASEL organization representatives expressed concern that the politicization of SEL might discourage state politicians from providing funding to assist districts' efforts in this area, depriving teachers of the means to teach SEL using the most up-to-date research and techniques (Stanford & Prothero, 2023).

Lohmann (2023) investigated Black high school students' beliefs and attitudes after being enrolled in their first year of social-emotional learning at a Midwestern high

school. The majority of students felt they could better relate to their classmates, comprehend the viewpoints of others, express their own opinions, and experience less isolation (Lohmann, 2023). Many students recounted that the SEL lessons helped them better manage their emotions, and most expressed their growth in emotional and coping skills (Lohmann, 2023). One Black female student in the study expressed that "content from the SEL class is relevant in their culture because [the] skills taught in that class should be used when talking to anyone, regardless of their cultural background" (Lohmann, 2023, p. 40). Another Black female student concurred that the SEL curriculum is crucial for their culture to equip them for potential adverse encounters stemming from their circumstances (Lohmann, 2023). Yet, since there is scarce research surrounding this matter, the success of SEL programs for students from diverse backgrounds cannot be presumed without proper reporting and analysis of relevant data (Lohmann, 2023).

SEL Implications for Black Females

Most recently, the Black Lives Matter Movement emerged in cities like Baltimore, New York, and Ferguson, seeking to challenge unjust laws, policies, and beliefs that diminish the lives of Black people, uplift Black people, and oppose post-racial ideologies (Patton et al., 2016). It was a unified front against police brutality, racial profiling, and the criminalization of Black bodies (Patton et al., 2016). However, the movement primarily focuses on Black men and boys, even though Black females experience "police brutality, state surveillance, and predatory enforcement of regulatory laws" at the same disproportionate rates (Patton et al., 2016, p. 194). The researchers pointed out that "the

‘state of emergency’ discourse surrounding Black boys and men is often juxtaposed with the ‘invisibility’ discourse of Black women and girls” (Patton et al., 2016, p. 194).

In recent years, there has been an increase in studies and programs aimed exclusively at helping Black men succeed in college, correlating with “scholarly neglect of Black women and girls” (Patton et al., 2016, p. 194). Unfortunately, the experiences of Black females are often rendered invisible in several unacknowledged manners, including within the context of their educational experiences (Patton et al., 2016). Black females are socialized early to assume a subordinate status in schools, with classroom teaching often criticized for establishing color lines and using racially coded language to set White femininity as the acceptable standard, putting Black females’ actions, choices, and appearance under surveillance by teachers and classmates (Haynes et al., 2016). There are indications that currently available SEL programs do not adequately service Black students; nonetheless, there is a lack of empirical research exploring this topic (Lohmann, 2023). Furthermore, SEL may exhibit bias in the curriculum and implementation processes as a result of their racial and gender-neutral approach (Scott, 2023). These factors raise concerns about the applicability and effectiveness of SEL programs in diverse cultural contexts (Scott, 2023). Particularly for Black females, who face sexism and other forms of school discipline already, this is a major cause for alarm (Scott, 2023).

Opportunities to Learn

Federal policy in the U.S. is crucial in establishing the necessary framework to ensure that SEL is implemented statewide and district-wide for the benefit of all students (CASEL, 2023c). In 2021, President Biden signed the American Rescue Plan Act to provide immediate and direct relief to the American people in response to the COVID-19

pandemic (The White House, 2021). Out of the monies allocated, $123 billion was allocated to schools, bringing a unique and unparalleled prospect for investing in SEL programs (CASEL, 2023c).

To date, 27 states have implemented SEL competencies for grades K-12, while all 50 states have embraced SEL competencies for pre-K education (CASEL, 2023d). In 2021, an interactive online state scan by The Education Trust and CASEL was released to review each state's current policies and provide insight into how each state prioritizes social, educational, and academic development (CASEL, 2023d). This SEL state scan can also assist with finding trends in the data and point out the most important policies that states should adopt to make things work (CASEL, 2023d).

In Missouri, the state has not outlawed corporal punishment, does not forbid exclusionary discipline for any reason (including an explanation of the prohibition of discriminatory hair or grooming codes), does not provide guidance or funding for any restorative justice efforts, and does not provide guidance or funding for professional development in positive discipline practices (The Education Trust, 2021). Missouri lacks dedicated staff and funding for teacher preparation programs that integrate students' social, emotional, and academic development but requires teacher preparation programs to provide training (The Education Trust, 2021). The state has set goals for equitably enrolling students in advanced coursework but lacks specific actions, such as providing all students access to college preparatory coursework (The Education Trust, 2021). No funding has been issued for selecting standards-aligned curricula (The Education Trust, 2021). While Missouri's ESSA and strategic plan refer to student, family, and community

engagement, they fail to elaborate on how school districts can implement evidence-based practices or provide professional development (The Education Trust, 2021).

In Kansas, policies regarding exclusionary discipline mirror Missouri policy, but Kansas does provide guidance for implementing positive discipline in schools (The Education Trust, 2021). However, Kansas, in contrast to Missouri, has a well-defined, attainable objective for professional development that seeks to address adult mindsets and provide educators with the tools they need to promote student success, and has people dedicated to providing guidance and technical assistance when providing professional development (The Education Trust, 2021). Kansas requires teacher preparation programs to provide training for programs that integrate students' social, emotional, and academic development but does not require the programs to confront adult mentalities (The Education Trust, 2021). Kansas has a student-led state-level advisory council that assists in making state-level decisions (The Education Trust, 2021).

Missouri has ultimately decided to make implementing SEL programs optional and non-obligatory in response to growing political criticism (Stanford & Prothero, 2023). In contrast, Kansas maintains its commitment to the effective implementation of SEL through the alignment of SEL competencies with contemporary standards, active stakeholder engagement, and assistance in ensuring students' achievement (CASEL, 2023a). Kansas created a plan for school implementation to "develop and track students' social and emotional learning as an indicator of student success within accountability models" (Neuenswander, 2021).

Social-Emotional Confidence

The term “cultural imperialism” refers to the practice of imposing one group’s values and traditions on other people around the world (O’Garro Joseph, 2007). The fundamental unfairness of cultural imperialism is that the dominant culture impresses its own understanding of social life on the oppressed group, while the former is unable to communicate its own understanding of social life to the dominant culture (O’Garro Joseph, 2007). Throughout their academic careers, Black female students face cultural imperialism and develop a toolbox full of techniques to overcome it (O’Garro Joseph, 2007). Some Black girls clash with school norms as they struggle to form and express their identities (O’Garro Joseph, 2007). In contrast, others go silent, giving up important relationships with family and friends to succeed academically (O’Garro Joseph, 2007). Their silence can be confused with a lack of confidence by peers and educators.

In a recent U.S. study, Hinkelman (2023) revealed that the overall percentage of girls’ confidence fell from 68% to 55% from their 2017 report, with fewer girls reporting higher confidence levels in Grades 5-11. High levels of pressure were reported among these females, with 76% feeling under tremendous pressure from grades, school, friendships, and family issues (Hinkelman, 2023). Of the respondents, 65% indicated they did not feel good about their bodies as much as they used to, and their confidence dropped when they spent more time on social media (Hinkelman, 2023). On the other hand, females who feel a sense of belonging at school were seven times more likely to be confident, and females who attended schools where they could express themselves authentically had higher confidence (Hinkelman, 2023). Females reported more school satisfaction, less depression, and greater self-assurance when they have positive adult and

peer relationships (Hinkelman, 2023). Overall, Hinkelman (2023) found that confident females are more likely to like trying new things, express their minds, feel that school is a place where they belong, think that they can be themselves there, get along with other females, have supportive people in their lives, wish to take the lead and minimize their social media interaction.

Counterspaces

Black female students experience unique challenges due to intersecting identities of race and gender. Discrimination, stereotype threat, and underrepresentation can create adverse academic and social experiences. Counterspaces emerge as a response to these challenges, offering a refuge where Black female students can affirm their identity, voice their experiences, and empower themselves. Keels (2019) defines counterspaces as safe and supportive spaces created by marginalized groups to counteract discrimination and exclusion. Black female students, often facing multiple layers of discrimination, have found counterspaces invaluable for their personal and academic growth (Keels, 2019). To combat the microaggressions and violence they face daily, Black females need places where they are heard and supported (Anderson, 2022).

Other Definitions

"Affinity spaces," "safe spaces," and "brave spaces" are other terms that scholarly literature has used to define counterspaces (Green, 2020; Harrison, 2018; Myers et al., 2019). Harrison (2018) defined an affinity space as an informal learning environment where people interact around a common task, either in person or virtual. These spaces are not commonly found in classrooms, where students are typically segregated by race, gender, or ability level (Harrison, 2018). Affinity groups provide a venue for amplifying

the voices that are frequently marginalized. Affinity spaces provide a platform for students with a shared identity, sometimes associated with marginalization, to convene and discuss their respective identities within a secure environment (Green, 2020). Ultimately, affinity spaces should be accommodating, and the distribution of knowledge and leadership should be distributed among all participants, fostering an environment that promotes active participation and expanded understanding (Harrison, 2018).

