Untold Narratives: The Experiences of Black Teachers in Predominantly White Schools

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Abstract

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Untold Narratives: The Experiences of Black Teachers in Predominantly White Schools

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The current demographics of American public schools indicate that while the student population has become more diverse, the teaching force remains overwhelmingly White. Moreover, teachers are segregated in terms of where they teach: White teachers tend to work in schools with mostly White students, whereas Black teachers teach in schools that have a higher population of Black and minority students. However, there are Black teachers who work in majority White schools, and their stories are largely underrepresented in the existing body of research. Through this qualitative study, an attempt to allow these narratives is offered. These unheard voices enable readers to understand the experiences of these Black teachers. Specifically, the researcher used three theoretical frameworks (Critical Race, Racial Identity, and Tokenism) to examine the lived experiences of this study’s participants. Each of the six teachers was purposefully selected from three predominantly White Midwestern school districts. To gather data, the researcher used an in depth phenomenological protocol that required each participant to be interviewed three times. All interviews were transcribed, and the resulting transcripts were coded to reveal themes that addressed the research questions. From an analysis of these themes, the researcher concluded that although the Black teachers encountered challenges consistent with those described by previous researchers, they also enjoyed many positive opportunities. Additionally, the findings revealed all
participants developed and identified with their racial identity differently. Moreover, the degree to which they identified with being Black contributed to the sense they made of their experiences in mostly White schools. Lastly, this study’s participants acknowledged their token status, but also understood that others (e.g. White teachers and parents) may negatively perceive them as tokens. However, the participants in this study drew strength from their racial identity and relied upon support from mentors, colleagues, administrators, and family members to endure the pressures of being Black teachers in overwhelmingly White schools.
Dedication

Dedicated to the memory of Sidney Jones, Sr. & Shirley Ann Weber Jones,
Willie & Odette P. Jones, and Samuel Jones, Jr.
You encouraged me to dream, and taught me how to make dreams reality.
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Very little in life is accomplished on one’s own merits, and this dissertation is a true testament to this belief. I would not have been able to navigate and complete this odyssey without the guidance, assistance, reassurance, and prayers of a team of very important individuals.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

I, too, sing America…

--Langston Hughes, “I, Too”

The preceding epigraph is the opening line from “I, Too”, a poem by Harlem Renaissance poet Langston Hughes originally published in 1945. Although simple in form and construction, this poem paints a vivid, phenomenological portrait of Blacks living in the pre-Civil Rights era. However, its sentiments of one wanting to “sing” or fully participate in American society also represents the feelings of many contemporary African Americans. Yet their voices are sometimes ignored or muted in the societal choir dominated by the majority White culture. This research seeks to change this dynamic by giving voice to the untold narratives of a particular set of African Americans—those who teach in largely White schools. Throughout this dissertation, excerpts of Hughes’s “I, Too” are the common thread knitting together each chapter into a descriptive tapestry that highlights relevant literature, outlines the research methods used in this study, illuminates the participants’ experiences, and discusses the conclusions and possibilities for additional study.

Background of Study

The study described in this dissertation focuses on the racial dynamics experienced by Black teachers who work in predominantly White schools. As the discussion in this chapter shows, such an investigation is important because of the following three reasons: schools in the United States continue to be segregated; racism
plays a role in the treatment that Black teachers receive; and the employment of Black teachers in White schools has the potential to counteract racism, at least to some extent.

Segregation in American public schools is not just a problem of the past; rather, it is also a present dilemma. Not only are students segregated by race, but so too are teachers (Frankenberg, 2009). A recent study conducted by The Civil Rights Project revealed that the current American teaching force is both racially and socio-economically segregated (as cited in Frankenberg, 2009). This telephone survey of approximately 1000 teachers presented two related findings: White teachers teach in schools in which the teaching staff is predominantly White, and Black teachers teach in schools in which the teaching staff is predominantly non-White. Furthermore, the racial segregation of teachers entails not only the racial balance of the colleagues with whom they interact but also the racial balance of the students whom they teach (Frankenberg, 2009). After analyzing the results of the survey conducted by The Civil Rights Project, Frankenberg found that White teachers, in general, teach in schools whose student population is largely White, and Black teachers teach in schools whose student population is mostly Black.

Considering findings about the extent of segregation of the teaching force in the United States, education analysts offer conjectures about why a more diverse teaching staff might benefit all students. First, according to Parker (2008), a diverse staff, by its very presence, could challenge the racist notion that only Whites can hold positions of power. Parker (2008) argued “Our current system teaches children of color that Whites can be in positions of authority, but fails to teach White children, who are rarely exposed
to minority teachers, the corresponding lesson that people of color can be in authority…” (p. 39). Second, Parker claimed that if teachers of color primarily teach students of color, these students might come to believe persons of color can be in charge only of others whose race is the same as their own. Third, according to several commentators, Black teachers are more likely than White teachers to provide culturally responsive instruction, and this type of instruction has purported benefits for students of color (Delpit, 1995; Foster, 1997).

In a curriculum proposal for meeting the needs of an increasingly diverse student body, Villegas and Lucas (2002) supported this perspective, maintaining that diverse teaching staffs are more likely than White teaching staffs to include teachers who use culturally responsive practices. Further, these authors argued that such teachers have several traits, including the ability to understand how students of color make sense of their world, that make them effective instructors of racially and ethnically diverse students. Frankenberg (2009) agreed, claiming also that because of their sensitivity to racial and ethnic diversity “teachers of color may also help strengthen ties between home and school” (p. 4).

Lastly, according to some commentators (e.g., Frankenburg, 2009), a diverse teaching force may impact the diversity of future teaching staffs. In her analysis of the data collected by The Civil Rights Project, Frankenberg (2009) found that the White teachers (who comprised the majority of the teachers surveyed) had not attended schools that enrolled diverse groups of students. These same teachers also were not currently working in schools with diverse teaching staffs. One way to change this trend, in
Frankenberg’s view, is to model increased diversity for K-12 students who may choose to become teachers in the future. Frankenberg claimed that if these students are taught by a group of diverse teachers, those who actually do choose to become teachers themselves will be well prepared to teach a diverse student body.

Although most studies indicate that teachers tend to teach in schools whose dominant student population is the same as their own (e.g., Frankenberg, 2009; Parker, 2008), this alignment does not characterize the work of all teachers. In rare circumstances, for example, legislation has required teachers to work in schools where the majority of students and staff are of a different race from their own. Davis (1999), for instance, presented a case study of an atypical arrangement in the East Baton Rouge Parish School District in 1970. His study examined the experiences of “cross-over” teachers, that is, teachers whose racial difference from that of the majority of students assisted the district in integrating predominantly all-Black and all-White high schools. Through this study, Davis sought to understand the participating teachers’ thoughts about their experiences with students, administrators, and other teachers in their new school placements. He focused on two teachers, a Black male and a White female, in order to gain insights about the reactions of teachers who participated in this unusual experience. One reaction both teachers’ narratives revealed was a distrust of the school district’s motives in instituting the cross-over.

From the perspective of the Black teacher, the experience initially seemed like a conspiracy to dismantle successful Black schools by removing their most expert staff members. According to this teacher, experienced White teachers were permitted to
remain in the predominantly White schools, and only newly hired White teachers were required to participate in cross-over teaching. The White teacher, who was herself a newly hired teacher, supported this assessment by stating that older, White teachers were not required to participate because district administrators believed these teachers would either protest their reassignment to all-Black schools or simply resign from teaching rather than accepting the reassignment. According to Davis (1999), district administrators told the White teachers that they would need to “endure” only three years of cross-over teaching (p. 3); however, they made no such promise to the Black teachers.

Despite their suspicion of the district’s motives, both of the cross-over teachers recalled having generally positive experiences, although both described encountering challenges with the preconceived ideas others had of them in their new schools. For example, although the Black teachers were experienced, they were consistently treated as if they were inexperienced by both students and administrators. By contrast, the new White teachers were openly accepted and supported by the Black administrators in the cross-over schools. One challenge the White teachers faced, however, was Black students who deliberately underachieved in an effort to reinforce the perceived stereotype that White teachers would be unable to help Black students perform at high levels. Often the Black students, realizing the White teachers were inexperienced, would attempt to avoid doing their assignments by pretending to be unable to read, write, or perform basic math computations. Due to the small size of the sample in his study, Davis concluded by calling for the study of a larger sample of teachers to provide a more generalizable
characterization of the experiences of teachers working in cross-over schools. No such follow-up study has appeared in the published literature since that time, however.

The state-mandated cross-over teaching experience analyzed by Davis provided insight into the experiences of teachers working in environments that differed greatly from the ones with which they were familiar. Similarly, Gillette’s (1996) examination of a group of White student teachers working in a predominantly Black school added to the small body of research on “cross-over” teaching. Her research involved a case study of seven White student teachers (two males and five females) whose eight-week long student teaching experience took place in an elementary school that was 99% African American. The majority of the teachers and administrators in this school were also persons of color.

Gillette’s primary purpose was to examine the student teachers’ attitudes towards their students and the perceptions they had of themselves while teaching in a setting in which demographics and cultural practices were different from those with which they were familiar. Gillette found that two of the student teachers were highly resistant to modifying their practices to suit the needs of their students, whereas four were willing to do so. Also, one of the student teachers expressed a desire to immerse herself deeply in the community’s culture so that she could understand and relate to the students and their parents. Based on these findings, Gillette concluded that the ability to connect culturally with students of a different ethnic or racial background had more to do with a teacher’s open-mindedness and less to do with his or her own racial or ethnic background. Nevertheless because of her small sample, she called for more research about such
classroom experiences. In the next chapter, I review additional studies examining
dynamics similar to those explored by Davis and Gillette.

To summarize: the research discussed above suggests that teachers are segregated
in terms of the racial mix of the students they teach and in terms of the racial mix of
professionals with whom they work. Black teachers tend to teach in schools with a high
percentage of Black students and a low percentage of White teachers; White teachers
tend teach in schools that have a high percentage of White students and a low percentage
of teachers of color. Moreover, some studies (see Davis, 1999; Gillette, 1996) indicate
that when teachers are in schools where most of the students are of a race different from
their own, they may experience challenges in relating to and communicating with
students, parents, and colleagues. Additionally, some educators speculate that such
problems may result from cultural disconnections between teachers and the students with
whom they work. As Gillette’s study, among others, suggests “cross-over” teaching does
not always lead to disconnection. Being a “culturally relevant” teacher in Gillette’s view
does not “depend on skin color but on commitment, open-mindedness, and a propensity
for critical reflection on one’s work” (p. 126).

Three Relevant Theoretical Perspectives

Three theories provide insight into the dynamics associated with “cross-over”
teaching. Because this study focuses on the experiences of Black teachers who work in
predominantly White schools, the theories that are most relevant are ones that seek to
illuminate the roadblocks that Blacks face in their interactions with the White
mainstream. These theories are Racial Identity Theory (Helms, 1993), Critical Race Theory or CRT (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001), and Tokenism theory (e.g., Kanter, 1977).

The first theory, Racial Identity, maintains that being a member of a racial group is not simply a matter of physical traits (e.g. skin color) but one of psychological development (Helms, 1993). In particular, this theory seeks to explain the reasons a person has for either identifying or not identifying with the racial group to which he or she might belong on the basis of skin color and other physical characteristics (Helms, 1993). Black Racial Identity theory or “Nigrescence” (Cross, 1971) specifically focuses on the psychological stages of development one undergoes to identify oneself as Black. There are many variants of this theory, but they all agree that an individual begins in a negative or unhealthy stage where he or she either rejects his or her Blackness or identifies with Whiteness, and gradually progresses to the point of accepting his or her race (Helms, 1993). Because participants in this research are Black teachers, an understanding of racial identity helps provide insight about their reactions to the predominantly White schools in which they work.

The second theory, CRT, seeks to understand racism and how it impacts social, economic, and political dynamics (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). One of the primary tenets of this theory is the “voice-of-color thesis,” which maintains that minorities (e.g. Blacks) have experiences with oppression that differ from those of Whites; based on those experiences, people from minority groups are able to explain racism by describing their own experiences with racism in terms that are inaccessible to Whites (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). This tenet of Critical Race theory is similar to Du Bois’s concept of the
“double consciousness” (1969) of Blacks in America—meaning that they are both Black and American. Thus, since non-Blacks (i.e. Whites) do not possess the same such dual identity, they cannot articulate the experiences of those who do. More to the point, Critical Race theorists maintain that although Whites may have encounters with racism and have the ability to retell the stories of such encounters, their status as members of the majority group affords them the ability to narrate such experiences only partially. Full narrations of such experiences require the voices of those in the minority. This theory is relevant because it helps make sense of the any cultural disconnection between the Black teachers in this study and the White teachers and students in their schools.

The final theory, Tokenism, attempts to comprehend the nature of what it means to be the only one or one of a few members of a group within a particular social setting. A key principle of tokenism is that persons who are tokens are not viewed as individuals, but as representatives of their respective race, gender, or other marginalized group (Kanter, 1977). Thus, people who fill the role of “token” may face stereotypes and performance pressure from members of the dominant group (Kanter, 1977). Because the participants in this study are the lone or almost lone Black teachers in schools that are predominantly White, Tokenism theory partially helps interpret the experiences they describe.

In summary, the theories discussed above help explain the experience of being Black in a largely White society. First, Racial Identity Theory makes the claim that the nature of a person’s experience of being Black is not defined by his or her physical traits such as skin color, but by psychological development. However, this theory was
developed to assist White therapists relate to Black clients (Helms, 1993) and has been applied to the context of education only to a limited extent. The theory, like other developmental approaches, assumes that all people develop their racial identities in similar ways. Data from this study may offer evidence that conforms to this theory or may suggest an alternate perspective—namely that the pattern of racial identity development might differ from person to person. Some critiques of Racial Identity Theory have made this claim (e.g., Constantine, Richardson, Benjamin, & Wilson, 1998; Ponterotto & Park-Taylor, 2007).

Second, Critical Race theory’s “voice of color thesis” maintains that although White and Black individuals may both experience incidents of racism, Blacks have a cultural history with oppression that affords them the ability to narrate such experiences from a Black perspective. Yet critics of this theory argue against the “voice-of-color thesis” for many reasons, the most pertinent being that it treats an individual’s narration of his or her experience as emblematic of the experiences of others in his group without requiring evidence of its actual generalizability (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). The literature to be reviewed in the next chapter illustrates that there have not been many recorded narratives of Black teachers working in predominantly White schools. Therefore, not enough research exists to generalize about the typical experiences of such teachers. My study, therefore, gives one sample of Black teachers an opportunity to demonstrate similar or different experiences working with predominantly White colleagues, students, and administrators.
Third, Tokenism maintains that in situations where they are the only one or one of few, Blacks may be regarded as tokens and subjected to pressures relating to stereotypes or to the experience of being viewed as representatives of their entire race. Much of Tokenism theory is based upon the work of Kanter (1977) who, although she studied the token status of women in corporate American (i.e., tokenism based on gender), held that her findings could be applied to racial tokens as well. However, few studies have applied Kanter’s research to the context of Black teachers in predominantly White schools (see Castaneda, Kambutu, & Rios, 2006; Kelly, 2007). Further, Tokenism theory assumes that all tokens, regardless of race or gender, will experience similar performance pressure from the dominant group and will respond in similar ways to the pressures they experience. Data are produced through this dissertation that addresses the predictions of Tokenism theory.

**Problem Statement**

Racial Identity, Critical Race, and Tokenism theories all establish a foundation for understanding the problem explored in this dissertation. All of these theories enable an examination of the relationship between Blacks and members of the dominant racial group (i.e., Whites). Nevertheless, as the literature reviewed in the following chapter reveals, most educational research focusing on Black teachers draws on these theories as a way to illuminate the experiences of Black teachers in urban schools, settings in which these teachers typically interact primarily with other Black teachers and students. In these settings, Black teachers are not positioned as tokens. Although the token status of Black teachers in rural schools has been the subject of one recent study (e.g. Castaneda et al.,
2006), there have been few other studies focusing on the experiences of Black teachers in schools in which they are numerical minorities because the dominant racial group of those schools is White.

This study fills this gap in the research literature by addressing the following overarching research question: What does it mean to be a Black teacher in a school primarily enrolling White students and employing White teachers? Further, the study addresses the following subordinate questions: What opportunities and challenges do Black teachers experience as racial minorities in schools primarily enrolling White students and employing White teachers? How does the racial identity status of Black teachers in primarily White schools contribute to the sense they make of their experiences in those schools? How do Black teachers working in primarily White schools make sense of, enact, moderate, or defy their status as tokens?

**Relevance of Study**

By making a close examination of the experiences of Black teachers in predominantly White schools, this study contributes to the previously discussed theories. First, attempting to understand the racial identity status of Black teachers who work in predominantly White schools is a circumstance to which Racial Identity Theory has seldom been applied. Thus, the findings of this study expand the scope of the existing theory. Critical Race Theory’s “voice of color thesis” is also be expanded because little “is known about faculty desegregation, teachers’ own racial experiences, and how teachers’ commitment to their schools may differ by race of themselves, their faculty colleagues or their students” (Frankenberg, 2009, p. 2). Finally, Tokenism theory makes
assumptions about whether being a member of a minority group due to one characteristic (e.g. gender in Kanter’s research) is the same as being a minority because of a different characteristic such as race (Kelly, 2007). Examining the extent to which Black teachers in mostly White schools view themselves as “tokens” and the sense of they make of this status determines whether being regarded as a token differs across identity categories.

A second point of relevance for this study is its potential contributions to the existing base of knowledge about educational environments. As previously indicated, the teaching force in America is racially segregated, with White teachers primarily teaching White students and Black teachers primarily teaching Black students or students from other racial and ethnic minority groups. Because of these typical arrangements, a substantial body of research explores the experiences of teachers interacting in educational settings serving students and employing teachers whose racial identity is similar to their own. By contrast, relatively few studies have investigated the experiences of teachers working in schools in which their race differs from that of the majority. Furthermore, even fewer studies have examined the experiences of Black teachers working in predominantly White schools.

The gap in the research literature is also addressed through this study. As a result, to provide insights about the motives and experiences of Black teachers working in predominantly White schools are provided. First, the findings of this dissertation reveal whether Black teachers teach in schools in which the students and the staff are predominantly White because they are, or feel the need to be, “heroic individualists” (Watts as cited in Kelly, 2007). Such teachers willingly endure any difficulties in their
work environment because they have responsibility to serve as racial role models.

Similarly, this study explores whether Black teachers see their token status in a positive light. As racial tokens in their schools, the Black teachers have increased visibility, and they may use their status to offer positive representations of their racial group. Therefore, such teachers may believe it is easier to teach in settings where their racial background affords them a type of celebrity status. Conversely, some of the teachers in this study may believe their higher visibility as racial tokens makes their teaching assignment more difficult as compared to teaching in a school with a greater percentage of Blacks or other minorities. Thus, this dissertation attempts to clarify understandings about the pressures placed upon Black teachers in predominantly White schools. Also, the conclusions of this study attempt to determine whether these teachers are exemplars of their racial group who counteract prevailing stereotypes, or whether they behave in ways that confirm stereotypes about their racial group.

Another point of relevance about which this study provides insight is the interaction between Black teachers and the Whites students whom they teach. While some researchers maintain that the racial background of a teacher is of little consequence as long as the teacher remains open-minded about his or her students’ cultural backgrounds (e.g., Gillette, 1996), others hold a different view. Researchers such as Delpit (1995), whose work is discussed in more detail in the following chapter, believe that teachers who share the same or similar cultural backgrounds as their students are better able to connect to them. The conclusions reached in this dissertation add to the
existing literature about that nature of the interaction between Black teachers and White students and staff members.

Lastly, this research is relevant for educational leaders. As discussed earlier, the student population of public schools is becoming increasingly diverse but the current racial composition of public school teaching staffs remains static and predominantly White. However as Yukl (2006) emphasizes, managing and increasing diversity is an important task for all leaders of organizations. Yukl further maintains increasing the diversity of an organization increases the diversity of members’ perspectives; consequently, the level of creativity in an organization is increased. However, increasing diversity has potential for negative consequences such as “…more distrust and conflict, lower satisfaction, and higher turnover” (p. 435). To counteract such issues, leaders can initiate training programs focusing on tolerance instead of placing blame for discrimination (p. 435). Additionally through active minority recruitment, mentorship for new minority hires, and management development programs for all employees, leaders can ensure equal opportunity within their organizations. Yukl writes, “The success of these mechanisms depends not only on top management, but also on the support of leaders at middle and lower levels of the organization. All leaders in the organization share the responsibility for ensuring equal opportunity” (p. 436). The results of this study about the experiences of Black teachers in predominantly White schools provide insights about increasing the racial tolerance in their schools and increasing the diversity of their teaching force.
Societal Context of Study

In the previously mentioned poem, “I Too”, Langston Hughes presents a hopeful vision of “tomorrow” for Blacks living in America. Now, seventy-one years after he published this poem, it is fair to ask: Has Hughes’s tomorrow come to fruition? One could refer to The Brown v. Board of Education decision (1954) and the events of the Civil Rights era as evidence that America has indeed given Blacks a seat at the table of equality. More to the point, the 2008 election (and subsequent re-election in 2012) of the first African American president can also indicate America has grown into a more racially accepting society. Thus, one could conclude the societal status of Blacks in America has significantly improved in the decades since Hughes’s publication of “I Too.”

However, there have been several recent incidents that demonstrate the social climate of America has not improved. First, some individuals contend the election of Barack Obama as the first African American president in American history has been more polarizing than unifying. A Gallup poll of President Obama’s approval ratings among Democrats and Republicans indicates that 79% of Democrats approve of his job performance while only 9% of Republicans do so. This 70% gap, according to Gallup, “ties for the fifth-most-polarized year for a president in Gallup records dating back to 1953” (Jones, 2015). Gallup further predicts that if this margin persists, President Obama will statistically be the most polarizing president ever in terms of approval ratings. Some people believe the large disparity in the perception of the President’s job approval may be due to his race. For instance in 2013, Oprah Winfrey stated, “There is a level of
disrespect for the office that occurs. And that occurs, in some cases, and maybe even many cases, because he’s African-American” (as cited in Blow, 2013). Additionally, there were some high profile occurrences that support this view. For example, while addressing a joint session of Congress just nine months into his first term, the President’s speech about health care as it applies to illegal immigrants was interrupted when a member of the House of Representatives shouted, “You lie!” Another example occurred in January of 2012, as he was disembarking from Air Force One in Arizona; President Obama was summarily greeted by the then Governor of the state, Jan Brewer. However, Governor Brewer and the President were photographed having what appeared to be an intense conversation—during which the Governor was shown waving her finger President Obama’s face. Later when questioned about the incident, Brewer stated she felt threatened by the President during the encounter (Wickham, 2012).

A final, more recent example of the national disparity created by the Obama presidency is the rise of radical, political outsider Donald Trump as the Republican presidential nominee for the 2016 election. Some Republicans argue that Obama is to blame for this phenomenon because many of his policies have alienated the White, uneducated voters who comprise a significant portion of Trump supporters. Democrats, on the other hand, “hold Republicans responsible for years of vitriolic attacks designed to delegitimize the president, which only encouraged extremism” (Tierney, 2016). Another theory maintains that Trump is simply Obama’s “alter ego” spawned by years of media coverage that has grown more critical of the White House and an increase in political partisanship; in reference to the latter, only approximately fourteen percent of
Republicans approve of Obama as compared to the twenty-seven percent of Republicans who approved of Bill Clinton in the 1990’s (Tierney, 2016). Such approval ratings seem to further indicate how divided America has become during the Obama presidency.

Another indicator of the America’s racial pulse is the number of prominent nationwide protests for racial justice and equality that have occurred in recent years. Many of these protests have been in response to incidents where White police officers used fatal force against Black citizens, but have been tried by juries and found not guilty of murder. The majority of the protests have been organized by various chapters of The Black Lives Matter movement (BLM); this is an organization founded by three African American women in response to the death of Trayvon Martin, an unarmed Black teenager killed by a neighborhood watch coordinator in Sanford, Florida. Members of BLM also led protests in response to the following: the death of Michael Brown, an unarmed Black teenager shot and left dead on the street for hours by a White officer in Ferguson, Missouri; the killing of Tamir Rice, a twelve year old Black male who brandished a gun (later revealed to be a toy replica) and was fatally shot by two White officers in Cleveland, Ohio; and the suicide of Sandra Bland, an unarmed Black woman forcibly arrested and jailed for failing to use a traffic signal in Prairie View, Texas; similar to the other previously mentioned cases, a grand jury did not indict anyone in Bland’s death. However, the footage from the officer’s dash camera indicated that he did not follow proper procedure in stopping Bland. Further in January of 2016, the officer was indicted for perjury in relation to his statement regarding his reasons for removing Bland from her vehicle. Lastly, other recent high profile violent incidents have seemingly further divided
the nation. The July 2016 shootings of two Black men by White police officers—Alton Sterling in Baton Rouge, Louisiana and Philando Castille in Falcon Heights, Minnesota—seem to continue the trend of Black men arrested or stopped on suspicion of criminal activity and in turn being subjected to lethal force by officers. Moreover the deaths of both men were videoed by bystanders and cast doubt as whether such force was necessary. In response, BLM organized peaceful protests to bring attention to these incidents. However two the peaceful protests were marred by violence in the form of lone, Black gunmen targeting and killing police officers in Baton Rouge and Dallas, Texas. Although neither gunman was affiliated with the BLM movement, the tragedies caused some individuals to regard Black Lives Matter as hate group (Hope, 2016).

Two recent incidents of racial insensitivity also occurred in Central Ohio at a suburban high school closely resembling the demographics of schools in this study. In September of 2014, at a patriotic themed high school football game, two students (one White and one Black) of this predominantly White school donned red body paint with the words “Former Slave Owner” and “Former Slave” written across their backs. While the students faced disciplinary actions from the school for violating the student code of conduct, there were some members of the community who questioned whether anything should be done because they were simply “kids being kids” (“Pickerington Students,” 2014). Recently the same school made news again, but this time for a picture posted online of a high school student dressed in a Ku Klux Klan outfit; this regalia was a costume used in a school play ten years ago and stored in the school’s drama department. The picture caused an outcry from the student body, particularly from the minority
students. Similar to the 2014 incident, two students (the one who posed in the costume and the student who took the picture) were discipline for violating the school’s code of conduct for students. However, with this incident all of the students in the school were mandated to attend a sensitivity training course (“All Pickerington North Students,” 2016).

The previously discussed incidents only represent a small fraction of the racially charged incidents that have occurred in recent years, but they seem to indicate that America still has work to do as a society before it becomes the tomorrow that Langston Hughes envisioned in “I Too.” Moreover within the context of this study, it is imperative to consider not only the immediate settings in which my participants work, but the larger, societal one as well. The Black teachers in my study do not teach or live in a vacuum. The ideas, attitudes, and reactions to incidents of racism that occur, be it nationally or locally, are likely to affect teachers, administrators, parents, and students involved in schools. Further, the theoretical frameworks of this study (i.e. Racial Identity Theory, CRT, and Tokenism) indicate that incidents of racism may determine how minorities, such as the Black teachers in this study, experience their surroundings.

**Personal Connection to Study**

As a researcher and a Black teacher, I have obvious personal and professional connections to this study. I grew up in a rural Louisiana town that was predominantly Black. Most of the schools I attended were ones in which the majority of the students and teachers were also Black. The only exception was my fourth grade year of school when I attended a Catholic elementary school where there were no Black teachers and
fewer than ten other Black students. After high school I continued my education at a large state university that had a population of approximately 26,000 students, of which only approximately five percent were Black.

After earning an undergraduate and a graduate degree, I moved to a Midwestern state, where I have been employed as a high school English teacher in a large urban public school system for the past seventeen years. Thus far, I have worked in only two schools. For the first half of my career, I taught in an adult education and dropout prevention high school where the majority of the teachers and students were Black. However for the past nine years, I have taught at an academically rigorous college preparatory high school; in this current setting, the majority of the students are Black, but the teaching staff is predominantly White.

Because my own professional experiences as an educator involve teaching in schools where the staff has been mostly White, but the majority of students have been Black, I have the unique perspective of both being a minority on staffs upon which I have worked, but a member of the dominant majority in regards to the total school population. However, I am curious as to what it would be like to teach in a predominantly White school (i.e. one in which both the students and the teaching staff are White). I personally know of only a few Black teachers in such an environment, and although we have had some cursory conversations about the subject, my curiosity remains. My only experience with teaching in a predominantly White school was a brief one-month student teaching assignment in a Baton Rouge, Louisiana suburb. Although I cannot recall all the details of this placement, I do remember confronting stereotypes from students and enduring the
challenge of teaching lessons to students whose cultural backgrounds differed from mine. I also believe this experience, limited as it was, gave me the perception that teaching in a setting where I am of the same race as the majority of my students and peers is far less difficult. Therefore with this study, I not only hope to add to the pool of existing research, but also to either support or refute my own initial perceptions of teaching in a predominantly White school. I believe I am not alone in having such perceptions. Thus, through my study I also seek to help my colleagues, and a wider group of educators, deepen their understanding about the nature of our profession.

Assumptions and Limitations

This study about the experiences of Black teachers in mostly White schools rests primarily on the assumption that race is a differentiating factor in the experiences Black teachers have when working with predominantly White students and teachers, as opposed to the experiences Black teachers have when working in schools with a majority of Black teachers and students. One justification for this assumption is Racial Identity theory which maintains that being Black or African American means one will not only subscribe to the societal definition of Black as having at least one ancestor of African descent (McRoy & Zurcher as cited by Helms, 1993), but he or she will also go through a set of psychological stages to develop his or her racial identity. Thus according to this theory, Black teachers have more in common with other Black teachers than with their White counterparts who did not undergo the same stages of psychological development, and who have a different racial identity.
Another justification for my assumption comes from the tenets of Critical Race Theory, specifically the “voice-of-color thesis”, which maintains that Blacks’ cultural history with oppression affords them unique experiences. Since White teachers do not share this cultural history, they will not be able to articulate the same experiences as their Black counterparts. By contrast, in a school that is predominantly Black, Black teachers would work with many others with a shared racial background and set of cultural experiences. Therefore my study assumes the experiences of Black teachers in an environment where a majority of teachers share the same or similar cultural experiences differ from the experiences of Black teachers in a school with mostly White teachers who would have a different set of cultural experiences.

A related assumption of this study is that Black teachers experience more difficulty teaching in predominantly White schools than they would teaching in predominantly Black schools. This assumption is supported by Tokenism theory, which holds that a Black teacher in a school compromised predominantly of White teachers and students would be identified as both a racial and a numerical token. Further, as tokens, Black teachers maintain a highly visible presence and are subject to performance pressures, and racial stereotypes. Yet, in spite of such challenges, this study assumes that at least some Black teachers choose to persist because they feel a sense of responsibility to be positive representatives of their race. By contrast, in schools where Black teachers are not tokens (i.e. schools that have a majority of Black teachers) such performance pressures and stereotypes would not exist, making the teachers’ job less difficult.
Lastly, this study assumes that Black teachers in mostly White schools have different experiences from their White colleagues due to the cultural connections with their respective students. Because Black teachers do not share the same set cultural experiences as their White students, they may have more difficulty relating to them in the classroom. Additionally, researchers such as Delpit and Ladson-Billings, support this assumption by maintaining that a teacher’s race is relevant to his or her relationship to students. Such researchers believe that when Black teachers teach Black students they are able to connect culturally and use that connection to design lessons that resonate with their students. Although few studies address the reverse situation (i.e., Black teachers working with predominantly White students), one might expect that cultural disconnections make it more difficult for such teachers to design culturally relevant lessons. Theoretical and empirical discussions of cultural hegemony (Kanter, 1977; Laws, 1975); however, suggest a different set of dynamics: whereas only members of a particular minority group need to understand that group’s culture, everyone (i.e., members of all minority groups and the majority group) are expected to understand the culture of the dominant group. If these dynamics are in play, the findings of my study may reveal few cultural disconnections in the lessons that Black teachers provide to White students.

Based upon the scope of this dissertation, some limitations must be acknowledged. First, through this study an attempt to understand the experiences of Black teachers without taking into consideration the possibility that the teachers’ gender or other identity markers could define their experiences in predominantly White schools.
For instance, it is very likely that gender is as much of a factor as race in terms of how a teacher interacts with colleagues, students, and parents.

A second limitation is the context of the study. The assumption that the racial composition of the school is a more powerful influence on the experiences of Black teachers than the school’s socio-economic status or geographical locale (i.e. rural, urban, or suburban) is made. Moreover for this study, the size of the schools’ population is not considered.

**Chapter Summary**

Currently, there is a demographic disparity among public school teachers in America. Most White teachers teach in schools that are predominantly White, and Black teachers teach in schools that are mostly Black; based on these statistics, it appears as if the demand for greater educational diversity mandated by the Brown v. Board decision of 1954 has not been met. Another related demographic trend is the increasing number of Black students who are enrolling in public school districts (such as ones in suburban areas) that are predominantly White. Yet as the student population of these schools becomes more diverse, the cultural make-up of the faculty and staff of those schools remains static.

It is true that the vast majority of America’s teaching staff is White; however, this demographic fact alone does not thoroughly explain why teachers, particularly Black teachers, choose to work in schools that tend to mirror their own cultural background. Although there has been a large body of research examining the experiences of Black
teachers, the amount of research documenting the experiences of Black teachers in predominantly White schools is small.

This study adds to the limited research on the experiences of Black teachers in predominantly White schools by drawing upon three theoretical perspectives to explore the nature of being Black in such a context. First, in an attempt to understand the concept of race, and more specifically how individuals come to recognize and understand themselves as Black, Racial Identity Theory is examined. Second, Critical Race Theory is utilized to illustrate Blacks’ shared history with oppression and the distinct difference it creates between Blacks and those who belong to the dominant societal group (i.e. Whites). Lastly Tokenism theory is used to explore the challenges Black teachers endure as racial and numerical minorities in schools where White teachers and students are the majority.

