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## **Feeling Like the Only: The Experiences of Black Parents Navigating the K-12 Educational System**

Logan Michael Schultz

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**Feeling Like the Only: The Experiences of Black Parents Navigating the K-12 Educational  
System**

**A Dissertation  
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF  
CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY, ST. PAUL  
BY**

**Logan Michael Schultz**

**IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
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**Dr. Laura Wangsness Willemssen, Advisor**

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## **Abstract**

As researchers and educators focus on ameliorating racialized disparities in education, the research and media focus has often been on such details as test scores, graduation rates, and exclusive of parental voice (Golden, Koumpilova, & Webster, 2019). Some studies, for example, focus on quantifying the so-called “achievement gap” while other studies use suspension statistics to describe the schooling experience through numbers, instead of words (Maynard & Weinstein, 2019). In contrast, this dissertation focuses on learning from a perspective on which there has been historically less research focus: that of the experiences and perspectives of Black parents navigating the education system, both as previous students and current parents.

While schools may frequently use terms like “parental involvement” or “engaging parents”, current research suggests that most schools may not have avenues to listen and take action based on diverse parental input, thus creating weak connections between parents and schools (Brandon, 2007). This research aims to fill that gap by specifically drawing on the perspectives and experiences of eight Black parents of early grade students as they navigate a suburban school district in the Midwest.

The participants in this study spoke to the importance of having staff of color, opportunities for involvement, and were continually comparing their schooling experiences to that of their child’s- some parents in a positive realm and others wishing their child(ren) had an experience similar to their schooling. This study highlights the needs for better communication between schools and parents to create a supportive and collaborative approach to supporting students. These findings lead to recommendations for school leaders at the local level and also provide recommendations for future research, including but not limited to: improving hiring practices with a focus on hiring

staff that reflect the diversity of students, reimagining and better supporting parental involvement, and creating inclusive spaces and opportunities for parents to feel heard.

*Keywords:* Black Parents, Experiences, Staff of Color, Parental Involvement, Inclusive, Parent Voice