Myers et al. (2019) define safe spaces as environments that foster candid, considerate, courteous, and civil dialogue while establishing and enforcing ground rules to facilitate discussions and regulate group dynamics. Brave spaces are places that represent the reality that no environment is ever completely safe, especially among people who are similar, like-minded, or otherwise affiliated with one another (Myers et al., 2019). Despite this danger, coming together with others may be preferable to being alone and may assist in recognizing unsaid lived facts (Myers et al., 2019). Gathering is a courageous act of defiance that must be carried out despite the possibility of punishment or the continual occurrence of microaggressions (Myers et al., 2019). Brave spaces are places that not only provide a venue for connection and recognition but also tackle the internalized biases and oppressions that exist within a community (Myers et al., 2019). The establishment of brave spaces merely consists of filling up the gaps that dominant groups have presumptively occupied due to their numerical and cultural superiority (Myers et al., 2019).

Theoretical Foundations

An analysis of contemporary research on Black adolescent females requires the application of research frameworks and perspectives that are more validating towards

Black females (Joseph et al., 2016). Thus, the examination of racism in schools and the perspectives of Black adolescent females was grounded in Black feminist thought and critical race theory (Joseph et al., 2016). By emphasizing racism's inherent nature in American society and advancing racial progress, critical race theory seeks to examine and transform the interconnections between race, racism, and power (Joseph et al., 2016). Critical race theory is advanced by Black feminist thought, which focuses on the intellectual thought that results from a nuanced examination and analysis of the unique experiences of women of African descent in the United States.

Galan's (1990) multidimensional model of bicultural identity examines distinct quadrant types of adaptation that are transitory in terms of personal integration and cultural adaptability; it is grounded in the realities of Black students (Myers et al., 2019). The four quadrants, traditional adaptation, marginal adaptation, assimilation adaptation, and bicultural adaptation, are presented on a continuum of adherence and can be plotted on the two-dimensional model of bicultural identity (Robbins et al., 2011). The Galan model incorporates the influence of cultural and behavioral values that arise in any social situation (Robbins et al., 2011). It also introduces the concept of time, which allows for a framework that considers both the contextual and temporal aspects in the formation of a dynamic bicultural identity (Robbins et al., 2011). Galan argued how vital it is to investigate the degree of conformity to both the norms and values of the ethnic family culture and those of the greater majority American culture (Robbins et al., 2011). Ultimately, racial identity formation models are informative for the Black counterspace, shedding light on how individuals might cultivate a good racial self by learning to

appreciate and combine elements of their own culture with those of other cultures (Myers et al., 2019).

Intersectionality and Its Connection to Counterspaces

Keels (2019) defined intersectionality as "the understanding that key status characteristics such as race-ethnicity, gender, national origin, class, and sexuality are indivisible in understanding people's experiences of the social world" (p. 20). The concept of intersectionality, which originated with Kimberlé Crenshaw, posited that examining the intersection of a woman's race and gender identity is crucial to comprehending the unique struggles women of color face (Joseph et al., 2016). For Black females, these various identities are significant, and comprehensive assessments of discrimination and other forms of oppression need to take these identities into account (Joseph et al., 2016). Because classrooms are microcosms of the greater society, teachers, administrators, and legislators who fail to recognize the interconnectedness of Black females' experiences are responsible for the inequality and mistreatment of this group (Anderson, 2022). As a result, Black females are prevented from realizing their full academic potential by adult perceptions in schools that support a false narrative about them and validate unfavorable stereotypes (Anderson, 2022). In the end, when considered separately, race, ethnicity, and gender are observable identities that come with unique difficulties in a culture that disfavors women and Black people. Because Black women are the embodiment of these two identities, they do not experience femininity or Blackness in the same ways that White women or Black men do (Keels, 2019).

Challenges and Criticisms

There are major challenges and criticisms for having counterspaces for marginalized groups of people. According to Pendharkar (2022), Parents Defending Education, a parent group, has filed four complaints and a federal lawsuit against school districts with the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights against counterspaces. The complaints and lawsuits were filed in response to counterspaces providing safe spaces for students or educators of color, claiming that the establishment of these groups violates the Civil Rights Act and the 14th Amendment's equal protection provision (Pendharkar, 2022). Ultimately, the lawsuit was settled in February 2022, with districts consenting to clarify that all students were welcome to join the groups (Pendharkar, 2022).

The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights released a document providing guidance and clarification on Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, a law that prohibits a statute outlawing discrimination on the basis of race or national origin for any entity receiving government funds (Lhamon, 2023). According to Barnum (2023), the documents cannot express that while schools should encourage open dialogue about race and racism, they should not, under any circumstances, allow students to form exclusive groups based on race. The statement implies that educational institutions could implement customary approaches, such as incorporating race-related content into the curriculum and implementing initiatives to assist marginalized communities affected by racism (Barnum, 2023). The establishment of race-exclusive groups, a strategy used in several educational institutions, may potentially initiate an investigation of civil rights (Barnum, 2023). The guidance was presented as a letter addressed to school officials and

does not possess the legal authority of law (Barnum, 2023). However, this implies the potential approach of the present administration towards legal inquiries, and this kind of counsel is frequently monitored by educational authorities (Barnum, 2023). The guideline outlines what would and would not result in a civil rights investigation and provides several fictitious instances highlighting the department's methodology (Barnum, 2023). Ultimately, Lhamon (2023) acknowledges that "many schools, colleges, and universities offer spaces and activities for students... to cultivate inclusive communities that feel welcoming to students from traditionally underserved populations," and that these efforts are permissible as long as they "are open to all students regardless of race" (p. 11).

Opponents of safe spaces often assert patriarchal arguments that prioritize the needs of an ideal student, disregarding the potential harm caused by engaging in confrontational debates that directly impact the student's social identity (Keels, 2019). In addition, historical claims that colleges and universities are post-oppressive are frequently invoked to refute arguments against safe spaces, given that few laws directly disadvantage historically marginalized students (Keels, 2019). Critics have also denied the existence and significance of microaggressions and stereotypes (Keels, 2019; Tatum, 2017). On the other hand, providing role models from stigmatized groups who defy stereotypes is crucial for young Black females' academic success, especially when their strong racial identity is associated with achievement (Tatum, 2017).

Positive Outcomes of Counterspaces for Black Females

Black scholars are adamant that for Black women to maintain a sense of unity and strength in their dual identities as Black and female, they must maintain strong social connections (Marsh, 2013). Thus, counterspaces provide opportunities for students to

celebrate their Blackness and womanhood and offer the chance to connect with peers who share similar experiences, providing validation and a sense of community (Case & Hunter, 2012). Counterspaces are spaces where participants establish and uphold unique narratives, serving as the foundation for individual stories or identities, as well as the collective ideologies, worldviews, or belief systems that define a particular counterspace (Case & Hunter, 2012). Counterspaces play a crucial role in allowing marginalized individuals to think, feel, and behave in ways that align with their own identities, which are often undervalued by the broader society (Case & Hunter, 2012).

In this context of a counterspace, students can discuss how to disrupt systems that marginalize them when they gather in safe places centered on common identities, ultimately leading to a shift in the school's focus from assimilation to social activism (Bell, 2015). Students who share an identity will develop deeper connections with one another than they could with peers who lack the ability to relate to or comprehend their experience (Bell, 2015). It involves safety and, in certain instances, fundamental injustices (Bell, 2015).

Counterspaces often include mentorship from faculty and staff who understand the unique challenges Black female students face and provide guidance and support in navigating the academic environment (Skeffrey, 2022). Black females must be exposed to influential Black women who embody success in a wide range of fields, including science, politics, and business, and occupy positions that defy gender stereotypes (Skeffrey, 2022). Young girls must be exposed to positive female role models to be inspired to pursue careers in positions of prominence, where they are currently grossly underrepresented and subjected to negative stereotypes (Skeffrey, 2022).

Counterspaces are socially and emotionally safe, inclusive, and welcoming. Myers et al. (2019) conducted a study on affinity spaces for all marginalized groups at a mid-Atlantic regional state-funded, predominately White college. The researchers reported that many students expressed happiness about being able to discuss their issues and challenges without worrying about being judged or alienated even more (Myers et al., 2019). Students also experienced a sense of relief in having a space where they could openly discuss their worries and difficulties without apprehension of being criticized or excluded even more (Myers et al., 2019). Members of the counterspaces also reported that after connecting with one another on similar problems, they no longer felt alone and isolated (Myers et al., 2019).