Using all of the aforementioned theories, I explore primary the research question of what it means to be a Black teacher in a school primarily enrolling White students and employing White teachers. In doing so, the following subordinate questions are also addressed:

1. What opportunities and challenges do Black teachers experience as racial minorities in schools primarily enrolling White students and employing White teachers?

2. How does the racial identity status of Black teachers in primarily White schools contribute to the sense they make of their experiences in those schools?
3. How do Black teachers working in primarily White schools make sense of, enact, moderate, or defy their status as tokens?

There are some key assumptions that may impede the validity of this study. First is the assumption that race is the critical factor that differentiates the experiences of Black teachers in predominantly White schools from those of Black teachers in mostly Black schools. Next, it is assumed that Black teachers experience difficulties working with mostly White co-workers because White teachers have a different set of cultural experiences. Additionally because of their status as racial and minority tokens, Black teachers in predominantly White schools are highly visible and therefore face intense scrutiny, endure constant pressure to perform well, and are viewed as racial stereotypes. Lastly, this study assumes Black teachers are not able to utilize culturally relevant teaching methods with mostly White students, and therefore have difficulty connecting to these students.

**Operational Definitions of Terms**

*African American and Black*: The two terms will be interchangeably used to describe persons of African ancestry. The researcher will use Black (with a capital “b” unless lowercased by cited authors) as a default, but will use to the term “African American” when citing its usage in literature.

*Black Racial Identity*: A theoretical framework that maintains being Black is not solely based on physical traits (e.g. skin color and hair texture), but also involves various psychological processes a person undergoes in identifying as Black. (Cross, 1971; Helms, 1994).
Critical Race Theory (CRT): A theoretical framework that focuses on “studying and transforming the relationship between race, racism, and power” (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001, p. 2)

Epoche: In Phenomenological research, this is an approach in which the researcher “engages in disciplined and systematic efforts to set aside prejudgments regarding the phenomenon being investigated…in order to launch the study as far as possible free of preconceptions, beliefs, and knowledge of the phenomenon from prior experience” (Moustakas, 1994, Chapter 1, “Human Science Perspective and Models”, para. 65)

Nigrescence: A term used by Cross (1971) to describing the stage process a Black person undergoes in developing his or her racial identity.

Phenomenological Study: A study which focuses “…on exploring how human beings make sense of experience and transform experience into consciousness, both individually and as shared meaning” (Patton, 2002, p. 104).

Predominantly White Schools: Schools where the dominant population of students and staff (a minimum of 65%) is White.

The Researcher: The phrase will be used to refer to the person conducting this study—Sidney Jones, Jr.

Tokenism: A theoretical framework that seeks to understand the pressures and expectations placed upon an individual when he or she is the only one or one of a few members of a particular group in a setting.
White: This term (with a capital “w” unless lower cased by cited authors) will be used in the literature to refer to individuals of European ancestry.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

…I am the darker brother.

They send me to eat in the kitchen

When company comes…

--Langston Hughes, “I, Too”

Introduction

In Chapter Two of my dissertation I review bodies of literature with theoretical and empirical relevance to this study. In the first part of the chapter, I consider the theoretical literature that discusses the following issues: the development and acceptance of one’s racial identity (i.e., Black Racial Identity Theory); Blacks’ history of coping with oppression and how it grants them a distinct, shared cultural perspective (i.e., Critical Race Theory); and the circumstances associated with membership in an organization as a token representative of a minority group (i.e., Tokenism theory). In addition to exploring the relevant claims constituting these three theoretical perspectives, I also discuss the literature providing empirical support for those claims.

In the second part of the chapter, I review the empirical literature that is closely aligned to this dissertation. Of particular importance are studies about the experiences of Black teachers. These empirical studies, from the early 1990’s to present, focus on the experiences of Black teachers working in schools that have predominantly white teaching staffs and study populations. Such studies not only constitute the relevant subset of recent work with applicability to the core theories upon which my study rests, but they also serve as models for my research methodology.
With respect to the empirical literature that I consider in the second part of the chapter, I pay particular attention to the strength of the studies’ designs and the extent to which their findings lend support to general claims. After discussing which studies have strong empirical evidence and which have weak claims and limited support, I conclude by justifying the need for my research by discussing the gaps in the related literature.

Theoretical Frameworks

To establish a foundation for understanding the experiences of Black teachers in predominantly White schools, the literature reviewed in this section relates to three theories—Black Racial Identity Theory, Critical Race Theory, and Tokenism. Black Racial Identity Theory (i.e. Nigrescence) focuses on “the progress of becoming Black” (Cross, 1991, p. 147), and provides a framework for understanding how the teachers in this study might have come to understand themselves as members of a specific reference group (i.e. Black Americans). Critical Race Theory (CRT), which represents a more sociological than psychological perspective, maintains that race is important when considering the nature of society and its institutions. This theory focuses on “studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 14). Moreover, CRT suggests that Black teachers, because of their cultural history and perspective, have an expert voice for narrating the character of their experiences as Blacks within the educational system (in this study, within predominantly White schools). Lastly, Tokenism Theory, which comes from the applied field of administrative science, maintains that individuals who are the sole (or almost sole)
representatives of a group have experiences in an organization that differ from those of dominant-group participants in that organization.

**Black racial identity.** Several researchers in the fields of psychology and counseling developed Black Racial Identity theories in the 1970’s in response to the Civil Rights Movement a decade earlier (Helms, 1993) and the Black Power Movement of the 1970’s (Cross, 1991). Because Blacks’ demands for equality disrupted the status quo of American society, Whites associated such demands as acts of aggression (Helms, 1993). Grier and Cobbs confirmed this interpretation when they wrote, “The growing anger of Negroes is frightening white America” (1968, p. 4). Further, psychological and counseling literature of the time revealed that Whites were afraid that they would be the targets of Blacks’ anger (Helms, 1993). Because there were no pre-existing psychological models for therapists (most of whom were White) to use in helping their Black clients develop normally (i.e., without rage or resentment towards Whites), therapists sought to help Black clients cope with problems thought to be a result of their Blackness; as a result, two theoretical strands evolved. The first strand, the Client as Problem (CAP), helped counselors determine which Black clients could be problematic for White counselors (Helms, 1993). The other strand sought to explain Nigrescence, or “the developmental process by which a person ‘becomes Black’ where Black is defined in terms of one’s manner of thinking about and evaluating oneself and one’s reference groups rather than in terms of skin color…” (Helms, p. 17).
Vontress was one of the earliest to theorize about the CAP in order to help White counselors relate to Black clients (Helms, 1993). He wrote that of all of America’s minorities, Blacks demand the most attention because they have been removed from their native culture in Africa, not accepted by the majority (i.e. Whites), and regarded as second-class citizens in America (Vontress, 1970). Vontress further stated, “A well-known phenomenon among members of minority groups is hatred of the group, its culture, its members, and even the self for being among the members” (p. 716), and such self-hatred among Blacks stems from problems with identification. Vontress (1971b) contributed to the Client as Problem theory by proposing that Blacks’ racial identity varies based on how they view themselves; consequently, he held that as a minority group, Blacks in America could be divided into three subgroups: Blacks, Negroes, and Coloreds.

According to Vontress (1971b), Blacks exhibit racial pride in their appearance and heritage. Demographically, Vontress theorized that Blacks are of a younger generation who lived in Northern urban areas. Also, they are most likely to make Whites (and White counselors) uncomfortable because they react to the racist attitudes and beliefs of Whites with hostility. On the other hand, Negroes are unsure as to how they feel about themselves. This subgroup is primarily of God-fearing, middle class individuals who are comfortable with their place in a mostly segregated society. More to the point, Vontress held that Whites, specifically White counselors, could easily relate to Negroes because they do not cause Whites anxiety. Vontress’s final subgroup, the Coloreds, view themselves the same way many Whites view them, and subscribe to the
“designation used by whites who refuse to acknowledge the dignity of the race by referring to it as black” (p. 11).

Dizard (1970) provided a different understanding of the CAP model by examining the sense of collective identity among Blacks. She wrote that three major themes address the manner in which Blacks identify with their race in American society. Some view themselves as more American than Black and would willingly assimilate into society, if not for the presence of White prejudice. Other Blacks, because of such historical hardships as slavery and segregation, see themselves as psychologically damaged and unable to achieve racial equality in American society. Lastly, “there are still others whose adaptation to being Black in a generally hostile white world more closely resembles a traditional ethnic group response—the attempt to preserve a group identity and a sense of dignity” (p. 196).

Dizard believed that the latter of three major themes was the most prevalent manner in which most Blacks coped with being Black in America. However, popular psychological belief of the time held that Blacks did not have a collective identity, or if they did, it was one that was negative and characterized by self-loathing. Yet Dizard maintained that to have a positive group identity, Blacks would have to “share a distinctive and valued culture” (p. 196). She further held that a collective identity was one that depended upon a shared historical experience held by each member of a group and a sense of power among the group. Another claim for Blacks not having a positive group identity was based on the belief that “most black people do not actively identify with others of their race…” (p. 197). However, Dizard refuted this claim by stating that
only a small number of a group is needed to maintain the groups’ identity, allowing others to identify, or re-identify, with it at later times. That is, the degree to which Blacks as whole identify with the groups’ collective identity is not constant; however as long as some Blacks subscribe to the group’s collective identity, then it remains viable.

As one of the earliest theories about Black racial identity development, the CAP theories provided an understanding of how Blacks developed a racial identity in America. However, there have been noticeable changes over time that may make some of CAP theories irrelevant to this current study. First, it appears as if the public demands for equality by Blacks that initially led to the formation of the CAP theories has lessened. As a result, the manner in which Blacks view themselves may differ from what Vontress initially theorized. Also, some of the terms used to classify Blacks’ racial identity have now become antiquated. In that sense, Vontress’s theory about Black racial identity may not provide much to inform this proposed study. Conversely, the phenomenon of Black teachers working in schools where the students and staff members are predominantly White could be considered a microcosm of American society. In both contexts, Blacks are racial and numerical minorities who may choose to cope with their status by either attempting to assimilate into the dominant White culture, viewing themselves as downtrodden victims of racism, or gaining strength from their racial group’s a set shared historical experiences. The latter alternative, a primary component of Dizard’s theory about Blacks’ collective identity, best informs my study of how not only how some Black teachers see themselves but also how they cope with working in schools of predominately White teachers and students.
Unlike the typologies used in the Black Racial Identity models of Vontress and Dizard, Cross (1971) constructed a stage model of Black Racial Identity using “phenomenological data, scattered interview material,” and information from interactions with Blacks participating in the Black movement of the late 1960’s and 1970’s (p. 14). Cross originally conceived Nigrescence as a “Negro to Black” conversion; but as the term “Negro” became outdated, Cross (1991) reimagined this theory as a “search for Afrocentricity” (p. 190). For Cross, there were five stages one must undergo to develop a Black identity.

The first stage of Cross’s, Pre-encounter, is one where a person’s worldview is either non-Black or dominated by Euro-America thought (Cross, 1971). His or her actions and thoughts diminish the value of everything considered Black, but elevate the value of things that are considered White. Additionally, a Pre-encounter individual believes that “the assimilation-integration paradigm is … the only model for cohesive race relations” (p. 16). Upon later revision, Cross (1991) wrote that Pre-Encounter Blacks range in attitudes from those of low-salience, to neutral, to Anti-Black. Those on the low-salience end of the spectrum accept the physical fact of their Blackness but believe it to have an insignificant role in their lives. Cross described such persons as race neutral because although they acknowledge their Blackness, they see it as an obstacle that must be overcome. Anti-Blackness, the final attitude in the Pre-Encounter range, construes Blackness as an important negative feature of identity. A Black person who maintains this attitude sees his or her Blackness in a similar manner as a White racist.
would see it. Furthermore, he or she accepts negative stereotypes of Blacks and positive stereotypes of Whites, and therefore he or she dislikes other Blacks.

The second of Cross’s five stages, Encounter, is the point when discovery of one’s Blackness first occurs as a result of an event, something seen or heard, that causes one to search for deeper racial understanding (Cross, 1971). The event “shatters the person’s current feeling about himself and his interpretation of the condition of Blacks in America” (p. 17). Although Cross theorized that a single negative event (e.g. the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.) may have been responsible for moving individuals from Pre-encounter to Encounter in the 1960’s, he later emphasized that positive events can be equally as effective (Cross, 1991). Whether the encounter is negative or positive, once a person has experienced the encounter and begins to see the world in a different way because of it, he or she ultimately feels angry about the brainwashing he or she endured in the Pre-encounter stage. Cross further believed that the negative reactions to this brainwashing tend to manifest themselves differently for Blacks from different social classes. For instance, “A middle-class person may feel guilty for having denied the significance of race; a lower-class person may feel guilt and shame for having degraded Blackness through street hustling and exploitation” (p. 201).

The next stage, Immersion-Emersion, is a two-step transitional phase that is akin to a racial baptism. A person first immerses him or herself into Blackness in that “Everything of value must be Black or relevant to Blackness” and “Everything that is Black is good and romantic” (Cross, 1971, p. 18). Cross (1991) further held that these newly developing Blacks (or “new converts”) are still more familiar with the identity
they are leaving (i.e. the Encounter stage) than the one they are creating. More to the point, new converts may be so fervent in destroying the remnants of their previous identity that they develop a “Blacker than thou syndrome” and attack other Blacks who still demonstrate perspectives common at the Pre-Encounter or Encounter stages (p. 202). Cross maintained that both the “Blacker than thou” syndrome and the desire to confront or speak bluntly to White people could be attributed to one's insecurity in his or her newfound identity and the need to prove one’s Blackness (pp. 205-206). During the latter part of the Immersion-Emersion stage, an individual experiences intense emotions that must be controlled if he or she is to continue developing. More to the point, continued development also depends upon the avoidance of the following traps of this transitional phase: Regression, Continuation/Fixation, and Dropping out. Regression is when a negative experience results in one rejecting his or her newfound Blackness and reverting back to the Pre-encounter stage. Continuation occurs when a “new convert’s hatred for Whites is overwhelming to the point where he or she will not progress to the next stage of identity development. Lastly, if a person feels that either fighting the problem is futile or that he or she has reached satisfactory degree of Blackness, then Cross believes that person will “drop out,” ceasing all racial identity development.

After successfully navigating through the Immersion-Emersion stage, one becomes the “settled convert” and enters the fourth stage--Internalization (Cross, 1991). At this point in identity development, an individual places a high priority on his or her Blackness. Moreover at this stage, one’s internalized identity protects him from harshness of living in a racist society, provides a sense of cultural belonging, and allows
him to comfortably interact with others who are not Black. The fourth stage, according to Cross, is similar to the final stage of development--the Internalization-Commitment stage. However, one distinction is that Blacks who achieve this final stage of identity maintain it for much longer period of time, if not for a lifetime.

Cross’s stages of racial identity development suggest that Blacks’ view of themselves and others around them may change because of their life experiences. Although all of the participants in my study are Black teachers, they do not have the same experiences; thus, they do not view themselves in the same way. Cross’s model informs my study by providing a lens for investigating the manner in which Blacks identity themselves racially. Additionally, Helm’s (1984) interpretation of racial identity models, such as Cross’s, is also be relevant for my study. Helms maintained that a person’s race consciousness indicates how one “perceives the world or certain segments of it, in particular ways and reacts and interacts in a manner that follows his perception” (p. 162). Thus, gaining an understanding of a Black teacher’s respective stage of racial identity development provides insight about the manner in which he or she views and relates to the predominantly White students and teachers with whom he works.

**Black identity development.** Another stage model that has been used to explain the development of Blacks’ racial identity is Black Identity Development Theory (Jackson, 1976). Originally this theory “was researched and developed independently of the Nigrescence model. It shows many of the same perspectives…However, the snapshots of the process, aka the stages, are taken at slightly different points…” (p. 39). In the most recent revision of his theory, Jackson includes an increased focus on how
cultural heritage and effects of racism work together in the development of a Black person’s identity (Wijeysinghe & Jackson, 2012). Additionally in his recent revision, Jackson incorporates a newer identity theory, Intersectionality, to redefine the final stage of Black Identity Development (BID).

The first of Jackson’s five stages is the Naïve stage. This was not originally included in BID, however Jackson writes “as a result of work with elementary and junior high school students, I began to notice that there were indeed instances in which children and youth were demonstrating a degree of awareness of racial identity” (pp. 39-40). The Naïve stage occurs from birth to age three, and it is when Black children are aware of the differences between themselves and others, but they view these differences with more curiosity than fear. Jackson further maintains that at this time, they still have not learned to “value some differences over others in the social world” (p. 40). As young Blacks transition to the stage, two important changes occur. First, they learn and accept what it means to be a member of their respective racial group. Jackson writes, “For most Blacks in the United States, this involves internalizing many covert and some overt messages that being Black means being less than, and that whiteness equals superiority, or normalcy, beauty, importance, and power” (pp. 40-41). The second change occurs when Black youth learn that societal rules are not the same for all people. Moreover, they learn there are negative consequences for violating the rules regarding the way races relate to each other (p. 41).

The second stage of BID, Acceptance, is where Blacks internalize what it means to be Black in America. This may occur consciously or subconsciously and often
involves the acceptance of the mostly negative perceptions of Blackness. As an example, Jackson proposes that a person in this stage of BID is likely to place more credence on statistics about the incarceration rate of Black Males as opposed to the positive achievements of Blacks in society (Wijeyesinghe & Jackson, 2012). Another characteristic of the Acceptance stage is conforming to everything White in society while rejecting or ignoring everything Black. Jackson further maintains that during Acceptance:

Black youth, usually between their teenage years and their twenties, struggle with their developing understanding of racism and with decision about how much they are doing to fight or collude with the expectations that a White racist society imposes on them (p. 42).

At this stage, Black Culture forces the Black person struggle with the negative images of Blackness portrayed by society and the positive images promoted by the Black community. Jackson writes in the latter phases of Acceptance, decisions must be made that “are linked to how one will continue to cling to, value, and develop Black cultural influences that are not racism-based” (p. 42). The transition phase of this stage of BID is not immediate as the individual has experiences, such as direct experiences with racism, that are contrary to his earlier accepted White worldview; such incidents slowly lead the person into the next stage of racial identity development.

The third BID stage is Resistance and it begins with a Black person begins to see and comprehend the pervasiveness of racism and its effects on Blacks. During the early part of this stage the Black individual is hostile towards the values he or she previously
adopted in the Acceptance stage. Later in this stage, he “internalizes the antithesis of the
Acceptance stage of development. He experiences, anger, pain, hurt, and rage” (p. 44).
Jackson further theorizes the duration of the Resistance stage varies; some will remain in
this stage for long period of time, while others will try to “choose the path of passive
Resistance in hop they will be able to stay in favor with White society while rejecting
racism” (p. 44). Black culture is not a focal point at this stage due to the person
spending energy in attempts to rid themselves of the effects of White culture. Jackson
maintains at the Resistance stage, Black culture is not fully appreciated but it “is
embraced simply because it isn’t White…” (p. 44).

During the fourth stage of BID, Redefinition, the Black individual no longer
defines himself by White cultural standards, but “focuses attention and energy on
developing primary contact and interacting with other Blacks at the same stage of
consciousness” (p. 44). Such contacts, instead of interactions with Whites, are now the
most integral to developing one’s racial identity. Additionally, Jackson states that Black
culture is most important during this stage. Lastly, the transition from Redefinition to the
final stage of BID begins “when an individual begins to apply or to integrate some of the
newly defined aspects of Black culture” (p. 45). Jackson believes the combined lessons
and experiences from all previous stages are necessary to move into the final stage of
racial identity development.

The final stage of BID is Internalization. Jackson writes during this stage, “Black
people… no longer feel a need to explain, defend, or protect their Black identity” (p. 45).
In his original version of BID, Jackson (1976) theorized that in the Internalization staged
Blacks developed a unique sense of American culture in which they were able to accept aspect they deemed positive (i.e. materialism), but reject those which were negative (i.e. racism). Jackson further maintained that there was a constant conflict with Blacks but the “acceptable aspects of American culture does not preclude or override the ownership of black culture” (Jackson, 1976, p. 162). One recent change to his original theory is that Jackson now contends instead of developing a unique American culture, some Blacks “have or will adopt a multicultural perspective, which brings together worldviews from as many compatible cultural perspectives as possible” (Wijeysinghe & Jackson, 2012, p. 47). Additionally, the newest revision of BID incorporates Intersectionality, which is the concept that an individual has many different social identities in addition to race (i.e. gender, class, religion, age) that influence each other. Also, Intersectionality “suggests that we must also understand how each manifestation of social oppression (i.e. racism, sexism, classism, etc.) interacts with every other manifestation of social oppression and the ways that social oppression sustains itself through these intersectional relationships” (Wijeysinghe & Jackson, 2012, p. 36). When applied to the Internalization stage of BID, Intersectionality suggests that coming to an understanding of what it means to be Black is not simply accepting and understanding one’s race, but it also the acceptance and understanding of all of an individual’s social identities.

**African-centered framework.** Kambon (1992) also developed a stage model of Black racial identity development; however, he sought to establish an understanding of Black identity based on African thought rather than the European thought that has dominated the psychological literature in the US. Kambon argued that the disconnect
between African thought and European thought results in Blacks being psychologically misunderstood and mislabeled, which leads to Blacks being perceived as more prone to mental disabilities and criminal behavior than Whites. Therefore, Kambon theorized that the best way to understand Blacks and Black identity is to use a school of thought grounded in African culture.

Kambon proposed a theory of African personality for explaining Black identity development that featured two core components. First is the African Self-Extension Orientation (ASEO), which Kambon defined as “an innate-biogenetically determined, immutable, unconscious, and deeply-rooted psychical energy or dispositional potential that exists in all people of substantive African descent” (p. 48). This claim maintains that there is a communal, biologically based thought among Blacks in which there is no “I” but only “We”. Kambon further argued that the ASEO works because a sense of “Spirituality” not only connects all Blacks to each other but also the knowledge of long dead African ancestors (p. 49-50).

The second of Kambon’s core components is the African Self-Consciousness (ASC), which he defined as the segment of the ASEO that represents the conscious development of an African Identity. This development allows one greater access to his or her African unconsciousness as he or she progresses to higher levels of self-awareness. Kambon theorized that this process occurs through the development of different behavioral traits. First, one must recognize his or her African heritage and identity. The desire to become more self-aware allows a person of African descent to become aware his or her collective African unconsciousness. Next, priority must be placed on the
survival and prosperity as a collective group of people. Third, an individual must respect and promote all things African or all things related to African culture. Finally, one must counteract Eurocentric or Western thought by resisting all things that are not African. Kambon believed that these behaviors characterize the natural African disposition and that a Black person would develop such an identity if nurtured in a Pro-African environment.

In considering the various theories of racial identity development, Constantine et al. (1998) divide them into two primary categories—“mainstream theories” (e.g., Cross’ Nigrescence) and “underground theories” (e.g., Kambon’s theory of African Personality)—and offers critiques of both. One limitation of mainstream theories, according to these commentators, is their depiction of racial development as a simple process. Theories, such as Cross’s stages of development, conceptualize racial identity as a “linear process” in which an individual moves from stage to stage. Also, these commentators argued, there is too much generalization in mainstream theories; such theories assume that Black all people undergo the same the experiences or pass through similar stages (e.g. Cross’s stages of racial development) in order to establish who they are racially. Another critique Constantine et al. have of mainstream racial identity theories is they often do not incorporate knowledge from other cultural perspectives (such as Afrocentricism) in seeking to understand Black racial identity development. Additionally, from the perspective of these commentators, mainstream theories have a limited view of Black Culture. They “conceptualize it as representing a situational way
of reacting to oppression, as opposed to a coherent and enduring system of African and Black American cultural practices” (p. 98).

Although Constantine et al. believed that the underground racial identity theories avoided many of the limitations of the mainstream theories, they claimed that these theories do not go far enough in explaining the role racism has played in the experiences and perspectives of Blacks. Thus, these authors argued, such theories “may contribute to the internalization of racism in Black Americans, and may limit their potential accordingly” (p. 98).

To address the limitations of both mainstream and underground theories, Sellers, Rowley, Chavous, Shelton, and Smith (1997) developed the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (as cited in Sellers et al. 1997). This theory assumes race is only one of the many identities that constitute what it means to be Black. The Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI) adds to the existing body of racial identity theories “by considering the historical and cultural significance that race has played in the experiences of African Americans” (p. 806). MMRI uses a phenomenological approach that allows an individual, on a personal level, to decide whether or not they identify with being Black, and to define what attitudes and actions define Blackness.

MMRI utilizes four dimensions to determine the importance and meaning race has for an individual. The first dimension, salience, refers to the degree of importance to which a person holds his or her race at a specific moment. Salience “is dependent upon both the context of the situation as well as the person’s proclivity to define her or himself in terms of race” (p. 806). Therefore, this dimension is subject to change due to the
situation and the person’s concept of self. The second dimension, centrality, refers to the
degree to which a person uses race to define her or himself. Sellers et al. write that it “is
a measure of whether race is a core part of an individual’s self-concept” (p. 806). More
to the point, MMRI holds that one may have many different identities, all of which are
arranged in a ranked hierarchy; the higher an identity, such as gender or race, is ranked,
the closer it is to the person’s core definition of self. Thus, centrality and salience are
closely related. The third dimension of MMRI, ideology, is a person’s judgments of their
race and their beliefs about how members of their race should behave or interact with
others in society. Sellers et al., propose that a person may have one or more of the
following four primary ideologies: a nationalist philosophy, in which one believes that
being Black and of African descent is of primary importance; an oppressed minority
philosophy, in which one finds similarities between Blacks and other oppressed groups;
an assimilationist philosophy in which one believes it is most important to find
similarities between Blacks and others in American society; and lastly, a humanist
philosophy which focuses on the commonalities all people, regardless of race, share.
Further MMRI maintains that a person may have more than one ideology at once and that
such philosophies are not dependent upon a particular stage of racial identity
development. The final dimension, regard, involves “the extent to which individuals feel
positively or negatively towards African Americans and their membership in that group”
(p. 807). Sellers et al. believe there are two types of regard. Private regard refers to
one’s personal feelings about being Black and a member of this specific racial group. On
the other hand, public regard is the degree to which a person feels others positively or negatively view Blacks.

One important facet of MMRI is that race may not be the highest ranked aspect in a person’s hierarchy of identity; therefore, although the participants in my study are Black teachers, they may not place the greatest emphasis on their race. Thus, MMRI may inform my study by helping me understand that importance of a person’s race or lack thereof, could not only provide insight about his or her identity, but also about how he makes sense of his experiences with White teachers and students.

**Ego statuses.** Helms (1994) contends people of races develop their racial identity in similar ways, but “the context within groups may differ depending on whether or not the person’s group (rather than the person per se) is sociopolitically powerful” (p. 286). Further, she maintains race is not synonymous with culture or ethnicity. Helms states that culture “might be thought of as at least two constructs, a macroculture…and a variety of subsidiary cultures identified with particular collective identity groups…” (p. 292); macroculture is the worldview of the dominant society and subsidiary culture consists of the customs and traditions of groups living within the macroculture (Helms, 1994). Although it is sometimes used interchangeably with race, Helms believes ethnicity is not the same as race. She writes ethnicity “…might be better defined as a social identity based on culture of one’s national or racial groups as modified by the demands of the CULTURE [macroculture] in which one’s group currently resides” (p. 293). On the other hand, Helms believes race to be “quasi-biological” meaning that some visible traits, such as skin color or hair texture, may define one’s race. Further, based upon these
biological traits, some individuals have been oppressed; thus, Helms states that race can also be socio-political. Additionally, race can also be defined by the shared culture of a group. Such “Cultural Race” means that Blacks and Whites who live in close proximity to each other may have cultural similarities in spite of their different macrocultures.

Based on her definition of race, Helms proposes a racial identity model based on *ego statuses* or “successive differentiations of the ego… The statuses are not assumed to be mutually exclusive or discontinuous… the statuses that occupy the greatest percentage of the ego [have] the greatest influence over an individual’s racial identity or self-expression” (p. 301). Further, Helms defines dominant ego statuses as “…those that are reinforced most consistently in the environments in which the person interacts, that help to maintain the individual’s own personal esteem, and that require the least amount of personal suffering” (p. 302). The description of each of Helms’s five ego statuses is same as the previously discussed stages of development in Cross’s Nigrescence. However, Helms argues using stage models are limiting “because people tend to think of stages as being located external to the person and of transitions between the stages as being fixed or relatively stable, such usage encourages minimization of the dynamic aspects of the developmental process” (p. 302). In the ego status model, the statuses are always present, even if they or no longer dominant in influencing one’s development. Further, a previously manifested status may re-emerge to help an individual deal with a newly present situation.

**Critical Race Theory.** Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a movement that began in the mid-1970s as an extension of the Civil Rights movement a decade earlier. Early CRT
theorists were lawyers, activists and, legal scholars who believed the momentum from the Civil Rights movement was being lost and the legal gains were beginning to be recalled (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001). Forefathers of CRT, such as Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, and Richard Delgado, believed “new theories and strategies were needed to combat the subtler forms of racism that were gaining ground” (p. 4). Thus, they met with other thinkers at a convention near Madison, Wisconsin in the summer of 1989 and formally established CRT by combining key principles from Critical Legal Studies (the belief that not every legal case ends with the correct judgment), Feminism (consideration of how power is related to social roles), and the Civil Rights movement (the addressing and correcting of historical wrongs).

While not all CRT theorists agree on every facet of the theory, they all maintain the core tenet that racism in America is not a societal abnormality but an everyday occurrence (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Because racism is so ingrained in American society, CRT theorists believe responding to it with attitudes or actions of “color blindness” (i.e. equal treatment regardless of race) may only alleviate the most extreme racist scenarios. Further, CRT theorists maintain that racism still exists in American society because it benefits the racial majority. Delgado and Stefancic write that because “racism advances the interests of both white elites (materially) and working-class people (physically), large segments of society have little incentive to eradicate it” (p. 7).

Another important principle of CRT is the “social construction thesis” or belief that race is a concept created by society. While CRT theorists agree that certain physical traits such as skin color are common among specific groups of people, these features are
minimal when compared to commonalities shared by all individuals. Moreover, physical traits have “little to nothing to do with personality, intelligence, and moral behavior” (p. 8). Additionally, CRT theorists are concerned with “differential racialization” or the manner in which society treats different minority groups differently depending on the time and societal need.

Similar to theorists who subscribe to MMRI, CRT theorists also believe that individuals do not possess one single identity. Other factors besides race (i.e. gender, sexual identity, political affiliation, etc.) contribute how a person identifies his or herself. Lastly, CRT theorists believe in the “voice of color thesis” (Delgado & Stefancic, p. 9). This is the belief that all persons of color have unique cultural and historical experiences with racism that allows them to speak about issues of race and racism in ways White people, who lack the same cultural and historical experiences, cannot. CRT theorists have often utilized this principal in the legal storytelling movement in which persons of color have drawn upon their experiences with racism and constructed “counterstories” that provide a more complete understanding of Americans view of the legal system (Delgado & Stefancic, p. 38).

In her book *Other People’s Children* (1995), Lisa Delpit uses CRT as a lens for examining the dilemma teachers face when educating children of color. Delpit believes that such children often have problems achieving to the same level as their White counterparts because of a conflict with or disconnection between the students’ culture and the culture of the schools they attend. Delpit maintains schools are societal institutions that, as such, operate within the rules of established by the dominant societal group (i.e.
Whites). Further, she writes that a “culture of power” exists in schools because the quality and type of education they provide can determine the future occupation and socio-economic status of students of color (p. 24). Therefore, students’ potential for academic success rests upon how well they operate within the rules of school—rules which mirror the standards of language, dress, and behavior of those who have power in society. Because students of color are not members of the dominant culture, they are not inherently aware of these rules and, according to Delpit, must learn them in school. However, “Those with power are frequently least aware of—or least willing to acknowledge—its existence. Those with less power are often most aware of its existence” (p. 26). Therefore Delpit believes that teachers, particularly White teachers, are neither aware of the culture of power, nor do they understand they must empower children of color by explicitly showing them the rules of society.

Another educational theorist who applies the lens of CRT when examining the education of children of color is Gloria Ladson-Billings. In her book, *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African-American Children* (1994), Ladson-Billings proposes that in many schools where children of color are in the minority, the dominant culture of the school may have negative effects on these students. For instance, a school’s curriculum may not reflect students’ cultures or may be misrepresent it. Ladson-Billings also writes that another negative effect may be due to “the staffing pattern in a school (when all teachers and the principal are white and only the janitors and cafeteria workers are African-American)…” (p. 17). Similar to Delpit, Ladson-Billings also believes that teachers are in positions of power; however, she contends that with
such power teachers have the ability to either maintain the societal status quo or change it. Teachers may do the latter through culturally relevant teaching practices, and they may begin using such practices through the expectations they have of their students. Ladson-Billings believes that expecting students, particularly African-American students, to learn and succeed in the classroom defies the typical societal expectations that they will fail.

Ladson-Billings further states that another important aspect of culturally relevant teaching is that acknowledgement of color and culture. She writes that teachers who claim to not see color in regards to their students are guilty of “dysconscious racism” (p. 31). This is not to say that these teachers are racists, but that their color blindness is a refusal to accept that some students are privileged while others are disadvantaged. Furthermore, Ladson-Billings also states that a teacher who maintains an attitude of color-blindness is refusing to “acknowledge one of the most salient features of a child’s identity and that she does not account for it in her curricular planning and instruction” (p. 33). Ladson-Billings argues that recognizing color and culture in the classroom does not equate to inequality; rather, it means that the teacher understands that his or her students are not the same and have different needs which must be addressed to help them succeed.

While not all the principles of CRT directly apply to my study, a few are relevant. First because my research seeks to understand how Black teachers perceive their experiences in settings where they are racial minorities, my study utilizes the CRT’s “voice of color thesis.” Additionally, the concept of culturally relevant teaching, a derivative of CRT, is relevant. Understanding how and to what extent Black teachers utilize culturally relevant teaching methods in majority White schools helps make sense
of their classroom experiences with their students and their collegial interactions with White teachers.

