The Factors That Inhibit Black and Hispanic Students from Succeeding in Middle Tennessee Magnet Schools: A Snapshot of America

by

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To the students of color in America:

Keep pushing.

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Praise God. I made it through.

Abstract

Black and Hispanic students in magnet schools are underrepresented in the educational conversation. Magnet schools provide academic enrichment and rigor that could greatly benefit Black and Hispanic students, most of whom are statistically more likely to be disadvantaged than White peers. However, in Middle Tennessee, a region with relatively high racial diversity, the racial demographics of magnet schools do not reflect the demographics of the broader region and fall short in serving these students. I completed a review of literature to discover the factors that inhibit Black and Hispanic students from applying to, being admitted into and staying in magnet schools. Next, I completed four interviews with Black and Hispanic adult graduates of Middle Tennessee magnet schools to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the topic. Finally, I analyzed and synthesized the data from the review of literature and interviews to draw conclusions for Middle Tennessee magnet schools. I found that the location where a student resides, a student's family dynamics, transportation issues, and student race-based beliefs are the factors that inhibit Black and Hispanic students from succeeding in Middle Tennessee magnet schools. I presented re-examining school zones and allocating funds to buses and translation resources as potential solutions.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

When most Americans think of magnet schools, they generally only think of academic achievement or giftedness. Some even equate magnet schools with just being "the smart schools." While that may be the perception of magnet schools now, these schools were initially developed as agents for social change, and they could prove to become that again in the current American education system.

Magnet schools in the United States first began to open in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Proposed initially to facilitate integration in American school systems following the court decisions in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) and *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education* (1971), magnet schools provided an alternative choice for parents in their children's education. The first magnet schools offered unique curricula—such as performing arts or advanced math, science, and technology—to students, catered to individual learning styles and speeds and, most importantly, were fully optional for students to attend, unlike mandatory zoned schools. These schools were often opened in lower-income areas, which generally served Black and Hispanic students (Rossell, 2009), but the allure of these new schools attracted White students from neighboring areas as well. Thus, a peaceful, effective option for school desegregation was put into play.

Up until the 1990s, magnet schools were firmly in the educational landscape as an enriching choice school for students. However, following the *Board of Education of Oklahoma City Public Schools v. Dowell* (1991) Supreme Court case, schools were no

longer legally required to uphold desegregation efforts (*Board of Educ. v. Dowell, 498 U.S. 237 (1991)*). This, combined with the first charter school laws passed in 1991 (National Charter School Resource Center, 2013), caused the main alternative school choice to shift from magnet schools to charter schools.

Now, as time has progressed and new policies have been put in place, educational enrichment has replaced racial integration as the driving factor of magnet schools. Magnet schools are built upon "individually themed curricula," which can focus on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), performing arts, International Baccalaureate, Career and Technical Education (CTE), and World Languages (Magnet Schools of America, 2019). In addition to creating engaging curricula, magnet schools greatly emphasize academic rigor. This is evidenced by the fact that despite representing less than 5% of all public schools, magnet schools comprise 25% of the top 100 schools in the country (Magnet Schools of America, 2025). Lastly, with the grants allocated through the Magnet School Assistance Program, magnet schools can provide better resources and opportunities for students, further boosting student academic achievement (Walden University, 2019).

The group that influenced the creation of magnet schools—Black students—and the largest minority group in the country—Hispanic students—are two groups who are often underrepresented in magnet school settings today. Though these groups make up a significant percentage of American society, youth in these groups are markedly more likely than their White peers to come from households with lower incomes (The Anne E. Casey Foundation Kids Count Data Center, 2023), which can negatively affect mental

and physical health, educational attainment, and future career prospects (Escarce, 2003). As quality education can serve a pivotal role in promoting chances of socioeconomic gain and ending cycles of poverty (Reality Changers, 2024), the aforementioned benefits of magnet schools could be uniquely important in the lives of underprivileged Black and Hispanic youth. However, if these students cannot access these benefits, a valuable resource is lost.

Middle Tennessee, a well-populated region with substantial racial diversity, provides a clear example of the underrepresentation of Black and Hispanic magnet school students. The census data for two of the largest cities in Middle Tennessee—Nashville and Murfreesboro—show that the Nashville population is 24.9% Black and 14.1% Hispanic and that the Murfreesboro population is 16.4% Black and 9.7% Hispanic (United States Census Bureau, 2024). Ideally, the magnet school demographic percentages would be similar to or even higher than the census demographic percentages, but according to *U.S. News & World Report* in 2024, this is largely not the case. In Nashville, Hume Fogg Magnet High School (Grades 9-12) has a Black student percentage of 18.2% and a Hispanic student percentage of 10.1%, while Martin Luther King Jr. Magnet School (7-12) has a Black student percentage of 33.8% but a Hispanic student percentage of only 9.3%. In Murfreesboro, McFadden School of Excellence (K-5) has a Black student percentage of 6.4% and a Hispanic student percentage of 2.3%, and Central Magnet School (6-12) has a Black student percentage of 4.3% and a Hispanic student percentage of 5.3%.

If magnet schools are still truly "choice schools" that bridge communities, then the demographics of those who choose to go to magnet schools should reflect the broader population. This cannot be said for multiple magnet schools in Middle Tennessee for reasons that are not readily obvious.

I hypothesize that socioeconomic, cultural, and systemic factors hinder Black and Hispanic students from applying to, attending, and succeeding in Middle Tennessee magnet schools. For the purposes of this study, socioeconomic factors refer to conditions such as income level, housing access, transportation, and parental education; cultural factors refer to social beliefs, identity pressures, and community norms that shape academic engagement; and systemic factors refer to institutional policies, school zoning practices, admissions criteria, and structural inequities embedded within the education system. By exposing and analyzing these factors, I will shed light on the current state of magnet schools and introduce potential solutions to promote true educational equality. Though this thesis focuses on Middle Tennessee magnet schools, the goal is that this information can be applied on a national level. This study seeks to answer the following research question: What are the socioeconomic, cultural, and systemic factors that inhibit Black and Hispanic students from applying to, gaining admission to, and succeeding in Middle Tennessee magnet schools?

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

This research was focused on two main categories: factors that inhibit Black and Hispanic students before admission into magnet schools and factors that limit Black Hispanic students during their time in magnet schools. Due to magnet schools being a smaller sector of the educational sphere, information relating to general public schools was also used to draw conclusions. This review will serve to establish factors preventing students of color from applying to and receiving acceptance into magnet schools, establish factors that could hinder success for those who do gain access, and address any gaps found in the literature.