Summary

This chapter examined topics that were relevant to this study. A history of suburbanization in the United States and the Kansas City metro area and its impact on the social-emotional learning of Black females in suburban high schools was presented. Furthermore, the chapter provided an overview of the social-emotional learning framework, its competencies, and how its framework is utilized in schools. Furthermore, detailed in this chapter were the profound impact of social-emotional counterspaces on the educational experience of Black female student in suburban schools and why providing social-emotional counterspaces for them in suburban high schools are vital to their educational experience. Included in the next chapter are the methods utilized to conduct the current study.

Chapter 3

Methods

The focus of the current study was to determine the extent Black females agree they had the opportunity to learn and are confident in their social-emotional skills, the extent of representation for Black females at the high school they currently or recently attended, and Black females' agreement about the benefits of a counterspace for Black females had it been offered at the high school they most recently attended. Also, this study was focused on the extent there is a relationship between Black females' agreement about the opportunity to learn social-emotional skills and their agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial at the high school they most recently attended; the extent there is a relationship between Black females' agreement about their confidence in their social-emotional skills and their agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial at the high school they most recently attended; and the extent there is a relationship between Black females' agreement about the representation of Black females and their agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial at the high school they most recently attended. Chapter 3 includes a description of the study's research design and the method of selecting the participants. The chapter also includes a detailed description of the measurement, data collection procedures, and data analysis and hypothesis testing. An explanation of the study's limitations and a summary are found at the chapter's end.

Research Design

A survey research design was used in this study to measure Black females' responses about their level of agreement with the opportunity to learn about social-emotional skills, their confidence in their social-emotional skills, the representation of Black females at the high school they currently or recently attended; and their agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial at the high school they most recently attended. The design was also used to measure the comparative relationship between Black females' level of agreement with the opportunity to learn about social-emotional skills, their confidence in their social-emotional skills, and the representation of Black females at the high school they currently or recently attended, to their agreement about the benefits of a counterspace for Black females had been offered at the high school they most recently attended. For this study, a survey research design was appropriate to utilize due to the capacity to examine the frequencies and detect patterns in the survey responses (Voxco, 2021).

Selection of Participants

The general population of interest was Black females, ages 18 and older, who attended or recently attended a suburban high school in the Kansas City metro area. Purposive sampling was the approach used in this study. According to Lunenburg and Irby (2008), "purposive sampling involves selecting a sample based on the researcher's experience or knowledge of the group to be sampled" (p. 175). Purposive sampling was used in this study because it enabled the investigation of the targeted population of Black females, 18 and older, who currently attend or recently attended a suburban high school in the Kansas City metro area. Participants from the targeted group who completed the

survey comprised the sample for this study. Participants were located using Facebook groups (e.g., Black Owned Business-Kansas City, BOBKC-Women, Black Women Making Friends-Kansas City, Melanin Moms of KC) that include Black women members in the Kansas City metro area. The researcher contacted individuals from these groups using a solicitation post to collect email addresses for current or recent students who met the criteria. The post included a link to a Google Form to collect valid emails and a flyer. The solicitation post was also shared on Snapchat, LinkedIn, Instagram, X (formerly known as Twitter), Discord, TikTok, Reddit, and Nextdoor (see Appendix A).

Measurement

The instrument used in this study was a survey developed by the researcher to gather data to understand better the respondents' perceptions of the need for social-emotional counterspaces in suburban high schools. The researcher used the five competencies of CASEL's (2020) SEL framework and items relevant to understanding the perception of the need for counterspaces in suburban high schools to create a five-point Likert-type agreement scale for the survey. The scale ranges from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) (see Table 1).

Section 1 of the survey included an item requesting that respondents name the high school they currently or most recently attended. Section 2 included six items related to Black females' agreement about the opportunity to learn social-emotional skills at the high school they recently attended. Section 3 included six items related to Black females' agreement about their confidence in their social-emotional skills. Section 4 included four items related to Black females' agreements about the representation of Black females at the high school they most recently attended. Section 5 included one item related to Black

females' agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial had it been offered at the high school they most recently attended. The alignment of survey items, research questions, and hypotheses is presented in Table 1 (see Appendix B for the full survey).

Table 1

Alignment of Survey Items, Research Questions, and Hypotheses

Item	RQ	H
At the high school I most recently attended, I had opportunities to learn how to understand my own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence my actions	1, 5	1, 18
At the high school I most recently attended, I had opportunities to learn how to manage my emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations to achieve my goals and aspirations.	1, 5	2, 19
At the high school I most recently attended, I had opportunities to learn how to understand the perspective of and empathize with others from different backgrounds, cultures, & contexts.	1, 5	3, 20
At the high school I most recently attended, I had opportunities to learn how to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships.	1, 5	4, 21
At the high school I most recently attended, I had opportunities to learn how to effectively navigate settings with diverse individuals and groups.	1, 5	5, 22
At the high school I most recently attended, I had opportunities to learn how to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations.	1, 5	6, 23
I am confident that I learned how to understand my own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence my actions at the high school I most recently attended.	2, 6	7, 24
I am confident that I learned how to manage my emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations to achieve my goals and aspirations at the high school I most recently attended.	2, 6	8, 25
I am confident that I learned how to understand the perspective of and empathize with others from different backgrounds, cultures, & contexts at the high school I most recently attended.	2, 6	9, 26
I am confident that I learned how to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships at the high school I most recently attended.	2, 6	10, 27
I am confident that I learned how to effectively navigate settings with diverse individuals and groups.	2, 6	11, 28
I am confident that I learned how to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations at the high school I most recently attended.	2, 6	12, 29
Black females were represented in the classroom experiences at the high school I most recently attended.	3, 7	13, 30
Black females were represented in the books and resources in the library at the high school I most recently attended.	3, 7	14, 31
Black females were represented in the school employee population at the high school I most recently attended.	3, 7	15, 32
Black females were represented in the student population at the high school I most recently attended.	3, 7	16, 33
A counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial had it been offered at the high school I most recently attended.	4, 5, 6, 7	17-33

Lunenburg and Irby (2008) stated that validity is “the degree to which an instrument measures what it purports to measure” (p. 181). To ensure the validity of the survey, the researcher sent the survey to an expert panel to review the survey and provide feedback on the relevance of the items, the need for additional items, audience appropriateness, and any other improvements the researcher needed to consider (see Appendix C). The experts included:

- Expert #1- A previous executive director/superintendent at a Kansas City area school district
- Expert #2- A previous assistant principal at a Kansas City metro area school district, UMKC adjunct professor, and diversity, equity, and inclusion consultant
- Expert #3- Director of curriculum and instruction at a Kansas City metro area school district and a social-emotional learning training expert
- Expert #4- Kansas City metro area therapist specializing in trauma-informed therapy

Although not all suggestions were implemented, all responses were considered, and the survey was modified. As a result of the expert panelists’ comments, survey item 2 was modified to read “to achieve my goals and aspirations” from “and achieve my goals and aspirations.” Also, the fourth CASEL SEL competency, “establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships and effectively navigate settings with diverse individuals and groups,” was divided into two items for easier readability and comprehension for the survey participants and improved measurement for the research. The new items were

"establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships" and "effectively navigate settings with diverse individuals and groups."

Reliability is the degree to which an instrument consistently measures what it purports to measure (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). Reliability is a characteristic of a scale constructed from multiple items (Sankaran, 2022) and evaluated based on the internal consistency of the responses to those items on the scale. For this study, the survey items were used to measure variables individually.

> Most commonly used single-item measures can be divided into two categories: (a) those measuring self-reported facts . . . and (b) those measuring psychological constructs, e.g., aspects of personality . . . measuring the former with single items is common practice. However, using a single-item measure for the latter is considered to be a "fatal error" in research. If the construct being measured is sufficiently narrow or is unambiguous to the respondent, a single item may suffice. (Sackett & Larson, 1990, p. 631)

The individual items used in this research were self-reported facts that were sufficiently narrow and unambiguous. Because no scale was constructed, reliability was not an issue for this survey instrument's measurement.

Data Collection Procedures

Preceding data collection, the researcher submitted a request to conduct the study to Baker University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) on November 28, 2023. The IRB approved the study on November 30, 2023 (see Appendix D). After obtaining IRB approval to conduct the research, the survey link was emailed to the participants using the email addresses collected via the aforementioned social media platforms on December

18, 2023, December 19, 2023, and January 17, 2024, requesting the selected sample to participate (see Appendix E). The email expressed the study's importance and included the study's purpose, the researcher's contact information, and the terms of participation. In the correspondence, participants were also informed that by completing the survey, they were granting permission to use their responses in this study. A reminder (see Appendix F) was sent to selected participants on January 8, 2024 and January 30, 2024. The survey was closed on February 2, 2024, and the results were downloaded into an Excel spreadsheet.