**Tokenism.** Tokenism theory involves the examination of experiences a person has as either the only or one of a few representatives of a particular group (i.e. race, gender, etc.). One of the earliest researchers to attempt to define the nature of tokenism was Judith Long Laws (1975) who examined the phenomenon of women entering the male dominated profession of higher education. However, Laws believed that her analysis would “apply in any instance where participation of one group in controlled by another” (p. 51). She described tokenism as a system in which an under-represented group has the opportunity to rise to the same status occupied by members of the dominant group. Although this system only allows those chosen to be tokens to gain “marginal existence,” there are benefits for both groups. For instance by admitting the token, the dominant class is empowered to “demonstrate a lack of prejudice” against members of the lower class (p. 58). For those of the lower class, the possibility of ascending to the position of a token is presented as the ultimate career goal. More to the point, those who are chosen to be tokens are given confirmation that they possess a uniqueness that separates them from other members of the lower social class. However, this can be a form of social control wielded by the members of the dominant class since the tokens are covertly reminded that they are only special because they demonstrate attributes valued in members of the dominant group. For example in Laws’ research, female tokens admitted to the academic profession were deemed exceptional because they were more like their male counterparts and less like other women in society (Laws, 1975). Laws also
indicates that all potential advantages of tokenism is contingent upon the lack of intrusiveness by the tokens, which can only be guaranteed by ensuring that the number of tokens allowed admittance does not disrupt the system. Therefore only a limited number of tokens are allowed.

In the particular case of Laws’ research, tokenism in the academic profession reflected the gender-class system in American society in which men are in the dominant class and women are inferior (Laws, 1975). In addition to being members of the lower societal class, Laws refers to the female participants in her research as double deviants. This means being born as women in primarily male dominated society makes them primary deviants, and aspiring to positions other than those typically prescribed to their gender equates to an additional state of deviancy. As double deviants, women seeking token positions in the academic profession are not “man-haters,” nor do they reject their womanhood (p.54). According to Laws, all these women want is a privilege granted to men—the ability to advance to higher positions.

Simply being a double deviant is not enough to elevate a woman to the status of token, however. Laws focuses on the “role partnership by which the enterprise of tokenism is carried”; this is a bond between the potential token and a sponsor (p. 52). The sponsor, who may or not be a member of the dominant class, acts as an intermediary between the token and the dominant group. Laws theorizes that the sponsor has volunteered for this role and helps the token fit into the special role. In this regard, the sponsor “acts on behalf of the dominant class, and at the same time acts of regard for the Token” (p. 52). Throughout her career, the token may have several sponsors. For
women in the academic profession, Laws suggests that the token’s initial sponsor was most likely a female teacher who recognized her special talent and adopted her as a prodigy. A key function of this sponsor, and later sponsors, is “broaden and raise the expectations” of the aspiring token (p. 55).

Another early researcher who proposed a theory about the nature of tokenism was Rosabeth Kanter. In her book *Men and Women of the Corporation* (1977), she examines the experiences of women as numerical minorities in the male dominated world of corporate America. Kanter believes by examining the distribution of women and men in this environment, one can infer relevant implications for other minorities in similar contexts. Based on numerical proportions, she identified four distinct groups: uniform, skewed, tilted, and balanced. Uniform groups are completely homogenous, so there is no minority group. In a skewed group one group largely outnumbers another by a ratio of at least 85:15. In this dynamic the members of the larger group are the dominants, while the members smaller group are the tokens (Kanter, 1977). Through examining the interactions between the two groups, Kanter theorized that tokens are not viewed as individuals, but rather representatives of their race, gender, or other marginalized groups. Also in a skewed group, tokens are so few in number that they have no influence over the larger group. Next, Kanter defines Tilted groups as those with a 65:35 ratio. In this group dominants are known as the majority, and tokens are the minority. Minorities can now have alliances which “may affect the culture of the [whole] group”, and further they are “identified from each other and the majority” (p. 209). Lastly, Kanter writes about
balanced groups with either a ratio of 60:40 or 50:50. In this group, there is no true minority group.

In addition to identifying the numerical composition of groups in which tokenism exists, Kanter also posits three “perpetual tendencies” associated with tokenism—visibility, contrast, and assimilation (p. 210). Moreover, all these tendencies are based on the perceptions the majority group (or dominants) have of the tokens. First, Kanter believes that because tokens are highly visible in their interactions with the dominant group “they capture a larger awareness share” (p. 210). It is this high level of visibility which simultaneously makes them the dominants’ objects of attention and scrutiny; this is often a negative effect of being a token because this means that tokens must perform under greater pressure than others (p. 212).

Secondly, Kanter defines contrast as more than just differences between dominants and tokens; it is also the amplification of those differences by dominants to preserve the status quo. Kanter writes that in uniform groups, members are not conscious of their shared culture; instead, it is simply taken for granted. However, this awareness of a shared culture occurs in skewed groups because of the presence of one or few who are from an obviously different culture. In this case, dominants are also aware of their status as the majority (i.e. what makes them different and dominant), so they try to preserve this by treating tokens as “outsiders” (p. 211). For instance, dominants may exaggerate the differences or generalize about the tokens’ behaviors in order to create a boundary between the two groups (Kanter, 1977). Due to their scarcity in numbers, tokens are powerless in attempting to change or disrupt this boundary.
Lastly, Kanter identifies assimilation as a perpetual tendency of tokenism. Since tokens are too few in number to fight stereotypes that result from the contrast created by the dominant group, they conform or assimilate to them. Often this is also easier than fighting the stereotypes. Kanter further theorizes that tokens have a contradictory existence. They clearly standout as being different, yet are not allowed to be individually different because they are forced into stereotypical roles (Kanter, 1977).

Being a token can also have a few advantages. Kanter writes that in some contexts, such as business, being well known can equate to success. Thus, some tokens may use their higher degree of visibility in a positive sense. Moreover, these individuals enjoy the limelight and their “only one” status (p. 220). Additionally, the performance pressures placed on tokens may not be entirely negative. Kanter believes that some tokens, often ones who may be older and more experienced in the workplace, respond well to the pressures. In doing so, they often over-achieve and build public personas which are accepted by the dominants (p. 220).

In *Rethinking Tokenism: Looking Beyond Numbers* (1991), Janice D. Yoder re-examines Kanter’s theory of tokenism. Yoder argues that Kanter’s theory “did not reflect the complexities of gender discrimination in the workplace”, and she disagrees with Kanter’s concept of number balancing as a resolution to the negative effects tokens experience (p. 178). Yoder’s primary point of contention is with the manner in which Kanter defined a token. Similar to Laws, she believes that gender is an important factor to consider when examining the effects of tokenism. Yoder writes that “token men may not share the negative experiences of token women,” and that Kanter “minimized the
gender of her subjects in discussing the negative effects of being a numerical minority in the workplace” (p. 180). She further states that any token, who is a minority due to her social status, may be subject to the same negative pressures faced by the women in Kanter’s study.

Yoder also believes Kanter’s theory did not account for “gender typing,” or the idea that some jobs are considered inappropriate for members of a specific gender (p. 181). For instance, the occupational setting of Kanter’s study was, at the time, male dominated and considered inappropriate for women. Thus, the women who entered this environment violated a societal norm (i.e. becoming what Laws earlier defined as double deviants). Yoder states that men who also violated such a norm endure negative repercussions, and that “the work outcomes Kanter described may have been influenced by her saleswomen’s deviation from occupational norms, not just from their numeric imbalance or gender status per se” (p. 182).

Lastly, Yoder writes that Kanter ignored the level of intrusiveness of her participants in a male dominated profession. She states that although “Kanter suggested that there is a tipping point beyond which additional numbers of a women will reduce the negative effects of tokenism, the opposite may be true” (p. 185); therefore, as more women enter a male dominated profession, the discriminatory practices and attitudes may increase. Thus, the negative consequences of tokenism Kanter describes in her study may not only have been a result of “their small numbers but of their increasing numbers” (p. 185). Additionally, Yoder theorizes that gender must still be considered when discussing the effects of intrusiveness. She writes that a great increase in the numbers of
women (or other members of a lower social group) is believed to be intrusive whereas it is not “when members of higher-status group do so” (p. 185).

**Relevant Empirical Studies**

In the following section, I review current empirical literature (i.e. beginning in the early 1990’s) that closely resembles my study. Due to a lack of studies directly addressing my research questions, I first review empirical literature that explores the current demographics of public school teachers and students in America. These studies indicate that most teachers are White and they remain segregated along racial lines as to where and whom they teach. More to the point, the demographic data in these studies addresses diversity by representing the percentage of all minorities (e.g. Latino, Asians, etc.). However, the scope of my research limits diversity to only Blacks; therefore, I only present and review the data pertaining White and Black teachers and students. Next, I review studies that explore the experiences of Black teachers in public school settings where they are racial minorities; these students also explore how Black teachers racially identify themselves, and to what extent their racial identity helps them make sense of working in schools where they are minorities.

**Teacher demographics.** As discussed in the previous chapter, America’s current teaching force is predominantly White. One of the earliest studies to examine this phenomenon was a longitudinal study conducted by Shen, Wegneke, and Cooley (2003). These researchers used data from the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), a national survey conducted by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) from the years 1987-88, 1993-94, and 1999-2000. The NCES data was examined to identify the
diversity of American public school teachers in terms of race, gender, and ethnicity. Additionally this survey had a return rate of approximately 90% and utilized sampling weights to “more accurately estimate the population based on the sample” (p. 113).

In terms of race, Shen et al. found that the percentage of minority teachers increased slightly from 10.4% in 1987-88 to 10.8% in 1999-2000; however, for African Americans, there was a decrease from 8.4% to 8.0% over the same time span. The diversity of newly hired teachers was also studied in an attempt to predict future demographic trends. The NCES data revealed that new teachers were overall more diverse racially, specifically, the percentage of new African American teachers increased from 6.8% in 1987-88 to 9.6% in 1999-2000.

Lastly the NCES data for 1999-2000 was also examined to indicate the composition of public school teachers in terms of school location and the percentage of minority student enrollment. Overall, more African American teachers taught in urban schools (16%) than suburban and rural schools combined (5.2% and 4.6%, respectively). Comparatively, the highest percentage of White teachers was in suburban (92.4%) and rural schools (93.5%), whereas 79.6% were found in urban schools. Schools with the lowest amount of minority students (i.e., 0-4%) had only 0.5% of African American teachers but 98.5% of White teachers. On the other hand, schools with the highest minority student enrollment (i.e. greater than 50%) had the highest percentage of African American teachers (20.9%) but the lowest percentage of White teachers (73.1%).

Overall, Shen et al. found that American public school teachers were becoming more diverse as a whole. However in spite of such gains, African American teachers still
worked in schools that were largely urban and composed of a high percentage of African American students, and most White teachers worked in suburban and rural settings that had schools with lowest percentage of minority student enrollment. Although the national survey data used by Shen et al. was somewhat limited in that not every public school teacher participated, the large national sample size and high rate of return ensured that their findings were a good reflection of the public school teaching force as a whole.

Strizek et al. (2007) conducted analysis of NCES data collected from the 2003-04 Schools and Staffing survey. The SASS went out to 5,400 public school districts that represented 13,300 students and 62,000 teachers, and for this study the “SASS data [was] weighted to represent 88,113 public schools educating 47,315,700 students in grades k-12. About 3,250,600 full-time and part-time teachers…” (p. 2). Strizek et al., similar to Shen, Wegneke, and Cooley, analyzed the racial demographics of the teaching force and the distribution of teachers by race in terms of the types of schools in which they taught—although in their reporting, suburban schools were identified as urban fringe/small town schools.

As a whole, Strizek et al. found that 83.1% of current teachers were White and 7.9% were Black. Of these totals, 70.5% of the teachers in urban school communities, 87.4% in urban fringe/small town, and 90.2% in rural schools were White. Comparatively, 15.1% of the teachers in urban schools, 5.1% in urban fringe/small town schools, and 4.9% in rural schools were Black. In terms of the student population, 36% of the students in urban school areas were White, but 68.2% and 50.5% in urban fringe/small town and rural schools, respectively, were White. On the other hand, 28.4%
of students in urban, 12.3% in urban fringe/small towns, and 10.6% in rural school communities were Black.

Overall, the survey results reported by Strizek et al. indicate the persistence of a large racial disparity between Black and White public school teachers. Further, teachers remain segregated in terms of the school communities in which they work and the racial make-up of the students they teach. Specifically, White teachers teach in schools with the greatest percentages of White students and Black teachers teach in schools with the greatest percentages of Black students. However, this study is limited in the scope of its findings because it only considered data gathered for one year; thus, there is no way to determine if the results about teacher diversity would have persisted over an extended period of time.

Utilizing data from a 2005 Civil Rights Project survey, Frankenberg (2009) also analyzed the demographics of public school teachers and racial divide that exists among Black and White teachers. For her study, a telephone survey was “…designed to investigate teachers’ beliefs and practices as they relate to race in their schools” and contained forty-seven questions pertaining to the teachers’ backgrounds, their experience with diversity training, the contexts of the schools in which they worked, and their attitudes about race (p. 5). Further, to reduce bias, the teachers’ identities were kept confidential. The survey sample came from 25,000 randomly selected teachers on the National Education Association (NEA) membership list; additionally, all potential participants were screened to ensure they were classroom teachers. Also due to the scope of the research, “…there was a target of having 60% of the teachers from the sample
from demographically diverse schools, which was defined for sampling purposes has between 10 and 90% white students”; therefore, only 1,002 public school teachers representing forty-eight states and a diverse range of school districts (i.e. urban, suburban, and rural) were included in the final sample (p. 6). With the exception of the average years of experience, the traits of the teachers in the sample closely resembled those of current public school teaching force, as reflected by data from the 2003-04 SASS survey data. Thus, no weights were used in analyzing the survey sample. Further, the characteristics of the teachers’ schools (e.g. the racial composition of the student body), was determined by “merging each teacher’s responses to the survey with data about their school as listed on their NEA record from the 2005-06 Public Universe of NCES Common Core Data” (p. 6).

Of the teachers sampled, 85% were White, and 5.7% were identified as African American. Moreover these teachers worked in schools that 60% White and 15% African American. Next Frankenberg analyzed the teachers’ exposure to diversity by examining the racial composition of the teaching staffs to which they belonged and their personal educational experiences. Her results indicated White teachers taught on faculties that were approximately 89% White, and African American teachers taught on faculties that were nearly 63% White. Survey questions about teachers’ own educational experiences revealed “among all teachers, white teachers attended elementary schools with the lowest percentage of students who were a different race…On average white teachers had attended elementary schools that were over 90% white” (p. 11). Conversely, African
American teachers attended elementary schools where only 30% of students were of a different race.

Frankenberg’s analysis of SASS data, similar to previous studies, reveals racial segregation of the public school teachers and students. However, this study also explores the personal education experiences of public school students to indicate that the majority of the respondents had limited contact with persons of races different from their own. Despite this consistency of her findings, Frankenberg’s analysis has a few limitations. First the sample size of 1,002 teachers is small. Frankenberg notes this is because the respondents were only chosen from the NEA membership list and not other sources such as the American Federation of Teachers. Moreover, new teachers (i.e. those with three years experience or less) and teachers who work in large urban areas are under-represented. Additionally the survey data is limited because it only accounts for one-time responses from the teachers surveyed. Frankenberg believes that further research over an extended period of time would better address whether or not racial segregation in schools is a persistent problem.

While previous studies indicated how schools with a higher percentage of minority students also tend to have a higher percentage of minority teachers, Parker (2008) believed such data did not reveal the true nature of the school segregation. Her study focused on schools that were not racially homogenous, but “…places where integration is possible according to the demographic makeup of the school district” (p. 18). To investigate whether racial segregation persisted in this context, Parker used two data sets. First, she chose the 115 public school districts in North Carolina due to the
state’s high percentage of diverse student and teacher populations. According to data cited from the 2005-06 school year, 31.4% of the North Carolina’s students were African American and 56.6% were White. Further, 13.8% of the state’s teachers were African American and 80.8% were White. Parker’s other data set was from 42 public school districts from the following states: California, Louisiana, New Jersey, Ohio, and Texas. She chose these districts from these states because of the relative diversity of their teacher and student populations.

Using demographic data reported by state school boards, Parker analyzed the racial distribution of teachers and students in schools to develop odds ratios that compared “the probability of a white student having a teacher of a particular race/ethnicity with the probability of an African American or Latino student having the same teacher at the school building level” (p. 20). The odds ratios also revealed how much ethnic/racial matching occurred between student and teacher, and the probability students of diverse races had of attending school together. A ratio of 1.0 meant both White and Black students had an equal chance of having a teacher of a different race, a 1.50 indicated one group had a 50% greater chance of the same race, and 2.0 meant that one group had a 100% chance of having a teacher of the same race. Based on these ratios, Parker defined a “fairly integrated school” as having an odds ratio in the range of .51 and 1.49, and a “fairly segregated” one as with a ratio of 1.50 or greater.

From an analysis of the demographics of the North Carolina school districts, Parker found a dominant pattern of segregation. In twenty-six school districts, African American students had 50% or greater chance of having an African American teacher,
and in nineteen of those schools African American students had a 50% or greater chance of being in school with other African Americans students. Parker also noted that although seventy-five of the school districts were fairly integrated, most of their schools had smaller teaching staffs and educated fewer students than districts that were fairly segregated. Moreover, racial distribution patterns in the forty-two school districts from the other states were similar to North Carolina. Twenty-five of the districts were highly segregated, and of those “All but four had corresponding student segregation at the school building level, and those four were close to being classified with student segregation” (pp. 26-27).

The racial distribution of teachers and students in heterogeneous school districts in Parker’s study revealed a pattern of teacher and student segregation similar to that of previous studies. However, one limit of Parker’s study was her use of odds ratios. Such measures provided an estimation of how segregated a school was in terms of the probability of interactions between students and teachers of different races, but these ratios “offer only a rough approximation of a student’s actual classroom experience. They do not indicate who exactly taught which students” (p. 21). Furthermore, Parker noted that because her definitions of what constitutes a “fairly segregated” or fairly integrated school were liberal, her study limited its focus to high examples of segregation.

**Teacher experiences.** Davis (1999) conducted an historical case study of the desegregation of African American and White teachers in the East Baton Rouge Parish school system (EBR) in Louisiana. In the 1970-71 school year, more than 600 teachers
of both races were mandated by the school board and the courts to “cross-over” and teach in schools where the dominant population was of the opposite racial group. In seeking to understand the perceptions of “cross-over” teachers and the extent to which this experience impacted their teaching, Davis interviewed two cross-over teachers (one African American male and one White female) and used their own words to narrate the details of their experiences.

One of the participants in Davis’s study was identified as Mr. Freddie Millican, an African American teacher who began his career in EBR in 1963 as an English teacher at McKinley High School, which was of the South’s first all Black high schools and had statewide reputation for its academics. Mr. Millican was a fifth year teacher at McKinley was he was chosen to be a cross-over teacher. At time, he recalled that he and many other African American teachers were unsure about the true motives of the cross-over because African American schools lost a higher percentage of staff members (65%) when compared to White schools (35%); however, Davis cites that the demographics of the school system justified the percentages. Yet because African American teachers were not informed about how this decision was reached, many were suspicious of the integration. Mr. Millican stated, “…That was the prevailing idea, that they would get all of the good teachers out of schools like McKinley…and send them to White schools. So that was one idea, that people said—that our schools would be robbed of all the talent” (p. 7). Further in regards to how he was first made aware his new teaching assignment, Millican recalls never being asked to volunteer but rather being told to list (in order of preference) three White schools at which he may want to teach. Consequently, he was re-assigned to
Istrouma High School, which at that time had statewide renown for its academics and athletics, and had less than 100 African American students.

Ms. Helen Haw, a beginning teacher in 1970, was the other participant in Davis’s study. Prior to coming to EBR, her only teaching experience was one year at a private school. Ms. Haw recalls being made aware of her assignment as a cross-over teacher when she first applied for a position with EBR. She also had a different understanding of the rationale for the cross-over; according to Haw, “The people at the school board just told those of us who were being newly hired that we would be going to predominantly Black schools because we were the new hires… they were afraid to try and send any of their tenured teachers… because they would just quit” (p. 16). She also added that White teachers were promised that if they remained in the Black schools for three years than they would be moved to “a good school” (p. 18). For her cross-over experience, she was placed at Capitol High School, a building in a predominantly African American neighborhood near downtown Baton Rouge with very few White students and only two White teachers.

Both teachers had recollections of both negative and positive interactions with their cross-over teaching experience. For instance, on his first day at Istrouma, Mr. Millican recalls a conversation where his principal attempting to intimidate him by saying, “…‘You’re coming from McKinley? ...You all think you are better than us over there…”” (p. 8). Another example of verbal intimidation occurred at staff meetings when the principal would always refer to the African American teachers as “beginning teachers.” Millican recounts, “…The two years that he was there; the two or three years
after the cross-over, he always referred to us as ‘beginning teachers.’ I always wondered why we were never just considered a part of the faculty. We were always ‘beginning teachers’…” (p. 10). On the contrary, Haw’s initial interaction with her principal at Capitol was more positive. She recalls an incident when she selected several large, strong looking male students to assist in carrying textbooks from the book room. Upon observing this the principal inquired “… ‘Miss Haw, what’s wrong? Is there something I can do for you? What’s wrong?’…He later told me that he was terrified and had no idea what was going on because I had six of the worst thugs trailing behind me… he thought I was having problems” (p. 19). More to the point, she remembers the administration being supportive and non-threatening.

In regards to his experiences with students in his predominantly White classes at Istrouma, Mr. Millican recalls few challenges in the classroom. He stated, “…you had to be on your toes when you went to teach. You had to be doubly prepared because for some reason the White students felt that they wanted to test your knowledge…” (p. 12). However, Millican also remembers the students being quicker than the schools administration in accepting he and the other African American teachers quicker. He stated, “…after two or three years. They learned that you knew what you were talking about…and that you were just like anybody else; and everything went along fine” (p. 12). Likewise, Ms. Haw recalls some classroom challenges at the outset of her cross-over experience at Capitol. She attributed the difficulty to the racial stereotype some African American students had White teachers; the students believed Haw and her White colleagues were naïve in terms of the understanding the academic potential of African
American students. Hence, some students would deliberately “act dumb” (e.g. pretend to be unable to read, add, or subtract) to avoid doing classwork (p. 21). However, Haw credits being savvy enough to distinguish which students truly had difficulty learning and which ones were attempting to avoid doing difficult work. She also believes she was able to overcoming her initial teaching challenges by cultivating relationships with students and the school community through volunteering and chaperoning many school events.

In retrospect, both teachers, who at the time of Davis’ study were still employed with EBR, are grateful for their cross-over experience but they had differing viewpoints about the effectiveness of the mandated integration. Mr. Millican expressed regret that integration, in some cases, resulted in the closure of All Black high schools and hence the loss of alma maters for African Americans. He also feels another negative impact of integration was the loss of control the African American community had over its children. Millican stated, “…Some kind of way, when integration came along, we lost them. That we lost them to the White teacher, and that some people say is one of the reasons that some of our kids are going astray, because they don’t have that caring and nurturing that we used to give them when we would have them in the Black schools…” (p. 14). However, he admits that integration allowed African Americans students to attend schools that had new books and new facilities. Further, Millican believes the drawbacks of integration were worthwhile when considering the current interaction of students of different races; he states, “…I see them, they are hugging and talking just like brothers and sisters. And I can remember when they didn’t even look at each other…” (p. 14).
On the contrary, Mrs. Haw views the current state of EBR and does not believe integration was successful. She states, “It didn’t work. It is still not working. We are sitting here in a magnet school that was designed to entice White students, and we have got maybe twenty-five White students…I think it is because the majority of people power [sic] don’t want it to work” (p. 25). Moreover, Mrs. Haw believes diversity training is currently needed for integration is to be impactful. However, she credits her cross-over experience with changing her perspectives as a teacher and a person. She states, “The cross-over totally changed my life. It totally changed my ambitions and my aspirations. I tried to go back to being, thinking all white, and I have never been able too…” (p. 26).

Although the narratives in his case study provide details about teacher perceptions, Davis concludes that no generalized answers about the experiences of cross-over teachers can be drawn because only two teachers perspectives are known. Similarly, it is impossible to determine what the majority cross-over teachers perceived the impact their experiences had on teaching and learning. However, Davis maintains that his two participants represented typical cross-over teachers and their narratives allowed for deeper understanding of what such teachers experienced.

Mabokela and Madsen (2003) researched the experiences African American teachers in suburban schools that were predominantly White (or European American, as referred to in the study). They conducted their study in several desegregated suburban school districts near a large, metropolitan Midwestern city. Originally these school districts were mandated by the courts to desegregate and complied by admitting minority students (most of whom were African American) from nearby urban schools. At the time
of this study the desegregation program was voluntary. Nevertheless, the vast majority of
the districts’ students and teachers were European American, and less of the 4% of
teachers were minorities.

To understand the phenomenon of being a minority teacher within the context of
this study, Mabokela and Madsen focused specifically on African American teachers due
to the large body of existing comparative literature about the pedagogical differences
between European American and African American teachers (p. 93). Additionally, they
based their study on the Kanter’s (1977) theoretical framework of tokenism. However,
because Kanter was limited to the experiences of European American women as
numerical tokens, Mabokela and Madsen also cited Cose (1993) and Anderson (1999) for
their “studies on how African American workers are marginalized and do not feel like
feel participants within majority organizations” (p. 92). Lastly for data analysis, they
utilized embedded intergroup theory, which examines how minorities in large majority
organizations create a group identity that differs from the identity of the majority
members (Cox, 1994; Alderfer and Smith, 1982).

To begin gathering data, Mabokela and Madsen mailed letters explaining their
research to all the African American teachers in the school districts that participated in
the mandatory and voluntary desegregation. Fourteen teachers (seven male and seven
male) who responded were chosen to participate in a qualitative study that consisted of
two sets of interviews. The first set of interviews focused on the teachers’ experiences
with European American administrators, teachers, students, and parents at their
respective schools. A second set of interviews explored common themes that emerged from the initial teacher interviews.

From their analysis and coding of the interview data, two themes emerged. First, all participants reported feelings of boundary heightening through a perceived awareness of pedagogical differences between themselves and their European American colleagues. In particular, the participants stated that they used culturally relevant teaching methods, whereas the European American teachers utilized traditional teaching practices. Further, the participants believed their schools’ administration did not support their pedagogical practices and pressured them to conform to the more traditional methods. Mabokela and Madsen stated the African American teachers were not vocal about these differences because “they thought that by creating boundaries about pedagogical differences, they created more problems for themselves and the students of color” (p. 100). African American teachers also believed boundaries were created because their European American colleagues viewed them solely as experts on African American students. Mabokela and Madsen refer to this an “insider-outsider role” because the teachers were perceived to be cultural insiders with the students, but their cultural differences created a boundary that isolated them the majority of their European American colleagues (p. 102). Although, some of the teachers accepted being consulted about issues concerning African American students, many of them felt they were under-utilized because their teaching expertise was perceived to be limited to only issues concerning African Americans children.
The other major theme of Mabokela and Madsen’s study was role entrapment, or the perception of being defined by generalizations and forced to fit organizational roles based on those generalizations. The participants in the study expressed that “they became entrapped as the token, a position that invalidated other contributions…and limited their upward mobility to positions of authority…” (p. 105). Additionally, the African American teachers felt that as tokens, they were perceived as all being the same instead of as individuals. There were some key differences in among the participants as to how they experienced role entrapment, however. Many of the male teachers believed they were only hired to help their districts fulfill the desegregation mandate. They also felt pressured to conform to the dress and teaching methods of their European American counterparts. The female African American teachers expressed similar perceptions; they spoke about the districts’ tendency, particularly at the beginning of desegregation, to hire African Americans who were lighter complexioned and closely resembled European Americans. Some female participants also expressed that male African American teachers were regarded differently. One participant, stated, “Black males in the district are looked upon as fearful by female parents, and I think some female teachers…” (p. 107). All participants, however, agreed that the school districts typically hired African American teachers who would not vocally challenge the status quo. Those who did were discouraged through such tactics as being given difficult teaching placements.

Although their findings support previous research about the nature of tokens in large majority organizations, there were some limitations to Mabokela and Madsen’s study. First, the scope of this study limits the findings to only African Americans
teachers in suburban schools that were initially integrated through mandatory integration. More to the point, due to the small number of participants, the perceptions reported in this study are not representative of all African American teachers in these school districts. Additional limitations are the teachers’ gender and grade levels taught because they may influence how the teachers perceive their experiences. Finally, only the experiences of African American teachers were considered. The researchers note that for a more complete understanding of the nature of racial power in the schools additional research that includes the perceptions of all teachers is needed.

Castaneda, Kambutu, and Rios (2006) addressed the lack of teachers of color in rural contexts, which they referred to as “diasporic” because these areas were distant from the teachers’ native settings. The researchers cited the year 2000 Rural Schools and Community Trust report that identified seventeen percent of the residents of rural areas were minorities, but 24% of those minorities as school age children (p. 13). They maintained that there is a need for educators of color to serve the needs of diverse students and promote diversity for all students. For their study, Castaneda et al. focused their research in Wyoming, which at the time was the sixteenth most rural state in America (p. 14). Also despite its decreasing student population, Wyoming had an increasing population of minority students.

The researchers sought to understand how minority teachers in rural contexts made sense of their teaching experiences. To address their research question, Castaneda et al. used a three phase methodology. First, they contacted the superintendents representing all of Wyoming’s forty-eight school districts and asked them to identify
teachers of color in their respective schools. For the next phase, the researchers mailed letters to all minority teachers explaining the nature of their study, along with questionnaires pertaining to their racial group and their perceptions about how their minority status impacted their teaching experience. From the returned questionnaires, the researchers identified teachers who believed their cultural identity was integral in their professional lives. For the final phase, eight teachers were selected to participate in the study (p. 15). These eight students underwent initial interviews, classroom observations, post-observation interviews, and were invited to participate in a focus group—of which only six teachers were available to participate.

From an analysis of the focus group data (i.e. informal discussions, formal interviews, and additional questionnaire responses), the researchers identified several emergent themes. First, all participants discussed their reasons for becoming teachers. Many of them said they became teachers due to the influential family members or teachers in their lives. Further, three of the teachers believed that became teachers because an inherent ability. One participant, for instance, stated, “…I was always looking after and teaching my younger siblings. I really enjoyed seeing other human beings grow and experience and perhaps benefit from my influence” (p. 16). All of the participants also expressed the desire to positively influence students’ lives as a reason.

Another theme that emerged from the focus group was the importance of minority teachers. Many of the participants believed that minority teachers helped expose White students in rural schools to other cultures. One teacher stated, “…most of those kids don’t see anybody but White people… it’s good for minorities to teach just to five kids a
view or aspect of other cultures and races” (p. 16). Some of the teachers also added that minority teachers might be able to utilize different, culturally relevant teaching strategies that could allow all students to learn in new or different ways. Lastly, the teachers in the focus group all expressed that their presence impacts students’ perspectives by providing them with insights about what it means to be a member of an underrepresented group (p. 17).

The final emergent theme identified by the researchers was that the minority teachers faced challenges teaching in rural schools. However, Castaneda, Kambutu, and Rios write that all participants were reluctant discuss these issues because they perceived that doing so might cause more problems. The rural communities in which they taught were small and therefore the teachers believed it was easy for whatever they said in the focus group to known and lead to retribution (p. 17). The researchers insured the anonymity of minority teachers by keeping their names confidential and ceasing the videotaping of the group discussion. After participants were re-assured, they shared some common dilemmas of teaching in a diasporic context. First, they reported having their educational qualifications and teacher training questioned; thus, the minority teachers were often misperceived as inferior to White teachers. Some of the participants further reported that they were labeled as “crazy” or “too tough” by students; however the researchers theorize, “It is possible that, because these educators did not fit the existing misperceptions, children had no choice but to label these educators as ‘crazy’ and ‘freaks’…” (p. 18). Another common challenge all six participants discussed was the feeling of isolation due to a lack of parental and administrative support. For instance, one
teacher reported her administrator siding with the students in resolving classroom challenges and disputes. Also, the participants felt isolation because they were often the only minority teacher in their schools. In spite of these challenges, all six participants shared similar factors that helped them persist in teaching in a diasporic context. They relied on lessons from their previous educational experiences (i.e. in college) and support from their family members and departmental colleagues to sustain them.

In conclusion, Castaneda, Kambutu, and Rios determined that by fostering a supportive teaching atmosphere and providing more opportunities of peer interaction, rural areas may be able to attract more teachers of color. However because of their small sample size, the researchers amid their research findings can neither be generalized for all minority teachers in rural settings, nor teachers of color in other diasporic contexts (e.g. suburban schools). The researchers, therefore, call for additional research to further investigate their research problem. Additional study may also provide more insight about recruiting more minority teachers to diasporic settings.

A final empirical study relevant to my research is Hilton Kelly’s (2007) examination of Black teachers’ experiences as racial and numerical tokens in predominantly White schools. In his study, Kelly (2007) reevaluates Kanter’s Tokenism theory and recent subsequent research (i.e. Mabokela & Madsen, 2003) that claims Black teachers endure mostly negative work experiences in White schools. Kelly theorizes that although such challenges as high visibility, role entrapment, and boundary heightening exist, traditional civil rights ideology may provide a more thorough understanding of Black teachers’ experiences as tokens. According to Kelly, this ideology (based on the
beliefs of racial empowerment espoused during the Civil Rights Movement), allows
Black teachers to cope with the negative aspects of tokenism.