Inhibiting Factors before Magnet School Admission

Based on the literature, the location where a student lives and a student's family dynamics are the biggest factors that keep Black and Hispanic students from applying to and being admitted into magnet schools. These factors are discussed in the following sections.

Location

Research shows that the physical location where a student lives is pivotal in determining later enrollment in a magnet school. Straubhaar, Wang, and Sylvester concluded that "schools are segregated because school attendance zones are formed geographically (Richards, 2014), and housing is geographically segregated (Freeman,

2000)" (2021). The housing market on its own imposes various racial barriers upon Black and Hispanic parents of students.

Though the Fair Housing Act under the Civil Rights Act of 1968 was implemented to eliminate discriminatory practices towards Black and Hispanic citizens (Rial, 2021), homeownership remains extremely low among Blacks and Hispanics, housing equity wealth is substantially lower in Black and Hispanic households than in White households (U.S. Department of Treasury, 2022), and predatory lending practices still largely target minority homeowners (Morgan, 2005). Additionally, Black and Hispanic people comprised 18.4% and 15%, respectively, of all Americans living in poverty in 2024 (Shrider & Bijou, 2025). Living in poverty coincides with living in places with fewer available resources (DeLuca et al., 2013; Meade, 2014), which further hinders Black and Hispanic populations in the housing sector.

Considering that funding for schools is generated largely by revenue from property taxes (Owens, 2018; Straubhaar et al., 2021), living in a more affluent area can be linked to better funded educational opportunities and resources for youth. However, the aforementioned systemically imposed barriers that prevent Black and Hispanic families gaining access to any housing at all—let alone affluent housing—can immediately reduce the amount of available educational opportunities. Schools in low-income areas often have larger class sizes and teachers of lower quality, both of which negatively impact student learning (Rowley & Wright, 2011; Owens, 2018). Therefore, students living in low-income areas and attending the schools for which they are zoned not only receive fewer resources, but the resources they do have are of a lower quality as

well. As evidence for this, it was found that schools that serve areas that were historically redlined—a practice which devalued Black and Hispanic neighborhoods by disproportionately assigning them a "hazardous" lending risk level—receive less district funding than areas that were not historically redlined, offer less educational opportunity, and serve larger percentages of low-income and Black and Non-White students (Lukes & Cleveland, 2021).

Additionally, low-income areas have been linked with higher rates of crime (Meade, 2014) and other outside societal stressors such as stereotyping and police brutality (Lofton & Davis, 2015). High, chronic stress in general can lead to various mental and physical health problems (Mariotti, 2015; Mayo Clinic, 2023), but specifically for students, this stress can inhibit the executive functioning skills necessary for academic success (Augusta University, 2024). Black and Brown students who have the inclination to apply themselves academically may find that they do not have the mental capacity to do so due to their surrounding environment.

The addition of gerrymandering on top of these housing-related education issues further exacerbates the issue. Gerrymandering, the skewed redistricting of a region to favor one political party or candidate (Li, 2025), can have negative effects on Black and Hispanic students in general. However, this practice is also applied to school attendance zones by unevenly redrawing them to favor or exclude one racial/ethnic demographic of students (Richards, 2014).

In terms of the impact of general gerrymandering on the education of Black and Hispanic students, an article from Center for American Progress found that the

redistricting of districts in Michigan, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin caused policies that would increase educational funding to be either cut down dramatically or opposed altogether (Tausanovitch et al., 2020). These policies were proposed by Democrat governors but were pushed back by Republicans who are the majority in the House and Senate of these states. It is a result of unfair redistricting that the majority of votes for the House and Senate were for Democrat legislatures, yet the majority of seats ended up filled by Republicans. The decisions made by the Republican lawmakers in these states were not representative of the people they serve, and this is especially true for Black and Hispanic constituents who typically vote Democrat (Maddock, 2020). The proposed policies in these states could have given extra resources to low-income students, who have been established to be disproportionately Black and Hispanic, but gerrymandering blocked these valuable resources from reaching in-need students.

Research specific to the gerrymandering of school attendance zones is somewhat scarce. However, some value insight has been added to the topic by Meredith Richards. In the past, educational gerrymandering manifested itself as school districts pinpointing schools and redrawing attendance boundaries specifically to "undermine integration efforts" following the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision (Richards, 2014). The effects of this are still seen in present day. The attendance zones of schools established after 1991 are more gerrymandered than zones established before 1991, and gerrymandered school attendance zone boundaries create a small, yet significant increase in school segregation (Richards, 2014). The segregation caused by gerrymandered school

attendance zones are also most severe in areas experiencing rapid growth in racial diversity (Richards, 2017). This segregation was found to exclude Non-White students and include more White students within an attendance zone in some cases (Richards, 2014), which could perpetuate the educational disadvantages faced by Black and Hispanic students.

Family Dynamics

There is substantial data that a student's family has a large impact on a student's initial success in school. More specifically, family involvement in a student's education (Henderson & Mapp, 2002) and prior familial education (Nelson, 2009) can determine much about a student's educational trajectory. For Black and Hispanic students, family involvement (Abdul-Adil & Farmer, 2006; Schhneider et al., 2006) and prior familial education (United States Census Bureau, 2023) may be lower, and this can serve to prevent these students form further education.

Family involvement has been linked to increased academic achievement, social/emotional outcomes, high school completion rates, and attendance rates (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Jensen & Minke, 2017). It is important to note that both Henderson & Mapp and Jensen & Minke explicitly state that these outcomes are not exclusive to parents in nuclear households; any adult who serves a parenting role in a student's life can be involved in a student's education and reap these benefits. This family involvement can come in the form of activities that families engage in both at

home and at school and the attitudes families have towards their students' education (Topor et al., 2010).

A study of 122 elementary schools found that "characteristics associated with lower parent participation in school activities included being Hispanic, African American, or Asian American" (Griffith, 1998). The barriers which create lower familial participation in a Black or Hispanic student's life are structurally entrenched. As previously established, Black and Hispanic adults represent a disproportionate number of Americans living in poverty. Being low-income with a family often requires individuals to work with inflexible schedules or to work multiple jobs at once (Velsor & Orozco, 2007), which can prevent families from attending school meetings, school volunteer events, and other activities (Murray et al., 2014). Transportation limitations can prevent parents from getting to after-school events and meetings (Hill & Taylor, 2004). Also, families with fewer economic resources are less likely to participate in literacy activities (e.g. reading to a student) at home than families with more economic resources (Schhneider et al., 2006).