Data Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

To address the purposes of the study, seven research questions were posed and 33 hypotheses were tested. The research questions, along with the corresponding hypotheses, are listed in this section. The statistical analysis method is listed after the hypothesis or hypotheses that address each RQ.

RQ1

To what extent do Black females agree they had the opportunity to learn social-emotional skills at the high school they most recently attended?

H1. Black females agree they had opportunities to learn how to understand their own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence their actions at the high school they most recently attended.

H2. Black females agree they had opportunities to learn how to manage their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations to achieve their goals and aspirations at the high school they most recently attended.

H3. Black females agree they had opportunities to learn how to understand the perspective of and empathize with others from different backgrounds, cultures, & contexts at the high school they most recently attended.

H4. Black females agree they had opportunities to learn how to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships.

H5. Black females agree they had opportunities to learn how to effectively navigate settings with diverse individuals and groups at the high school they most recently attended.

H6. Black females agree had opportunities to learn how to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations at the high school they most recently attended.

Six one-sample *t* tests were conducted to test H1-H6. For each test, the sample mean was compared to a test value of 3. The one-sample *t* test was chosen for the hypothesis testing because it involves the comparison of one group mean with a known value, and the group mean is calculated from a numerical variable. The level of significance was set at .05. When appropriate, the effect size, as measured by Cohen's *d*, is reported.

RQ2

To what extent do Black females agree they are confident in their social-emotional skills?

H7. Black females are confident they learned how to understand their own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence their actions at the high school they most recently attended.

H8. Black females are confident they learned how to manage their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations to achieve their goals and aspirations at the high school they most recently attended.

H9. Black females are confident they learned how to understand the perspective of and empathize with others from different backgrounds, cultures, & contexts at the high school they most recently attended.

H10. Black females are confident they learned how to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships.

H11. Black females are confident they learned how to effectively navigate settings with diverse individuals and groups at the high school they most recently attended.

H12. Black females are confident they learned how to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations at the high school they most recently attended.

Six one-sample *t* tests were conducted to test H7-H12. For each test, the sample mean was compared to a test value of 3. The one-sample *t* test was chosen for the hypothesis testing because it involves the comparison of one group mean with a known value, and the group mean is calculated from a numerical variable. The level of significance was set at .05. When appropriate, the effect size, as measured by Cohen's *d*, is reported.

RQ3

To what extent do Black females agree they are represented at the high school they most recently attended?

H13. Black females agree they were represented in the classroom experiences at the high school they most recently attended.

H14. Black females agree they were represented in the books and resources in the library at the high school they most recently attended.

H15. Black females agree they were represented in the school employees at the high school they most recently attended.

H16. Black females agree they were represented in the students at the high school they most recently attended.

Four one-sample *t* tests were conducted to test H13-H16. For each test, the sample mean was compared to a test value of 3. The one-sample *t* test was chosen for the hypothesis testing because it involves the comparison of one group mean with a known value, and the group mean is calculated from a numerical variable. The level of significance was set at .05. When appropriate, the effect size, as measured by Cohen's *d*, is reported.

RQ4

To what extent do Black females agree that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial had it been offered at the high school they most recently attended?

H17. Black females agree that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial had it been offered at the high school they most recently attended.

A one-sample *t* test was conducted to test H17. The sample mean was compared to a test value of 3. The one-sample *t* test was chosen for the hypothesis testing because it involves the comparison of one group mean with a known value, and the group mean is

calculated from a numerical variable. The level of significance was set at .05. When appropriate, the effect size, as measured by Cohen's *d*, is reported.

RQ5

To what extent is there a relationship between Black females' agreement about the opportunity to learn social-emotional skills and their agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial at the high school they most recently attended?

H18. There is a relationship between Black females' agreement of the opportunity to learn how to understand their own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence their actions and their agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial at the high school they most recently attended.

H19. There is a relationship between Black females' agreement of the opportunity to learn how to manage their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations to achieve their goals and aspirations and their agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial at the high school they most recently attended.

H20. There is a relationship between Black females' agreement of the opportunity to learn how to understand the perspective of and empathize with others from different backgrounds, cultures, and contexts and their agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial at the high school they most recently attended.

H21. There is a relationship between Black females' agreement of the opportunity to learn how to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships and their

agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial at the high school they most recently attended.

H22. There is a relationship between Black females' agreement of the opportunity to learn how to effectively navigate settings with diverse individuals and groups and their agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial at the high school they most recently attended.

H23. There is a relationship between Black females' agreement of the opportunity to learn how to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations and their agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial at the high school they most recently attended.

A Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was calculated to index the strength and direction of the relationship between each of the six survey items that measured Black females' agreement about the opportunity to learn social-emotional skills and their agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial at the high school they most recently attended. The statistical significance of the correlation coefficients was examined to test H18-H23. The level of significance was set at .05. The effect size, as measured by r^2, is reported when appropriate.

RQ6

To what extent is there a relationship between Black females' agreement about their confidence in their social-emotional skills and their agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial at the high school they most recently attended?

H24. There is a relationship between Black females' agreement of confidence in understanding their own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence their actions and their agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial at the high school they most recently attended.

H25. There is a relationship between Black females' confidence in managing their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations and achieve their goals and aspirations and their agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial at the high school they most recently attended.

H26. There is a relationship between Black females' confidence in understanding the perspective of and empathizing with others from different backgrounds, cultures, & contexts and their agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial at the high school they most recently attended.

H27. There is a relationship between Black females' confidence in establishing and maintaining healthy and supportive relationships and their agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial at the high school they most recently attended.

H28. There is a relationship between Black females' confidence in effectively navigating settings with diverse individuals and groups and their agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial at the high school they most recently attended.

H29. There is a relationship between Black females' confidence in making caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse

situations and their agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial at the high school they most recently attended.

A Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was calculated to index the strength and direction of the relationship between each of the six survey items that measured Black females' agreement about their confidence in their social-emotional skills and their agreement a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial at the high school they most recently attended. The statistical significance of the correlation coefficients was examined to test H24-H29. The level of significance was set at .05. The effect size, as measured by r^2, is reported when appropriate.

RQ7

To what extent is there a relationship between Black females' agreement about the representation of Black females at the high school they most recently attended and their agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial?

H30. There is a relationship between Black females' agreement about the representation of Black females in their classroom experiences and their agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial at the high school they most recently attended.

H31. There is a relationship between Black females' agreement about the representation of Black females in the books and resources in their library and their agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial at the high school they most recently attended.

H32. There is a relationship between Black females' agreement about the representation of Black females in the school employees and their agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial at the high school they most recently attended.

H33. There is a relationship between Black females' agreement about the representation of Black females in the students and their agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial at the high school they most recently attended.

A Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was calculated to index the strength and direction of the relationship between each of the four survey items that measured Black females' agreement about the representation of Black females and their agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial at the high school they most recently attended. The statistical significance of the correlation coefficients was examined to test H30-H33. The level of significance was set at .05. The effect size, as measured by r^2, is reported when appropriate.

Limitations

"The limitations of the study are the parameters placed on the methodology. These limitations need to be noted and briefly discussed so the reader understands the potential impact of the application and interpretation of results of the study" (Joyner et al., 2018, p. 194). Limitations of this research include the following:

1. Survey participants may not interpret the survey items or directions similarly.
2. The comfort levels of the respondents could vary.

3. Survey participants may have reflected on previous answers and changed their opinions while taking the survey.
4. The researcher had no control over who completed the survey.

Summary

Chapter 3 contained a discussion of the research methods. Included in this chapter were the research design, selection of participants, measurement, data collection procedures, data analysis and hypothesis testing, and the limitations. Chapter 4 includes the study results.

Chapter 4

Results

The focus of this quantitative study was on Black females who currently or recently attended a suburban high school in the Kansas City metro area and their agreement that they had the opportunity to learn social-emotional skills, are confident in their social-emotional skills, and are represented at the high school they most recently attended. Additionally, the focus was on the relationship between the opportunity to learn social-emotional skills and Black females' agreement that a social-emotional counterspace would have been beneficial had it been offered; the relationship between Black females' confidence in their social-emotional skills and Black females' agreement that a social-emotional counterspace would have been beneficial had it been offered; and the relationship between the representation of Black females in their school environment and Black females' agreement that a social-emotional counterspace would have been beneficial had it been offered. Lastly, the focus was on their agreement that a social-emotional counterspace would have been beneficial had it been offered. The results of the hypothesis testing are presented in this chapter.