Another point of contention Kelly has with Kanter’s theory is the usage of the
word “minority.” He believes the term is confusing because in Kanter’s study and in
more contemporary research based on her findings, it has dual connotations. First, it is
used refer to participants’ race (i.e. individuals who are minorities in general society) and
the tokens who are “numerical rarities in the workforce” (p. 232). Additionally, minority
is used to mean one who is a racial or gender token. In both cases, Black teachers in
Kelly's study fit this definition because their white colleagues outnumber them.

Therefore, Kelly reconciles this disparity by using minority to refer to Blacks in society,
and the term “racial token” to refer to Black teachers in mostly White schools. He also
contends, “The experience of being a token is not the same as being a numerical
minority” (p. 232).

Moreover, Kelly finds fault with previous research pertaining to the workplace
experiences of Black teachers because it is rooted in the past when segregation and racist
ideals were the norm. However, “the work experiences and evaluations of racial tokens
change over time,” and the previous research has not accounted for such change (p. 232).

Kelly further contends that there have been positive changes over time in the relations
between Blacks and Whites, and these changes have had a positive effect on the manner
in which the two groups relate to each other in the workplace.

For his exploratory study, Kelly selected six teachers from schools whose student
population was at least 80% White students and no greater than 5% Black. The
participants (two elementary, one middle school, three high school teachers) were either the only Black teacher in their schools, or one of two on staff. To best ensure anonymity, Kelly does not identify the participants’ schools (or school districts) and also refers to them by pseudonyms in his report. He also collected qualitative data through classroom observations and interviews, and then coded data for emergent themes.

Through their narratives, the participants identified all the negative aspects of tokenism revealed through Kanter’s research. However, each teacher utilized principles of traditional civil rights ideology to relate positive accounts of their experiences. For instance, while all teachers described dealing with performance pressures and varying forms of racism at their schools, they also discussed how they coped by using their token status to improve relations between races; additionally, the teachers described a desire to prove themselves and considered this desire more of a performance enhancer instead of a performance pressure (Kelly, 2007). More to the point, Kelly found Black teachers in predominantly White schools purposefully endured performance pressures and other negative effects of tokenism because of a greater sense of duty.

The participants also were aware of their token status and perceived it as a cultural boundary that separated them from White teachers and students. However, they crossed these boundaries in a few different ways. One teacher, the first Black teacher hired by her school, recalled openly expressing cultural pride in the school building and, as a result, was respected and accepted by White students and colleagues. Another participant stated that she taught “children and not color” (p. 244). Kelly identified this
philosophy of coping with cultural differences as representative of traditional civil rights ideology.

Lastly instead of feeling confined into a single, stereotypical role, the participants perceived their job as an opportunity to destroy racial stereotypes by being more than simply a classroom teacher. Some of the participants reported being actively involved in their school communities by serving as coaches and mediators between students of color and their White colleagues and administrators. Participants stated that being active allowed them interactive with and impact as many students as possible.

In conducting this research, Kelly admits a few limitations. Due to restrictions on time and distance, he was only able to observe three of the six teachers in the classroom. Thus, he could not gain a complete first hand account of all participants’ interactions with students. Also, the qualitative data from six participants teachers is not enough to allow for generalizations about the experiences of Black teachers in mostly white schools. However, Kelly reiterates the purpose of his study was not to provide such generalizations, but to build upon previous research and extend Kanter’s tokenism theory.

**Gaps in Literature**

As indicated by the literature reviewed above, several studies examining the demographics of teachers in America have indicated that Blacks are vastly underrepresented in this profession. These statistics also show a racial divide regarding where and with whom teachers work: White teachers tend to teach in schools where the dominant majority of students are White, and Black teachers teach in schools that have the highest percentage of Black and other minority students. More to the point when
Black teachers work in schools where they racial minorities, qualitative research reveals that they have negative experiences. A few studies also suggest that Black teachers may use tokenism to sustain themselves and have positive interactions with White colleagues and students; however, negative experiences such as performance pressures, role entrapment, boundary heightening often occur and appear to be related to the lack of Black teachers in predominantly White schools.

To illustrate the relevance between negative experiences and the scarcity of Black teachers in vastly White schools, I review the following arguments presented in the previous chapter: schools continue to be racially segregated; racism (in the form of negative tokenism) impacts school segregation; and the presence of Black teachers in mostly White schools may alleviate racism. Further, these arguments suggest increasing the number of Black teachers in White schools rests on understanding how such teachers make sense of their experiences in settings where they are racial minorities. Although there is a significant body of existing literature about the experiences of Black teachers in mostly Black schools, there are fewer studies about the experiences of Black teachers in White schools.

Many of the existing studies about Black teachers’ interactions with mostly White teachers and students attempt to make sense of these experiences through a single theoretical perspective. For example, Davis (1999) Mabokela and Madsen (2003), and Castaneda, Kambutu, and Rios (2006) all implicate tokenism in their examinations of Black teachers’ narratives about working majority White schools. Kelly (2007), on the other hand, expands Kanter’s theory of tokenism by suggesting traditional civil rights
ideology sustained Black teachers in challenging mostly White school contexts; yet, he does not conclusive determine whether other ideologies could also help Black teachers endure the negative impact of tokenism. Thus, my study builds upon and extends previous research by utilizing three theoretical lenses—racial identity, critical race, and tokenism—to understand the experiences of Black teachers in mostly White schools.
Chapter 3: Research Methods

…But I laugh,
And eat well,
And grow strong…

--Langston Hughes, “I, Too”

Introduction

As stated in Chapter Two, demographic data about America’s public schools indicates the majority of the current teaching force remains overwhelmingly White. As illustrated, the data further shows the national teaching force is still segregated in regards to where teachers teach and whom they teach: the majority of Black teachers teach in schools with the highest population of Black and other minority students, whereas White teachers tend to teach in schools where the majority of the student population is White.

However, Black teachers who work in schools where they are racial and numerical minorities have experiences that are different from those of their White counterparts. Black teachers in such settings may be perceived as tokens, and as such they may encounter such challenges as negative stereotypes, border heightening, and performance pressures (Kanter, 1977). Additionally due to their cultural past in America, Blacks have a history of encountering oppression. It is this past that affords contemporary Black teachers a unique perspective in narrating their experiences with such challenges. Racial identity theory, used as a framework for this study, suggests that although they have a shared cultural history, Blacks do not share a monolithic cultural
identity. Thus, not all Black teachers who teach in predominantly White schools will experience and describe the phenomenon in the same manner.

Although the research about the experiences of Black teachers in overwhelmingly White schools is limited, the existing literature intimates that the challenges faced by Black teachers may in part be why they choose to teach in schools where they are not minorities. However, if the overarching dilemma of desegregating the teaching force of is to be truly addressed there must be an understanding of the experiences Black teachers have in predominantly White schools.

The purpose of my study, therefore, is to understand how Black teachers who work in schools where the student and teacher population is predominantly White make sense of their experiences. As the previously mentioned studies of national public school demographics illustrate, the majority of America’s teaching force is not only White, but also racially segregated to the extent that teachers tend to work in schools where they share the same racial background as the majority of students (Frankenberg, 2009; Shen, Wegneke, and Cooley, 2003; Strizek et al., 2007). Although there has been a great deal of research exploring Black teachers in predominantly Black schools and even the experiences of White teachers in similar settings, very few studies have explored the nature of Black teachers working in school settings where they are racial and numerical minorities.

An understanding of what Black teachers experience in schools where they are racial minorities is imperative for educational leaders who want diversify their teaching force by recruiting and retaining Black teachers. As previously mentioned, some
researchers maintain that it is beneficial for educational leaders, especially those who work in predominantly White schools and school districts, to hire Black teachers. To reiterate, having schools with a diverse teaching staff counteracts the racist belief that only Whites can hold positions of authority (Parker, 2008). Further, the student population in public schools is becoming increasingly diverse, and Black teachers are more likely than Whites to meet the needs of this student body by incorporating culturally relevant teaching practices (Parker, 2008; Villegas & Lucas 2002). Lastly by hiring and retaining more Black teachers, educational leaders can model diversity for current K-12 students who may become future teachers, and thereby help diversify the future teaching force.

**Research Questions**

Through this study I examine the experiences of Black teachers in schools that primarily enroll White students and employ White teachers. By focusing on these experiences, I explore the following primary research question: What does it mean to be a Black teacher in school settings that are majority White? I also address the following subordinate research questions:

- What opportunities and challenges do Black teachers experience as racial minorities in schools primarily enrolling White students and employing White teachers?
- How does the racial identity status of Black teachers in primarily White schools contribute to the sense they make of their experiences in those schools?
• How do Black teachers working in primarily White schools make sense of, enact, moderate, or defy their status as tokens?

To explore these research questions, my research is grounded in the following three theories: Black Racial Identity Development (BRID), Critical Race Theory (CRT), and Tokenism. BRID maintains that being Black is not solely defined by one’s physical traits such as skin color, but is more importantly about the psychological process an individual undergoes to identify with his or her Blackness. CRT is the belief that racism, in many different forms, is a part of everyday American society. The “Voice of Color Thesis,” another a key principle of CRT, maintains that due to their unique historical experiences, Blacks can provide narratives about racism that differ from those of Whites. Lastly, Tokenism Theory holds that persons who are either the only one or one of a few of a specific group in organizations are not regarded as individuals but as representatives for their specific minority group.

These theoretical frameworks support the use of phenomenological methodology. Further, the theories and in depth interviews in this study allow the participants opportunities to share their distinct narratives, and as Seidman (2006) writes, “stories are ways of knowing” (p. 7). From a phenomenological slant, BRID is used to understand how the participants in my study make sense of their experiences as members of a specific racial group. Further, in depth interviews about issues pertaining to race provide “…access to the most complicated social and educational issues, because social and educational issues are abstractions based on the concrete experience of people” (Seidman, p. 7). Through interviews with the participants in my study, I learn how these Black
teachers viewed and defined themselves in terms of their race. The participants also reveal thoughts about how their race is perceived by the White teachers and students with whom they interact, and insights about the degree to which they believe race plays a part in those interactions.

CRT’s “voice of color thesis” also supports phenomenological inquiry because it calls for Blacks to rely upon their unique historical experiences with racism to provide narratives that are different from those of Whites. This story telling aspect was relevant to my study because “Telling stories is essentially a meaning-making process. When people tell stories, they select details of their experience from their stream of consciousness” (Seidman, 2006, p. 7). Thus, through in depth interviews with the participants in my study, I allow them to speak with an expert voice and provide narratives about personal educational and racial experiences in their personal and professional lives. Additionally, I gain insight about their unique life experiences and understanding of how these experiences not only play a role in their decision to become teachers, but also in their decision to teach in their present schools.

Finally, Tokenism Theory holds that persons who are either the only one or one of a few of a specific group are highly visible, subject to stereotypes and performance pressures, and regarded as tokens; thus, they have experiences that further differentiate them from members of the majority group. As with the previous two theoretical frameworks, in-depth phenomenological inquiry is used to explore Tokenism—particularly Tokenism as it applies to education. Seidman writes, “If the researcher’s goal, however, is to understand the meaning people interviewed in education make sense
of their experience, then interviewing provides a necessary, if not always completely sufficient avenue of inquiry” (p. 11). Thus, through phenomenological interviews, I explore the extent to which Black teachers view themselves as tokens in their respective schools. Further, the in-depth interviews illustrate, in explicit detail, the performance pressures placed upon the participants by the White teachers and students with whom they interact daily. Additionally, Seidman’s phenomenological interview structure reveal how and why they teachers in this study confront the performance pressures of their work settings.

Research Design

Again, the purpose of my study is to gain an understanding of Black teachers’ experiences when interacting with students, parents, administrators, and other teachers in schools where the dominant population is White. When considering an appropriate method to investigate research questions, Creswell (2014) writes “researchers need to think through the philosophical worldview assumptions that they bring to the study, the research design that is related to this worldview, and the specific methods or approaches of research that translate the approach into practice” (p. 5). Therefore for this study, my philosophical assumption, my worldview as a researcher, and the inherent nature of my research all justify the usage of qualitative research methods.

Creswell (2013) states, “Philosophy means the use of abstract ideas and beliefs that inform our research” (p. 20). Moreover, he maintains that philosophy is the first phase a researcher must acknowledge when designing research. Thus considering my primary and subordinate research questions for this dissertation, I espouse an Ontological
philosophical assumption that questions the nature of reality and maintains that reality is not singular but multiple, as seen through the perspectives of different individuals (Creswell, 2013). Further, Ontology requires the researcher “use multiple forms of evidence in themes using the actual words of different individuals and presenting different perspectives” (Creswell, 2013, p. 20). Because I examine the experiences of several Black teachers who work in different settings where they are racial and numerical minorities, I assume these teachers have different realities and view their experiences differently. A qualitative approach best aligns with my philosophical assumption because it allows for “questions about people’s experiences; inquiry into the meanings people make of their experiences; [and] studying a person in the context of her or his social/interpersonal environment…” (Patton, 2002, p. 33).

Of similar importance to the philosophical assumption is the researcher’s worldview, which Creswell (2014) defines “as a general philosophical orientation about the world and the nature of research that a researcher brings to a study” (p. 6). For this study, the worldview with which I identify is Social Constructivism or the belief “that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work” (Creswell, 2014, p. 8). Social Constructivists also rely heavily upon the perspectives of their research participants to make sense of their world (Creswell 2014). This worldview corresponds with my research because I attempt to understand how Black teachers make sense of the context in which they work (i.e. predominantly White schools) by relying upon their perspectives. Creswell suggests qualitative research methods, such as interviews, allow researchers to understand other’s perspectives, and he further writes
“The more open-ended the questioning, the better, as the researcher listens carefully to what people say or do in their life settings” (p. 8).

A final justification for choosing a qualitative approach to address my research questions is the group of individuals I studied. My research focuses on Black teachers who, as the previously discussed demographic data indicates, are extreme numerical and racial minorities in the current public school teaching force. Additionally, previously reviewed literature indicates that the perspectives of Black teachers who work in settings where the majority of their students and co-workers are White are seldom studied. Therefore qualitative research is most appropriate for my research because “exploration is needed… to study a group or population, identify variables, that cannot be easily measured, or hear silenced voices” (Creswell, 2013, p. 48).

**Rationale for phenomenology.** The most appropriate qualitative approach for the scope of my study is phenomenology, which focuses “on exploring how human beings make sense of experience and transform experience into consciousness…” (Patton, 2002, p.104). This qualitative method has its origin in philosophy and psychology and requires the researcher to rely upon participants to describe the phenomena of their lived experiences (Creswell, 2014). The purpose of phenomenology is to determine the meaning individuals attribute to experiences and to provide a thorough description of those experiences (Moustakas 1994). Additionally, van Manen (2014) writes “Phenomenology is more a method of questioning than answering, realizing that insights come to us in that mode of musing, reflective questioning, and being obsessed
There are two primary schools of phenomenology— descriptive or transcendental phenomenology and interpretive phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 2014). Descriptive phenomenology focuses on how individuals describe their experiences and attempts identify patterns or themes in those experiences that transcend the individual experience with a phenomenon. Interpretive phenomenology, also referred to as hermeneutic phenomenology, involves methods that encourage reflecting upon lived experiences in order analyze and explain why the experiences occur (van Manen, 2014). Although they differ in focus, both schools of phenomenological thought share a few important principles. van Manen states that all phenomenological researchers must possess Pathos or a sense of wonder about a phenomenon, and he maintains that phenomenological inquiry “can only be pursued while surrendering to a state of wonder” (van Manen, 2014, Chapter 2, “[Hermeneutic] Phenomenology Is a Method”, para. 4).

Secondly, all forms of phenomenology assume “that there is an essence or essences to shared experience” (Patton, p. 106).

Because the goal of this study is to describe the experiences of my participants in their own words, I utilized the transcendental framework of Moustakas (1994), who built upon the earlier work of Husserl (1931). In discussing how to approach this type of phenomenological research, Moustakas writes:

The challenge facing the human science researcher is to describe things in themselves, to permit what is before one to enter consciousness and be understood
in its meanings and essences in the light of intuition and self-reflection. The process involves a blending of what is really present with what is imagined as present from the vantage point of possible meanings; thus a unity of the real and the ideal. (Moustakas, 1994, Chapter 2, “Transcendental Phenomenology”, para. 9).

This approach guided my thinking as I collected and analyzed my participants’ narratives. For instance when conducting the interviews, I allowed the teachers to freely speak and share their experiences; as they talked, I listened and took notes in order to record my personal thoughts, reactions, and potential follow-up questions without interrupting as they recounted their lived experiences. Later when reviewing these notes along with the digital narratives and written transcripts, I not only reflected on what the participants shared, but also what I felt as empathic listener. Thus, I focused on comprehending what was being described, and I attempted to understand what the teachers were feeling as they re-lived the experiences. By analyzing the qualitative data as a researcher and attempting to view it from the perspective of my participants, I was able to code the transcripts for deeper analysis and later creatively present it as narratives in Chapter Four.

To phenomenologically understand how Black teachers in predominantly White schools make sense of their experiences, I used the open-ended interview format designed by Seidman (2006). This approach calls for the researcher to conduct three separate, ninety-minute interviews with each participant over a two to three week period. The initial interview explores the participant’s life history as it relates to his current
experiences within the context being studied. The second interview focuses only on the participant’s current contextual experiences by asking him or her to reconstruct the details of those experiences (Seidman, 2006). The final interview builds upon the foundation established by the previous two, but its primary focus is the participant’s feeling and understanding of his or her experiences.

Seidman’s phenomenologically based interview structure was best for my qualitative study because it allowed the researcher to build rapport with participants, required active listening, encouraged the researcher to suspend judgment, and gave the participants opportunities to richly describe and narrate their experiences. Also by analyzing the narratives, I identified themes that illuminate the essence of the participants’ experiences.

**Setting**

For this study, the settings from which I selected my participants were three public school districts in a Midwestern state. According to the student enrollment data for the 2014-2015 school year, the districts varied in size from approximately 2,000 to nearly 9,000 students; however, these school districts were chosen primarily because of the demographic composition of their students and teachers. The average ratio of both White teachers to Black teachers and White students to Black students in all of these school districts was at approximately 85:15. This classified all of the chosen districts as racially “skewed” settings, which indicated Black teachers in these schools were likely to experience the effects of Tokenism (Kanter, 1977). Selecting participants from schools in these settings facilitated inquiry consistent with my research questions.
Study Participants

For this study, I identified six Black teachers who are employed full-time in schools where both the majority teachers and students are White. Although a larger sample size could have yielded more data, my choice of six participants was ideal considering the constraints of time and resources that limited my study. Also in regards to small sample sizes, Patton (2002) writes that smaller sample sizes are acceptable because “Qualitative inquiry typically focuses in depth on relatively small samples, even single cases… selected purposefully” (p. 230).

Seidman (2006) addresses the question of whether a small number of participants is sufficient by defining “enough” in terms of two terms: sufficiency and saturation. He further writes to determine sufficiency the researcher must address the following question: “Are there sufficient numbers to reflect the range of participation and sites that make up the population so that others outside the sample might have a chance to connect to the experiences of those in it?” (p. 55). Thus in regards to fulfilling this criterion, I chose Black teachers who taught in elementary, middle, and high schools. By including participants who work at these various levels, my study sufficiently represented the experiences of other Black teachers who work in predominantly White schools.

Saturation is defined as the point where a qualitative researcher no longer acquires new knowledge because information provided by interviewees begins to be repeated. In regards to saturation for my study, Seidman suggests “The method of in-depth, phenomenological interviewing applied to a sample of participants who all experience similar structural and social conditions give enormous power to the stories of a relatively
few participants.” (p. 55). Therefore by utilizing Seidman’s method of three ninety-minute interviews with each of my six participants, I reached saturation at the conclusion of my interviews.

**Selection of Participants**

The six potential participants for my study were chosen through purposeful sampling because as Patton (2002) writes, “Purposeful sampling focuses on selecting information-rich cases whose study will illuminate the questions under study” (p. 230); additionally, Maxwell (2005) states that purposeful sampling is better suited for studies featuring small sample sizes. For this sampling technique, I referred to colleagues who were knowledgeable about Black teachers working in mostly White school settings. Before contacting potential participants, I sought approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) by completing a thorough outline of my study (see Appendices A and B). Once IRB approval was received, I contacted potential participants through email, introduced myself, explained the scope and purpose of my study, and asked if they would be willing to participate (see Appendix C). Once consent was received, I began arranging times and places to conduct the interviews with each participant.

The selection of participants was guided by what Maxwell (2005) believes are four possible goals of purposeful sampling. The first is to select participants who represent the typical individual in respective setting. In reference to my study, I selected teachers who identified themselves as Black or African-American and who work in schools where the majority of the teachers and students are White. Additionally, for my study I defined majority as a minimum of seventy percent to reflect Kanter’s (1977)
definition of a “skewed group” or a group whose members most likely experience tokenism.

Maxwell’s second goal of purposeful sampling is “heterogeneity” in order to “ensure that the conclusions represent the entire range of variation, rather than only the typical members or some ‘average’ subset of this range” (p. 89). One way I met this goal in my proposed study was by choosing participants who taught at different grade levels (i.e. elementary, middle, and high schools). Moreover, all of my anticipated participants had at least a minimum of five years cumulative teaching experience and three years in their current school setting. Additionally, one participant’s teaching experiences were only in a predominantly White school. In this regard, I attempted to have conclusions that better represent the range of Black teachers who work in such settings.

The third goal is to select participants who are “critical for the theories that you begin the study with” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 90). In regard to my proposed study, all potential participants worked in schools where they were regarded as racial tokens, identified themselves as Black, and were willingly to share personal narratives about their background and their experiences as Black teachers in mostly White schools. Thus, through purposeful selection, I was able to acquire participants who best addressed my research questions.

A fourth possible goal of purposeful sampling is to explain the differences between participants as revealed through the study. All participants were Black teachers in predominantly White schools; however, they also had notable differences (e.g.
different schools and school districts, difference levels of teaching and years of experience). Further, Black Racial Identity theory also maintains that they may also identify with their “blackness” in different ways. Recognizing and understanding such differences was integral to understanding the phenomenon of being a Black teacher in a school with majority White teachers and students.

Lastly, when selecting participants for my study, it was important to be mindful that my qualitative research was a phenomenologically designed study utilizing in depth interviews. Seidman (2006) cautions researchers to place critical importance on the selection of potential participants because:

The researcher’s task is to present the experience of the people he or she interviews in compelling enough detail and in sufficient depth that those who read the study can connect to that experience, learn how it is constituted, and deepen their understanding of the issues it reflects (p. 51).

**Phenomenological Interviewing**

As previously discussed, I used Seidman’s in-depth phenomenological interview structure for this study. Because the purpose of interviewing is not to find concrete answers or to test hypotheses but to seek understanding (Seidman, 2006), this method corresponded to the essence of my research questions. Once again, my study was qualitative in design and phenomenological in structure because I was not only focusing on the experiences Black teachers had in mostly White school settings, but also on how they made sense of these experiences. Moreover, for my study I subscribed to transcendental phenomenology to gather descriptions my participants have of their
experiences. After reducing those descriptions to themes, I was able to provide insights about what it means to be Black teacher in a school of mostly White teachers and students. Seidman’s protocol aided in this phenomenological research because over the course of three separate in-depth interviews, I established a rapport with my participants and allowed them, in their own words, to narrate their experiences.

Although participants make meaning of their experiences in all phases of this phenomenological interview structure (Seidman, 2006), it is important to remember that each interview has a separate focus. The goal of the first interview was to uncover the life history of each participant. Seidman writes that during this initial interview, “… the interviewer’s task is to put the participant’s experience in context…” (p. 17). During this stage of interviews I asked the participants to reconstruct their personal educational history by asking questions about the environment in which they grew up, their early childhood educational experiences, and how they arrived at the decision to become a teacher. Seidman writes that goal of such questions is to have the participants “reconstruct and narrate a range of constitutive events in their past family, school, and work experience” which aligns their working majority White schools “…in the context of their lives” (p. 17).

The second interview was intended to “concentrate on the concrete details of the participants’ present lived experience in the topic area of study” (Seidman, p. 18). The goal was to collect as many details as possible, and then reconstruct those details into a thorough picture of the participants’ experiences within the researched context. At this stage, I asked my participants to provide narratives about their interactions with students,
parents, other teachers, and administrators in the school settings. From these narratives, I was able to gather enough details to illustrate the participants’ experiences of working in a majority dominant setting.

The focus of the final interview was to get the participants to make sense of their current experiences. Seidman writes, “The question of ‘meaning’ is not one of satisfaction or reward… Rather, it addresses the intellectual and emotional connections between the participants’ work and life” (p. 18). Further, meaning is made by having the participants reflect upon their past experiences and how these events have led to their current situation and experiences. During the final interview, the manner in which the participants made sense of their experiences was placed within the context of the other interviews (Seidman, 2006). For this final interview, I asked participants to reflect on their previously shared narratives and explain how they view themselves currently (as Black teachers in mostly White schools).

**Interview protocol.** Because each interview in Seidman’s protocol has a different focus, the questions I asked during each interview helped distinguish between the noema and noesis (Husserl, 1931). Noesis is a person’s consciousness or all of the experiences, feelings, and ideas one may have. Noema refers to how one experiences lived events, and it relies upon noesis to help a person form a perception of current experiences. By analyzing interview data for noema and noesis, I connected participants’ responses to the theoretical frameworks upon which this proposed study is grounded and address my overall research question.
Although phenomenological interviews are usually unstructured in design (Roulston, 2010), I utilized a semi-structured interview guide comprised of approximately ten to thirteen questions for each interview. A semi-structured format helped me adhere to the ninety-minute limit and concentrate on the prescribed focus for each phase of the interview structure. Seidman advises researchers who utilize interview guides to do so cautiously and to remember in depth phenomenological interviews should allow participants to recall lived experiences for meaning and not “…test hypotheses, gather answers to questions, or corroborate opinions” (Seidman, 2006, p. 92).

Additionally, there were several other techniques of which I had to be mindful during the in depth phenomenological interviews. First, researchers must not only actively listen as the participants recall their experiences, but also allow the participants to do the majority of the talking. Seidman also suggests interviewers take field notes during the process. Field notes encourage active listening and keep the researcher attentive to participants’ body language and other unspoken verbal cues (e.g. laughter) that may provide insight about what participants’ feelings during the interviews. More to the point, participants’ unspoken language can provide opportunities to ask follow-up questions and gain more details about participants’ experiences. Seidman cautions, however, that follow-up questions should be asked for clarification or to deepen understanding) and not be probing (i.e. asking poorly timed questions that could make a participant feel uncomfortable). It is also important for researchers to understand how to navigate silence during the interview process. As Seidman states, “It is important to give your participant time to think, reflect, and add to what he or she has said” (p. 93). Both
active listening and taking fields notes helped me maintain the phenomenological aspect of the interview by encouraging epoché and ensuring the focus remained on the participants’ experiences.

For my study I utilized Seidman’s suggested techniques when digitally, audio recording my interviews with each participant. Also, I conducted the interviews between three days to a week apart—depending on the availability of each participant. Doing this, “… allows time for the participant to mull over the preceding interview but not enough time to lose the connection between the two” (Seidman, 2006, p. 21). Further, I adhered to the recommended ninety-minute time limit in order to maintain fidelity to the purpose of each interview.

**Pilot Study**

After gaining IRB approval, I conducted a pilot study by choosing sample participants who fit the same criteria as the study’s participants. Seidman (2006) emphasizes pilot studies are valuable to researchers because they “… can alert them to elements of their own interview techniques that support the objectives of the study and to those that can detract from those objectives” (p. 39). To pilot test the interview questions, I used two participants. The original intent was to only use one participant to pilot all three sets of interview questions; however, due to a conflict with the intended participant’s schedule and the time constraints under which I was conducting this study, I used one participant to pilot for the first and third interview sessions and another participant to pilot the questions for the second interview session. In conducting the pilot, I asked the participants the questions and recorded their responses as I did for all
interviews. However, at the conclusion of the pilot interviews, I allowed the participants to view the semi-structured interview questions that were used, and asked them to provide feedback about the clarity and coherence of the questions. Lastly, the participants were asked whether there were any questions that should have been included but were not.

As a result of the pilot interviews, I edited several of my original interview questions, making them more concise and coherent; I also augmented my original questions by including a question suggested by one participant (see Appendix D). For instance, a participant shared that he sometimes visited students’ homes to have conferences with parents. At the conclusion of our pilot interview, he suggested that asking other participants a question about such practices (i.e. home visits) might reveal how they understand and interact with the predominantly White parents and students in their context. At the conclusion of another pilot interview, a participant identified a question that he initially had difficult comprehending and answering questions that asked him to describe who he made sense of his experiences. However, the questions became clearer when after I followed them with some brief explanation. Thus, I edited these questions by following them by asking “What does this mean to you?”

Additionally, piloting the questions helped enhance my research because I used the interviews to practice adhering to the stages of the phenomenological approach and test my initial qualitative coding choices (Saldaña 2013). In addition to simply testing qualitative methods, Maxwell (2005) suggests researchers may also learn from them.
Thus, any discoveries made through the analysis of pilot study data were included with the findings of the proposed study.

**Data Analysis**

Data collection is the initial step in the qualitative data analysis (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014), and as previously stated, I utilized descriptive phenomenological methods to collect data pertaining to the lived experiences of Black teachers in mostly White schools. To do this, I followed the three phases of transcendental phenomenology as discussed by Moustakas (1994): époché, phenomenological reduction, and imaginative variation.

In the époché phase, the researcher attempts to focus on the participants and their experiences without bias or preconceived ideas. This phase was particularly necessary for my study because my participants and I shared similar racial and professional identities; thus, any assumptions I had about their experiences due to these commonalities could have prevented me from learning about their unique experiences. To achieve époché, as previously mentioned, I actively took notes as my participants spoke. This process kept me actively focused on what the participants were sharing, and prevented me from interrupting them with comments; instead, I wrote such comments in my notes (e.g. how I felt, what I thought, what experiences I had that were similar). By taking such notes as I collected data through in-depth interviews, I was able to freely allow my participants the space and opportunity to speak without biased interruption or commentary.

In the next phase, phenomenological reduction, I identified the phenomenon of being a Black teacher in a largely White school and described the participants’ textural
experiences with it by using language that illustrated the narratives with sensory and emotional details. In reference to Seidman’s three in-depth interviewing protocol, the first and second set of interviews allowed me to gather data that was useful for thoroughly describing my participants’ lived experiences. By applying phenomenological reduction to the narratives, I was able to develop the codes I initially used when analyzing the interview data. After I first listening the digital recordings and reading the transcripts for accuracy, I reviewed them and focused on identifying important textural details that described the participants’ experiences. For my initial codes, I used key terms or phrases to identify these experiences (e.g., experiences with racism, first year teaching experiences, and college experiences). Also, in some instances, I used the participants’ own words, or “in-vivo” codes, to identify descriptive details in the transcripts (e.g. “thick-skin,” “the game,” or “like family”).

The final phase, imaginative variation, focused on structural descriptions that illustrated how the phenomena were experienced. As a researcher, this phase allowed me the freedom to explore any possible perspective to attempt to explain “the underlying and precipitating factors that account for what is being experienced…” (Moustakas, 1994, Chapter 5, “Imaginative Variation”, para. 1). After phenomenologically reducing the data through coding the interviews, I used imagination variation to organize the important textural details gathered from the first and second set of in-depth interviews into timelines that outlined the participants’ life and work histories. These timelines, later written in Chapter Four as descriptive narratives, were augmented with participants’ own words in an attempt to allow their voices to be heard.
Lastly by maintaining époché as recommended by Moustakas (1994), and utilizing phenomenological reduction and imaginative variation with the data collected in the first and second interviews, I was able to analyze the third set of in-depth interviews. During this final part of Seidman’s protocol, I first synthesized the participants’ life histories and their feelings about present work experiences. Next, I applied the previously identified codes to the analysis of the transcripts from the third set of interviews. I again noticed redundancies and reduced the number codes from twenty to ten. It was at this stage in the interview protocol that I realized data saturation was achieved because the manner in which the participants made sense of their life histories, work experiences, and their roles as Black teachers in mostly White schools was similar. Focusing on these similarities, I reduced the coded data into themes that revealed the essence of being a Black teacher in a predominantly White school. Lastly in Chapter Four, the participants, in their own words, voiced how these themes defined their experiences.

**Organization of Qualitative Data**

I utilized Seidman’s three-interview protocol to conduct my research with all six participants. Over a three-month period, I conducted all eighteen interviews. As suggested by Seidman, each interview was, on average, ninety minutes in duration and, based on participant availability, the interviews the span between each interview was approximately a week. Further, each interview was conducted either in a public place that still afforded an environment conducive to recording or (in the case of one participant) in the privacy of a home environment. Additionally, as I recorded each
interview, I kept notes in a research journal. These notes allowed me to maintain epoché as a researcher and focus on the experiences shared by the participants. Through this I was able to listen closely and ask appropriate follow up questions. Additionally, the notes aided in noting emotional responses some of the participants exhibited in response to the interview questions. Lastly, the research notes were later used in analyzing the interview transcripts to establish and refine qualitative codes.

In total nearly twenty-one hours of recorded interviews were electronically submitted to a transcription company specializing in transcription services for qualitative research. This process yielded 383 pages of phenomenological interview data. Each transcript was reviewed for reliability by listening to the audio recording of the interview before I began the coding process.

Coding is a method of analyzing qualitative data, although Saldaña (2013) emphasizes it is neither the only nor necessarily the best method for doing so. As previously stated, the intent of the transcendental phenomenological approach employed during this proposed study was to identify and describe the essence of participants’ experiences (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002; van Manen, 2014). Because coding is considered an “essence-capturing” analytical method (Saldaña, 2013), I believe it was the most appropriate method for my research. Some phenomenologists maintain that codifying qualitative data for analysis is better suited for other qualitative approaches such as Grounded Theory (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 2014); van Manen specifically argues that analyzing data for themes of lived experiences is too complex to be accomplished with coding procedures. On the contrary, Seidman (2006) believes that
applying codes to phenomenological interview data is possible if the researcher first achieves epoché and allows the interview transcripts to speak for themselves. Additionally, Seidman suggests researchers pre-code by first reviewing interview transcripts and mark passages of interest.