Though the structural barriers Black and Hispanic families face can have negative impacts on a student's academic achievement, the literature indicates that familial attitudes towards a student's school and teachers has even more influence on educational outcomes (Jensen & Minke, 2017). When families of any race perceive their student's school to be a welcoming place, they are more likely to engage with their student's education (Gale et al., 2024; Murray et al., 2014). However, factors like teacher and administrative bias against Black and Hispanic families and cultural and language

differences can alienate families, make them wary of schools, and cause them to disengage.

Teachers who have different backgrounds than Black or Hispanic families often automatically assume that these families are disinterested in their student's education (Velsor & Orozco, 2007; Hill & Taylor, 2004), which can create hostile interactions between these families and teachers (Goss, 2017; Murray et al., 2014). Teachers who have different backgrounds may also be less likely to try to understand Black and Hispanic students and their families (Hill & Taylor, 2004), and this further perpetuates bias against these families. Additionally, families are more likely to disengage when they are frequently met with a lack of effective, accessible communication (Goss, 2017) or lack of any communication outside of behavioral issues (Murray et al., 2014). Some communication may only be in English, include overly academic language, or only be available on the internet, and this exclusivity prevents Spanish-speaking families, less-educated families, and low-income families without at-home internet access from being able to participate (Goss, 2017; Velsor & Orozco, 2007). When families face these examples of bias, they feel unwanted, and therefore are less likely to involve themselves with their child's schooling.

Particularly for Hispanic families, cultural and language differences can produce a lack of familial engagement. For immigrant families supporting students in America, they are unlikely to have a solid understanding of how the U.S. education system works (Schhneider et al., 2006). Additionally, Hispanic families hold educational values that conflict with those of the U.S. education, such as an increased role in home-based

participation over school-based participation (Shah, 2009) and increased joint participation efforts with other parents over autonomous efforts (Velsor & Orozco, 2007). These two factors combined with the fact that in-person translators are often unavailable at school meetings and other communication is frequently only in English (Henderson & Mapp, 2002) can leave Hispanic families with feelings of being unnecessary in their student's education. These families do not understand and have no chance to ever understand unless an intentional attempt at outreach is made by the school, so disengagement increases.

Prior parental education also plays a large role in student success. Parents who have succeeded in their past educational endeavors (e.g. obtained a post-secondary degree, maintained good grades, participated in upper-level classes) are more likely to pass on a value for education to their children (Rowley & Wright, 2011; Dubow et al., 2009; Nelson, 2009). When families model "achievement-oriented behavior" (Dubow et al., 2009) to their children, their children adopt an achievement mindset and are more likely to achieve academic success. When families are unable to model this behavior, however, students may be more at risk of falling behind, and this inability is common among Black and Hispanic families.

Black and Hispanic students are likely to face "racialized tracking" (Lofton & Davis, 2015). Racialized tracking is de facto racial segregation through course enrollment discrimination (Hirschl & Smith, 2025). This tracking begins early in a student's educational career, as teachers tend to rate kindergarten Hispanic students lower than their White peers despite both groups of students having equal opportunity (Schhneider et

al., 2006) and teachers generally hold lower academic and behavioral expectations for Black students than their White peers (Lorenzetti & Johnson, 2022). As a Black or Hispanic student progresses through school, they are more likely to be placed in lower-track, special education, and remedial classes (Lofton & Davis, 2015; Schhneider et al., 2006; Calabrese, 1989) and less likely to be placed in Advanced Placement or other college program courses (Hirschl & Smith, 2025; Calabrese, 1989). Additionally, having a parent who was in a lower-track had a direct effect on whether a student would be placed in a lower-track class as well (Lofton & Davis, 2015). If a Black or Hispanic student's parent were placed in less rigorous, likely lower quality courses in their education, it is unlikely that the student will see achievement-oriented behavior modeled by their families.

In 2003, Hispanic adults had the lowest percentage of individuals over the age of 25 with a bachelor's degree with 11%, and Black adults were only slightly higher with 17% (Schhneider et al., 2006). Though both percentages increased, in 2022, 20.9% of Hispanic adults and 27.6% of Black adults over the age of 25 had a bachelor's degree, compared to 41.8% of non-Hispanic White adults (United State Census Bureau, 2023). With these statistics in mind, the likelihood that a Black or Hispanic student is raised by parents who do not have bachelor's degree is high. These parents may have less knowledge of the economic and social benefits of postsecondary education (Nelson, 2009) and fewer tools to navigate education in general (Lofton & Davis, 2015), which can result in their children being demotivated to pursue higher education and more unsure of their academic ability.

Effects on Magnet School Applications

Magnet schools utilize either academic-based admission (e.g. test score or GPA requirements) or lottery-based admission, and the majority of magnet schools actually operate with lottery-based admission (Bifulco, 2025). However, for both methods of magnet school admission, the location and family dynamics of Black and Hispanic students directly and overwhelming prevent them from seeking admission to these schools. The combination of location and family dynamics creates a lack of awareness in parents to apply to a lottery magnet school and a lack of academic resources available to Black and Hispanic students to be successful for an academic magnet school application.

For parents to apply for their student to enter a lottery-based magnet school, parents must have an understanding that the magnet school is even an option. Parents must be able to put forth the time and the effort to learn about these options for their students (Clark, 2024). Seeing as Black and Hispanic families are more likely to be of a low socioeconomic status and working multiple jobs, it is unlikely that these families have the time or energy.

Academic-based magnet schools require that students show substantial academic achievement before they can be admitted. This being the case, Black and Hispanic students are at an extreme disadvantage when applying to these schools. Because the structural housing and funding inequities described above shape school quality and access to academic preparation, Black and Hispanic students often enter the magnet admissions process with fewer institutional advantages (Baker et al., 2022). Also, since students who had parents in low-track classes are more likely to be placed in low-track

classes themselves, it is unlikely that students will receive the tools they need to excel academically.

If attempting to apply to a magnet school in the elementary years, Black and Hispanic students may face similar outcomes. Once again, due to the high percentage of Black and Hispanic adults in poverty, it is likely that the families of students will not have time or energy to dedicate to their child's academic growth at home. Resources like tutors or academic support programs may also not be available due to financial strain and transportation limitations (Lofton & David, 2015).