At the time the survey closed, there were 22 survey respondents. Upon review of the survey data, the responses for one of the participants were deleted due to the participant's high school not meeting the criterion of being a suburban school in the Kansas City metro area. Because some participants chose not to respond to all of the survey items, the sample size for individual hypothesis tests varies.

Hypothesis Testing

This section provides an analysis of the hypothesis testing conducted for each research question. There were 33 hypothesis tests conducted. Within this section, the outcomes of the analysis are detailed in the following order: research questions, hypotheses, data analysis, and the results of the hypothesis testing.

RQ1

To what extent do Black females agree they had the opportunity to learn social-emotional skills at the high school they most recently attended?

H1. Black females agree they had opportunities to learn how to understand their own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence their actions at the high school they most recently attended.

H2. Black females agree they had opportunities to learn how to manage their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations to achieve their goals and aspirations at the high school they most recently attended.

H3. Black females agree they had opportunities to learn how to understand the perspective of and empathize with others from different backgrounds, cultures, & contexts at the high school they most recently attended.

H4. Black females agree they had opportunities to learn how to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships.

H5. Black females agree they had opportunities to learn how to effectively navigate settings with diverse individuals and groups at the high school they most recently attended.

H6. Black females agree had opportunities to learn how to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations at the high school they most recently attended.

Six one-sample *t* tests were conducted to test H1-H6. For each test, the sample mean was compared to a test value of 3. The one-sample *t* test was chosen for the hypothesis testing because it involves the comparison of one group mean with a known value, and the group mean is calculated from a numerical variable. The level of significance was set at .05. When appropriate, the effect size, as measured by Cohen's *d*, is reported.

The results of the six one-sample *t* tests indicate no difference between any of the group means and the test value (3). Table 2 contains the test and descriptive statistics for the tests of H1-H6. These results indicate that Black females neither agree nor disagree that they had the opportunity to learn social-emotional skills at the high school they most recently attended.

Table 2

Test and Descriptive Statistics for the Tests of H1-H6

H	Opportunity to Learn	*M*	*SD*	*N*	*t*	*p*
1	Understand their own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence their actions	3.19	1.25	21	0.698	.493
2	Manage their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations to achieve their goals and aspirations	3.14	1.28	21	0.513	.614
3	Understand the perspective of and empathize with others from different backgrounds, cultures, & contexts	3.33	1.11	21	1.375	.184
4	Establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships	3.57	1.29	21	2.034	.055
5	Navigate settings with diverse individuals and groups	3.35	1.14	20	1.377	.185
6	Make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations	3.14	1.06	21	0.616	.545

RQ2

To what extent do Black females agree they are confident in their social-emotional skills?

H7. Black females are confident they learned how to understand their own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence their actions at the high school they most recently attended.

H8. Black females are confident they learned how to manage their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations to achieve their goals and aspirations at the high school they most recently attended.

H9. Black females are confident they learned how to understand the perspective of and empathize with others from different backgrounds, cultures, & contexts at the high school they most recently attended.

H10. Black females are confident they learned how to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships.

H11. Black females are confident they learned how to effectively navigate settings with diverse individuals and groups at the high school they most recently attended.

H12. Black females are confident they learned how to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations at the high school they most recently attended.

Six one-sample *t* tests were conducted to test H7-H12. For each test, the sample mean was compared to a test value of 3. The one-sample *t* test was chosen for the hypothesis testing because it involves the comparison of one group mean with a known value, and the group mean is calculated from a numerical variable. The level of significance was set at .05. When appropriate, the effect size, as measured by Cohen's *d*, is reported.

The results of five of the one-sample *t* tests indicate no difference between any of the group means and the test value (3). However, the test for H10 was statistically significant, $t(18) = 2.585$, $p = .019$, $d = 1.065$. The mean ($M = 3.63$) is higher than the test

value. Table 3 contains the test and descriptive statistics for the tests of H7-H12. The results for five of the hypotheses indicate that Black females neither agree nor disagree that they are confident in their social-emotional skills at the high school they most recently attended. The results for testing H10 indicate that Black females are confident they learned how to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships. The effect size for H10 indicates a medium effect.

Table 3

Test and Descriptive Statistics for the Tests of H7-H12

H	Confidence	*M*	*SD*	*N*	*t*	*p*
7	Understand their own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence their actions	2.95	1.22	19	-0.188	.853
8	Manage their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations to achieve their goals and aspirations	3.00	1.33	19	0.000	1.000
9	Understand the perspective of and empathize with others from different backgrounds, cultures, & contexts	3.21	1.03	19	0.889	.385
10	Establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships	3.63	1.07	19	2.585	.019
11	Navigate settings with diverse individuals and groups	3.26	1.10	19	1.045	.310
12	Make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations	3.21	0.98	19	0.940	.360

RQ3

To what extent do Black females agree they are represented at the high school they most recently attended?

H13. Black females agree they were represented in the classroom experiences at the high school they most recently attended.

H14. Black females agree they were represented in the books and resources in the library at the high school they most recently attended.

H15. Black females agree they were represented in the school employees at the high school they most recently attended.

H16. Black females agree they were represented in the students at the high school they most recently attended.

Four one-sample *t* tests were conducted to test H13-H16. For each test, the sample mean was compared to a test value of 3. The one-sample *t* test was chosen for the hypothesis testing because it involves the comparison of one group mean with a known value, and the group mean is calculated from a numerical variable. The level of significance was set at .05. When appropriate, the effect size, as measured by Cohen's *d*, is reported.

The results of two of the one-sample *t* tests indicate no difference between any of the group means and the test value (3). However, the test for H13 was statistically significant, $t(20) = -3.200$, $p = .004$, $d = 1.091$. The mean ($M = 2.24$) is lower than the test value. The test for H15 was also statistically significant, $t(20) = 3.970$, $p = .001$, $d = 1.044$. The mean ($M = 2.10$) is lower than the test value. Table 4 contains the test and descriptive statistics for the tests of H13-H16. The results for two of the hypotheses

indicate that Black females neither agree nor disagree they are represented at the high school they most recently attended. The results for testing H13 indicate that Black females disagree they were represented in the classroom experiences. The results for testing H15 indicate that Black females disagree they were represented in the school employees. The effect size for H13 and H15 indicates large effects.

Table 4

Test and Descriptive Statistics for the Tests of H13-H16

H	Representation	*M*	*SD*	*N*	*t*	*p*
13	Classroom Experiences	2.24	1.09	21	-3.200	.004
14	Books and resources in the library	2.57	1.08	21	-1.826	.083
15	School employees	2.10	1.04	21	-3.970	.001
16	Students	3.33	1.20	21	1.276	.217

RQ4

To what extent do Black females agree that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial had it been offered at the high school they most recently attended?

H17. Black females agree that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial had it been offered at the high school they most recently attended.

A one-sample *t* test was conducted to test H17. The sample mean was compared to a test value of 3. The one-sample *t* test was chosen for the hypothesis testing because it involves the comparison of one group mean with a known value, and the group mean is

calculated from a numerical variable. The level of significance was set at .05. When appropriate, the effect size, as measured by Cohen's *d*, is reported.

The results of the one-sample *t* test indicate a statistically significant difference between the group mean and the test value, $t(20) = 11.090$, $p = .000$, Cohen's $d = 0.669$. The sample mean ($M = 4.62$, $SD = 0.67$) was significantly higher than the test value (3). H17 was supported. Black females agree or strongly agree that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial had it been offered at the high school they most recently attended. The effect size indicates a medium effect.

RQ5

To what extent is there a relationship between Black females' agreement about the opportunity to learn social-emotional skills and their agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial at the high school they most recently attended?

H18. There is a relationship between Black females' agreement of the opportunity to learn how to understand their own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence their actions and their agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial at the high school they most recently attended.

H19. There is a relationship between Black females' agreement of the opportunity to learn how to manage their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations to achieve their goals and aspirations and their agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial at the high school they most recently attended.

H20. There is a relationship between Black females' agreement of the opportunity to learn how to understand the perspective of and empathize with others from different backgrounds, cultures, and contexts and their agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial at the high school they most recently attended.

H21. There is a relationship between Black females' agreement of the opportunity to learn how to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships and their agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial at the high school they most recently attended.

H22. There is a relationship between Black females' agreement of the opportunity to learn how to effectively navigate settings with diverse individuals and groups and their agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial at the high school they most recently attended.

H23. There is a relationship between Black females' agreement of the opportunity to learn how to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations and their agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial at the high school they most recently attended.

A Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was calculated to index the strength and direction of the relationship between each of the six survey items that measured Black females' agreement about the opportunity to learn social-emotional skills and their agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial at the high school they most recently attended. The statistical significance of the correlation coefficients was examined to test H18-H23. The level of significance was set at .05. The effect size, as measured by r^2, is reported when appropriate.

The correlation coefficients that were calculated to test H18-H23 provided no evidence for relationships between any of the variables. The hypothesis tests for the correlations indicate no statistically significant relationships, and the hypotheses were not supported. Table 5 contains the test statistics and correlations for the tests of H18-H23. The results of the six hypothesis tests conducted to address RQ5 provided no evidence for a relationship between Black females' agreement about the opportunity to learn social-emotional skills and their agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial at the high school they most recently attended.

Table 5

Test Statistics and Correlations for the Tests of H18-H23

H	Opportunity to Learn	*r*	*p*	*N*
18	Understand their own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence their actions	-.148	.522	21
19	Manage their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations to achieve their goals and aspirations	-.050	.829	21
20	Understand the perspective of and empathize with others from different backgrounds, cultures, & contexts	-.022	.923	21
21	Establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships	-.141	.542	21
22	Navigate settings with diverse individuals and groups	-.073	.760	20
23	Make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations	-.131	.572	21

RQ6

To what extent is there a relationship between Black females' agreement about their confidence in their social-emotional skills and their agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial at the high school they most recently attended?

H24. There is a relationship between Black females' agreement of confidence in understanding their own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence their actions and their agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial at the high school they most recently attended.

H25. There is a relationship between Black females' confidence in managing their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations and achieve their goals and aspirations and their agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial at the high school they most recently attended.

H26. There is a relationship between Black females' confidence in understanding the perspective of and empathizing with others from different backgrounds, cultures, & contexts and their agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial at the high school they most recently attended.

H27. There is a relationship between Black females' confidence in establishing and maintaining healthy and supportive relationships and their agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial at the high school they most recently attended.

H28. There is a relationship between Black females' confidence in effectively navigating settings with diverse individuals and groups and their agreement that a

counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial at the high school they most recently attended.

H29. There is a relationship between Black females' confidence in making caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations and their agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial at the high school they most recently attended.

A Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was calculated to index the strength and direction of the relationship between each of the six survey items that measured Black females' agreement about their confidence in their social-emotional skills and their agreement a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial at the high school they most recently attended. The statistical significance of the correlation coefficients was examined to test H24-H29. The level of significance was set at .05. The effect size, as measured by r^2, is reported when appropriate.

The correlation coefficients that were calculated to test H24-H29 provided no evidence for relationships between any of the variables. The hypothesis tests for the correlations indicate no statistically significant relationships, and the hypotheses were not supported. Table 6 contains the test statistics and correlations for the tests of H24-H29. The results of the six hypothesis tests conducted to address RQ6 provided no evidence for a relationship between Black females' agreement about their confidence in their social-emotional skills and their agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial at the high school they most recently attended.

Table 6

Test Statistics and Correlations for the Tests of H24-H29

H	Confidence In	*r*	*p*	*N*
24	Understand their own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence their actions	-.159	.516	19
25	Manage their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations to achieve their goals and aspirations	-.241	.321	19
26	Understand the perspective of and empathize with others from different backgrounds, cultures, & contexts	-.258	.287	19
27	Establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships	.079	.747	19
28	Navigate settings with diverse individuals and groups	-.138	.572	19
29	Make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations	-.272	.259	19

RQ7

To what extent is there a relationship between Black females' agreement about the representation of Black females at the high school they most recently attended and their agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial?

H30. There is a relationship between Black females' agreement about the representation of Black females in their classroom experiences and their agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial at the high school they most recently attended.

H31. There is a relationship between Black females' agreement about the representation of Black females in the books and resources in their library and their agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial at the high school they most recently attended.

H32. There is a relationship between Black females' agreement about the representation of Black females in the school employees and their agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial at the high school they most recently attended.

H33. There is a relationship between Black females' agreement about the representation of Black females in the students and their agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial at the high school they most recently attended.

A Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was calculated to index the strength and direction of the relationship between each of the four survey items that measured Black females' agreement about the representation of Black females and their agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial at the high school they most recently attended. The statistical significance of the correlation coefficients was examined to test H30-H33. The level of significance was set at .05. The effect size, as measured by r^2, is reported when appropriate.

The correlation coefficients that were calculated to test H30-H33 provided no evidence for relationships between any of the variables specified in H30-H33. The hypothesis tests for the correlations indicate no statistically significant relationships. H30-H33 were not supported. Table 7 contains the test statistics and correlations for the

tests of H30-H33. The results of the four hypothesis tests conducted to address RQ7 provided no evidence for a relationship between Black females' agreement about their representation in classroom experiences, library books and resources, school employees, or students at the high school they most recently attended and their agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial.

Table 7

Test Statistics and Correlations for the Tests of H30-H33

H	Representation	*r*	*p*	*N*
30	Classroom experiences	-.281	.218	21
31	Books and resources in the library	-.030	.898	21
32	School employees	-.160	.488	21
33	Students	-.083	.720	21

Summary

The findings related to the data analysis conducted in this study were reported in this chapter. Twenty-two participants completed the survey in total, but the data from 21 of the participants were used in the data analysis. In Chapter 5, the study summary, findings related to the literature, and the conclusions are presented.

Chapter 5

Interpretation and Recommendations

In the current study, the perceptions of Black females who have recently attended or currently attend a suburban high school in the Kansas City metro area were examined. Chapter 5 includes the study summary and the findings related to the literature. The final section includes the conclusions.

Study Summary

The first subsection of this section of the chapter provides an overview of the problem. The second section includes the purpose statement and research questions. The third section is a review of the methodology, and the fourth section provides a presentation of the major findings.

Overview of the Problem

Black female students in suburban schools have distinct hurdles in their educational experiences due to considerable variations in their social-emotional experiences and opportunities compared to their White counterparts (Crenshaw et al., 2015). Furthermore, Black females in suburban settings may confront gendered prejudices that influence their educational experiences, including the refusal to acknowledge their intellectual capabilities, microaggressions, code-switching, and assumed conformity (Riley, 2021). Black females have unique challenges related to their social identities, which hinder their equal participation within the student body (Keels, 2019). Tackling these issues necessitates significant mental and emotional resilience (Keels, 2019). Therefore, offering social-emotional support in counterspaces designed for Black females could prove advantageous as the fundamental basis of counterspaces in

suburban high schools. Currently, there is limited quantitative research that focuses specifically on Black females' experiences in suburban high schools, especially with a social-emotional skill learning emphasis. Therefore, a study should be conducted to garner the perceptions of Black females in suburban high schools.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The focus of this study was on Black females who currently or recently attended a suburban high school in the Kansas City metro area. The first purpose of this study was to determine the extent Black females agree they had the opportunity to learn social-emotional skills at the high school they most recently attended. The second purpose was to determine the extent Black females agree they are confident in their social-emotional skills. The third purpose was to determine the extent Black females agree they are represented at the high school they most recently attended. The fourth purpose was to determine the extent Black females agree that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial had it been offered at the high school they most recently attended. The fifth purpose was to determine the extent there is a relationship between Black females' agreement about the opportunity to learn social-emotional skills and their agreement about the benefits of a counterspace for Black females had been offered at the high school they most recently attended. The sixth purpose was to determine the extent there is a relationship between Black females' agreement about their confidence in their social-emotional skills and their agreement about the benefits of a counterspace for Black females had been offered at the high school they most recently attended. The seventh purpose was to determine the extent there is a relationship between Black females' agreement about the representation of Black females at the high school they most

recently attended and their agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial.

Review of the Methodology

A quantitative research design using a survey was used in this study to measure Black females' responses about their level of agreement with the opportunity to learn about social-emotional skills, their confidence in their social-emotional skills, the representation of Black females at the high school they currently or recently attended, and the agreement about the benefits of a counterspace for Black females had been offered at the high school they most recently attended. Purposive sampling was the approach used in this study. The instrument used in this study was a survey developed by the researcher to gather data to understand better the respondents' perceptions of the need for social-emotional counterspaces in suburban high schools. To ensure the validity of the survey, the researcher sent the survey to an expert panel to review the survey and provide feedback on the relevance of the items, the need for additional items, audience appropriateness, and any other improvements the researcher needed to consider. The hypotheses were tested using one-sample *t* tests and significance tests for Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients.