To best manage the coding of these transcripts, I used qualitative analytical software MAXQDA (version 12). As I input each transcript into the program, I established three data sets—one for each phase of the interview protocol. Using what Saldaña (2013) refers to as eclectic coding, I began developed codes for the first cycle of the process by considering the participants own words (“in vivo”), the three theoretical frameworks upon which my research is based, and descriptions that identify how the participants see and understand their experiences. During the first cycle of coding, I identified 60 distinct codes (See Appendix E). After reviewing the first cycle codes for redundancy and reviewing the transcripts for the first set of interviews, I reduced the number of codes to 20 (see Appendices E and F). For instance, such original codes as “sense of self,” “awareness of cultural/racial differences” and “not being Black enough,” were combined under the final code of “Racial Identity”, whereas such as “Importance of Black/Minority Teachers and “implicit bias” were combined under the code “Critical Race”.

Using these codes, I began the second cycle of coding by reviewing the transcripts for the second and third set of interview data. I then created a code landscape for each participant by copying and pasting their interview responses into the website WorditOut.com; the result yielding a word cloud that a visual representation of the
prominent ideas and descriptions each participant discussed (see Appendix I). These
descriptions contained in word clouds, along with my field notes, were useful in creating
profiles for each participant. I also used the word clouds, in addition to a final review of
the previous codes to conduct a third cycle of coding. At the conclusion of this, I further
narrowed my code list to ten.

Additionally, throughout coding process, I maintained a set of memos in
MAXQDA (See Appendix G). Saldaña (2013) states this method is important because it
allows the researcher to think reflexively about such things as his relationship to the
participants or the phenomenon, the study’s research questions, code choices, and
problems with the study. More to the point, “…by memo writing about the specific
codes you have applied to your data, you may discover even better ones” (Saldaña, 2013,
p. 51). The memos allowed me to constantly compare the teachers’ narratives and
identify possible patterns and relationships in the phenomenological data. The memos
were also instrumental in themeing the interview data (Saldaña, 2013).

Validity Issues and Techniques to Improve Credibility and Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, validity is a “way to refer to the correctness or credibility
of a description, conclusion, explanation, interpretation, or some other account”
(Maxwell, 2005, p 106). In using interviews to gather data, there were inherently some
validity issues. For instance as the researcher, I was faced with ensuring that participants
were truthful in their responses to interview questions and that the meaning gleaned from
those responses primarily reflected the participants’ ideas and not those I had as the
researcher (Seidman, 2006). Creswell (2014) recommends several strategies to check the
accuracy of qualitative findings; the ones I utilized for my study were clarification of bias, member checking, peer debriefing, and triangulation.

**Researcher bias.** To address the presence of bias in this study, I began by first acknowledging it (Creswell, 2014). As previously stated in Chapter 1, I identified the personal relevance of this research. I further identified bias by practicing epoché as I interviewed each participant, and also by applying a variety of coding techniques to the transcribed participants interviews and formal field notes (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014; Saldaña, 2013). Moreover by using in depth interviews to investigate the phenomenon of Black teachers in predominantly White schools, I recognized that I am the research instrument (Patton, 2002; Seidman, 2006). As such, I not only sought to learn about my participants’ experiences and the meaning they ascribe to those experiences, but I also wanted to learn more about myself by identifying and understanding my experiences with the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

**Member checking.** Another way to insure validity is to have research participants review the qualitative findings at the conclusion of the study. To do this, Creswell suggests the researcher return the participants with “…parts of the polished or semi-polished product, such as major findings, the case analysis, the grounded theory, the cultural description, and so forth” and have the participants review them for accuracy (p. 202). Thus after I composing the biographical profiles, I emailed each participant a draft of what was written. I encouraged them to scrutinize the drafts for factual inconsistencies and narrative descriptions that they felt compromised their anonymity. I also periodically contacted my participants (via email or text message) to keep them abreast of my process
during the data analysis and writing processes. Through such communication, I was able to better edit and revise the participant data for accuracy and anonymity.

**Peer debriefing.** For additional validity, I utilized peers who read and reviewed the complete study. More importantly, the peer debriefers posed relevant questions about my qualitative methods and added comments and critiques about my study’s strengths and weaknesses. I selected two individuals who had some knowledge about my field of research. Both peer debriefers are African American, and both had experience in the field of education. Also my peer debriefers were former doctoral students who recently graduated; therefore, they were able to provide feedback and guidance that aided in revising the content of my literature review and interview questions.

**Triangulation.** A final way of enhancing the validity of my study was through triangulation. Seidman (2006) suggests that his in-depth three-interview protocol allows for data triangulation because the one to three week interview period for each participant, the researcher is able to check the consistency of all responses. Additionally, I accomplished triangulation by interviewing of a six different participants and obtaining qualitative data. This allowed me to “connect their experiences and check the comments of one participant against those of others” (Seidman, 2006, p. 24). Triangulation can also be accomplished by viewing the data from different perspectives as well (Creswell, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Patton, 2004); this is known as Theory Triangulation (Patton, 2006, p. 247), and for my study, I used Black Racial Identity, Critical Race, and Tokenism theories to analyze my interview data.
Limitations of Research Design

van Manen (2014) writes the goal of phenomenology is to always attempt to capture the experience of a moment as a person is living it; however, phenomenological methods ask participants to stop and reflect on the on the lived moment, and once that occurs the moment is lost. Thus, “No matter how hard we try, we are always too late to capture the moment of the living now” (van Manen, 2014, Chapter 2, “How a Phenomenological Question May Arise”, para. 6). Because my study did not utilize observation in to describe the interactions of my participants as they interacted with students, parents, colleagues, and administrators in their contexts, I was limited in thoroughly capturing their lived experiences. More to the point, this proposed study used a descriptive as opposed to an interpretive phenomenological approach. This was a limitation because there was little emphasis on reflecting on participants’ experiences to analyze how and why these experiences happened. Therefore, this study was limited in its ability to thoroughly capture and analyze the essence of the participants’ experience with the phenomenon. Further, Patton (2002) writes that, “The only way for us to really know what another person experiences is to experience the phenomenon as directly as possible for ourselves” (p. 106). Although, I used in-depth interviews, I did not observe the participants’ as they encountered the phenomenon naturally (i.e. teaching in mostly White schools). Thus, I was limited by only relying upon interview data to describe my participants’ experiences.

This study was further limited through its use of coding methods to analyze phenomenological data. As previously discussed, phenomenologists emphasize the
importance of maintaining a sense of wonder (i.e. Pathos) when analyzing data (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 2014). van Manen particularly believes that using codes to reduce data to recurring themes detracts from the phenomenological attitude and does allow for the true meaning of an experience to be gleaned from a text. Similarly, this study may have been limited in using codes to achieve its research goals because Saldaña (2013) states that coding for identity (e.g. Racial Identity) is often difficult since there is no one way to define it.

Summary of Methods

To summarize, the focus of this research was an exploration of what it means to be a Black Teacher in a school where the majority students and teachers are White. In investigating this primary research question, a qualitative phenomenological approach was used. This research was set in three public school districts in the Midwest. The average racial ratio of teachers and students defined them as racially skewed and predominantly White. The six interview participants for this study were selected through purposeful sampling, and all participants met the criteria of being full-time elementary, middle, or high school Black teachers in predominantly White schools. Data was gathered through an in-depth, three phase interview method developed by Seidman (2006), and the researcher maintained detailed field notes and reflective analytic memos throughout the process. The findings from each participant’s interview were checked for consistency by reviewing their interview responses. Additionally, member checking, peer debriefing, and triangulation techniques were used to enhance the validity of the study. Transcendental phenomenological methods as described by Moustakas (1994) and
various qualitative coding techniques were used to analyze all interview data (Saldaña, 2013).

Lastly, as Black high school teacher I acknowledged that I have some obvious attributes in common with the participants of my study. During the course of my in-depth interviews, I discovered that we shared other commonalities. However as a qualitative researcher engaging in phenomenology, it was important for me to I recognize important similarities and understand they could bias my data interpretation and analysis. By identifying potential biases and achieving epoché, I maintained focus on the lived experiences of my participants, approached my research with a true sense of wonder, and remained receptive to discovery as I analyzed my qualitative data.
Chapter 4: Findings, Cases, and Themes

. . .Tomorrow,
I’ll be at the table
When company comes.
Nobody’ll dare
Say to me,
“Eat in the kitchen,”
Then.
Besides,
They’ll see how beautiful I am
And be ashamed—

--Langston Hughes, “I, Too”

This qualitative phenomenological study was conducted to explore and understand the experiences Black teachers have when teaching in schools and school districts where the majority of the teachers, administrators, and students are White. To thoroughly explore these experiences, my research addressed the following questions: What opportunities and challenges do Black teachers experience as racial minorities in schools primarily enrolling White students and employing White teachers? How does the racial identity status of Black teachers in primarily White schools contribute to the sense they make of their experiences in those schools? How do Black teachers working in primarily White schools make sense of, enact, moderate, or defy their status as tokens?
In this chapter, I first discuss the current societal context in which all of my participants live and work. Next, I present biographical profiles for each of the six participants in my study. Although these profiles provide a thorough picture of the life history, work experiences, and meanings subscribed to their lived experiences, I protect the anonymity of all participants by referring to them and their school districts with pseudonyms. I have also removed specific details that could be used to identify the participants. Lastly, this chapter briefly reviews the theoretical frameworks used to analyze the qualitative data, and reveals the emergent themes that summarize and address each of the aforementioned research questions.

**Participant Profiles**

The six teachers who participated in this phenomenological study were chosen from three Midwestern school districts. The average White student and teacher population of all three school districts is 80 percent and 96 percent respectively. Additionally, the selected teachers have been working as full-time educators in their districts for an average of eleven years. These six participants, as indicated by Table 1, represent all levels of the K-12 continuum (i.e. elementary, middle, and high school) and all identify themselves as Black or African American. The experiences of these teachers are not intended to be a generalization of all Black or African American teachers who work in predominantly White schools, but a representation of the typical experience such teachers have these settings.
Table 1

*Participant Demographic Data*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Total years teaching</th>
<th>Years at current school</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>District</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Allen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Allen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baldwin</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Beauregard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williams</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Beauregard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheryl</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Caldwell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chambers</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Caldwell</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Pseudonyms are used for the participants’ names and the names of their respective school districts.
**Michael Charles.** “Mr. Michael Charles” is a 30 old Intervention Specialist (i.e. Special Education teacher) for an elementary school in the “Allen Public School District.” He has been a teacher for a total of eight years, and has been teaching in his current setting for the past three years. Michael’s K-12 experiences growing up were extremely varied. Of growing up he recalled,

> My father was [military] so we moved around a lot. I was born in Germany; we lived in Germany for the first couple of years of my life. Then we hopped around different countries in Europe at which point we came to the states. We were in [a West Coast state] for two years, then we were sent to [a Northwestern state] for two years, then [a Southern state], then [the Mid-Atlantic area] which is where I went to high school (M. Charles, Interview, December 22, 2015).

Although he was still a child during his time in Europe, Michael believes it positively influenced him as he grew up. He said, “You have a more international aspect being in Europe, being in Germany, Italy and France.” However another influential life moment occurred when he and his family moved to a Southern state and he attended a predominantly White, Christian middle school:

> I would definitely say once again [a Southern state] stands out the most…I think it was the first school experience up until sixth, seventh grade where people pointed out your race…People would make comments about how dark my skin was or how big my lips were and it kind of caught me off guard because up until then I never—I always knew I was Black. I wasn’t blind to the fact I was Black; my parents definitely affirmed who I was at an early age but it was the first time that
had been pointed out by someone of an opposite race and I remember how divided it was both racially and politically (M. Charles, Interview, December 22, 2015).

Later, Michael moved to a city in the Mid-Atlantic region. There he attended a school that was diverse, yet segregated due to the zoning of nearby neighborhoods. He described the experiences as follows:

So we had a very affluent neighborhood inside of the county where kids go to there, that were predominantly White and then you had an area where it was predominantly military, we were by [a military base] which is major…so you had a lot of military families that were diverse for sure and then you had just the [city] population in general, the locals who were diverse by nature anyway. But that’s where class really came into play and it really bothered me because it seemed like your friendship and your circles were very attuned to where you came from, neighborhood-wise, which really caught me off guard especially being a kid that moved around so much (M. Charles, Interview, December 22, 2015).

Moreover, Michael seemed to have feelings of ambivalence in when narrating the story of his high school years. He stated,

I guess in a sense I never really formed these amazing relationships in a high school setting that made me say, ‘I wish high school would just continue.’ I knew college was the next step and I figured college would be better than high school (M. Charles, Interview, December 22, 2015).
Although he did not remember many fond memories from this time, it was during high school that Michael became steadfast about becoming a teacher. He recalled a pivotal incident during his senior year where he broke up an incident where some other students were picking on an Autistic student. Mr. Charles stated, “We ended up in the office, come to find out that I am the only student who wasn’t in special education.” From this, Michael became aware, for the first time, of how the needs of Special Education students differed from those of general education students like him. Also as a result of his involvement with stopping this altercation, Michael was asked by the Special Education teacher his school’s Autistic unit to volunteer with working more closely with these students. It was this experience and along with influence of his mother that set Michael on his career path; he explained,

My mom had been a teacher and a principal as well so even when I wasn’t in school I was still at her school and she was dealing with something or going to a basketball game as an administrator. So I kind of figured I might want to go in that arena but it wasn’t until I was in high school and I was in that classroom and I saw these kids that were learning your basic life skills, crossing the street, looking at stop signs, being in the crosswalk, which was drastically different from Algebra 2 and all the things, concepts that I was learning, and then they would go off site for half of the day and really be in Applebee’s or Pet Smart and they’re learning how to stock shelves and wash dishes and do things they are capable of at their level and I thought it was awesome. At that point I decided I wanted to be a Special Ed teacher (M. Charles, Interview, December 22, 2015).
To pursue his goal of becoming an educator, Michael chose to attend a moderately sized, predominantly White university in a Midwestern state. He chose this university to be closer to his mother, who was from the region and who was, at the time, living there. Michael also recalled how a visit to the campus affected his decision, as he stated,

I really liked the campus when I visited. I thought it was really awesome that they had a multicultural center; the Black student population, while it is small in the grand scheme of things, it seemed really connected so I just went for it (M. Charles, Interview, December 22, 2015).

However, once he began his freshman year, Michael gained fuller understanding of what it meant to be an African American at this predominantly White university. He explained,

It was almost like coming into a bubble. You had a lot of people being in [Midwestern state] that came from farm towns and were very Midwestern; it seemed like the Black students that were there were from [urban Midwestern areas] it seemed like they were from some kind of a city…it was very stereotypical to me…it was very much what you saw on TV or MTV for example all the White guys wanted to talk to me about Rap music, and they assumed I loved Rap music and R&B (M. Charles, Interview, December 22, 2015).

Michael also soon realized that, due to his life experiences up to this point, he was also different from many of the other Black students. He recalled,

I didn’t feel like I was welcomed with open arms into the Black community…because I didn’t come from [an urban Midwestern area] and my
experience growing up wasn’t homogenous but I did find friends out of those groups. But it definitely wasn’t easy; I felt very much like an outsider my freshman year (M. Charles, Interview, December 22, 2015).

Nevertheless, Michael navigated his college years by meeting through some of the jobs he had as a college student and developing friendships with a diverse group of individuals. He stated,

You met more students and being in a college area the majority of people are students in your age so it was outside of the structured college settings that I found a group of friends that was diverse and it was easy to kind of build that bridge and navigate and have conversations with people about where they come from and why their world view is the way it is (M. Charles, Interview, December 22, 2015).

Prior to graduating, Mr. Charles sought to return to the East Coast and interviewed with many school districts there. He said,

I did interview and I got job offers from the more affluent school districts but once again it was me being the minority interviewing for a school district. It felt like I was supposed to accept that it was a privilege to work for them (M. Charles, Interview, December 22, 2015).

It was, however, during an interview with an urban school district that he felt most comfortable and truly wanted. Thus, he accepted a teaching position at a middle school with the district. When asked to described what it was like to begin his career with in an inner city school, Michael declared,
It was very much—I tell people all the time it was very much—[a Mid-Atlantic city] was very much like is perceived on television... Poverty was very much real, and still is in [Mid-Atlantic region], it is unlike anything I had ever seen even. It was different. I always felt comfortable because I was Black entering a predominantly Black situation but in terms of life experience it was completely different (M. Charles, Interview, December 22, 2015).

Mr. Charles remained with the urban district for two years, but decided to change school districts due to what he felt to be a lack of leadership throughout the district. He described the scenario in the following manner:

The principal at that school was horrible; she got forced into retirement halfway through my second year and there were just a lot of shifts with the school district in general...I was frustrated with the fact that I didn’t have any mentors or anyone to go to as a beginning teacher (M. Charles, Interview, December 22, 2015).

For the next three years, Michael worked at two different schools in Mid-Atlantic region. The first school was a predominantly Black alternative school for students with behavioral problems. However, similar to his previous placement, Mr. Charles still struggled with finding a teacher mentor to help aid in his professional development as an educator. He explained,

They taught me a thing or two about really relating to all the kids and being no nonsense and behavior management that I didn’t come in with but in turn I taught them that we should still be pushing out and not just focusing on behavior because they are capable so it was kind of a—there was a balance but to say that I had
At this point in his career, Michael recalls feeling frustrated. However, his motivating focus was still working with the students. He emphasized, “The kids, it was always the kids, no matter how frustrating [Mid-Atlantic city] was or my first two years at the alternative school…it was always the kids and making a difference in the kids’ lives and their genuine appreciation for the things that you do for them.” For his final year in the Mid-Atlantic region, Mr. Charles worked for public charter school. At this placement as a middle school teacher, worked with predominantly Black students but with a predominantly White teaching staff. Although he did finally find the mentor he sought in previous placements, the manner in which the staff related to the student body bothered him. Michael explained,

The intention was to get these kids to achieve what they don’t normally achieve and they did a good job of making it happen the way they went about it was completely wrong though. There was a lot of yelling at kids; there was a lot rule by fear. It was a lot of teaching young teachers, specifically White teachers to rule by fear because you have to have control over these kids because this is what these kids respond to (M. Charles, Interview, December 22, 2015).

After only a year with this charter school, Michael moved back to the Midwest, citing his desire to be nearer his mother and help her with his ailing grandmother. He recalled the difficulty of finding a job as a teacher in the region, so he worked as teacher on assignment with several charter school through contracting agency. Eventually, Mr.
Charles was placed at “The Center,” an agency that provides student services to many central Midwestern school districts. Through this position, he first began working with the Allen Public Schools; he recalls,

I interviewed for a…position because [The Center] had control of that particular unit or classroom and [The Center] thought that I would be a good fit… In hindsight and seeing the way the school district is now it’s almost impossible to get in if you don’t know someone (M. Charles, Interview, December 22, 2015).

After, a working for the school system for two years as an employee of The Center, Allen Public Schools decided to hire him solely as a district employee this past year.

**Baldwin Williams.** “Mr. Baldwin Williams” is 57 years old and has been teaching for eleven years, with all eleven years in the Allen City School District as a middle school science teacher. Baldwin was born and raised in a predominantly African American neighborhood in a New York City borough. Of his childhood experiences, Mr. Williams has fond memories. He states, “…that was very interesting for me. Being…at the time of the Civil Rights movement. My school was right in the middle…. I mean, all the parents were very conscious of what was going on…” Baldwin also recalled encountering some of the leaders of the Civil Rights Movement and described how those experiences influenced him. He stated,

I was fortunate that my mother was involved with Civil Rights a lot. When King would come up to New York, a lot of times, he would come to raise money. He'll come to meetings that wasn't [sic] publicized to raise consciousness. Also, Malcolm was very instrumental during that time. Malcolm and my family were
very close. It was nothing for me to come and see Malcolm at the house or to go
to Malcolm's lectures…Because it helped mold me today. It helped me to
understand that when I go to bed at night, when I wake up, I'm going to be Black.
I can't change that (B. Williams, Interview, December 23, 2015).

Baldwin also remembered being strongly influenced by his father, who because of his
work as a pilot on oil tankers, would be gone for long periods of time. Yet, Mr. Williams
said that he, like his mother, was aware of and involved in the Civil Rights Movement.

Baldwin stated,

He'd be gone for two, three months. When he came in, he jumped right into Civil
Rights, because he was born in [a southern state]. You know what that was like
when he was born. He was very conscious of the movement and very supportive.
What he brought to the table was the plight of people of color around the world
(B. Williams, Interview, December 23, 2015).

Mr. Williams remained in New York City until the age of nine. He then moved to a
Caribbean island nation due to the influence of his maternal grandmother. Baldwin
explained,

My mother's side of the family is from…My grandmother had ten children. My
mother was one of those ten. She said, “I don't care about my children, but I want
all of my grandchildren to see where I came from.” In 1957, she took the oldest
grandchild at the time to [Caribbean island nation]. He stayed a year. From that
point on, up until maybe about five, ten years ago…when you got between the age
of 9 and 12, you had to go…My grandmother's philosophy was “You need to see from whence I came” (B. Williams, Interview, December 23, 2015)

Mr. Williams continued his education there and graduated from a Caribbean high school. During his time on the island, he became interested in agriculture and decided that was what he wanted to study in college. Laughing, Baldwin declared, “I was really happy, because I was really having a good time…I wanted to stay there. My parents said, ‘No, you have to come back to go to school.’” With the encouragement of his parents and family friend, he applied to and was accepted into a small academically prestigious, predominantly White and upper middle class college in Upstate New York. Although, he originally desired to attend an Ivy League university, because of the financial grants that were available at the time, attending this smaller college was economically easier for his family. Mr. Williams also admitted,

To be honest, I think that was the best thing that could've happened, because at the small college, I was able to see things. I was able to grow. I was able to put all these experiences into perspective... I had to wear both hats as being someone from [a New York City borough], but also someone that has Caribbean experiences (B. Williams, Interview, December 23, 2015).

While in college as an undergraduate, Baldwin became active in the Black student union and a leader in the International Club. His roles with such organizations helped him dealing with and confronting incidents of racial division on campus. He explained,

As an African American…when there were issues of race, it would be to the extent where they—the students will categorize you. They will shun you. They
may say things that were inappropriate. For example…to raise funds for the student union. They were going to have a slave auction, where you'll put someone up on this stage. People will bid on them. Then…whoever gets the highest bid will then—you have them for a day or hour. You have them clean your room. You have them take your books…They thought that was no big thing… I said, “No.” I rallied the group. “No, we can't do that.”…The administration was all in a row. I rallied the people together. We said, “No.” They canceled it (B. Williams, Interview, December 23, 2015).

After completing his undergraduate degree, Mr. Williams pursued a graduate degree in agriculture at an Ivy League university in Upstate New York. Once again, he was in a predominantly White, and affluent setting, but Baldwin recounted positive experiences with the other agricultural graduate students. He said, “…we kind of bonded together. We kind of helped each other. We functioned as a unit…They've come from all walks of life. All different countries, but we kind of bonded together.”

Upon earning his graduate degree in crop horticulture and soil science, he worked for a large American and international science and engineering company for several years. It was Mr. Williams’s job with this company that brought him to the Midwest. He stated, “They said, ‘We're going to send you to [a Midwestern state].’ ‘…What's in [a Midwestern state]?’ I wanted to go to California or Florida… My job was the fruit and vegetable markets in [a Midwestern state].” Afterwards, he worked as a supervisor in the marketing division of the Department of Agriculture in a Midwestern state. Later, Baldwin worked internationally for twelve years, focusing on international marketing and
development of food and food products. He states, “I worked in about 50 different countries, mainly in Russia, former Soviet Union countries. Worked in 15 African countries. The Caribbean. Southeast Asia. All around. I actually flew around the world.” However Mr. Williams cites the terrorists attacks on September 11, 2001 as turning point in his career and life. He recalls,

I was overseas for a while, and then, after 9-11, things got kind of slow, so I decided to do some subbing. I applied at the [large urban school district] and put the application in for subbing and to be a teacher. I got one interview and never got called back for the second one or a third one, whatever the final one was, and then someone told me, “Why don’t you try [Allen school system]?” I said, “Okay,” so I put in an application there, and within three weeks, I was subbing. I stayed with them and then subbed there for about a year and a half, and doing other things, and then decided, “Okay, I’m going to go into the teaching full-time,” because I kind of liked it (B. Williams, Interview, December 23, 2015). Although he had never worked as an educator prior to his initial substitute teaching experience with Allen Public Schools, Mr. Williams explained there were many educators in his family, particularly on his father’s side. He also stated that it was his mother who first encouraged him to teach and he said that she “always was in education. She got the city to build her a daycare center where she had 200 kids every day coming and going from three years old to first, second, and third grade”.

Baldwin worked as substitute teacher for few years in Allen Public Schools while still occasionally doing international marketing work. However, he recalls being
encouraged by school officials to pursue teaching full-time. He stated, “…they said, ‘You know what? You're good at this. Why don't you go ahead and get certified and do that.’ Then I said, ‘Okay. I'll do that.’” After securing his teacher certification, Mr. Williams was hired as teacher by Allen Public Schools. In his years as teacher in this school district, Mr. Williams has taught math and science, and he has worked at the high school level before his current placement as middle school science teacher.

**Sheryl Chambers.** “Mrs. Sheryl Chambers” is a 35 year old high school teacher who has been teaching thirteen years, with the last six years in her current school district—“Beauregard Local Schools”—where she teaches elective courses focusing primarily on business and marketing. Sheryl grew up as one of four children in a suburb of a Midwestern city and describes the neighborhood in which she grew up as predominantly White; she said, “…There were some other nationalities, like there was a Native American down the street, but for the most part everybody pretty much identified as Caucasian.” Of her K-12 school experiences, Mrs. Chambers stated that she received a good education from the majority White schools she attended. However, she did recall, There were, I would say, a lot of un-comfortableness I guess because—I didn't really notice it then but I just—I never understood why I didn't have very many friends back then, but as I got older I understood… they just didn't—they thought I was different (S. Chambers, Interview, January 7, 2016).

During her entire K-12 educational experience, she did not have any Black or minority teachers. This phenomenon served to encourage Sheryl to become a teacher. She explained, “I decided that I wanted to be a minority teacher that ways kids who are like
me growing up and never having a Black teacher will finally at least see one in the building…”

Although, she did have many positive experiences growing up, Mrs. Chambers does remember the first blatantly racist experience that made her aware of her race in the predominantly White area in which lived. She described the experience in following manner:

I was probably, I would say, third or fourth grade and there were a lot of kids in my neighborhood. I didn't—I was very limited on who I talked to because—or where I went because my parents were kind of paranoid. There was a family around the block that had recently moved in. I went around the block to play with their daughter, who was a year younger than me. While I'm there her older brother, who was in high school, had a friend come over and he said to her brother, "Oh my gosh, there's a n-word at your house." I, at that point, did not know what that was... I knew he was talking about me, but I didn't know what it meant. When I got home I asked my mom what it was and she asked me where I heard it. After that I was never allowed to go back over there (S. Chambers, Interview, January 7, 2016).

During her junior high and high school years, Sheryl indicated that some of the discomfortableness she felt as African-American in predominantly White school went away. She believed it was because she and her peers were learning more about diverse races and she said, “...at that point, all of my friends were getting into Rap and Hip Hop and—so at
that point it started to become cool to be Black.” She also credited an experience with one of her high school teachers as part of the reason she began a teacher. She said,

I actually wanted to be—originally wanted to be a social studies teacher and I took a marketing class my senior year of high school through our career academy. I mean I knew I've always liked commercials, but I didn't realize all the other things that went into it. I had started to think about going just into the business world, but then I decided I just wanted to be—I still wanted to be a teacher, but I wanted to teach marketing instead because I enjoyed the class so much in high—my senior year (S. Chambers, Interview, January 7, 2016).

After high school, Sheryl chose to attend college at a university that was just twenty minutes away from her home because, at that time, the university was one of highest producers of teachers in the Midwest and because it was one of few universities to offer Marketing as major. Once again in college, Mrs. Chambers was in a predominantly White setting but she explained,

At that point I was used to it because I'd been pretty much alone since I'd been in school. It really just doesn't even bother me anymore. I mean I guess it does bother me, but it's not something I dwell on because I'm—it's a part of life since I've been dealing with it my whole life (S. Chambers, Interview, January 7, 2016).

While her experiences as minority in predominantly environments made it somewhat easier to adjust to the setting of her college at large, it did not help her in relating to some of the other Black students she encountered. She stated,
I think it was probably when I was a freshman I was trying to fit in, because that was the first time I had been around a large amount of Black—I mean I can't say it was necessarily large, but there were more Black people… than there were in high school…I didn't know them so I would try to fit in, which with my history and growing up the way I did, I don't exactly fit in with somebody who may have grown up in a place other than a suburb… I think it kind of—at one point I wasn't fitting in with the Black students at the school so I just kind of said, "I'm going to do my own thing, graduate, and move on" (S. Chambers, Interview, January 7, 2016).

After graduating with her undergraduate degree, Sheryl was hired by a diverse high school in suburban Midwestern school district; this school, in spite of being mostly White, had a high population of Mexican and Somali students and a noticeable number of Black teachers. Mrs. Chambers remembered, “It was a great place to work. I absolutely loved working there. We had great interactions with our students because they could come—they would come to us and they would relax.” However during her seven years at this school, Mrs. Chambers recalled having several students who were murdered. These experiences affected her to the point where she considered leaving the teaching profession and pursuing a career in business. She said,

I had just really decided that I just didn’t want be there anymore because it was extremely difficult to teach these students who I think have all of this potential just to find out a year or so after they graduate that they’re dead (S. Chambers, Interview, January 7, 2016).
After the death of one of her favorite students who was a recent graduate, Mrs. Chambers sought to be released from her teaching contract and applied for similar teaching position with Beauregard Local Schools, a more affluent and predominantly White school district in a different Midwestern suburb. At the time the school district for which she worked refused to void her contract; however, a year later when the principal of a high school in Beauregard Local Schools called her about the same open teaching position, she was able to accept the job. Of this change, Sheryl simply stated, "...[Beauregard Local] saved my teaching career."

**Tanika Morris.** Another teacher with the predominantly White and affluent Beauregard Local Public Schools is 35 year old “Tanika Morris.” Mrs. Morris has been a teacher for nine years and has been with Beauregard Local for six years. She is an elementary school teacher who currently teaches first grade. Mrs. Morris recalls her family moving frequently during her childhood; thus, her K-12 years include experiences in the two different Southern cities and two different Midwestern cities. She describe these years in the following manner:

> I was always the new kid, too. As far as making friends, I was very shy growing up. I would make friends. Usually connecting with people who look like me. As I got a little bit older though and started to notice who I was; I interacted more with White people. I felt like because the schools that I was going to were higher performing, then they were more generally White populated (T. Morris, Interview, January 21, 2016).
Through her many diverse educational experiences, Tanika encountered many different races of students and teachers; however, Mrs. Morris remembered a specific incident that made her aware of her Blackness. She explained,

It was in middle school… I had a lot of White friends, too. I had one White friend, one Hispanic friend; we all hung out together. When I knew I was different was going to her [the White girl’s] house. Just feeling different, feeling like they've never really interacted with a Black person before. I remember me sitting on her bed. She was playing in my hair saying things like, “Oh, your hair is just so different” (T. Morris, Interview, January 21, 2016).

In spite of this experience, and others where she was conscious of her race and how it differed from those around her, Mrs. Morris credited her mother helping her know and understand herself racially. She said, “My mom is a very strong Black woman. She would always speak positivity into us…” Moreover after moving to a Midwestern city in the eighth grade, it was her mother who got Tanika involved in an African American Rites of Passage group. Of her experiences with this group, Mrs. Morris recalled,

My initial involvement, I felt like it was forced. I didn't even really feel like I wanted to be a part of it, necessarily... When I first got into it, everyone was very nice. Of course, everyone looked like me but different because they had dreadlocks and other physical differences. Also they said things like “Ashe” honoring our ancestors and just different things that I just wasn't used to—Kwanzaa celebrations. It was just very different… It was just a wonderful experience. It was very empowering. I felt like… I was starting to understand
Upon graduating high school, Tanika decided to attend a moderately sized, predominantly White Midwestern university. Although she had researched and was interested in a Historically Black College or University (HBCU), her college decision was a financial one. Tanika explained,

I always had a really good GPA. I actually was doing post-secondary options. Junior and senior year, I was going to college and taking college classes at the same time. I kind of felt like I was always going to go to a good school… However, my parents didn't really save money for college (T. Morris, Interview, January 21, 2016).

A few months after her high school graduation, she was notified that she was the recipient of an Urban League scholarship for which she had previously. This scholarship paid for her books and tuition, but it stipulated that she would have to attend a specific university. Tanika stated, “At that point, I was desperate. I just felt like, ‘Yeah, I'll take it.’”

Prior to beginning her first semester, Mrs. Morris attended a minority study orientation program that allowed her to get a sense of the university before classes began. This program not only helped Tanika become acclimated with her new environment, but it also allowed her to meet some of her new peers and confirmed her decision to attend this university. However regarding her initial experience on campus, Tanika admitted,
There was a small population… for African Americans. I didn't realize that, but honestly, I felt very comfortable, because that's kind of what I was used to anyway. That didn't bother me. If anything, it made me—if anything, I was probably more comfortable around White people than Black (T. Morris, Interview, January 21, 2016).

While in college, Tanika also became very involved in a The Black Student Union and she joined a predominantly Black sorority. She particularly credited the latter with helping her navigate her college years; Tanika stated, “...This sisterhood, this amazing sisterhood. That definitely helped, seeing that me being a Black woman, I can be… a doctor, lawyer, whatever I wanted to be.”