Ultimately, before students even enter kindergarten, many Black and Hispanic students encounter structural conditions that create significant barriers to academic opportunity. Gaining entrance into magnet schools is inhibited by various factors relating to where a student live and the dynamics of a student's family—both of which a student can do nothing about. However, when Black and Hispanic do earn admission into magnet schools, what factors hinder them during their education?

Inhibiting Factors during Magnet School Experience

While the barriers discussed thus far primarily affect whether Black and Hispanic students apply to and gain admission into magnet schools, these same structural and cultural forces do not disappear once enrollment is secured. Instead, they often evolve into new forms within the magnet school environment, influencing students' sense of belonging, academic persistence, and long-term success. The literature indicates these

new forms most frequently manifest as transportation issues and race-based academic beliefs. The following sections expound upon these issues.

Transportation Issues

Although magnet schools are meant to be free for anyone who obtains admission to them (Magnet Schools of America, 2025), Black and Hispanic families may have to bear hidden costs to support their students' education. Poverty and a low socioeconomic status do not automatically change once students are accepted into a magnet school, and this lack of resources can hold students back in their schooling. The most prominent manifestation of this is found in difficulty securing transportation to and from the magnet school.

Because magnet schools do not have attendance boundaries, the magnet school student body is comprised of students from all over the district. These districts are often irregularly drawn (Dur et al., 2025), which can mean students must undertake a lengthy bus commute that could take an hour, just to get to and from school each day (Noah Webster Educational Foundation, 2023). For all students, long school commutes are associated with higher school transfer rates (Stein et al., 2020; Blagg et al., 2018). In a study conducted in D.C., it was found that Black students have the longest commute out of all other races and ethnicities from kindergarten through 9th Grade (Blagg et al., 2018). This means Black students are more at risk of transferring out of magnet schools due to high commute times they likely face.

However, if bus transportation is not provided by the district for magnet school students, then families are responsible for their student's transportation. The elimination of bus routes to magnet schools has risen in the past 15 years, with districts in Illinois, Kentucky, and Florida cutting funding that would support bus routes to magnet schools (Jimenez, 2024; School Bus Fleet, 2011). If the expectation is for families to drive their students to school, then Black and Hispanic families find themselves at a huge disadvantage.

In 2022, 17% of Black households and 10% of Hispanic households did not have access to a car, in comparison to 6% of White households (National Equity Atlas, 2022). This means that almost 1 in 5 Black households and 1 in 10 Hispanic households would not even have the means to get their child to and from a magnet school. Considering commutes could be an hour long and work schedules for Black and Hispanic individuals have been previously established in this review to be largely inflexible, it is unlikely that a minority family with a car would even have the time to get their child to school.

Race-Based Academic Beliefs

From the literature, three community values held by Black and Hispanic students that can have negative effects on educational success are aversion to "acting White," stereotype threat, and the importance of family. In general, more research has been conducted for Black students on the topics of "acting White" and stereotype threat, and more research has been done for Hispanic students on the importance of family.

However, all three beliefs apply to both groups of students and play a large role in the education of these students.

The behaviors associated with "acting White" have been contested over the years, but some that were identified through student focus groups were "being enrolled in honors or advanced placement classes, speaking standard English, wearing clothes from the Gap or Abercrombie & Fitch (instead of Tommy Hilfiger or FUBU), and wearing shorts in the winter" (Neal-Barnett, 2001). The first two behaviors in this list—enrollment in higher-level classes and speech patterns—show the association between academic achievement and Whiteness (Ispa-Landa & Conwell, 2015; Rowley & Wright, 2011). This association may stem from the fact that Black and Hispanic students must try to reconcile the lack of representation they see in higher-level classes (Souto-Maior & Shroff, 2024). Since there has been and still is such a disparity between White students and Black and Hispanic students, these minority students recognize the disparity, internalize it, and respond to it by rejecting anything that is associated with Whiteness (Tabron & Chambers, 2019; Ispa-Landa & Conwell, 2015). An endless cycle, fewer Black and Hispanic students enroll in higher-level classes, there is less representation in those classes, and the disparity is perpetuated further.

"Acting White" is no small insult to be called. Black students who reject ideas of academic achievement also reject, alienate, and disparage other Black students who pursue academic achievement (Tabron & Chambers, 2019; Ispa-Landa & Conwell, 2015; Ford, 1993). The same phenomenon occurs with Hispanic students (Portes & Zhou, 1993). An example of this comes from a 2010 study which measured the perceived social

status of different races of students in relation to their GPA. The results showed that as the GPA of a Black or Hispanic student increases, the social status of the student decreases. For Hispanic students, social status sharply decreases above a 2.5 GPA and for Black students, status declines above a 3.48 GPA (Fryer & Torelli, 2010). High-achieving minority students must choose between their academics and their peer relationships and as a result, may choose to underachieve due to social pressures (Ford, 1993).

Stereotype threat is the anxiety around potentially confirming the negative stereotypes about the group, such as race or ethnicity, that one identifies with (Totonchi et al., 2021). As children mature, their ability to recognize widely held racial stereotypes increases linearly with age, with 80% of Black and Hispanic students recognizing stereotypes by age 10 in comparison with 63% of their White peers at age 10 (McKown & Weinstein, 2003). Black and Hispanic students are more at risk of experiencing stereotype threat because they are more primed to recognize the stereotypes held by others and do so from a young age.

Having to perform academically under these "allegation[s] of inability" (Steele & Aronson, 1995) can cause anxiety, a decrease in motivation, and even complete withdrawal from academics (Aronson et al., 2001). Anxiety in children frequently manifests as difficulty concentrating and difficulty sleeping (McCurdy et al., 2022), which can prevent students from engaging in content in a meaningful way. When students feel as though they are unable to succeed in their academics, they may cope by disidentifying (i.e. disengaging) with academic achievement and devaluating education

(Totonchi et al., 2021). Devaluation can be temporary, and students can begin to pursue academic achievement after overcoming the stressors of stereotype threat, but when devaluation becomes chronic, it can result in total disidentification with academics (Aronson et al., 2001).

Additionally, when stereotypes are perpetuated by teachers, stereotype threat becomes exacerbated by the concept of self-fulfilling prophecy. Teachers often have low expectations for students of color (Tabron & Chambers, 2019). When teachers change their treatment of students based on their low expectations, the student's motivation, goals, and self-efficacy is negatively impacted, and the student will ultimately perform at the level of the low expectations (Alderman, 2004). With this concept also at play, Black and Hispanic students are more likely to live up to negative academic stereotypes, which can make stereotype threat anxiety even more severe.