Major Findings

The results of the current study indicate that Black females neither agree nor disagree that they had the opportunity to learn social-emotional skills at the high school they most recently attended. When asked about their confidence in learning social-emotional skills, the results indicate that Black females agree they were confident they learned how to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships, but neither

agree nor disagree that they are confident that they learned social-emotional skills in the other areas at the high school they most recently attended. When Black females were asked about their agreement with Black female representation at the high school they attended, the results indicate that Black females neither agree nor disagree that they are represented in library books and resources and student population at the high school they most recently attended. However, the results provided evidence that Black females disagree that they were represented in the classroom experiences and school employees. Black females agreed or strongly agreed that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial had it been offered at the high school they most recently attended. The results provide no evidence for a relationship between Black females' agreement about the opportunity to learn social-emotional skills and their agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial at the high school they most recently attended; no evidence for a relationship between Black females' agreement about their confidence in their social-emotional skills and their agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial at the high school they most recently attended; and no evidence for a relationship between Black females' agreement about their representation in classroom experiences, library books and resources, school employees, or students at the high school they most recently attended and their agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial.

Findings Related to the Literature

In this section, the current study's findings are compared to the existing literature on the topic. The focus of this study was on the experiences of Black females who

currently or recently attended a suburban high school. Even though the methodology used in this study was quantitative, the majority of comparisons were made to qualitative studies.

Findings from this study indicate that Black females neither agree nor disagree that they had the opportunity to learn social-emotional skills at the high school they most recently attended. Missouri is a state that no longer requires SEL programs to exist in public schools (Stanford & Prothero, 2023). If district and building-level administrators are not intentional about implementing SEL instruction, students may not seek to learn and acquire SEL education on their own.

Findings from the current study also indicate that Black females agree they were confident they learned how to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships. This finding supports Lohmann's (2023) findings related to Black high school students' beliefs and attitudes after SEL instruction. In Lohmann's (2023) study, the majority of students reported an enhanced ability to empathize with their peers, understand diverse perspectives, articulate their own beliefs, and reduce feelings of social isolation. The findings of the current study differ from O'Garro Joseph's (2007) research, which highlights Black female students' plight with the dominant culture imposing its idea of social life on the oppressed group, whereas the latter is unable to express an understanding of social life to the dominant culture. Consequently, Black females struggle to form and express their identities and sometimes become socially introverted, resulting in a perceived lack of confidence by peers and educators.

Findings from the current study also indicate that Black females disagreed they were represented in their classroom experiences. This finding supports Eggleston and

Miranda's (2009) finding that Black females expressed that there was a lack of representation of Black culture in a large Midwestern suburban high school. Schocker and Woyshner (2013) found that Black women are largely underrepresented in mainstream U.S. high school history textbooks, aligning with previous research on the absence of diversity in educational materials, which is supported by the findings of the current study.

Findings from the current study provided evidence that Black females agree that they were not represented when examining the school employee population. This finding supports Eggleston and Miranda's (2009) finding that all interviewed Black female students agreed they would like to see more teachers of color in their educational space. This finding is also critical to the success of Black female students, as noted in the findings of Neal-Jackson (2018) that K-12 Black female students reported experiencing diminished expectations from school administrators and educators and were frequently stereotyped, ultimately disregarding their academic requirements and neglecting their ethnic identities. To further highlight the importance of Black female representation in suburban high schools, Scherer and Cleveland (2022) reported that matching Black female students with approximately one additional Black female teacher resulted in a nearly 4.2% reduction in absences for the year and boosted individual motivation and interpersonal dynamics between students. Scherer and Cleveland (2022) also reported that matching teachers and students of the same race is linked to improvements in student achievement, decreased absences and suspensions, reduced high school dropout rates, and enhanced college enrollment.

The findings of this study indicate that Black females agreed or strongly agreed that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial had it been offered at the high school they most recently attended. Findings from Eggleston and Miranda (2009) revealed that Black females expressed that there was a lack of representation of Black culture. Eggleston and Miranda (2009) also revealed that Black females felt that support for Black issues was non-existent, which is supported by the findings of the current study. Furthermore, supportive findings from Marsh's (2013) qualitative study at a science and math focused suburban high school showed that Black female seniors sought out homogeneous, predominately Black social groups to preserve a portion of their Black identity.

Conclusions

The concluding section of Chapter 5 brings the study to a close. This section includes the implications for action and recommendations for future research. This section ends with concluding remarks.

Implications for Action

Due to the limited survey sample size, the implications that may be drawn from the results are limited. A replicated study with a larger sample size would garner more insight. Despite this, the results of this research study are significant and provide implications for action to district and building-level administration.

One immediate implication for action by district and building administrators is to create a counterspace designed for Black females at their school to include a social-emotional component. The barrier to creating the safest and bravest space for Black females in any school is the most recent documentation providing Title VI of the Civil

Rights Act of 1964, which states that by segregating students on the basis of race or by treating specific students or groups of students differently on the basis of race, schools may be in violation of Title VI (Lhamon, 2023). Yet, Lhamon (2023) highlights that the Office of Civil Rights would refuse to initiate an investigation in districts that allow counterspaces if all students were able to join the counterspace.

Another possible implication would be to address Black females' need to have the opportunity to learn SEL skills so they can be confident in the use of these skills. At the same time, administrators should focus their energy on professional development that helps teachers shape their identity development (Elliott-Schrimmer, 2023). In fact, more classes on racial identity should be offered in teacher preparation programs, and a more inclusive and anti-racist approach should be incorporated into the curriculum of teacher preparation programs (Elliott-Schrimmer, 2023). Furthermore, since Missouri is a state that can no longer requires SEL programs to exist in public schools (Stanford & Prothero, 2023), district and building-level administrators must be intentional about implementing SEL instruction, as students may not seek to learn and acquire SEL education on their own. Lastly, district and building level administrators should examine the culture of their districts to entice Black women to apply to work in their space, and not just hire Black women for Black female students, but for all students.

Recommendations for Future Research

In this study, Black females' level of agreement that they had the opportunity to learn and are confident in their social-emotional skills, the extent of representation for Black females they currently or recently attended, the agreement about the benefits of a counterspace for Black females had been offered at the high school they most recently

attended was measured. The study also focused on the extent there is a relationship between Black females' agreement about the opportunity to learn social-emotional skills, their confidence in their social-emotional skills, and the representation of Black females and their agreement that a counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial at the high school they most recently attended. Because no single study can thoroughly investigate every facet of a given issue, recommendations for future research are made. The recommendations for future research include the following:

- replicate the current study in other suburban cities because this research focused on suburban schools in the Kansas City metro area;
- replicate the current study in one suburban school district to gain more insight into the social-emotional needs of one suburban district's Black female population;
- replicate the current study for Black females in private and rural schools because this study focused on Black females in suburban schools;
- replicate the current study as a mixed-methods study by adding a qualitative component because having personal anecdotes from a focus group would provide a future researcher with specific information about their experiences; and
- replicate the current study for all female students in a suburban space, adding a modification to RQ 4 that replaces "Black" with other races. Conducting this study would allow researchers to compare and contrast the results.

Concluding Remarks

Without a doubt, Black females agree it would have been beneficial to have a counterspace designed for them in their suburban educational space. Therefore, if the goal of public education is to create equitable spaces for all students to learn, educational systems should seek to support Black females' social-emotional well-being, especially in suburban spaces and other spaces where they are not socially or culturally dominant. The educational experiences of Black females in suburban areas are complex and multifaceted. Further research is needed to better understand the challenges Black females face and their strategies to succeed in their educational pursuits in suburban spaces. By examining the experiences of this often-overlooked population, a better understanding of how race, gender, and geographic location intersect to impact social-emotional outcomes is necessary for their overall K-12 school experience. This researcher hopes that the educational experience of suburban Black females is prioritized and attended to for their academic and social-emotional advancement in their educational experience and beyond.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Social Media Solicitation for Email Addresses of Survey Participants

Calling all Black ladies, 18 and older, who attend or have recently graduated from a suburban public high school in the Kansas City metro area!