Originally, Mrs. Morris did not desire to become a teacher. When she began college her initial focus of study was Pre-Med, but she later changed it to psychology. However after graduating with her Bachelor’s degree and working jobs that were not in area of psychology, Tanika’s experience as a mother motivated her to pursue teaching. She explained,

I had my son. I was at home with him... I was able to stay home with him for a year and a half. I was teaching him. It just kind of was like, “I can do this. I can do this for real, as a career” (T. Morris, Interview, January 21, 2016).

Mrs. Morris enrolled in and earned a Master’s degree in education through an online university; of this experience, she stated, “...that's a hard program, because even though it's not like a brick and mortar, it's a lot of papers, a lot of writing—it was just very rigorous.” Afterwards, she completed her student teaching in the suburbs of a large
Southern city (where she and her family were living at the time). It was this experience with cemented her decision to become a teacher. Tanika, stated, “... As soon as I hit that door, I loved it. I love being able to teach kids and just—you just watch them grow, become stronger readers, stronger writers. It was just amazing. I fell in love with it…”

Shortly after completing her student teaching, Mrs. Morris and her family moved back to the Midwest, and she began to seek teaching jobs. Her initial search focus on teaching positions in suburban districts of a nearby large urban area because these were the settings in which Tanika was accustomed. However when she could not find any available positions in those schools, Mrs. Morris accepted a job teaching in a charter school—something that her cooperating teacher during her student teaching experience in The South had forewarned against. Tanika recalled,

She just said, ‘It's too much for too little pay. Too much you have to deal with for too little pay’…. To me, I thought the money was great. I was thinking “That lady didn't know what she was talking about” (T. Morris, Interview, January 21, 2016)

Mrs. Morris worked for approximately a year at the charter school, teaching a combination of third, fourth, and fifth grade boys in a single classroom. This experience came to an abrupt conclusion when she arrived at work one day to find the school’s principal was not there. Tanika said, “…she just took the money, and just left.”

Although the school was closed, Mrs. Morris stated,

We worked—just continued to work, even though there was no money coming in. I worked for them probably a whole month after they shut down the school, because kids kept coming (T. Morris, Interview, January 21, 2016).
She was next hired but another charter school, one she describes as “better” than her previous school. However, even at this new school Tanika faced several difficulties. First, the school provided no professional development; thus, Tanika did not feel she was adequately prepared to teach. Additionally, she described her principal at this charter school as domineering. For instance, Mrs. Morris said, “…She would just come into the classroom and just make rules: ‘I don't like how the kids are sitting. Switch the seats,’ in the middle of class.” Further, the school was financially unstable; she recalled on separate occasions having to purchase concessions for the students to have lunch and supplies for their music class. Similar to her previous, charter school experience, this position also came to an abrupt and unforeseen conclusion. Tanika stated,

I got pregnant. I was able to take my time off…When I was at home, during those three months something happened—my position was gone. I don't know how. Now, I can't remember exactly how it happened or even at that point if I cared. It was just so—I was so happy to be out of there and at home with my baby. I was looking for other places to go (T. Morris, Interview, January 21, 2016).

In search of another teaching position, Mrs. Morris primarily concentrated on seeking jobs in suburban schools because she felt they offered the best financial compensation, professional development, and teacher support. Ideally, she wanted to work for Beauregard Local Schools because her mother was employed as a support services employee and her younger siblings attended school there. Of her pursuit of a teaching position in Beauregard, Tanika declared, “I had been applying there for three years. The same three years [laughs] I was working at the charter school. I went on interviews with
[Beauregard]. Never got in…they would just say, ‘You just don't have enough experience…’” Fortunately for Mrs. Morris, her mother was also a member of parent group who was concerned with the lack of teacher diversity in Beauregard Local Schools. To address this concern, she met with the district’s superintendent on behalf of the group. It was this meeting to which Tanika credited with her being hired by the school district and being placed in her current teaching position. She explained,

When my mom went to the superintendent at the time, “Why don't we have any more Black teachers?” He said to her, “Well, nobody qualified applies. Nobody qualified applies,” is what he said. She said, “Well, my daughter has her Masters degree in elementary education. She's been trying to get in to this district for the past three years and was told that she needs more experience, more experience. She's qualified. She's a qualified candidate.” Then right after that conversation she had with them, I was set up with a certified interview day (T. Morris, Interview, January 21, 2016).

**Harriet Edwards.** “Mrs. Harriet Edwards” is a 57 year old elementary teacher in the “Caldwell City School” district. She currently teaches Math and has been a full-time teacher for eighteen total years—with the sixteen of those years being in her current teaching placement. Harriet is a native of large East Coast city, and is one of seven children. When describing her childhood, she said,

I was raised in what might be called the ghetto or the hood. At the time, growing up there, myself and my siblings didn’t know it was the ghetto or the hood, because that was home...We went to predominantly African American or Black
schools. We went to a church that was predominantly African American. Growing up, for the most part, all I knew was people that looked like me, Black, African American. There were a few Caucasians that attended our church, and I can remember maybe a few Caucasian kids at our school. For the most part, it was an inner city school with African American students and mostly White teachers (H. Edwards, Interview, January 9, 2016).

Mrs. Edwards also remembered deciding to be a teacher during her early childhood, and cites her experience with a particular teacher second grade teacher as the reason. She explained,

I had a young, vibrant, enthusiastic, effervescent teacher…Looking back now, she probably was a first or second year teacher, because she was so full of excitement, so full of joys…She was Hispanic…She just made learning so much fun. I loved being in her classroom. She was a warm one. She gave hugs…She instilled in me a love for learning, and I saw how excited she was about teaching…From that time, I always knew that I wanted to be a teacher. The path that was set before me, there was no diversion (H. Edwards, Interview, January 9, 2016).

Growing up during the Civil Rights Era, Mrs. Edwards recalled being a “product of busing” and described the day when she and some of her siblings were a part of the integration of the city’s public schools. She stated,

We had to walk to our neighborhood school and there were busses outside the school. We all got on different busses and we were bussed across the city…. to different schools… It was such a strange and uncomfortable feeling. We were on
buses with other Black kids. We get to this building. We didn’t know where we were in the city. We get off and then the teachers there—they were angry. They were not happy that we were there. It was not a good feeling… experience. It was not warm. It was not welcoming (H. Edwards, Interview, January 9, 2016).

A short time after her busing experience, Mrs. Edwards’s family moved into the home in which she would grow up; in this new neighborhood, she attended schools nearby that still had mostly White teachers but predominantly Black students. Similar to her pervious integrated schooling, she did not recall this environment as very welcoming. She said, “…the teachers were not out and out mean, but they just were not pleasant. They did not seem happy.” In middle school, Harriet saw more African American teachers, and distinctly remembered one “…who was really into culture and ethnicity. She wore the dashiki, she wore the Afro…” Later in high school, Mrs. Edwards had more positive experiences with her predominantly White teachers. There was, however, one incident during her eleventh grade year was a revelation. She explained,

We were learning about Egyptian history. I’m ashamed to say that until probably 11th grade history, I did not even realize that Egypt was in Africa. The White teacher, who was also the football coach, he did not emphasize that Egypt was a part of Africa. I did not realize that he did not emphasize it. I’m thinking Egypt is someplace in Europe or something. It was through my research and my study, because I had to do a research paper, that I realized… I felt cheated. I felt gypped. I felt that the truth hadn’t been shared with us. Here we are in a classroom full of Black kids with a White teacher. To me, that should’ve been something that was,
“hey, this is you guys’ culture. This is where you guys came from” (H. Edwards, Interview, January 9, 2016).

After high school, Harriet decided to attend nearby and predominantly White Ivy League university. She credited her father for pushing her, and her siblings, to pursue higher education. She also stated that her high school guidance counselor was the person who suggested she apply to the Ivy League university. She said,

I did well in high school. I didn’t realize at the time, but… that [Ivy League university] was looking for minorities to attend the school. I got a full ride to [Ivy League university], as did my roommate that graduated from high school with me. It wasn’t a necessarily conscious decision… My counselor said, “Why don’t you apply here? I think you can get in,” and helped me with the paperwork along with my dad, and I got accepted (H. Edwards, Interview, January 9, 2016).

Overall, Harriet regarded her college years as academically rigorous and a time of positive personal growth. She described the experience in the following manner:

College was good, even though I was a minority there. We had a strong Black influence on campus. The fraternities and the sororities were in full swing during that time. I did not pledge, but I was a part of the [African American fraternity auxiliary group] organization…I also was a part of…the gospel choir. I was a part of that. College helped me to see myself more so as a strong Black woman. It helped me to identify with other Black women who were aspiring to help change the world or do something great. It helped affirm me as an African American
woman because I saw others that were trying to do the same thing that I was
doing. It was a positive time (H. Edwards, Interview, January 9, 2016).

Upon grading with her Bachelor’s degree, Mrs. Edwards got married and relocated to an
upper East Coast state because of her husband’s job. It was there, after working briefly
for a bank, that she was hired for first teaching job. She described her experience as
unique because although the city was fairly diverse at the time (i.e. “one third White, one
third Black, and one third Hispanic”), the school in which she taught was segregated.
She stated,

There were Black teachers. There were White teachers. There were Hispanic
teachers. The Hispanic teachers had entirely Hispanic classes and they spoke
Spanish. The White teachers had predominantly White kids and a few Black kids
sprinkled in. The Black teachers had a mixture of all three because if the Hispanic
class was overflowing, the Hispanic kids would be the Black kids’ class with a
few other Hispanics, Whites, and Blacks. I had a mixture of all three (H. Edwards,
Interview, January 9, 2016).

Mrs. Edwards and her family remained in this upper East Coast state until her husband’s
job again relocated them—first to the northeastern region of her native state and then a
predominantly White suburb in The Midwest. At time when they were searching for a
house in the area, Harriet said the realtor informed her that area was very diverse because
it had Asians and Whites; further, the realtor assured her that more African Americans
would be moving there as well. However, Harriet declared, “We get here and I soon
discover that I’m in White man’s land around here, but it was fine.”
Mrs. Edwards had decided to stop teaching and become a stay-at-home mother, while her children were very young. However, she did not intend that decision to be permanent. She explained,

I stayed home with our children for about 16 years. I was a stay at home mom. My husband provided. I already had my degree, of course, and I was licensed in the [East Coast state] from the state that I graduated from and also in [an Upper East Coast state]...I thought as the kids got older that it was time for me to get my license...because eventually I did want to go back to teaching (H. Edwards, Interview, January 9, 2016).

After securing her Midwestern state teacher certification, Mrs. Edwards began working as a substitute teacher in the Caldwell City School district. She thought it was important to work as a substitute in her children’s district because she explained,

My children were in [Caldwell City schools], so I said I’m going to start subbing, get my foot in the door, and just see what’s going on. Because my children had some issues with school being the only or one of few Black kids in a classroom full of White kids (H. Edwards, Interview, January 9, 2016).

After working as a substitute for at various schools throughout the Caldwell City district for a few years, Harriet was not seeking a full-time position but believed her reputation and name as substitute may have been “floating around in the district.” Because of this, she received a phone call while on vacation during the summer of 2000; the principal of a Caldwell City elementary school inquired if she would be interested in filling a teaching
vacancy. Upon returning home, she said, “I go to the school and we have a very informal, fun, casual, interview, and he hired me...I’ve been at that school ever since.”

**Helen Lawrence.** “Mrs. Helen Lawrence” is 47 old and teaches third grade in the Caldwell City School district. She has been teaching for eleven years, with ten of those years at her current placement. Mrs. Lawrence is, herself, a product of Caldwell City Schools having grown up as the older of two children in the suburb of a large Midwestern city where the school district is located. Although the suburb itself was overwhelmingly White at the time, Helen’s neighborhood was not. She said, “There were a total of 11 houses on our street. Everyone on our street was African-American…We all really got along really well…like family...” However outside of her small, close-knit neighborhood, the atmosphere was not as welcoming. Recalling her early experiences in school experiences in the district, she stated,

As I was growing up, it was a bit of a challenge. I think as a matter of fact, when I was in elementary, there were only three Blacks at that time to go through school with me. I felt very isolated and misunderstood. I had a lot of support. I did have an African-American teacher when I first started in third grade... She was very helpful to be able to kind of get me to calm myself and relax, and be able to understand the dynamics of the district and the school (H. Lawrence, Interview, January 6, 2016).

Another factor that made Helen feel isolated from her peers as elementary school student was being removed from class periodically for tutoring. She declared, “…I didn’t feel that I was academically equal to my peers at that time because [Caldwell] was so much
more advanced in education. I was pulled out a lot for tutoring, which kind of made me feel inadequate.” However as Mrs. Lawrence progressed through elementary, middle, and high school, she began to make more friends and became more accepting of her surroundings and who she was. By time she entered high school, she recalled there being more African-American students (i.e. “maybe 10 at that time”), and she also recalled being an active member of the school’s drill team. However it was also during this period in her life that Mrs. Lawrence became made aware of race because of an incident that occurred with peers. She explained,

It was some type of music we were listening to. One of my peers had turned around to me and said, “Why do you listen to that station?” I’m like, “What do you mean why do I listen to that station?” “That’s a Black station.” I looked at him, and I said, “What color am I then?” He kind of like was, “Oh, I didn’t really pay attention to that.” At that time, I was kind of taken back. Other people were saying, “We just don’t see you as a Black person.” I said to them, “Well, then, what do you see me as?” They just said, “Well, we just see you as a person.” …I felt insulted. I was a little angry… it just kind of made me feel like just because they said, “I don’t see you as a Black person, I just see you as a person,” it made me feel like, “Oh, well because I am Black that means you would think less of me?” I was very uncomfortable at that time (H. Lawrence, Interview, January 6, 2016).

After graduating high school, Mrs. Lawrence was interested in study in Law; she said, “I never thought I would ever be in a school district.” She pursued post-secondary classes
in that area of study as she got married, moved to another Midwestern suburb, and started a family. However, as she observed the experiences of her first child in his suburban school, her interest shifted from law to education. She stated, “I had noticed there was a difference as to how the school portrayed my son versus other students. That was my big eye-opener. I thought, ‘I want to make a difference.’” She began her path to becoming a classroom teacher by working as a teacher assistant at an elementary school. Of this experience, she explained,

I really enjoyed it…it is [an inner city school], so there’s a lot of urban area. I really wanted to make a difference because there were kids that just had a hard time reading, or their ethnicity was not African-American. They could have been [sic] Somalian. They didn’t understand a lot of the concepts of what we are learning. That kind of made me feel at home because I thought back of where I was coming into [Caldwell]. That’s what really changed my mind…After assisting, I wanted more (H. Lawrence, Interview, January 6, 2016).

Upon the encouragement of her father, Mrs. Lawrence initially enrolled in a nearby small, private university to pursue her education degree. However due to scheduling conflicts with her class and her job as a teaching assistant, she transferred to another nearby suburban university that offered evening classes. Both of the universities she attended were predominantly White; however, the former had a more diverse student body. Moreover at her second university, Helen recounted a significant difficult racial experience involving a professor and her student teaching assignment. She said,
One professor had sent me to a rural area school…The teacher that they actually assigned me to looked at me and rolled her eyes. She whispered to another colleague, which made me think once again it was because I was Black…The first thing she said was, “How do you speak versus the other classmates that you have? Do you talk just like them?” I said, “What do you mean by that?” When she was talking to me, she said, “Oh, you do sound like you’re a White girl.” I thought, “Are you kidding me?” She never allowed me to work with the students. I always was cutting papers for her, making copies…. I told my professor about it from day one. She just kept saying, “...I know what’s going on. I understand. I’m aware.”...I ended up getting a really bad grade… so I had to appeal…I actually won the appeal. That professor didn’t like me from that day on (H. Lawrence, Interview, January 6, 2016).

Mrs. Lawrence never took another class with this professor, and emphasized although her student teaching experience was negative it allowed her to grow “thick skin” and inspired her to continue to better herself.

After graduating, Helen wanted to work for a nearby urban school system; however time due to the amount teachers in the district at the time, there were no teaching positions available. Further, personal reasons influenced her search for employment. Mrs. Lawrence explained, “…I was divorced and I just needed stability within my employment. Other districts would start and then… you’d teach for a couple of years, then you’d have to interview for that position…” One school district that was
hiring and offered the professional stability she sought was her home district of Caldwell City schools. She stated,

I applied. I was very skeptical because, once again, this is not where I wanted to be. I wanted to be in [a large urban school district]. I have found being at [Caldwell] and being the minority has opened eyes of parents and children as to, “Wow. Everyone can succeed. Everyone can learn and be what they want to be” (H. Lawrence, Interview, January 6, 2016).

**Racial Identity, CRT, and Tokenism as Theoretical Frameworks**

The findings from this study were analyzed through the three theoretical lenses chosen for this study—Racial Identity Theory, Critical Race Theory (CRT), and Tokenism theory. Again, Racial Identity Theory is a framework that attempts to explain the psychological processes individuals undergo in viewing and identify themselves racially (Cross, 2001; Helms, 1993, 1994). CRT contends that racism is not an abnormal occurrence in society and that people of color can best narrate their experiences with racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Lastly, Tokenism describes the experiences individuals have when they are either the only one or one of few representatives of a specific group (Kanter, 1977; Kelly, 2007). The outcomes of this study were analyzed and presented using the scope of all three of the aforementioned theories in an attempt to describe the unique experiences of Black or African American teachers in predominantly White schools.
Emergence of Themes

Upon reviewing the distinct experiences shared by the participants, I compared and contrasted the teachers’ narratives. Through this comparison, I noted similarities and differences among the participants’ responses. Once again using the aforementioned three theoretical frameworks, I reduced the final ten phenomenological codes into the following four overarching themes to address my research questions: (1) Opportunities, (2) Challenges, (3) Racial Identity as Strength, and (4) The Necessity of External Support Systems.

Opportunities. All participants spoke candidly about their experiences as Black or African American teachers in predominantly White schools. In sharing their narratives, the participants mostly recounted many positive opportunities their role in such schools afforded them. Some of the benefits of the teachers’ token status were the relationships they fostered with students, the opportunity to promote diversity in their mostly White environments, and the opportunity to be role models for the Black and minority students.

Student relationships. All participants discussed the positive relationships they established with the students they teach. A universal feeling among all teachers is that they built such student rapport by being “honest” and “fair” when communicating with their students. Also, all teachers described the importance of maintaining positive relationships with their students. For instance, Mr. Charles stated,

It’s all about building those relationships, letting them know what my expectations are and then following through with those—the positives that come
along with meeting those expectations and the consequences for not meeting them. It’s very cut and dry with me. The kids know that I’m fair, but they also know that I’m not a pushover (M. Charles, Interview, January 5, 2016).

Mr. Williams expresses a similar sentiment in describing how he establishes the rules for his classroom. He also discussed how he sometimes uses incentives to build rapport and motivate his students. Such positive reinforcement is not only effective, but it is also remembered by many of his former middle school students. He explained,

We talk about the school climate and the class climate is how I present that, and my students, I tell them all the time that, “You do well, I’m going to reward you,” and I do. When the class does well on a test, I reward them. I’ll bring popsicles in. I’m ‘The Popsicle Guy’ now, and I always tell, “Alumni takes precedence over the rookies,” meaning, if you’re in my class, some of the guys up in high school now, they come back, and if I have two popsicles left, the alumni gets it. “Sorry. You’re still here in class.”...so you build a rapport with them for learning. I’ve had a class where I had just some knuckleheads, but by the end of that school year, these guys are stepping. I tell them because learning is so important, as well as their confidence (B. Williams, Interview, December 29, 2015).

Other teachers discussed how they openly express and share their personality with their classroom students. For instance, in relating to her high school students, Mrs. Chambers said,

Well I’ve never been one to take myself too seriously. I kind of like to joke around and goof around a little bit. I think them knowing that I’m kind of laid back and
I'm there to help them and I always make that very clear is that I'm here to help you learn so that you can be something outside of these school walls. I think just honesty and being up front with them and telling them what your goal is for them even. I honestly think that a lot of them just really knew—once they knew that I believed that they could do it that was all they needed was somebody who believed in them (S. Chambers, Interview, January 25, 2016).

Mrs. Tanika Morris, in explaining the interaction she has with her elementary students, plainly stated, “Students love me. I love them.” She further described how she builds and maintains such relationships with students by relating an anecdote about situation she once had where a student’s parent seemed hesitant to have her child in her classroom. The parent expressed that Tanika “…may not be a good fit for her child,” to which Mrs. Morris expressed, “I think that what she meant was, ‘We don’t interact with Black people.’” However, in order to get to know the student better and begin to build a relationship with him, Mrs. Morris stated, “…We would have lunch together, and I would talk to him just to get him comfortable with me, and ask I would ask him questions. He was fine. That’s the thing that I noticed…The kids are fine.”

Mrs. Edwards manages to be both demanding, yet light-hearted at time with her elementary students; she declared,

I'm strict. I have high expectations for the students, but I can be fun with them. I know when to laugh and joke. I dance and sing in the classroom with them. I know when to be funny and to have fun with them, but they know when it's time
to buckle down and work, that Mrs. Edwards means business (H. Edwards, Interview, January 18, 2016).

For Mrs. Lawrence, a large part of building positive student relationship involves creating a “home” like atmosphere for all students in her classroom. She also invests time in her students outside of the classroom by supporting them at extracurricular activities. She explained,

When we first come into school at the beginning of the year is the expectations and to let them know, “Yes, I’m your teacher, but I’m also your friend. We have to be respectful to everyone and we always include anyone and everyone.” We set that type of atmosphere up for a good month where the kids—we have what we call [“Lawrence’s Heroes”], where the kids come in and we have lunch together. We have a Lunch Bunch. Sometimes I call them on weekends. A lot of my kids are involved with a lot of sports and gymnastics and musicals, and I go to those things. I support the kids, not only Monday through Friday, but Sunday through Monday, or Sunday through the next Monday, I should say. Sunday to Sunday, there we go. There’s a lot of personal connection with them that I set up with the kids. That’s not just the first couple of months. I do it throughout the year… Any time that the kids—there are several kids that have been in the Nutcracker. I’m always there. Swim meet, I’m there on the weekends with them (H. Lawrence, Interview, January 13, 2016).

Promoting diversity. Another opportunity the participants described was using their position as either the only or one of few Black teachers in their respective schools a
chance to illustrate the value of diversity. In some instances, the teachers through direct interact with their White colleagues; in other cases teachers explicitly taught diversity to their students either through culturally relevant teaching tactics in or by sharing of their personal life experiences with in the classroom.

Michael Charles, as the only person of color in his building, understands his role as a Black educator is to not only work with students but to also teach his peers to consider the needs of minority students. He explained,

It means I have to help people to see from a wider lens… I have to help them to be more attuned to issues that aren’t strictly behavior. What I mean by that is they have to look at kids from a cultural aspect. The way that a kid might behave might be a cultural thing. It may not be something that they just express due to a situation or an action at school (M. Charles, Interview, January 14, 2016).

When asked how he feels about this role, Michael stated, “I don’t mind it but it is frustrating that you’ve got essentially the black man teaching the white adults that they are not the only race in the world…”

Baldwin Williams believes it is important to use his role as an African American teacher as an opportunity to teach diversity by challenging the assumptions of students in is mostly White classroom. One way Mr. Williams does this is by sharing his varied life experiences with his middle school students. He declared,

When I share my experience, it is almost as, “Wow, we didn’t believe that you did that or that that happened to you”….it allows them to know that you have other experiences other than academics, that you are a whole person beyond here. They
know something more about you. I think the more than they learn about your life, the more you relate to them, the better the bonding becomes... When I tell them, Black and White, when I tell it to the White students, they’re in shock because—not shock, but surprised because they don’t expect an African-American to have traveled to 50 something countries, speak four languages (B. Williams, Interview, December 29, 2015).

Mr. Williams also described a culturally relevant community service lesson he use to force students to think beyond their perspectives by exposing them to the world beyond the borders of their school and neighborhoods. He explained,

We have a community service day, which is we have the kids go out and do things in the community...We bring 180-something, almost 200, both teachers and all, for a whole day. We walk the neighborhood showing the history of Second Baptist Church. We show them the history of The Lincoln [theater]. They do tours. They see performances, and they walk through and explain the history, how this area helped to support Allen because a lot of Jewish families that are there (B. Williams, Interview, December 29, 2015).

Sheryl Chambers described promoting diversity in her classroom as something is inherent, partially due to the part of her curriculum that focuses on international business. She said, “…Pretty much everything I do is business and marketing and sales-related, so it comes in as far as we talk about the different cultures that people have and how they expect different things…” However, Mrs. Chambers described the very direct lesson about different cultures she uses with her high school students. She stated,
I have this entire class brainstorm every stereotype they can, based on race. Then we just kind of go through and we talk about who knows somebody who’s this race, and then we say, “Okay, do they do this?” Then we just kind of go through all those different ones like that. Then we go further by talking about what you can expect, like if you see a person of this nationality walk into your store, how should you approach them? I’ve never really had problems doing that. I mean, I get nervous every year just thinking that somebody’s going to take it too far or get extremely inappropriate, but so far I have not had that… in my opinion that lesson is kind of a safe way to explore some of their curiosities and to get answers to things that they would like to know but are too polite to ask. I also think that it kind of helps them to accept other people (S. Chambers, Interview, January 25, 2016).

Mrs. Morris described the importance of using culturally relevant lessons to which her elementary students can relate and which are connected to larger, life lessons. She stated, They love it…we were just learning in our course about Martin Luther King… We were talking about not just him, but being peaceful. He believed in peace. I said, “If you get into an argument with your little brother over a toy or something, how do you settle that? That disagreement? Do you fight? Do you whatever?” We talked about that. Then we talked about segregation. We talked about how in that day I wouldn’t have been able to be their teacher. Everybody, said, “What?!” [Chuckles] I said, “Yeah, that was part of segregation. You guys wouldn’t have been able to be friends.” Then we talked about just treating people different
because of one thing. If I took all the kids who have jeans on, and I gave them tickets— which is this thing we do in our school. I gave them tickets, but only people with jeans. I’m going around, and attempting to give high fives to everybody. I asked, “Why aren’t you giving me a high five? What’s wrong? You get a ticket—” They responded, “Because look over there. So and so is upset. They don’t get one. That’s not fair!” We talk about just those kind of things—equality and social justice issues, and try to do it with just in a fun way so they get it (T. Morris, Interview, January 27, 2016).

In her current placement as an elementary school math teacher, Mrs. Edwards spoke about how she manages to provide culturally relevant lessons for her classes and for the school as a whole. She stated,

Being it's math, it is a little difficult to implement the cultural elements, but I did come up with an idea over this past summer where the students would have to do a report on a famous mathematician. I didn't want it just to be African American mathematicians. I wanted to be culturally balanced, so I wanted some Caucasians, some African Americans, Hispanics, Asians, and Native Americans…Now with Black History Month coming up next month, I always spearhead the morning announcements with a moment in Black history…Every morning in the month of February, we have a moment in Black history, as I call it. The principals…They've always agreed. The kids volunteer, and they practice ahead of time…I've always gotten positive reinforcement, reviews from the teachers (H. Edwards, Interview, January 18, 2016).
At her school, Mrs. Lawrence does a specific lesson for Black History Month—a Black wax museum in which students must research a specific, notable Black person and present their findings by taking on the persona of the individual and speaking to museum visitors. Mrs. Lawrence discussed the value of this lesson and other culturally relevant lessons she utilizes; she stated,

> When we do this big Black history presentation, the kids are just blown away as to some of the inventors that they never thought had done this. I have a little boy that is now in sixth grade. He’s African-American, but he was adopted by a Caucasian family as a baby. His mother was just in tears by the time he left my class because she said, “I now feel like my son belongs.” He still to this day comes to see me. I think he realizes now, “I don’t have to be White. I don’t have to have light-colored eyes and light hair to be known and feel that I can be what I want to be.” ... Just because I am in a minority in my building, I try to hit as many different cultures that I possibly can... I even have a culture unit where my children pick a different country. They have to research it. At the end of the unit they have to bring artifacts—either clothing or food or whatever they would bring—to represent that country (H. Lawrence, Interview, January 13, 2016).

**Role models for black and minority students.** Several teachers also discussed the importance their presence in mostly White schools has for their Black and minority students. In many instances, they are act not only as a role model for these students but also a confidante. An example of this is one the experiences Mr. Michael Charles shared. He stated,
I had a kindergartener who was one of two African-American children in his class and the other African-American student in his class moved away. I happened to walk in the room because of the nature of my job and dealing with different kids in different classrooms. I walk in the room, make sure everybody is okay in terms of behavior, if they need to be pulled out or if they’re maintaining or not maintaining. I’m checking on one particular student that was not even him. I sat next to him on the carpet and they’re engaged with their teacher and he turns to me and he says, “Mr. Charles, Kayla is gone.” I said, “Yeah, she went to a different school.” He said, “Now I’m the only brown one.” That’s not a comment that he would’ve made to his regular teacher (M. Charles, Interview, January 14, 2016).

In her experiences at predominantly White school, Mrs. Tanika Morris has come to realize that being present in her current teaching environment is important for both parents and their students. She explained,

> When they find out their child has me, they’re like, “Yes! We wanted so and so to have you as a teacher!” I think they want their kids to see somebody Black teaching as well. I had one situation I’ll tell you about when I was walking through the halls. There was this little boy. I think he was an African boy, but he’s having a hard time. He had just moved... He saw me in the hallway. I didn’t even know who he was. Never seen him before. His eyes got so big, and he just ran up to me, and just grabbed me and hugged me. I’m hugging him. I’m like, “Hi, honey.” I’m like, “What’s your name?” He tells me his name. He was like,
“There’s more of us!” He was so happy to see another Black person (T. Morris, Interview, January 27, 2016).

Mrs. Harriet Edwards, has similarly experienced Black and minority parents being excited their students are in her class; she explained,

I think my role is just as important to the Blacks as it is to the Whites, maybe more—a little more important to the Black kids and definitely more important to the Black parents. I know that on Meet the Teacher Day when the parents come the first day in August, the Black students are surprised—I mean, excuse me—the Black parents are surprised that I’m Mrs. Edwards, even though parents talk, for some reason some of the incoming parents don’t know that I’m an African American teacher. They don’t know that there’s a Black teacher at their student’s—at their kid’s school. I remember the first couple of—first day, a couple of the parents—and this is a little girl I have in my class and she’s not African American. She looks maybe mixed Asian-something, Black, a mixture of something and her father was like, “Oh, I’m so glad my daughter’s in your class.” I had just met him. I hadn’t done my presentation yet so I really didn’t know what it was about, but I guess just by the way that I looked and maybe was dressed and carried myself, he was happy to see that (H. Edwards, Interview, January 18, 2016).

Because she attended a high school demographically similar to the one she in which currently teaches, Mrs. Chambers empathizes with the Black minority students in her building. She stated,
I try to be a role model for the other minority students at the school, just to say, “Hey, if you—you can do whatever you want to do.” I think I’m kind of like every student’s cheerleader. I keep telling them all, “Whatever you want to do, you can do it.” I really try to work with the—not really work with, but I talk to the, a lot of the minority or the Black students about just some of the—sometimes they have problems where they don’t feel like they fit in or they think that they’re being persecuted or something like that… (S. Chambers, Interview, January 25, 2016).

Challenges. The challenges this study’s participants faced as Black teachers in largely White schools were another prominent theme that emerged from the analysis of the qualitative data. Although the teachers worked in different settings and taught different subjects and grade levels, many of them described similar obstacles. As a whole, the challenges they shared were all related to their token status were gaining entrée into predominantly White school districts, the negative effects of being a racial token in their schools, and encountering incidents of racism and implicit bias.

Gaining entrée. One challenge nearly all participants described was being allowed to the opportunity to be hired by their respective districts. In some cases, the participants were not directly recruited by the White school districts or did not go through the traditional employment channels in gaining admittance. For example, Mr. Charles stated that he “stumbled into the position” at Allen City Schools. Prior to being hired as a teacher for the district, he worked for an educational service facility that was contracted to provide services to the district. When a teaching position became available he was
made of the public posting, applied, and interviewed twice. It was not until after he accepted the teaching placement that he understood the obstacle he had overcome. Mr. Charles stated,

After I got the position, and before I actually started teaching, there were friends that I talked to about it that were from [a Midwestern state], and they were amazed that I got hired with the school system because as far as they knew not many minorities in general-- Black, Latino, Asian, any type of minority really got hired into Allen City Schools. It’s more about who you know and getting hired through that way. Typically us being not the majority of this community, get hired on for that very reason (M. Charles, Interview, January 5, 2016).

For Sheryl Chambers, as previously discussed, her difficulty in gaining entrée into her currently predominantly White district was partly because her previous district did not want to release her from her teaching contract. However, a year later when she was released, the principal with whom she had previously interviewed sought her out to re-interview for the same job vacancy and she was hired. Although Sheryl stated that believed she was qualified for the job, she also expressed that she feels “lucky” to be working for Caldwell. She also stated that the difficulty in gaining being hired as teacher for her district has less to do with race and more to with the fact that Caldwell is district in which many teachers want to work. She explained,

When I applied, there were, I want to say, 60 job openings and 1500 applicants. Just that alone makes me understand how desirable the school district is. I already know if you don’t do your job they have no problem getting rid of you, because
there’s a line of people who will do it properly. That’s regardless of race (S. Chambers, Interview, January 25, 2016).

Mrs. Tanika Morris’s experiences also reflect the difficulty of being hired by her predominantly White school district. As previously mentioned, she had worked for several years at a two different charter schools and was actively seeking employment at a school district that would offer her more opportunities for professional growth. She explained, “I wanted something that would give me more professional development. I already knew about Beauregard. I had been trying to get into the district for three years. There were no real people trying to get me in there, so I was just like, ‘Well, I’m going to keep trying...’” However after her mother (a member of a minority parent’s group) had a conversation with the district’s Superintendent about the lack of teacher diversity, she was granted a certified interview that led to her being hired.