Lastly, the values held by family and community play a huge role in the academic success of Black and Hispanic students. This especially holds true for Hispanic students because 53% of Hispanic youth live with at least one immigrant parent (National Research Center on Hispanic Children and Families, 2020). The values and norms of these students are often different than those of the schools they attend, which can result in students feeling disconnected from their community for the sake of succeeding in school (Tabron & Chambers, 2019).

An example of these conflicting values is the importance of family in the Hispanic community. *Familismo* is the "firm belief in strong family ties, with […] loyalty to the family taking precedence over one's personal desires" (Turcios-Cotto & Milan,

2014). This loyalty can prevent students from staying in school, as the need to support their family may become a more pressing issue than education. Additionally, Hispanic men are socialized to become providers of their households, and Hispanic women are socialized to become caregivers from a young age (Smith, 2019). These beliefs are instilled early in a Hispanic student's educational career, which could make students less invested in academics in lieu of future goals like starting and supporting a family. If a Hispanic student were to choose to pursue academics over a family, they would be going against the values of their community and could be ostracized or isolated for it.

Effects on Magnet School Experience

The combined effects of transportation issues and race-based academic beliefs are extremely detrimental to a Black or Hispanic student's academic and social success in a magnet school. In regard to transportation issues, having a long commute to school is associated with increased rates of absenteeism and decreased ability to participate in before and after school programs (Blagg et al., 2018). The far distance of magnet schools hinders students from being in class consistently to receive course content and prevents them coming before or after school for tutoring programs, remedial activities, or other extra-curricular activities that could benefit them. Even if transportation is provided by the school, Black and Hispanic students may still miss out on vital content and guidance that could benefit them. When these students must also deal with the anxiety surrounding their race-based beliefs, their ability to succeed academically is further lowered. Black and Hispanic students often question their value, identity, and abilities in high-achieving

academic spaces (Tabron & Chambers, 2019). This, combined with the stress of stereotype threat and the internal conflict between school values and community values, can induce a huge amount of anxiety in students, which is linked to lower performance in school (McCurdy et al., 2022)

Socially, the distance of magnet schools can make it difficult to establish and maintain school relationships (Noah Webster Educational Foundation, 2023). Students may not live close to their magnet school peers, so attempting to see friends outside of school may prove difficult. Additionally, because Black and Hispanic students may feel "othered" in their magnet school environment (Ispa-Landa & Conwell, 2015), they may be less likely to forge meaningful relationships with their peers.

Gaps in the Literature

One major question unanswered by the research is the impact of magnet school curriculum on Black and Hispanic students. Although magnet school curricula have been established in this thesis to be unique and specialized, the literature does not indicate whether this curriculum is specialized to meet the needs of Black and Hispanic students. Great significance is placed on Eurocentricity in academically rigorous spaces, which can harm students of color in those spaces (Iweuno et al., 2024). Do magnet schools contribute to this harm?

An additional gap is found in the small quantity of qualitative data on the experiences of Black and Hispanic students in magnet schools. A multitude of sources were examined in this literature review, yet less than five of the sources included

interviews and quotes from Black and Hispanic students in magnet schools. This thesis will fill this gap by including qualitative data from graduates of Black and Hispanic Middle Tennessee magnet schools.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This study utilizes a qualitative research design to explore the narratives of Black and Hispanic students who attended magnet schools in Middle Tennessee. While existing research on magnet schools primarily focuses on quantitative outcomes, this study seeks to address the qualitative gap in the literature by examining participant perspectives and experiences. Through semi-structured interviews, this study provides deeper insight into how magnet school environments are experienced by students of color.

I created seven interview questions, and they are as follows:

1. What factors contributed to your enrollment in a magnet school? Was it the school's reputation, location, etc.?
2. Were there any logistical challenges (such as transportation issues, financial strain, or scheduling conflicts) that came with the choice to attend a magnet school?
3. In the specialized magnet school curriculum you received, did you feel as though it was culturally relevant? In other words, was there representation for various types of students embedded in the content you learned?
4. How did your peers in school perceive you? How did people outside your school perceive you? How did family perceive you?
5. Did you experience any academic, social, or disciplinary challenges specific to being a Black or Hispanic student in a magnet school? If so,

what were these challenges and were there any supports in place at the school to help you through them?

6. If you had younger siblings/cousins or had children, would you recommend/consider enrolling them in a magnet school? Why or why not?
7. Are there any final thoughts you wish to share relating to your magnet school education?

Interview questions were generated to both fill gaps in the literature and discover real instances of established statistics and facts. Four interviews were conducted with Black and Hispanic graduates of Middle Tennessee magnet schools. Participants identified as Black or Hispanic, attended a Middle Tennessee magnet school for at least one year, and were over the age of 18. Due to my connections to various graduates of Middle Tennessee magnet schools, participants were identified and initially contacted through social media direct messaging.

Four interviews were sufficient to provide insight into this thesis because the perspectives and experiences offered by the participants are unique and therefore invaluable. Adding any amount of new data into this topic would enhance the pre-existing literature by taking the research from just facts to real, lived experience. A thematic analysis was used to effectively identify, examine, and interpret meaningful patterns in the raw interview data (Ahmed et al., 2025). All interviews were recorded with the participants' consent, thoroughly reviewed, coded, analyzed, and summarized.

Chapter 4: Findings

Introduction to Findings

This chapter will present and discuss the findings from interviews conducted with four participants who attended Middle Tennessee magnet schools. The purpose of this analysis was to explore participants' experiences and perceptions related to magnet school enrollment and educational experiences, fill in gaps in the literature, and provide further insight into the research question.

Participant Overview

To protect the confidentiality of the participants, their names, ages, and places of current enrollment colleges/universities have been omitted from this thesis. However, some basic demographic information is provided below to provide context for participant answers.

Participant 1: Hispanic, Female, Graduate of a magnet school in Murfreesboro, TN

Participant 2: Black, Female, Graduate of a magnet school in Nashville, TN

Participant 3: Hispanic, Male, Graduate of a magnet school in Murfreesboro, TN

Participant 4: Black, Male, Graduate of a magnet school in Nashville, TN

Data Analysis and Theme Development

After completing all interviews, the recordings of the interviews were reviewed and transcribed. The data was analyzed to identify recurring experiences and perspectives

across participants. These patterns were grouped into different themes. Four major themes emerged: 1) Magnet School Reputation and Parent Motivation; 2) Issues with School Social Climate; 3) Impact of Teachers, and 4) Access to Resources, College Preparatory Programs, and Opportunities. Each of these themes will be introduced and discussed, with direct quotes and paraphrases incorporated to provide more depth.