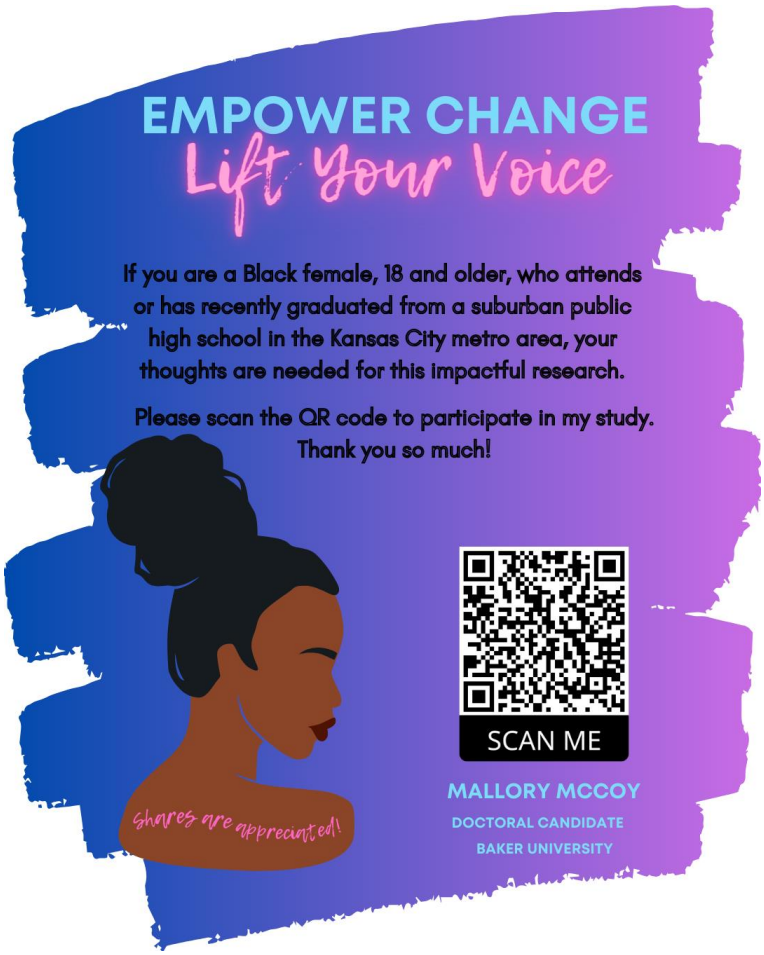
I'm a doctoral candidate, and for my research, I need input from Black females, 18 and older, who attend or have recently graduated from a suburban public high school in the Kansas City metro area.

Do you or anyone you know fit this criterion?

If so, can you please do the following:

1) Like/comment/share this post. The more interaction, the better the reach!
2) Text the following link to those you know: https://forms.gle/C9eSa3yFiEYh42CC8 It's the same link attached to the QR code.
3) Send the attached flyer to local business owners to post in their business.

Thanks for helping me out! #drmalloading



Appendix B: Survey

Counterspace Benefit for Black Students in Suburban High School Spaces

Social-Emotional Skills

Directions: Please select the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statements below the prompt.

At the high school I most recently attended, I have had opportunities to learn how to...

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Understand my own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence my actions.					
Manage my emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations to achieve my goals and aspirations.					
Understand the perspective of and empathize with others from different backgrounds, cultures, & contexts.					
Establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships.					
Effectively navigate settings with diverse individuals and groups.					
Make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations.					

Social-Emotional Confidence

Directions: Please select the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statements below the prompt.

At the high school I most recently attended, I am confident that I learned how to…

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Understand my own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence my actions.					
Manage my emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations to achieve my goals and aspirations.					
Understand the perspective of and empathize with others from different backgrounds, cultures, & contexts.					
Establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships.					
Effectively navigate settings with diverse individuals and groups.					
Make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations.					

Black Female Representation

Directions: Please select the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statements below the prompt.

At the high school I most recently attended, Black females are represented in...

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Classroom Experiences					
Books and Resources in the Library					
School Employees					
Students					

Counterspace

A counterspace is a safe space where individuals with shared identities come together to promote self-perception, discuss experiences, and affirm their feelings as marginalized members of a school, business, church, or other organization.

Directions: Please select the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statement below the prompt.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
A counterspace designed for Black females would have been beneficial at the high school I most recently attended.					

Thank you for taking the survey!

I appreciate your time and effort.

Appendix C: Expert Panel Email

Dear XXXXX,

I am a doctoral candidate at Baker University, and I am conducting research for my dissertation. My research topic focuses on the benefit of social-emotional counterspaces for Black females in suburban high schools. I am gathering feedback related to the survey I plan to administer to Black females, ages 18 and older, who currently or recently attended a suburban high school in the Kansas City Metro Area. As a [Black female educator], your input will be extremely helpful to my understanding of whether I have an appropriate collection of questions for my audience.

I would appreciate it if you could take a few minutes to review my survey and provide feedback on the relevance of the items, the need for additional items, audience appropriateness, and any other improvements you think I may need to consider. I ask that you evaluate the survey items in the following areas:

- Are the questions appropriate to ask Black females, ages 18 and older, who currently or recently attended a suburban high school in the Kansas City Metro Area?
- Are the questions understandable, too wordy, or complicated?
- Do the questions appropriately and sufficiently address the topic?
- Do you have suggestions to modify the survey to properly address the topic?

Attached are the survey items for your review. I am requesting a response by [insert a date a week from sending the email] for your feedback. Please contact me at MalloryDMcCoy@stu.bakeru.edu if you have any questions or concerns. Your input is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Mallory D. McCoy
EdD Doctoral Candidate
Baker University

Appendix D: IRB Approval Letter

BAKER UNIVERSITY
Own Confidence

Baker University Institutional Review Board

November 30, 2023

Dear Mallory McCoy and Susan Rogers,

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

Please be aware of the following:

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

If you have any questions, please contact me at skimball@bakeru.edu or 785.594.4563.

Sincerely,

Scott Kimball, PhD
Chair, Baker University IRB

Baker University IRB Committee
Jiji Osiobe, PhD
Tim Buzzell, PhD
Susan Rogers, PhD

Appendix E: Solicitation Email

My name is Mallory McCoy, and I am a doctoral candidate at Baker University conducting research for my dissertation. I am writing to invite you to complete an important survey that is crucial to my academic work. My study relies on input from Black female students who are currently attending or have recently graduated from a suburban high school.

The purpose of my study is to determine the extent to which Black females agree they had the opportunity to learn about and are confident in their social-emotional skills; to assess the extent of representation for Black females in classroom experiences, library books and resources, school employees, and students at the high school they recently attended; and their agreement about a counterspace for Black females being offered at the high school they most recently attended.

The survey will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. Your privacy is important. Therefore, your identity will remain anonymous, your responses will be kept confidential, and your responses will be combined with other participants' responses and reported in summary format. The information reported will not indicate individual participants or schools.

Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time without consequences. You may opt out of any questions you are uncomfortable responding to or discontinue your participation at any time. Your completion and submission of the survey will indicate your consent to participate and permission for me to use the information you provided for my study.

To participate in the survey, please click the following link:
forms.gle/2QqG4nyyxpqwEVo78

Your input is highly valuable to me, and your participation will be greatly appreciated. If you have any questions or require further information about the survey, please do not hesitate to contact me at mallorydmccoy@stu.bakeru.edu or 816-876-5022. You may also contact my major advisor, Dr. Susan Rogers, at srogers@bakeru.edu or 785-230-2801.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude for your consideration of this request, and I am eager to receive your valuable input. Your participation will provide valuable insights to advance knowledge in this field.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Mallory D. McCoy
Doctoral Student, Baker University
mallorydmccoy@stu.bakeru.edu

Appendix F: Solicitation Email Reminder

My name is Mallory McCoy, and I am a doctoral candidate at Baker University conducting research for my dissertation. I previously emailed to invite you to participate in an important survey that is crucial to my academic work. My study relies on input from Black female students who are currently attending or recently graduated from a suburban high school.

The purpose of my study is to determine the extent to which Black females agree they had the opportunity to learn about and are confident in their social-emotional skills, to assess the extent of representation for Black females in classroom experiences, library books and resources, school employees, and students at the high school they recently attended, and their agreement about a counterspace for Black females being offered at the high school they most recently attended. Your participation will provide valuable insights to advance knowledge in this field.

The survey will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. Your privacy is important. Therefore, your identity will remain anonymous, your responses will be kept confidential, your responses will be combined with other participants' responses and reported in summary format, and the information reported will not indicate individual participants or schools.

Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time without consequences. You may opt out of any questions you are uncomfortable responding to or discontinue your participation at any time. Your completion and submission of the survey will indicate your consent to participate and permission to use the information you provided for my study.

To participate in the survey, please click the following link:
forms.gle/2QqG4nyyxpqwEVo78

Please consider completing this survey. Your input is highly valuable to me, and your participation will be greatly appreciated. If you have any questions or require further information about the survey, please do not hesitate to contact me at mallorydmccoy@stu.bakeru.edu or 816-876-5022. You may also contact my major advisor, Dr. Susan Rogers, at srogers@bakeru.edu or 785-230-2801.

I would again like to express my sincere gratitude for your consideration of this request, and I am eager to receive your valuable input. Your contribution will make a meaningful impact on the success of my dissertation research.

Sincerely,

Mallory D. McCoy
Doctoral Student, Baker University
mallorydmccoy@stu.bakeru.edu