Two participants, Mr. Baldwin Williams and Mrs. Harriet Edwards described working as substitute teachers for their respective school districts before being hired as full-time classroom teachers. As previously described, Mr. Williams began teaching as a second career and originally inquired about a position in a nearby urban school district but never received any response to his inquiry. He then encouraged by friends to begin substitute teaching in Allen City Schools; Mr. Williams stated,

I really didn’t see it as a first option because I always heard that it was a predominantly White school with a heavy Jewish influence, and that they hired the best teachers, but definitely there aren’t too many African Americans in that school system for one reason or another. I said, “Well, hey, I’m not going to
waste my time there.” Then when I got called in as a sub, I said, “Okay, this is good” (B. Williams, Interview, December 29, 2015).

After working as substitute teaching for a few years, he was encouraged by school administrators to become a certified teacher, and afterwards was hired as a full-time teacher by the school district.

In similar manner, Mrs. Edwards acquired her teaching position by first working as a substitute teacher. Unlike, Mr. Williams she was a teacher previously, but postponed her career for sixteen years to raise her children. However as her children grew older, she decided to re-join the work force and become more involved in their school district (Caldwell) by substitute teaching there. In recalling how her substitute experience helped her get hired, she stated,

While I was subbing, I got to know the buildings and the different teachers and the administrators within the buildings, and I also would get calls. Back then …it wasn't online… we would actually get a call in the morning. I began to get calls in from the sub lady that would call. She would say that different teachers were requesting me to sub for them. By 2000, I got a call from one of the building principals, and they—he offered me a full-time teaching position in his building to begin in the fall of 2000 (H. Edwards, Interview, January 18, 2016).

**Role encapsulation.** Another challenge that nearly all participants faced was being either the only or one of few Blacks or minorities in their school buildings.

Although none of the teachers interview used the term “token” to describe themselves, they all were aware of their states and felt many of the effects of tokenism as described
by Kanter (1977). In some cases such effects were experienced negatively. One of the
negatives some the teachers described was role encapsulation or being attributed to only
specific roles or responsibilities because of their racial status. An example of this was
related by Mr. Michael Charles, who was hired as a Special Education teacher, is often
called upon to deal with the discipline issues of many students in his building. He states,

I really don’t have a set group of kids that I teach all day long. It’s almost like a
revolving door with my classroom. In that, there’s kind of like a catchall. I’ll get
phone calls to my classroom about students that don’t have anything to do with
me, but teachers need help just managing behavior. I get phone calls and emails
from parents about situations that weren’t handled well with administration in
terms of behavior management and how situations are handled…I don’t
particularly like it. If I were an administrator I would get it…. I feel like the Black
guy that’s managing the White kids, so to speak (M. Charles, Interview, January
5, 2016).

Mrs. Helen Lawrence discussed being sought out by her White colleagues for help in
dealing with Black students in their classrooms. She said,

If a teacher does have an African-American student, they do come to me often,
“What should I do in this situation when he acts out?” I may not have had that
child, but why do you come to me? Are you coming to me because I have the
same color of skin, or are you coming to me because I have a true way of calming
that child. That’s the difference. I have had colleagues come to me about students
that I never had. How do I handle that? …the first thing I asked them, “Are you
asking me because of the color of my skin, or are you asking me because you feel that I have strategies that will actually help that child.” Quite naturally it’s, “Oh, no, no, no, it’s the strategies,” but I know what—you automatically feel it and you know it (H. Lawrence, Interview, January 13, 2016).

In addition to being encapsulated as a disciplinarian or mediator for Black and minority students, some teachers are ascribed the role of being the spokesperson for all Black people. Mrs. Tanika Morris provided one example when she stated,

At times, I don’t like it. At times, I’m glad that they’re asking the questions. It’s kind of two-fold for me. I definitely can’t speak for my race, because everybody’s different… I don’t have all the answers. They do come to me with questions. My principal, he used to give people nicknames. Especially if their name was hard to pronounce, he would just give them a nickname. The kids loved it. They thought it was funny… I had to pull him to the side and say, “We need to learn their name. That’s part of who they are. When you shorten it, it’s saying that you don’t care about them. We need to make sure that we take that and really try to learn who they are, the whole child.” When we had that conversation, now, even in the announcements—it’s hard, but he pronounces full names, or he either asks the kid what they prefer to be called….I do think speaking, being an advocate is okay sometimes for my race... It can get tiring at times. (T. Morris, Interview, January 27, 2016)

A few participants acknowledged being associated with specific roles due to their token status; however, they did not perceive such encapsulation as a negative. On the contrary,
they viewed this aspect of their token status as a responsibility to better serve Black and minority students, and to counteract negative stereotypes of African Americans. For instance, Mr. Baldwin Williams stated,

> When they [Black students] go wrong, they know someone is going to jump on their case, and especially some of the guys who think that they are the best football or basketball player and they don’t have to do their work. I make it clear to them, and when they have issues with attitude, I go right to them and I say, “You know what? Let me tell you something about attitude. Yes, you’re good at this and good at that, but you have to get your work done…There’s a lot of people in the jail with that same attitude. They happen to look like you…” You have to put that in them, also. I think, so for me being in that White environment, I took, in some cases, it could be a negative, but I’ve turned it into making it a positive because I realize I have a role that I have to fulfill (B. Williams, Interview, December 29, 2015).

Mrs. Harriet Edwards, similarly, uses her position as one the few African American teachers in school to specifically address the needs of Back students. She said,

> I have had instances where I have had to pull African American boys aside into the hallway to talk to them because they're the ones cutting up. Not the only ones, but… when I see the African American boys, the minority that they are in the building, cutting up, acting a fool, and turning out, I have to talk to them…Little White girls start wearing makeup when they're in fifth grade, and that drives me crazy... The Black girls are swayed to want to do that because that's the culture
that they're in. I talk to them. "You don't need that. You don't need makeup. Your skin is beautiful. Your hair is beautiful." I try to reinforce all of that… I don't favor the African American kids, but there is something special between us because we look alike (H. Edwards, Interview, January 18, 2016).

High visibility. As Black teachers in mostly White school settings, the participants in this study were all highly visible. As a result of this, many also felt pressure to perform better or do more than their White counterparts. When his school hired him, Mr. Michael Charles recalled that he felt the need to prove himself—particularly because he was hired to replace a White male teacher whom (according to accounts of his peers) was not effective in dealing with special needs students. Michael described his high visibility and resulting pressures when he said,

Some teachers made comments to the fact that I was quiet when I first started. I may have been. It was observing the scene, seeing things and how they would go. It was definitely awkward walking into a situation where I am the only minority, even down to support staff... Then like I said, given my predecessor, I think people were on guard already. I think they were initially off put by the fact that I was quiet. I would chime in and ask questions... I just came in, asked about specific students that were on my caseload, took down notes and then continued on with my plans...I think the sense from what I heard about being was maybe I won’t handle it, I can’t handle it. It’s kind of like they took the silence as weakness. (M. Charles, Interview, January 5, 2016).
As she is only one of two African American teachers in her building, Mrs. Chambers initially admitted to being sensitive to performance pressures because of her race. She said,

I feel like I'm constantly having to prove myself because people always have their preconceived notions of who you are because of how you look. I don't get this feeling from anyone I work with or as far as my principals or administrators, … I don’t get it from the principals or co-workers, but… from the community, the parents, …I kind of get the feeling like if I screw up at all, no matter how minor it is, it's going to be a huge issue (S. Chambers, Interview, January 7, 2016).

However, Sheryl also believed some of the pressure she feels is not solely due to her high visibility but because she does not teach a core curricular subject. She said, “…I’m constantly trying to show my value to the district of why they should keep not just me but my program.” Mrs. Chambers also attributed the pressure to teaching at an academically high performing school. Sheryl explained,

I think we...have really high standards. We expect a lot from our students because our taxpayers expect a lot out of us. The only way for us to give them what they expect is for us to demand it out of the students. We have very high standards…most of my students, if they’re not getting an A, they’re upset. I mean, it can even be an A minus, but the lowest they can get in their mind that’s acceptable is an A minus (S. Chambers, Interview, January 25, 2016)

She later discussed being aware of her high visibility and described her feelings about the manner in which others perceive her because of it. She explained,
A lot of times people will assume that since I’m…one of the only Black teachers there and still am one of the only few, that I always feel like people assume that I was a—oh geez, what’s the word—affirmative action hire. That really annoys me because, in my opinion, I got the job because I was qualified for the job. I don’t like people assuming that I was an Affirmative Action hire on the behalf of the district (S. Chambers, Interview, February 10, 2016).

Mrs. Tanika Morris admitted to feeling performance pressures because of the high demands of her school and district. She said, “…it’s pressure. It’s a lot of pressure. I think the expectation is that you just need to be just this superstar teacher and be able to handle it without complaining and get it done…” She further described how she meets the pressures by not only teaching her elementary classes, but also voluntarily coordinating a student diversity group at her school. Although she recognized the necessity of the extra work she does with the students, she admitted to feeling her efforts may not be noted, especially by her administrators. She stated,

I feel like I’m doing ten times the amount of a normal—of a regular teacher, and not getting any kind of—I mean, I get some appreciation for it, but I just feel …my evaluation, should be higher. If I’m doing more, it should be higher. If I’m taking my personal time to plan for this extra position I have, I should be getting compensated, you know? Just, I don't know. I feel like it’s not that way... I just feel the expectation’s not the same for me, being in the skin that I’m in (T. Morris, Interview, January 27, 2016).
Harriet Edwards is conscious of her visibility as one of few African American teachers in her building; however, having worked several years in her current setting, she does not feel any additional performance pressures because of her race. She did recall having a feeling of such pressures when she was first hired. She stated,

I think in me going into a setting that I knew was….all White teachers, and a few Black kids, African kids, kids of our non-White races…. I had to make sure I was on my Ps and Qs because I did not want any—I don't want to put off any messages or give any vibes based on what White people may have thought Black people are based on the media or anything…I know in my mind, I had to go in with my best…” (H. Edwards, Interview, January 18, 2016)

Having grown up in a predominantly White suburb, Mrs. Helen Lawrence, spoke at length about being taught that she always had to “be better to be average”; she also applies this lesson to her professional life. As an example, she shared the follow anecdote about coping with the pressure she experienced in preparing her students for state mandated testing:

I stayed up all night. I created a lesson to introduce multi-paragraphs, to introduce writing across two or three, four pages…. Here’s the thing. Yes, I worry about that. I think I’m more nervous than anyone. I think the reason for that is because I have always—always—been raised that “You’ve got be on it… you can’t slip up a little bit because of who you are” …I work really hard. I research things. I do whatever I can to make sure that my kids achieve because I don’t want them to think, “Oh, this African American teacher is just—she’s not pulling the weight.”
I want my numbers to look just as good or better than any of the others (H. Lawrence, Interview, January 13, 2016).

**Implicit bias and overt racism.** The participants in this study described the challenge of dealing with racism in their predominantly White settings. Although not a daily occurrence, such incidents were vividly recalled, and all participants shared notable examples of either implicit bias (i.e. stereotypical assumptions based on subconscious beliefs) or overt racism. For example, Mr. Michael Charles has faced several incidents of implicit bias. As a Black man who is large in stature, he often feels acutely aware of how others regard him. He explained,

People are intimidated by my race, coupled with the fact that I’m male. Coupled with the fact that I’m 6’5… It’s demeaning to me because commentary like that makes it seem like I don’t have skills beyond intimidation… They’ll [White Teachers] make comments about when I handled a situation in their classroom… You go to the teacher’s lounge and everybody’s having anecdotal discussions… “Yeah, he’s just so big and he has the deep voice and so of course kids are going to do what he says” (M. Charles, Interview, January 5, 2016).

Sometimes the racism Black teachers encounter is not implicit but overt. Mr. Baldwin Williams shared such an encounter he once had with a White student who was acting out in his class. In response the student’s behavior, Mr. Williams informed him that he would be visiting his home and speaking to his parents. Mr. Williams further elaborated,

He took that meaning, “Well, I’ll tell my parents to have some fried chicken.”

My response is that a racial thing or not? My response to him was, “Well, make
sure that he has collard greens and corn bread because I like those, too. Then, but guess what, I’ll be knocking at your door to find out why you’re misbehaving”

…I went to the principal with it; he said, “Oh, well, do we need to call him and talk to him?” I said, “No, because I’m bigger than that.” I was able to get back and gain respect from that individual and never had another problem out of him (B. Williams, Interview, December 29, 2016).

Mrs. Chambers did not recall experiencing overt racism at her current teaching placement. However, she described an incident of implicit bias where a parent may have viewed her as intimidating. She stated,

I had one time that I can think of that may have been related to that. I had a parent who was upset with the way something in class was handled, so instead of even coming to me to find out what actually happened they went straight to the principal and spoke to him about it…I just, I mean, I don’t know if that’s related to race, but I would just—I just know from talking to other teachers that that parent has no problem going to other teachers and talking to them, but the fact that they went around me to the principal kind of made me feel like they were intimidated by me (S. Chambers, Interview, January 25, 2016).

More to the point, Mrs. Chambers discussed how White students, after having her class for few years, have shared how they initially saw her as intimidating as well. She said,

I’ve actually had a student tell me that she thought that I was going to be mean and she thought I was going to be really tough. I just looked at her and I said, “I am mean and really tough.” They just have this expectation that—especially the
ones who have never had a Black teacher before. They just assume that I’m going to be all rules, no play...I’ve actually had one student say that she thought that I was going to be tougher on the White students than the Black students. I’m just like, “No, I expect the same from everyone” (S. Chambers, Interview, January 25, 2016).

Mrs. Harriet Edwards experienced implicit bias near the beginning of her career in her current school. One incident that occurred a few weeks before school opened and she entered the building with her daughter to begin setting up her classroom for the year. As she entered the office, she remembers older, White administrative assistance greeting her rudely by simply asking, “What do you want?” Once Harriet introduced herself as the new sixth grade teacher, the lady’s tone softened. However Mrs. Edwards stated, “I was taken aback by that and I do think it had to do with her perception of a Black person.”

Additionally, there were other incidents of implicit bias during her early years at this predominantly White school. She recalled experiences where her role in the classroom was assumed to be that of “the help” instead of the classroom teacher.

She stated,

A parent or—who else could it be—someone from the board office or something would come into my classroom and would assume that the extra in the classroom was Mrs. Edwards, that I wasn't the teacher….They would come into the classroom. The kids might be busy working. I might be working with a small group. The IS [instructional specialist] might be working with a small group. The teaching assistant might be working with a small group. They would go to one of
the White teachers and say, "Mrs. Edwards?" Why couldn't I be Mrs. Edwards? (H. Edwards, Interview, January 18, 2016)

Mrs. Helen Lawrence, on occasion, has also faced with racial assumptions from her colleagues. She described one example in the following manner:

We had an exercise class at one time at our school, years ago. I remember one of the colleagues and the principal had asked if I could show them—or show the teachers a certain dance. I looked at them and I said, “Why do you think I know this dance?” They said, “Well, you’re Black. Black people know line dances.” I’m like, “What does that have to do with the price of tea in China? There are plenty of African-American people that don’t dance.” No, I’m not saying I don’t dance. They perceived the fact that this is a line dance and the song that went with this line dance, that automatically that I knew how to do it. I felt a little strange on that (H. Lawrence, Interview, January 18, 2016).

On the contrary, Mrs. Tanika Morris discussed fostering a positive persona with her colleagues and administrators. In spite of this, she still perceives that she is not implicitly respected in the same manner as the White teachers in her building. She explained, I’m known as fun, funny, energetic, always a good laugh—that kind of thing—which is nice. I think it definitely helps for people to feel comfortable around you, and you make friends besides just colleagues. I think that’s nice. Also, you want to be taken seriously…you want people to know, “I deserve to be here just like you. I’m not just here to provide the entertainment” (S. Chambers, Interview, January 27, 2016).
Racial identity as strength. In spite many of challenges, the participants of this study have managed to face and endure their obstacles. One emergent theme that described how many of the participants faced the challenges of the their predominantly White settings is the perception of their racial identity. To many of the teachers in this study, being Black or African American was not simply a racial classification, but more importantly it was a source of pride and strength.

For Mr. Michael Charles, proudly identifying as Black or African American allowed him to counteract the negative stereotypes and incidents of implicit bias he often faced. He stated, “For me the some of my parts can be summed up in my race, who I am, somebody strong, somebody educated, somebody very capable, more capable than others perceive me to be based on my looks.”

Mr. Baldwin Williams spoke at great length about his racial identity in relating stories of his life history. Having grown up in mostly Black neighborhoods and attending schools (both in America and in the Caribbean) that were predominantly Black, Baldwin states that he “never felt inferior” or like a second-class citizen. He often referred to that part of his life history when explaining how he understood his experiences in his predominantly White school and how he coped with the pressures of his current setting. He said,

Instead of...buckling up under it, I take it and embrace that. Therefore, I come with a lot of stuff because my ancestry is great. There’s nothing to feel inferior of or to feel, “Oh, well, I can’t do this. I can’t do that.” Really, it empowers me to take charge of the class and make it very clear to them that, if you have a problem
with who I am, that’s on you, but here’s the situation. I’m here to give you knowledge (B. Williams, Interview, December 29, 2015).

Mrs. Sheryl Chambers, who grew up in a neighborhood and attended schools similar in racial make-up to her current work environment, acknowledges her racial identity; however she did not believe it played a large role in how she currently is perceived as teacher in her high school setting. She stated,

…I think I do reach out to the minority students, not just Black but all of the minority students at our school. I feel I reach out to them a little bit more just because I grew up in a very similar type of environment as far as the high school goes, being in the minority. Other than reaching out to them, just letting them know I get it, I don’t really feel that it makes that big of a difference (S. Chambers, Interview, February 10, 2016).

In narrating her life history, Mrs. Tanika Morris describes having many experiences in both predominantly White and mostly Black settings. She also attributed the development of her racial identity to those experiences and to the influence of her mother. When asked what being Black means to her, Tanika said,

It means a lot to me. I think it's just really part of who I am and what I relate—the type of people that I relate to in my personal life. Yeah. It means a great deal to me. I consider myself, when I describe who I am, I'm [Tanika], a strong Black woman…it's always been instilled in me that way. My mom would talk to me about feeling good about who I am, being comfortable with the skin I'm in…She's always just instilled in me that part of your culture, like, "You are a strong Black
woman." I've just continued that as I've gotten older and also instilled it into my own kids… I just want my kids to know that regardless of your race, that you are just as important… and that being a Black person comes with a responsibility. It comes with history and being proud of who you are and being proud of that (T. Morris, Interview, February 4, 2016).

Mrs. Harriet Edwards described having a similar feeling about her racial identity. She also reflected upon her upbringing in a predominantly Black neighborhood and her college experiences have shaped that identity. She further believed working in a predominantly White school setting deepened the pride she has in being Black. She stated,

Well, I’ve always identified as a Black woman, as an African American woman and reflecting on my childhood and the experiences that I’ve shared growing up and college, and then my current role as a teacher in my school district, I think that my racial identity has become stronger... Yes, in entering the current role that I play in the current school district, it was a bit—there was some maybe fear and anxiety knowing that I would be teaching in a predominantly Caucasian school district with predominantly Caucasian kids, but I feel like my sense of who I am as a Black woman actually has become stronger by being put—by working and teaching in the environment that I’m in. I feel like I’m stronger as a Black woman. I feel that I have set the standard for Black women even though I don’t see a lot of them in my district, in my building… (H. Edwards, Interview, January 23, 2016). Mrs. Helen Lawrence related many incidents of being racial token as
she grew up, went to college, and eventually began working in a predominantly White school; as a result of these experiences, she developed “thick skin” which has helped her both confront the challenges of tokenism and be proud of her racial identity. In discussing how she viewed herself a Black teacher in her current school she stated,

I embrace who I am and I want them to be comfortable with me because I’m already comfortable with who I am… I think just accepting who I am. I was always raised I was different. I have different color skin….As I got older and my skin became thicker, once again because of what I had to endure, that I’m comfortable with who I am is the bigger asset for me (H. Lawrence, Interview, January 27, 2016).

**The necessity of external support systems.** All the participants in this study discussed the importance of external support in enduring the performance pressures of their placements in mostly White schools. Specifically, the teachers identified support as coming from following three areas: teacher mentors, colleagues and administrators, and family members.

**Teacher mentors.** One of the important external support systems the teachers in this study described was having a mentor to help them cope with the pressures of the token status. In some cases, the participants described how their teacher training programs or the respective school districts’ themselves provided such a mentor, but in other scenarios the teachers’ colleagues served as mentors.

Finding a teacher mentor was driving force for Mr. Michael Charles as he began his career as an educator. In narrating his life history, he discussed how the lack of a
mentor was one of the reasons he moved from one urban district to another during his earlier years as a teacher. However, prior to getting hired for his initial teaching placement, Michael recalled one of his undergraduate professors serving as an unofficial mentor and helping shape his classroom management style. He stated, “I will definitely credit [her]… She ironically was the professor who I did a year of classroom management classes with and she really spoke to the fact that nobody will be teaching anything unless behavior management is at the forefront…” Additionally, Mr. Charles cited his student teaching experience and his lead teacher in a predominantly Black, urban school in which he was placed as another influential mentoring opportunity. He recalled,

My lead teacher that I was set up with was a White woman. She was one that saw the reality of the situation of her students, teaching students of color. She was frustrated with her White counterparts who were in the school basically collecting a paycheck. It was interesting because it was almost like a crash course that I should have gotten in the school that I didn’t get… (M. Charles, Interview, January 14, 2016).

Because he did not become a teacher through the traditional route, Mr. Baldwin Williams did not have a student teaching placement, nor was he assigned a mentor by his district when he became a full-time teacher. However he found a mentor in the guise of the only other Black teacher in the school, who has since retired. At the time, Mr. Williams was still a long-term substitute, but this gentleman encouraged him to pursue becoming a full-time teacher. Baldwin further stated,
He kind of had the same attitude that, “I may be here, and I may be the only Black, but I’m not going to take any stuff. I’m going to enjoy y’all, but you’re going to respect what I do.” I had a couple of years with him and team taught with him. He was Language Arts. In that team teaching, I mean, he was just magnificent in that he taught me or helped to polish that attitude that we have to do something here… He’d say, “I was here when it was only me for ten years in this school.” He said, “The only person that came that was of color before I left was you, …Now you have to carry the ball, and you have to do it your way” (B. Williams, Interview, December 29, 2015).

As previously stated in her profile, one the mentors who first encouraged Mrs. Sheryl Chambers was her high school Marketing teacher. She said, “…to this day, we still communicate because she really was my mentor. I ended up teaching the same thing she did.” Although, she did not recall anyone in her current school serving as a mentor, Mrs. Chambers does fondly remember having an influential teacher in her previous job placement. She stated,

She was our department head. She basically got me going and made sure I was—knew how to do everything, made sure I had my classroom management working well with myself and the students… I moved here to—the day after I graduated from college. I don’t have any family here, so I was here completely alone and she really just took me in and introduced me to her family and made me basically a part of her family (S. Chambers, Interview, January 25, 2016).
Mrs. Tanika Morris discussed two teachers who mentored her. The first, as previously discussed, was the teacher with whom she did her student teaching. She said, “… she was a White lady. Country— the Southern accent and everything. She was young and just really gave me some great insight to just everything— classroom organization, lesson planning, everything…” The other teacher she attributes to being her mentor is one who helped her get acclimated to her current, predominantly White school. Of this mentorship, Tanika said,

I actually befriended one lady when I first started teaching. We are still really close. She teaches another grade level. It was like that person that I could go to and like just lay everything out— all my frustrations. She was just really good, because she’s been in the district a long time. She could relate to that (T Morris, Interview, January 27, 2016).

Harriet Edwards also described having two teacher mentors. Her first was a teacher whom was assigned to her. She recalled,

As far as a professional mentor, I know when I was hired in 2000, one of the three teammates that I was hired with was my mentor that was assigned to me. She was a fine lady, and she helped a lot. Didn't have a whole lot of time to devote to me because she taught science and was caught up in her curriculum and everything, and I was new and trying to figure out what I was doing (H. Edwards, Interview, January 18, 2016).

Mrs. Edward’s other mentor was a fellow colleague with whom she bonded through work. Of this relationship, Harriet said,
The one teacher that I mentioned, I taught with for 15 years. Actually, she was just restarting her career at the same time. She is ten years older than I am, and she just retired this school year. She was not put in the position as my mentor per se. She just developed as a mentor because we worked so closely together. Not only was she a mentor for me professionally, but she became a dear friend and a confidant for things outside of the classroom (H. Edwards, Interview, January 18, 2016).

**Collegial and administrative support.** Another support system all the teachers in this study discussed as imperative to be being a Black Teacher in a mostly White school is the help they have received from their colleagues, building administrators, or other district administrators. Michael Charles did not note any significant support from any of his building colleagues, and on more than one occasion he described his current administrator’s leadership as weak. However, Mr. Charles has received help from other sources within in his district. He stated,

Being within this school district I’ve really relied on the person who is in that director or community engagement position, and really do what I call wellness checks with them, because they are, both the previous position—the person previous to the one currently, have both been minorities and they’ve both been African American females as well. They know what it is to be a minority, and they very much get what it is to be a minority within the school district that we’re in (M. Charles, Interview, January 5, 2016).
For Baldwin Williams, he discussed how he has support in the guise of the two other African American teachers who currently work with him. Mr. Williams believes that they not only support each other, but they each also fulfill a different role in relating to the White students and staff. Of them, Baldwin said,

The other gentleman, he’s jovial, but because of his stature being six foot something—he’s six foot… tall and he’s funny, but he’s more firm. The African American female who’s there, she is like this. “Oh, no, I’m not here to play.” She gives them care and attention, but when she says something, they don’t push her back. We both have the common denominator, but we express it differently. I’m smiling 99 percent of the time. She’s smiling 25 percent of the time, [laughter] and he’s smiling 80 percent. We’re able to, just by our different personalities, and we communicate, to keep each other balanced. If something is going left or center with the staff, we support each other on that (B. Williams, Interview, December 29, 2015).

Mr. Williams also discussed the positive support provided by his administrator. As described in a previously cited example, the principal helped him deal with racist student remarks. On another occasion, he described how his principal was proactively by removing a particular student from his class. Mr. Williams recalled,

He said, “The reason why we did that is because this parent has been a pain with other teachers, so we don’t want you to have that issue with her and him all along.” I said, “Let his behind stay in there,” but they made the call… I had one less headache I didn’t have to worry about, but they were saying because other
teachers, White teachers, had issues with this child and the parent interfering like that, so they said, “We’re going to spare you of that” (B. Williams, Interview, December 29, 2015).

Mrs. Sheryl Chambers, who often spoke about the positives of her current teaching placement, also described working in a very supportive building. Although she did not cite particular incidents, she openly described the general feeling she has about her colleagues and administrators. Of them she stated,

I have no problems with anyone. I get along with everybody at work. We have a very good staff…. Basically all of our principals have an open door policy; if we ever have any problems we can go to them and talk to them. They really don't ever seem to judge us. They really honestly try to help us solve problems instead of pointing fingers and saying, “You’re doing this wrong”; they help us to come up with a new way of trying to do something to solve a potential problem (S. Chambers, Interview, January 25, 2016).

Mrs. Tanika Morris described not having good administrative support in the two charter schools in which she worked at the beginning of her teaching career. However, when she first met and interviewed with her current principal, Tanika sensed he was different and was adamant about working under his leadership. In recalling her interview experience with him, she said,

I know I wasn’t the most qualified candidate, because I didn’t have the professional development or experience… He said, “Well, I’ll forward your name to some of my colleagues. We’ll see what we can do.” I already knew what that
meant, because I’ve heard it before. I was like, “You know what… Um, you can forward the name… I don’t want to work for anybody but you.” … [Chuckles] By the time we left the interview, we were singing Beyoncé together (T. Morris, Interview, January 27, 2016).

Moreover, in reference to the previously described incident of implicit bias where a parent expressed that she was not a good fit for her child, Tanika recalled how her principal actively supported her. She said, “… He said, ‘Well, they just going to have to get over it. I’m not moving the kid. I think that you’re doing a good job. Don’t worry about it’ He just reassured me.”

Additionally, Mrs. Morris discussed building and maintaining positive collaborative relationships with the other teachers in her building by eating lunch together during the school day and often having after work get-togethers. She also shared how an anecdote of a now defunct effort involved other minority teachers throughout the school district. She stated,

We tried to start a group… and we had a couple meet-ups. Just to kind of just have somebody who you can relate to, and talk to, and have that support. It just fell off. I feel like because you have a handful of Black people, and you spread them out over across [many] schools; we’re not together. The district is huge. We don’t see each other. It’s just hard to keep in touch, and also a lot of people are fearful of losing their job, or saying how they really feel… I do know the desire is there. People want to have that support (T. Morris, Interview, January 27, 2016).
From the start of her career in her current placement, Mrs. Harriet Edwards has had a good, nurturing relationship with her peers. She stated,

My co-workers were welcoming and I never felt that they didn’t want me to be there… The pressure that I put on myself I would say by the first or second year diminished because I saw that I was embraced and that I was welcomed (H. Edwards, Interview, January 23, 2016).

More to the point, Mrs. Edwards feels especially supported by her grade level colleagues with whom she closely works. In discussing this relationship she said,

Currently, the two ladies that I teach with now, I think—as silly as this may sound, I think we mentor each other. Like I said, the one lady is retired, and there's a new young lady that we hired. Even though she's new and fresh and young, I'm learning things from her as well... I think as we work together each day and meet together and collaborate, I think we're mentoring each other (H. Edwards, Interview, January 18, 2016).

Mrs. Helen Lawrence stated that she has good relationships with her colleagues, but credits her principal with being the most supportive in her predominantly White school. She declared,

I’m privileged to have a principal who’s Caucasian but yet still has come from the inner city schools. She understands the role of support. I think she diminishes a lot of negative talk or questions about “Who is this Black teacher?” versus “Who’s Mrs. Lawrence?” You know what I mean? There’s a big difference. With that support it’s a big—I hope that any minority that enters a suburban school would
get the support that I do from my administrators because they understand it. They understand that there are people that don’t know and that are uncomfortable; they may not be abreast to different cultures. You have to have that support because…. you can be very isolated and feel individualized if you don’t have that support of your administrators (H. Lawrence, Interview, January 27, 2016).

**Familial support.** Lastly, all the participants felt their families, both extended and immediate, provided a crucial, sustaining support outside of their school environments. For many, as previously discussed in their profiles, their families were instrumental in encouraging them to become educators. However, from the insights they shared, their families were equally as important in encouraging them to not only remain educators but to persist in teaching in their mostly White schools. Michael Charles shared that his mother was an educator and first influenced him to pursue the same profession. Now as he copes with the challenges of his current teaching placement, he relies upon family and friends for support and advice. Mr. Charles stated, 

There are a lot of conversations outside of school with family, with friends. Being an educator, I do have a lot of friends who are educators. Many, or the majority of which are minorities. They’re all in schools that really vary when it comes to demographics. There are some that are in situations like mine. The majority are in predominantly Black or predominant with some kind of minority, inner-city. It really ranges…It’s interesting in having conversations with them, and I seek out validation from them, like, “Is my feeling really left of center? Am I
overreacting? Did I take a little situation and make it bigger than it really is?” (M. Charles, Interview, January 5, 2016)

Baldwin Williams cited many examples of how the strength he instilled with by his parents and grandparents. He strongly believes that his upbringing has given him the racial pride to endure the challenges of being one of a few Black teachers in his school. However, he also believes the many experiences and encounters he has had throughout his life serve as a collective support system. He stated,

I remember years ago I was counting. I stopped doing it because it’s just too much. At one point, I’m trying to think how long ago, maybe about 20 years ago…. I counted all the people that have come in touch with me and gave me something that have died. It was over 200 of people that I had direct involvement in my existence…What I’m saying is that I had all that input into me that I still use today (B. Williams, Interview, January 18, 2016).

Mrs. Sheryl Chambers cited examples of how her family would often show support by often inquiring about her well-being and being there to listen her concerns. She explained,

My mom always asks me how things are going. My dad passed away a few years ago, so—but even then he would always ask me how things are going, how I like everything… My husband is very supportive as far as constantly asking me how my day was. My mom asks me how my day was, too. He likes to hear stories about my students. If I tell him a story about a student that is having difficulty or needs extra help, he actually remembers that and later on will ask me how so-and-
so is doing. Then he likes to come to school events with me, and so do the kids.

My students absolutely love seeing my kids (S. Chambers, Interview, January 25, 2016).

Tanika Morris had previously described how her mother’s support was instrumental in getting her hired by her current school district. She also discussed from whence her additional familial support comes. She stated,

Well, I go to church. I have my church family. I definitely pray. I have spiritual support system there with my church… Then at home, of course, my husband is a great support. He is in a management position. He’s able to relate a lot of the stuff that he goes through with his staff to what I may go through at work. That’s nice. I have a lot of support (H. Edwards, Interview, January 27, 2016).

Harriet Edwards, primarily credits her parents being first supporters. She specifically, she described her father, who is deceased, as the driving factor behind her and all of her siblings pursuing and attaining a college education. She still cites his example as current source of strength. She explained,

He was hard on us…He was the one that pounded the education. He was the one that was up to the school at conferences. He was the one that was checking our homework…, my mom did too, but she was busy running the household and all that… Overall in life though, my dad has been a strong mentor to me” (H. Edwards, Interview, January 9, 2016).

Additionally, Mrs. Edwards her other integral support systems are, “…God and prayer, that has gotten me through. Strong family support with my husband and my kids.”
Mrs. Helen Lawrence explained that her parents, and her father in particular, provided support and encouragement. However, also explained that her support she received from sister was equally as important. Helen stated,

She is an assistant principal for [an urban district]. She just knows the passion that I’ve always had for education. To be honest with you, just like I said, I wanted to study law more than anything. Then I got married and had children. She kept saying to me, “You got to get back in education” .... My sister was my backbone. She was my supporter (H. Lawrence, Interview, January 13, 2016).