Discussion of Interview Themes

Theme 1: Magnet School Reputation and Parent Motivation .

The first question asked during each interview was "What factors contributed to your enrollment in a magnet school? Was it the school's reputation, location, etc.?" Every participant responded by stating their parents had heard of the magnet school's positive reputation and chose to enroll them in the school as a result.

However, participants reported that their parents heard about their respective magnet schools from different sources. For **Participants 2 and 4**, their parents entered them into a school district lottery program and were selected from that program to attend their magnet middle school. The same two participants also followed a feeder school progression, where their middle school primarily provided the students' body for their magnet high school. The parents of **Participants 1 and 3** found out about their magnet school through word of mouth and completed an academics-based application for the school.

The reputations of these magnet schools were so great that the parents of three participants were willing to overcome large barriers to keep their children in their magnet

school. One such barrier was distance. **Participants 1 and 3** did not live in the city in which their magnet school was located and had to commute roughly 25 minutes to school and back. These participants reported being provided a bus system, but one participant who had to take the bus described the situation as "a little bit of a struggle bus, no pun intended, working around all of our schedules" (Personal Communications, March 10, 2026). **Participant 4** moved out of the city in which his magnet school was located after having already been enrolled there, which greatly increased commute time and meant that "[the parent and participant] could get there in about 35-40 minutes, but it often took [them] 50-60 minutes or sometimes more" (Personal Communications, March 20, 2026). **Participant 2** lived in the same city as her magnet school for all of her schooling and had no issues with distance.

Another barrier mentioned was financial strain. **Participant 1** spoke of the expenses of AP exams and the stress it placed on her and her mother. She ultimately got a part-time job to help pay for the cost of AP exams and other related expenses, but this also worsened the already heavy workload that she had to manage. **Participant 2**, although not at a financial disadvantage herself, witnessed the effect that financial strain had on her peers. She noted that things like class trips, extracurricular activities like cheerleading and theater, ACT prep programs, and even just a parking spot at the school, were only available to students who had the financial resources. In her words, "if you didn't have that [referring to money], you weren't doing it" (Personal Communications, March 11, 2026). **Participant 4**, who self-identified as "poor," faced difficulties getting to school for part of his schooling because his family could not afford to fix their car.

Although all participants ultimately graduated from their magnet schools and pushed through their barriers, a by-product of this perseverance was feelings of parental pressure. **Participant 3** stated that he was expected to "keep going or he wouldn't succeed," (Personal Communication, March 12, 2026); **Participant 4** faced his mother comparing him to his sister who had attended the same magnet school years prior; and **Participant 1** stated she felt pressure from the sacrifices her parents made for her. The pursuit of success in their magnet schools came at the cost of the mental wellbeing of these participants.

As time went on, the parents of some participants noticed the decline in their students' wellbeing, but the responses of parents varied. The parents of **Participant 1** showed a more positive reaction. **Participant 1** explicitly stated that as she progressed through her magnet school, her parents became more "concerned" (Personal Communications, March 10, 2026), and she eventually began receiving therapy to better her mental health. Less positive responses came from the parents of **Participants 2 and 4.** After facing some difficulty in an advanced class, the parents of **Participant 2** persistently demanded that she be placed in the lowest version of the class instead of remaining in the class. The mother of **Participant 4** threatened to pull him out of his magnet school multiple times after he exhibited lower achievement.

Theme 2: Issues Within School Social Climate

The findings of this theme are notable because the differences in responses are related to gender. **Participants 1 and 2**, both female, passionately provided multiple,

vivid examples of their experiences with racism and disrespect, yet **Participants 3 and 4,** both male, were subdued on the topic and said that they did not face many, if any, challenges related to their race. **Participant 3** said that he felt he experienced being looked down upon a few times and **Participant 4** stated that he was told he "talked White," but these participants did not provide any other examples.

Participant 1 said that she faced microaggressions and condescension and felt judgement from her peers at school. To combat this, she felt that she had to "learn how to code switch," (Personal Communication, March 10, 2026). Her magnet school environment was a huge culture shock to her, and she felt a great amount of disconnection.

Participant 2 spoke frequently of "jokes" that peers made that were actually just disparaging comments towards people of color. Some peers "joked" of deporting someone's parents, while other peers would mock initiatives and performances for Black History Month and Hispanic Heritage Month. Additionally, although Participant 2 self-identified as "outspoken" (Personal Communications, March, 11, 2026) and peers were less likely to confront her with racism, Participant 2 witnessed her friends being treated poorly on the basis of race and had to intervene to stand up for them.

Participants 1 and 2 both indicated that they felt their peers acted with such racism and disrespect because their peers were never taught to act otherwise. **Participant 2** stated that "it's the environment these people live in […], they grew up seeing us a certain way" (Personal Communication, March 11, 2026), and participant said that "[…] a lot of those kids live in a bubble" and that "[those kids] were challenged academically,

but not socially" (Personal Communication, March 10, 2026). Based on how **Participants 1 and 2** spoke about their peers they graduated with, it does not seem likely that these peers were ever taught before leaving high school.

One commonality between all participants in this theme is that all participants used the word "different" to describe how they felt they were perceived by peers. Also, for **all participants**, the word "different" had a negative connotation. There is no other instance across these interviews of the exact same word being used to describe how they felt in their magnet schooling. The only participant to give any clarification to the meaning of "different" in this context was **Participant 3**, who stated that his culture and upbringing may have caused him to be looked at differently by peers. The use of this nebulous term by all participants indicates that while participants could identify a disconnect with their peers, they cannot articulate what truly caused the disconnect.

Theme 3: Impact of Teachers on Student Experience

Responses were split in half when answering the question, "In the specialized magnet school curriculum you received, did you feel as though it was culturally relevant? In other words, was there representation for various types of students embedded in the content you learned?" **Participants 2 and 4** answered yes, while **Participants 1 and 3** answered no. However, based on the further information provided by **Participants 2 and 4**, the way in which teachers delivered course content was significantly more important than the content itself.

Participant 2 spoke of foreign language and world history teachers who tried to make their curriculum broader and more relevant to students. These teachers made a difference in her education, and she spoke of them highly and excitedly. **Participant 4**, who had mainly White teachers, stated that "it was[n't] an issue for them to teach us about Black people and other culture" (Personal Communication, March 12, 2026).

Participant 1 gave an immediate no to the question and laughed. While she acknowledged that some teachers, especially those in the social sciences, did their best she said that "it was mainly just White history" and that "[she] couldn't find [her]self-relating to any of it" (Personal Communication, March 10, 2026). Similarly to **Participant 4, Participant 1** had mainly White teachers, but **Participant 1** felt as though this created disconnect in the classroom. Lastly, both **Participants 1 and 3** indicated that they believed it would be harder to facilitate cultural relevance in science and math classes, but **Participant 3** also noted that there wasn't much cultural relevance in core classes either.

The analysis of this theme filled in the literature gap regarding the impact of magnet school curricula on Black and Hispanic students. Considering many magnet schools focus on STEM, it may be more difficult to incorporate cultural relevance into magnet school courses. However, if the teachers at magnet schools are intentional about how they deliver content and engage students, the needs of all students can be properly met.

Theme 4: Access to Resources, College Preparatory Programs, and Opportunities

All participants mentioned the benefits they received from being enrolled at a magnet school. **Participant 1** spoke of the academic programs, well-enforced discipline, and opportunities that she received due to her enrollment in a magnet school. Her previous schools did not provide any of these things, which makes this a notable change in her education. **Participant 2** stated that she was "set up for success" (Personal Communication, March, 11, 2026), and that if she had attended her zoned school, she likely would have gone to a school with "bad influences and less funding" (Personal Communication, March 11, 2026). **Participant 3** said that magnet schools "prepare [students] for college a lot more than I've seen other schools do" (Personal Communication, March 12, 2026). **Participant 4** stated that going to a magnet school "[e]xposed me to a lot of things that I might not have been exposed to had I not gone to a magnet school" (Personal Communication, March 12, 2026) and mentioned having access to an arts program and better school funding. Additionally, Advanced Placement courses, Advanced Honors courses, and the ACT were mentioned casually by all participants, indicating how commonplace they were at their magnet schools.

When asked the question "If you had younger siblings/cousins or had children, would you recommend/consider enrolling them in a magnet school? Why or why not?" all participants responded affirmatively, though with varying levels of assent. Regardless of any negative aspects of magnet schools that participants discussed, overall, the benefits participants received seemed to outweigh everything else. **Participants 2 and 3** qualified for their assent by saying they would do research on the school, provide demographic

context, and ensure a strong support system was in place before recommending a magnet school to somebody.

Synthesis of Review of Literature and Interview Findings

Synthesis Process

From the review of literature, four main inhibiting factors were identified: Location, Family Dynamics, Transportation Issues, and Race-Based Beliefs. From the interview analysis, four major themes were identified: Magnet School Reputation and Parent Motivation; Issues with School Social Climate; Impact of Teachers on Student Experience; and Better Access to Resources, College Preparatory Programs, and Opportunities. To synthesize this data, the findings of the review of literature and the interviews will be compared. Areas of overlap and contrast will be noted and discussed.

Areas of Overlap

Distance barriers to magnet schools were found in both the review of literature and the interviews. Three of the four participants stated that they did not live in the city that their magnet school was in and that they had to commute at least 25 minutes to get to and from school. This illustrates the general lack of magnet school attendance boundaries and irregularly drawn school districts identified in the literature. Multiple sources emphasize the detrimental effects of attending a school that requires a long commute, and one participant articulated the negative impact it had on her and her family's schedules.

Across both datasets, I found that the barriers created by distance also create transportation issues to magnet schools. As established frequently throughout the review of literature, Black and Hispanic families are more likely than White families to be of a low socio-economic status. As such, the ability to afford or fix a car is out of reach for many of these families, and an example of this was provided by Participant 4's experience. Though Participants 1 and 3 were able to take the bus provided by their school, if no school bus system were in place, they likely would have run into more issues getting to and from school.

Lastly, both datasets identified a relationship between the level of school funding and the quality of the education. The literature shows that the higher the school funding, the better the educational resources and opportunities. All participants shared that they believed the education they received from their magnet schools was better than the education they would have received from a zoned school. All participants also mentioned the fact that funding for magnet schools is higher than that of most zoned schools in their area. Participant 1 went on to share that her previous schools, which were not magnet schools, did not provide as many benefits as her magnet school. It can be concluded that the academic programs and resources offered by magnet schools are so effective because they have sufficient funding for them.

Areas of Contrast

The largest area in which the datasets differ is in the findings relating to what causes social tension for Black and Hispanic students in a magnet school. The causes

identified in the literature were internal conflicts and more subtle influences. Being accused of "acting White," dealing with stereotype threat, and juggling cultural priorities with educational priorities all create issues within a student. These internalized beliefs do not have to stem from experiences with explicit racism and discrimination but can be adopted through casual interactions with peers and media perpetuation of stereotypes. The causes identified in the interviews, however, were related to overt shows of racism and disrespect by peers. While both internal racial conflict and external, explicit racism create anxiety and other negative emotions in students, the latter was the only one mentioned by interview participants. This difference in root cause is intriguing, because it is unclear which has the largest effect on social tension between Black and Hispanic students and their peers.

Additionally, the findings of the review of literature disagree with the majority of the interview findings regarding teachers of Black and Hispanic students. From the literature, it was concluded that when teachers have different backgrounds than their students, there is more disconnect in the classroom and that teachers may be less likely to get to know their students. However, in the experiences of Participants 2 and 4, this was not the case. Both participants encountered teachers who had different backgrounds from them, yet both participants reported their teachers putting in effort to teach students about their cultures, other cultures, and other course-related content that was relevant to students. It is notable that Participants 1 and 3, who did not feel this way, went to school in Murfreesboro, and Participants 2 and 4 went to school in Nashville. Though it is unclear whether the teachers of Participants 2 and 4 are exceptions, these clear examples

of teachers connecting with and knowing their various types of students directly contradict the literature.

Finally, the interview findings identified another aspect of family dynamics—familial pressure to succeed—that was not addressed in the review of literature. The dynamics found in the literature were familial involvement and familial education. Within familial involvement, the amount of participation in and the attitudes family have towards their child's schooling has a large impact on student preparedness and success. In contrast, the findings from the interviews indicated that the pressure participants felt from their families to succeed in their magnet school was the largest familial influence on student preparedness and success. Participants did not mention if their families helped with homework or attended school events, nor whether their families found their schools to be a welcoming place, nor the level of education of their families. Participants focused instead on the expectations their families had for them to succeed and the simultaneous motivation and anxiety this caused. This gap in the literature was not discovered until the interviews were analyzed, and this provides a concept that could be explored more.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

Through a review of literature and an analysis of interviews, I concluded that there are various factors that prevent Black and Hispanic students from succeeding in Middle Tennessee magnet schools, both before earning admission and while still in school. These factors are the location where a student resides, especially in relation to distance from a magnet schools; a student's family dynamics, including family involvement, prior familial education, and most notably, familial pressures to succeed; transportation issues; and race-based beliefs, both of Black and Hispanic students and of their peers. Although these factors are often extremely difficult to overcome, this thesis also established the value of magnet schools for these students, as magnet schools generally receive more funding than zoned schools, offer more academic opportunities, and effectively prepare students for college. This research has shed light on the causes of underrepresentation of Black and Hispanic students in both Middle Tennessee magnet schools and magnet schools across the nation and demonstrated how the socioeconomic and systemic disadvantages Black and Hispanic disproportionately face can be leveled by succeeding in a magnet school. By conducting interviews in addition to the review of literature, I provided more depth to the pre-existing research and filled gaps in the research.

Recommendations

After identifying these factors, it would be a disservice to this demographic of students not to offer any recommendations to combat these factors.

Factor: Location Where a Student Resides

Recommendation: Examine irregularly drawn school district boundaries and redraw districts to take on a more regular shape. This will allow school districts to better serve the students who are in the area. While some students will still have to commute farther than others to get to magnet schools without school attendance boundaries, no student will have to commute an exorbitant amount of time

Factor: Student Family Dynamics

Recommendation: Allocate a portion of magnet school funding to providing resources that are accessible to speakers of various languages other than English. This would involve surveying and communicating with parents to determine languages spoken by students and their families, sending out translations of school newsletters and memos, and providing translators at school meetings and events. Other aspects of family dynamics are difficult to address due to them not necessarily being related to magnet schools themselves.

Factor: Transportation Issues

Recommendation: Allocate a portion of magnet school funding to provide bus services to students across the school district. As opposed to only serving students more than 25 minutes away, buses could also be provided to students less than 25 minutes away to help alleviate stress on working parents and benefit older students who do not have a car. If the district is opposed to allowing magnet schools to utilize district buses, the magnet schools could hire private bus contractors to serve their students.

Factor: Race-Based Beliefs

Recommendation: There is not a feasible solution to help students overcome internal identity issues or to change all students into kind, respectful, compassionate people. However, the growth of Black and Hispanic students in magnet schools would help break the associations between Whiteness and academic achievement and make these students more confident in their schools. Initiatives could be put in place to help Black and Hispanic students adjust to and succeed in predominately White magnet schools, but this could come at the risk of further alienating these students in their schools.

Limitations

This thesis only included four interviews, and participants only attended magnet schools in Murfreesboro, Tennessee and Nashville, Tennessee. A larger pool of interviews and a wider range of Middle Tennessee cities represented would have provided a more holistic view of the research topic.

Additionally, while quantitative data analysis should be objective, the analysis of qualitative data like interview responses requires subjective interpretation. During the process of deriving meanings and themes from the responses, my unconscious biases and prior expectations may have colored my analysis of the interviews. While recordings were taken specifically to provide a neutral way to review the interviews and mitigate researcher bias, there was still some room for bias to take hold of the findings.

Suggestions for Future Study

In general, more research should be conducted on how to uplift young people from marginalized backgrounds. While magnet schools provide an accessible and effective approach, other methods should be explored as well. Equity can only be achieved through intentional action, and we as a nation cannot take any steps forward without an understanding of what is available.

The effects of magnet school curricula on Black and Hispanic students should also be further explored. Although the interviews conducted for this thesis provided some insight, there is a lack of academic conversation surrounding this topic. It would be valuable to educators to understand if and how differences in magnet school curricula affect students of various racial backgrounds.

Lastly, one area that needs more clarification from the interviews in this thesis is the relationship between gender and perception of racism in students. It is possible that the responses from interview participants are anomalous and do not indicate anything larger, but such a striking difference in participant responses is too interesting to ignore.

Is there a relationship between gender and perception of racism in students at all? If so, what effect does this have on students, and should action be taken to combat these effects?

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INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
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Office of Research Compliance
010A Sam Ingram Building
2269 Middle Tennessee Blvd.
Murfreesboro, TN 37129

Date: February 6,
2026 PI: Jocelyn
Bullock
Department: Middle Tennessee State University, Womack Educational
Leadership Co-PI: Everett Singleton
Department: Middle Tennessee State University, Womack Educational
Leadership Re: Initial - IRB-FY2026-97
The Factors Which Inhibit Black and Hispanic Students from Succeeding in Middle Tennessee Magnet Schools: A Snapshot of America

The Middle Tennessee State University Institutional Review Board has reviewed and approved by Expedited Review the above referenced research study. The approval is effective starting February 6, 2026.

Decision: Approved

Research Category:

6. Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.
7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies. (NOTE: Some research in this category may be exempt from the HHS regulations for the protection of human subjects. 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) and (b)(3). This listing refers only to research that is not exempt.)

The following apply to your approved study:

1. In accordance with 45 CFR 46.110 and the regulations for Expedited Review (Common Rule), this project does not expire and continuing review is not required by the IRB.
2. Any unanticipated harm to participants or adverse events must be reported to the Office of Compliance.
3. All modifications to the approved study must be submitted for review through Cayuse IRB for approval before their implementation. Adding new researchers constitutes a modification to the protocol. Per MTSU Policy, a researcher is defined as anyone who handles the data or interacts with participants. Everyone meeting this definition for this project must have completed the required CITI training and received IRB approval prior to becoming actively involved in the project.
4. Closure of the study must be submitted within Cayuse when the study ends or when personal identifiers are removed from the data and all codes and keys are destroyed.
5. Federal regulations require human subjects records be retained for at least 3 years after completion of the research. Once de-identified, the data can be kept longer for further analysis.
6. If your research is funded by a sponsor, they may have specific data retention policies that supersede the standard IRB guidelines.

7. If your study involves protected health information (PHI), you must adhere to HIPAA regulations when storing and destroying data.
8. Data should be destroyed using a secure method that permanently erases information. Keep a record of when and how research data were destroyed.

Sincerely,

Middle Tennessee State University Institutional Review Board