Summary

An analysis of the phenomenological interview data collected through this study indicates that although all the participants identity themselves as Black or African Americans, and are racial tokens in their schools; however, they do not all have the same life histories or experiences within the context of their schools. Further, the manner in which the participants view their common racial identity also differs. Additionally although they all participants describe experiencing opportunities and challenges in their mostly White schools, the nature of these opportunities and challenges, and the extent to which they are attributed to their token status, is unique to each participant. Lastly all participants cite relying upon different intrinsic and external systems to support them in their work settings.
Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

…I, too, sing America

--Langston Hughes, “I, Too”

Introduction

This qualitative study explored the experiences of Black teachers who work in schools and school districts where the students, teachers, and administrators are predominantly White. To understand how these teachers make sense of their experiences in settings where they are an overwhelming racial minority, phenomenological interviews were used. Moreover the focus of the phenomenological methods was to provide rich descriptions of the teachers’ life histories, experiences in their work context, and reflections about the meaning of their experiences (Seidman, 2006).

Six teachers who identified themselves as Black or African American and who were full-time teachers in racially skewed, mostly White school districts were selected for this study. To best represent the typical experience of Black teachers who work in similar contexts, the participants collectively taught in elementary, middle, and high schools. Also, all teachers who participated in this research had a minimum of five years cumulative teaching experience and three years in their current school setting.

Purposeful sampling was used to select the participants for this research. This technique, as discussed in Chapter Three, was the most appropriate due to this study’s small sample size (Maxwell 2005), and because it was the best “approach for locating information-rich key informants or critical cases” (Patton, 2002, p. 237). After participants were identified, qualitative data were gathered through an in depth, three-
phase phenomenological interview method. The participants’ responses to the semi-structured interview questions provided narratives that illustrated their experiences as Black teachers in predominantly White schools.

An analysis of the narratives of the researched Black teachers revealed the following four common themes:

- Acknowledgement of opportunities due to their status as the only or one of a few Black teachers
- Recognition of challenges of being a Black teacher in a mostly White school
- A reliance on one’s racial identity as a source of strength; and
- An acknowledgment of the importance of support from the following three external sources:
  - teacher mentors;
  - school colleagues and administrators;
  - and immediate and extended family members

A discussion of how these themes address this study’s research questions will be presented in the subsequent sections.

**Research Question One**

What opportunities and challenges do Black teachers experience as racial minorities in schools primarily enrolling White students and employing White teachers?
Conclusions from the data gathered through phenomenological interviews revealed three primary opportunities nearly all the participants attributed to working in mostly White schools. First, all teachers interviewed described having positive relationships with their students, and they placed building and maintaining such relationships as a primary focus in getting students to learn. In sharing anecdotes of how they relate to their students, the participants often used words like “confidante,” “fair,” or “love.” Also, a few of the teachers described experiences where they had difficulties with students in their classrooms. However, in the few narratives that detailed discipline issues with students, the teachers quickly dealt with the issues and without administrative intervention. More to the point, the issues with the students were not persistent, which seemed to be indicative of the positive student-teacher relationships.

Qualitative data describing the overall positive relationships Black teachers in this study have with their students is relevant because it counters some previous findings that indicate being token is a largely negative experience (Kanter, 1977; Mabokela and Madsen, 2003). This data further coincides with Kelly’s findings (2007) that Black teachers in White schools do not perceive their race a cultural boundary that hinders their performance as teachers. Additionally, the participants in this study did not appear to be guilty of what Ladson-Billings (1994) termed “dysconscious racism” because they openly acknowledged the difference in race and culture between their students and themselves. Those differences, however, did not prevent the teachers from developing productive, personal relationships with their students. More to the point, their honest recognition of cultural differences may be the reason why my participants were able to
develop and maintain positive student relationships. This may also explain why the teachers were able to easily resolve most student conflicts.

The second opportunity the participants in this study experienced was promoting diversity among their students and, in some cases, among their mostly White colleagues. Many teachers discussed incorporating culturally relevant lessons into their curricula in order to promote students’ thinking and talking about different cultures. In some instances teachers’ cultural lessons extended beyond the walls of their individual classrooms (e.g. daily factual announcements over the intercom during Black History Month or public “Blacks in Wax museum” exhibits). One participant also discussed how she seized upon the opportunity to spread diversity school wide by augmenting the school library with more culturally inclusive books. She said, “…we need to make sure our books are more diverse and that…the students can see themselves in what we’re doing. Because of that reason, I took on a position as a diversity liaison in our building…” Another participant explained how he would sometimes digress from his planned lesson to share anecdotes from his personal life history with his students. He believed doing so not only helped maintain a good rapport with his students, but also showed the (mostly White) students that a Black man is capable of having rich and varied life experiences and knowledge. Lastly, another participant expressed using his status as the only Black teacher in his school to serve as a mediator between the Black students and the mostly White staff. He stated that often his colleagues would not take Black students’ race and culture into consideration in matters of behavior or academic performance. Although he expressed his frustration at having to teach teachers about diversity, he understood the
importance of this opportunity in attempt to help them to understand that a student’s race and cultural perspective are important aspects of who they are.

These findings about the Black teachers’ use of cultural relevance in their teaching methods is consistent with previous findings that posit Black teachers, unlike their White colleagues, are more likely to use such tactics (Gillette, 1996). Furthermore, previously reviewed CRT theorists (Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1994) argued that culturally relevant teaching was imperative for teachers of students of color. However, it seemed as though the Black teachers in this study attempted to challenge and change the societal status quo by using cultural relevance in their mostly White schools.

Additionally, Ladson-Billings writes, “teachers who practice culturally relevant methods not only see themselves as professionals but also strongly identify with teaching” (p. 35); this is consistent with the attitudes teachers in my study expressed about themselves and their jobs. Consequently, the teachers’ usage of cultural relevance in their classrooms also reflected their racial identity. As some previously reviewed theorists maintained (Cross, 1991; Helms, 1994), individuals may possess a stronger racial identity during different stages or times during their lives. Thus, by freely sharing themselves and their culture with students (and peers) who are not Black, the participants seemed to express strong and positive Black racial identity.

The final opportunity all the participants described was being a role model for the Black and minority students in their respective schools. The teachers discussed that in mostly White schools it was important for them to “be there” in order to show Black and minority students, who themselves were tokens, that someone who looks like them could
be in a position of authority. Additionally, two participants in particular spoke about being able to openly express empathy with their minority students. Both of these teachers attended schools similar in racial make up to the ones in which they currently work and viewed their role as an opportunity to help minority students navigate the context of a mostly White environment.

By acknowledging the need to be a role model for Black and minority students, the Black teachers in this study subscribed to ideals of CRT and challenged the notion that people of color are not capable of being in positions of power (Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Additionally a previously reviewed study by Castaneda, Kambutu, and Rios (2006) indicated that Black teachers in largely White schools believed their presence provided insight about what it means to be a member of an underrepresented group in society. The narratives of teachers in my participants indicated they were aware of their minority status in society and in their schools. This may explain why some of my study’s participants felt a strong empathy for their minority students and strong desire to help them succeed in a predominantly White environment.

The conclusions from the qualitative data analysis also revealed that participants in this study, as a whole, experienced slightly more challenges than opportunities. The first challenge encountered by four of the six participants was gaining entrée into their respective schools and districts. The teachers seemed to allude to an invisible barrier around predominantly White districts that prevented them from being immediately or easily hired. In many instances, the teachers were only granted access through the invisible barrier because of special knowledge or due to special or non-traditional
circumstances. For example, two participants began as substitute teachers until later being encouraged or asked to pursue their positions full-time; another teacher worked in his mostly White district under the auspice of an outside agency before learning of a teaching vacancy and eventually being hired by the district. It appears in all of the aforementioned cases, the Black teachers had to prove themselves in lesser roles before being granted full access into the White school districts. In another instance, a participant gained access because her mother, as a member of minority parents’ group, directly challenged the district’s superintendent to hire more diverse teachers; this in turn led to her being granted a certified interview after years of unsuccessfully attempting to gain an interview on her own merit. However even after gaining admission, this teacher had to interview with several building principals before impressing upon the one who eventually hired her that she did not want work for anyone except him.

The challenge of the invisible barrier may be best explained through the theoretical framework of CRT. First because the presence of the barrier appears to be seen and best explained by the Black teachers, this is a clear indication of the “voice of color” being used by the Black teachers to describe experiences unique to them. Next, the presence of such a barrier is inherently racist because it maintains the status quo in school districts in which power rests solely with the dominant, White majority. Moreover, this is indicative of a core CRT principle that racism is an everyday occurrence in American society and that it persists because it benefits the dominant culture (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001). Therefore in the context of this study, predominantly White schools continue to exist because of the will of the dominant
majority. This could further explain why there appeared to be few large-scale initiatives to diversify the teaching staffs of the districts in this study.

Lastly while the hiring of a few Black teachers may appear progressive on the surface, CRT suggests otherwise. The tenet of “interest convergence” (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001), maintains that the dominant group benefits from racism and only appears to eradicate it when doing so is beneficial. Thus the participants may have only been allowed to pass through the invisible barrier because doing so benefitted the school districts (i.e. presenting the appearance of diversity or diverse hiring practices). Some tokenism research, particularly the findings of Laws (1975), also coincides with this tenet of CRT. As reviewed earlier, her study indicated that dominant groups admitted tokens into their organizations because it was a way to prove they were not racist or discriminatory. Also, Laws posited a few tokens were permitted access if they were viewed as different from others of the lower group, if they possessed some the qualities of the dominant group, and if their presence did not disrupt the status quo. This could be another way to comprehend the phenomenon of only a few Black teachers being granted access through the invisible barrier of White school districts.

Another challenge related to gaining entrée to the predominantly White school districts in this study is the socio-economic disparity between the teachers and the majority of the students whom they taught. All three of the school districts in this study were affluent, but only two participants (who taught in the same school district) described this as a challenge. Both teachers stated, indirectly and directly, that they could not afford to live in the school district. Moreover, both teachers described how their
positions as “outsiders” played a role in their interactions with peers, parents, and students. One teacher said, “…When it comes down to it, I don’t live there. I don’t see the area the same way they see it. I come in, I do my job, then I go home…”

The other teacher alluded to many of her peers being of higher socio-economic status and that “they don’t have to work”; this participant further indicated that while she believed her colleagues do not intentionally make her feel different, she was very conscious of the socio-economic difference. She explained, “…they don’t understand that the struggles that I may have as an African American teacher in the district who can’t afford to live there.”

While many of the previously reviewed demographic studies of teachers (Frankenberg, 2009; Parker, 2008; Shen, Wegneke, & Cooley, 2003) described the current nature of teachers segregation in terms of race and where they teach, they did not directly indicate teacher segregation in terms of socio-economics. More to the point, none of the previously discussed research pertaining to the experiences of Black teachers in other White contexts indicated this disparity. However, the perceived socio-economic differences experienced by some of the teachers in my study is analogous to the border heightening revealed in Mabokela and Madsen’s study (2003) where the teachers in that study perceived pedagogical differences between themselves and their White peers. Further when viewing this challenge through the lens of CRT, one may contend that economic-border heightening is not an aberration, but an ordinary phenomenon that exists to maintain the racial and economic status quo of predominantly White school districts. In this regard, a few Black teachers may be granted entrée in the White school
districts, because doing could be beneficial to the perception of the districts. Yet since these teachers cannot afford to actually live where they teach, the schools and school districts remain overwhelmingly White. Thus, the status quo is preserved.

Five of the participating teachers described being attributed particular roles due to their token status as Black teachers in their predominantly White schools. For three teachers in particular, they saw such role encapsulation as a challenge. These teachers shared experiences of being perceived as “threatening” or “intimidating” by White parents and teachers. In other incidents, the African American teachers were seen to be “Black student whisperers” and were sought out specifically to deal with issues concerning those students. One participant stated, “It’s infuriating because it’s like I’m not a true peer until there’s an issue.” However, the same teacher stated, in regards to relating to Black students, “…I see it as my responsibility to guide them through what the world is before they should even have to think about it.” Interestingly, the two oldest participants acknowledged such role encapsulation but strongly embraced it as a positive; they viewed it as their responsibility to help correct the behavior of Black students when they were acting up. One participant stated, “…if we’re the two only African Americans, and we have an issue with African Americans, we should be contacted to how to deal with it…”

The challenge of role encapsulation encountered by most participants in this study is consistent with Kanter’s research (1977) on the nature of tokens in numerically skewed organizations. In her study, Kanter found that tokens are often not viewed as individuals, but as representatives of their race. Thus, they are subject to negative stereotyping and
only being relegated to roles deemed appropriate for their status. This may explain why some of the participants in my study described some of the (initial) negative perceptions White students had of them, and why some of their White colleagues only viewed them as experts in dealing with Black students. Similar to my participants, the teachers in Mabokela and Madsen’s (2003) study also described being trapped in “insider-outsider roles” of dealing with Black students. They additionally believed such roles prevented them from advancing into positions of authority in their school districts. On the contrary, the positive view two of my participants had of their role encapsulation is consistent with the findings of Kelly (2007) who found that Black teachers in White schools endured the negative aspects of their token status in order to counteract racial stereotyping.

Another challenge described by this study’s participants was being the only or one of few Black teachers in their building. Many shared experiences of being conscious of their token status and feeling pressure to perform at higher levels because of it. The teachers also described working hard to prepare their students for state-mandated standardized tests because they did not want to be viewed as underperforming. One participant stated, “I feel like expectations [sic] is the same because of the way education is nowadays when it comes to test scores and kids, but I do think that I am looked at with a closer lens for sure because of my race.” Another participant described feeling such performance pressure in the following manner: “…If anything goes wrong, they’re going to not blame [me]. It’s ‘those African Americans.’”

Again, the challenges of being either the only or one of few Black teachers in a school are consistent with tokenism theory—specifically the findings of Kanter; she
maintained that in numerically skewed groups (i.e. a 85:15 ratio), tokens are highly visible and scrutinized by the dominant majority. Thus tokens, such as my participants, are under constant pressure to perform at levels acceptable to the dominant culture.

Further because tokens are few in number, Kanter maintained they are only viewed as representatives of their group instead of individuals. This may explain why some of the participants in my study described working hard in the jobs: they were acutely aware of the pressures of being highly visible Black teachers in their respective predominantly White schools, and they felt the burden of representing all Black people.

Another effect of high visibility that two participants in particular related was feeling as if they had to modify their personalities and not be who they truly are within the context of their mostly White schools. One teacher stated that she attempted to explain this to her White co-workers. She said, ‘I always, I joke with them. I say, ‘You guys are not ready for 100 percent of [me].’ They’re like, ‘Well, how much percent are we ready for?’ I say, ‘I’m giving you about 35, 40 [percent]…” This teacher also stated that she greatly anticipated her planning time, when she could be alone; she explained this was the one time in her daily routine that should simply be herself and not her expected teacher persona. Another teacher discussed that she would feel freer to be herself if she were teaching in a predominantly Black school. She explained, “… I'm realizing that I'm not fully being myself because I am engulfed in a predominantly White environment. I think maybe…I am looking over my shoulder to make sure that I'm not fulfilling those perceptions that they might have of me….”
The pressure to conform by not freely expressing one’s personality is similar to
the contradictory nature of tokens described by Kanter; she theorized that assimilating
into the dominant culture was easier than going against it. Because of this, many
tokens choose to conform and not express their culture differences. The participants in
Mabokela and Madsen’s study perceived similar pressures in describing how their school
district pressured them to teach and dress in ways akin to White teachers.

A final challenge many of the participants experienced was implicit bias or
racism. For the majority of the participants, such incidents were not regular occurrences.
Also, the teachers recalled more experiences with implicit bias (or assumptions based on
stereotypes) and less with overt racism. From this one could conclude that, like society at
large, issues of race and racism remain present in mostly White school districts. Further,
CRT supports this supposition because it maintains that racism persists in contemporary
society. Delgado and Stefancic (2001) write that racism has not lessened in frequency
but rather changed in form. For instance, lynching and other violent acts of the past have
given way to present discriminatory hiring practices and high incarceration rates of
people of color. Thus, the incidents of implicit bias experienced by some of my
participants are clear indicators that racism persists in their schools.

Research Question Two

How does the racial identity status of Black teachers in primarily White schools
contribute to the sense they make of their experiences in those schools?

As previously stated, all the teachers in this study identified themselves as Black
or African American; however, an analysis of their various life histories reveals that they
neither develop nor identify with their racial identities in the same manner. In comparing the narratives of all participants, the extent to which they identify with their race appears to be largely shaped by the environments in which they were raised. All the teachers in this study described experiences where their parents made them keenly aware of whom they were racially, and also positively reinforced their racial identity. However the participants differed in terms of where they grew up: One was raised in an overwhelmingly White neighborhood, three were raised in predominantly Black neighborhoods, and two experienced diverse settings due to their migratory childhood experiences. The participants who had either mostly Black or diverse childhood experiences spoke at great length about their race and its importance in terms of who they are as people and educators. On the other hand, the participant who had an overwhelmingly White experience during her childhood stated that while being Black is a part of her identity, it “doesn’t make a terribly large difference” in her current setting.

The extent to which the teachers identified with their “Blackness” contributed to the sense they made of their current work experiences. Those who had largely Black childhood experiences not only identified with being Black to greater degree but they also believed their race matters in their current experiences; these teachers expressed a responsibility to help others, especially Whites, recognize and understand diversity. Additionally, they felt the need to be positive representatives of their race and counteract stereotypes. Conversely, the teacher who had mostly White childhood experiences identified with being Black to a lesser extent. Although, she was comfortable with her race, this participant did not view it as a determining factor in how she experienced her
job in a predominantly White school. Also, while she did express the importance of diversity, she did not perceive it as her role to do so. Rather, she expressed a sense of responsibility to help Black minority students navigate their mostly White surroundings.

**Research Question Three**

How do Black teachers working in primarily White schools make sense of, enact, moderate, or defy their status as tokens?

As either the only or one of a few Black teachers in their respective schools, all the participants in this study were acutely aware of their token status. However they did not want to be perceived as teachers hired because of that token status. All participants discussed being sensitive to performance pressures and described working hard to not only deal with those pressures but also to prove they were hired on the basis of their merit as educators and because of their race.

Many of this study’s participants also drew strength from their racial identity and used it to defy their token status. As previously discussed, all the teachers experienced varying degrees of implicit bias, overt racism, and performance pressures attributed to their race. However, what sustained them in the face of these obstacles was the pride and sense of who they are as Blacks or African Americans. A majority of the participants, particularly those who strongly identified with their racial identity, often referred to their personal life or their cultural history as African Americans as a source of lessons that helped them deal with racism in their current life. Of particular note were the two oldest teachers in this study, both of whom not only grew up in predominantly Black neighborhoods but also grew up during The Civil Rights Movement. Of all the
participants, these two individuals were the most adamant about their racial identity. Moreover, these two teachers believed coming of age during The Civil Rights era played an integral part in their development as African Americans.

This finding is consistent with Kelly’s study of the experiences of Black teachers in mostly White schools. While his research uncovered many of the challenges as those described in my research, Kelly also found that his participants drew strength from Civil Rights ideology (i.e. a sense of duty to confront and defeat racism). For my study, the two teachers who grew up during the Civil Rights Era obviously espoused the beliefs of the movement and also directly credited those beliefs with helping them overcome the obstacles of their current contexts.

To moderate their role as tokens, the Black teachers in this study relied upon three systems of support. First, all participants discussed the importance of having mentors who provided guidance during their early years as teachers in mostly White schools. These mentors, whether provided through their teacher training programs, school districts, or individually sought out by the participants themselves, were often experienced teachers who provided advice and feedback in regards to teaching. This was important because helping the participants do their jobs better, especially as tokens, alleviated performance pressures. The second system that helped the Black teachers lessen the pressures of their token status was support from their colleagues and building or district administrators. Similar to the role of their mentors, the teachers in this study described relying upon their colleagues for professional guidance and collaboration. However, some of the participants also stated their work colleagues became personal
confidants with whom they could share their feelings pertaining to their jobs and, sometimes, their personal life. This study’s participants also felt administrative support was integral, especially when resolving conflicts involving students or parents. One teacher in particular alluded to the importance of peer and administrative support by describing the lack of such support in his predominantly White school. However, he received support from district level administrators with whom he also commiserated about his token status. Lastly, family was immensely important to the participants; they all cited parents, siblings, or spouses as persons with whom confided about the successes and frustrations of their jobs. Also, some participants stated the extended family at their respective churches provided spiritual support that was necessary to lessening the pressures of their token status. The importance of family in helping Black teachers cope with the pressures of teaching in White schools was a theme also that emerged in a study conducted by Castaneda, Kambutu, and Rios (2006). Their findings, similar to many of the narratives shared by my participants, described how family members were influential in encouraging Black teachers to pursue education as a profession, and in sustaining them in their careers.

**Discussion and Theoretical Implications**

Each of the previously discussed research questions corresponds to one of the three theoretical frameworks upon which this study was designed. Further, the conclusions from this study support many of the findings of previous studies based on these theories. However, some of the themes revealed by this research were not conclusive enough to thoroughly support or refute some of the previously reviewed
studies. Nevertheless, these findings were noted and are also worthy of analysis and discussion.

**CRT.** In regards to the challenges and opportunities Black teachers face in predominantly White schools, the findings of this study are consistent with facets of Critical Race Theory that were previously reviewed in Chapter Two. Again, one primary tenet of CRT is that incidents of racism and implicit bias are regular occurrences in American society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Moreover CRT’s “voice of color thesis” maintains that Blacks’ cultural history provides them with expert voices in narrating experiences with such oppression. This may explain why the teachers in this study were able to vividly identify and describe incidents of racism in their past and their current work experiences.

Additionally, some CRT scholars maintained that Black teachers were also more likely to recognize the “culture of power” in their schools that often manifests itself as a cultural disconnection between White teachers and Black and minority students (Delpit, 1995). Black teachers were also more likely to acknowledge their students’ race as salient and integral aspects of their being (Ladson-Billings, 1994; 2003). Consequently, other theorists believe Black teachers are more prone to utilize teaching methods culturally relevant to minority students in order to counteract the existing dominant school culture (Gillette, 1996; Villegas and Lucas, 2002). Again, the findings of this research support such theories because all participants described being aware of the dominant, White culture in their respective schools. More to the point, many also openly acknowledged the race of their students and incorporated culturally relevant teaching
methods in an attempt to increase diversity awareness in their classrooms and school communities.

**(Black) racial identity theory.** The manner in which the racial identity status of the Black teachers in this study contributes to the sense they make of their experiences in mostly White schools also coincides with the ideas of previously reviewed theories. Some theorists believe Blacks develop their sense of self in stages (Cross, 2001; Kambon, 1992), while others believe racial identity stage models are too rigid (Helms, 1993). Still others question how the interactions of race with other aspects (e.g. gender, socio-economic status, etc.) contribute to one’s racial identity development (Wijeysinghe & Jackson, 2012). However racial identity theorists collectively agree that one’s perception of his or her race transcends biological or genetic traits; rather, the manner in which one identifies with race is fluid and dependent upon experiences in various contexts. Thus since African Americans have different experiences, the concept of a “monolithic Black person” is non-existent. This is evident in the findings of this research. The narratives each participant shared revealed they each grew up in different environments and the manner in which they identified with race also differed. In comparison to the teachers who grew up in largely White settings, those who grew up in mostly Black or diverse environments had more Black and diverse cultural experiences. In turn, these teachers identified with their race to an extent where they believed it was an important factor in their current experiences in mostly White schools.

**Tokenism.** Further, the manner in which this study’s participants make sense of, enact, moderate, or defy their token status reflects the findings of previously reviewed
studies. One of the foundational Tokenism theorists maintained that numerical tokens who worked in skewed environments (i.e. contexts in which they were overwhelming numerical minorities) were likely to experience such negatives high visibility and role entrapment (Kanter, 1977). Similarly, many of the teachers in this study discussed experiencing these traits and also the pressure to perform as well as or better than their White colleagues. Many participants revealed being influenced by family members or former teachers, and believed that Black teachers were especially important in mostly White schools and districts; this mirrors the findings of the research conducted by Castaneda, Kambutu, and Rios (2006). Moreover, the participants in my study described feeling role encapsulation due to White colleagues believing they had “insider status” with Black students, which is consistent with the findings of Mabokela and Madsen (2003). However, many of the participants defied their token status by using it to serve as role models for Black and minority students and to teach others about diversity; similar the findings of Kelly’s study (2007), these teachers seemed to embody Civil Rights ideology and believed it was their responsibility to endure the pressures of teaching in mostly White schools.

**Additional implications.** Lastly, the conclusions of this study revealed some supplementary, but noteworthy findings similar those found in previous research—namely the study conducted by Mabokela and Madsen (2003). In their study of the experiences of fourteen African American teachers in a predominantly White, Midwestern school district, Mabokela and Madsen uncovered “border heightening” (i.e. the awareness of pedagogical differences between Black and White teachers) as a major
theme. Although the findings of this dissertation did not reveal border heightening to be a major theme, two participants described such experiences in their narratives. For instance, one teacher described how an administrator recommended she modify her “teacher language” and demeanor in order to interact with her students the way her White colleagues did. She explained:

She [the administrator] said, “Well, instead of maybe saying it the way you do, maybe just move your body closer to them. Let them know that you have that close proximity. Maybe put a soft hand on their shoulder. With your tone—” I said, “Look, that’s not the type of teacher I am. That’s not the type of person I am. Some people don’t like for you to touch them and be all in their personal space...My students know I balance it. They know that I love them, regardless of how I speak to them.” I’m not going to say, ‘Friends, can you please stop running?’ I’m going say, ‘Sit down.’ I’m just going say it the way it is. I had to check her on that...the way that I talk to them is the way that I would talk to an all-African American classroom (T. Morris, Interview, January 27, 2016).

Another teacher became aware of similar pedagogical differences through a conversation with one of her White peers; this colleague shared her perception that the African American students in their mostly White school respected African American teachers better due to cultural differences. These differences manifested themselves in the way children were raised at home and in the manner teachers treated them in their respective classrooms. The participant explained:
She said that they [White people] live by a democracy, meaning “My kids have a voice to be able to tell me if I’m unfair, tell me if they feel that I’m taking a different side than what their aim is.” They want them to be able to voice their opinion to their parents, to their teachers and they want to feel equal and they want to feel like they have a voice and be able to state how they feel. However, she doesn’t feel like the culture that we [African-Americans] have has room for that… There is no negotiation with me but there’s negotiation with her. That’s where the communication breaks down because they do have the democracy attitude that they should be able to speak up and speak their minds. Where we’re taught that you respect your elders, your parents, your teachers and whatever they tell you to do as long as it’s not physically harming you, then you do it (H. Lawrence, Interview, January 27, 2016).

Thus, the narratives of these two participants revealed the presence of border heightening as a minor obstacle Black teachers experience in the mostly White schools. Perhaps further study, or a study similar to this one with additional participants, could better illuminate this obstacle.

Another supplementary implication of this study as it relates Mabokela and Madsen’s research involves the theme of cultural relevant teaching practices. Whereas both studies uncovered the use of such practices as something used mostly by the Black teachers in their White schools, the teachers in Mabokela and Madsen’s study believed their White administrators discouraged them from using cultural relevance in their classrooms. Also by attempting to persuade them to teach like their White counterparts,
the Black teachers perceived another boundary was created between them and their peers. Conversely the majority of the participants in this study did not endure such pressures from their administrators; they reported that their the principals acknowledged and accepted the different pedagogical practices the Black teachers used. However, their administrators did not seem to overtly encourage cultural relevance. Only one participant shared an instance of strong administrative encouragement when describing the way her “Blacks in Wax Museum” project was regarded in comparison to her colleagues’ “Famous American’s Museum” projects. She stated, “...My principal has asked, ‘Why don’t they look at Black History?’ Because it’s in the Month of Black History that we’re doing this, why don’t they?” The teacher also shared that her principal openly encouraged and celebrated her focus of various cultures by acknowledging her diverse lessons through daily intercom announcements. Further, this participant perceived her administrator’s previous experiences in a diverse, urban school district resulted in her acceptance and support of culturally relevant teaching practices. Again, the sample size of this study was small, and a larger study may provide more conclusive findings about perceptions of Black teachers’ use of cultural relevance in mostly White schools.

Recommendations

In consideration of the findings of this study, recommendations have been made for school district leaders, building administrators, teachers, parents, and students who are interested in improving the experiences of African American teachers working in predominantly White schools. These suggestions are made in an attempt to help all stakeholders hear the often unheard voices of African American teachers in order that
they can work to alleviate the negative effects of tokenism, and provide African American teachers with the best opportunities for successful interactions with students, parents, and colleagues.

**For school district leaders.** As previously discussed, the current teaching force in America’s public schools remains largely White; however current statistical projections predict that student populations in schools will continue to grow in diversity (NCES, 2013). It has often been an implicit belief that the diversity gap between America’s students and its teaching force will continue to widen. Yet, recent demographic findings indicate this assumption may be a fallacy and the number of minority teachers is actually on the rise but Black and minority teachers are more likely to teach in schools that have predominantly high-minority and high-disadvantaged students (Ingersoll, Merrill, & Stuckey, 2014). Thus, there are Black teachers who are qualified and available in the job market; however, predominantly White school districts must demonstrate they earnestly want and need to diversify their teaching force. A good way to accomplish this may be to utilize current Black teachers to recruit new Black and minority teachers. Often an organization’s best salespersons are its own employees, and the same philosophy could work with mostly White school districts. Encouraging Black and minority teachers to visit colleges and universities, and especially their alma maters, may allow potential Black teachers to see and talk to others who look like them. This could help debunk the perception that White schools do not seeking or want Black teachers. It could also ease potential candidates’ apprehension about applying for available positions at these schools. Another way to recruit more Black teachers is to
build relationships with teacher training programs at colleges and universities in order to specifically seek African American student teachers for positions within their schools. Doing so would allow Black education students to get the necessary teacher training, and also gain the experience of teaching in mostly White environment; once again, this may help ease apprehensions and counter preconceived ideas. Moreover, the school district could benefit by increasing diversity in the schools and allowing students see and interact with more African Americans in positions of authority. Such recommendations may help if district leaders (i.e. superintendents and school board members) keep in mind that “Promoting diversity mostly comes down to focus and persistence. Organizations have to take it seriously and build it into day-to-day management…It takes more than lip service and it won’t happen overnight” (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p. 154).

An additional recommendation is for district leaders to place an increased focus on retaining Black and minority teachers. One way to do this is to counter the negative perceptions of tokenism by implementing district wide professional development opportunities for all staff members. Such training could focus on topics such as inclusion and diversity, with the goal being to promote open-mindedness and encourage honest, productive discourse. Another recommendation is that districts could help Black and minority teachers feel welcome by establishing and supporting minority teacher groups or organizations. Such groups could help ease the feeling of isolation Black teaches may feel in White districts and provide opportunities for peer mentorship. Also, such groups could provide these teachers with a representative voice in the district. Bolman and Deal (2003) state, “Organizations exist to serve human needs rather than the reverse” (p. 115).
Thus by working to recruit and retain Black and minority teachers, school district leaders can serve the needs of their increasingly diverse student body and the needs of its teaching staff.

**For building administrators.** The narratives of the Black teachers in this study revealed support from building administrators is crucial. Yukl (2006) states contemporary leaders have a responsibility to promote diversity and to lead by example when doing so. Thus, one recommendation is for administrators to model the behaviors and attitudes they want their staff to emulate by doing the following: promoting appreciation for diversity, encouraging respect for individual differences, discouraging stereotyping, challenging those who make prejudice comments, and speaking out against unfair and prejudices treatment of others (Yukl, 2006, p. 436). A second recommendation is to keep in mind that as tokens, Black and minority teachers have unique experiences and concerns. Educational administrators should be available to listen to those concerns in order to help alleviate some of the pressure these teachers face. Additionally, administrators must be present and active mediators in situations involving conflict between the teachers and parents or students, particularly when such situations may involve concerns of race. This study supports, as previously discussed theorists suggests, that Black teachers due to their cultural history are acutely aware of implicit bias and racism. Thus in such scenarios of conflict, administrators should not be dismissive of their experiences of Black teachers. Also, administrators could help foster a more inclusive building climate by encouraging all faculty members to seek professional development opportunities pertaining to diversity. Lastly, the participants in this study discussed how they used cultural
relevance in their teaching, but some of their White colleagues did not. Therefore another initiative administrators could pursue is the encouragement of all teachers to implement such teaching strategies where appropriate.

**For teachers.** In their study, Castaneda, Kambutu, and Rios (2006) also found that peer interaction could be utilized to better support Black teachers in largely White schools. Similarly, the findings of this study indicate that Black teachers’ colleagues can be another important support system that helps alleviates the pressures of their token status. Regardless of race, a teacher’s focus should be the education of all students. Keeping this in mind, a recommendation is for teachers to collaborate with each other in working towards the common goal of educating all students. Through collaboration Black and White teachers may develop positive work relationships that may transcend potential cultural disconnections and counteract assumptions and stereotyping. Additionally, open collaboration among teachers models positive attitudes about diversity and acceptance for students.

**For parents and students.** A recent study conducted by professors at New York University explored students’ perceptions of minority teachers by analyzing 2009-10 Gates’ Foundation survey data of over 50,000 students at 200 schools. The researchers found that “all students, including white ones, gave their black and Latino teachers better scores in a range of areas — such as their ability to challenge and care for them — than they gave their white teachers” (Klein, 2016, para. 3). Additionally, students’ did not seem to be biased towards teachers on their own race. As stated in the article, “Latino students, for example, did not tend to give higher scores to Latino teachers. And while
black students generally gave better scores to black teachers, Asian students rated them even higher than black students did” (Klein, 2016, para. 6). However, some of the Black teachers in my study discussed how they encountered overt racism or incidents of implicit bias in the form of White parents (and sometime students) questioning their expertise or simply not giving them the same respect afforded to their White colleagues. Considering the findings of this research, as well as what was revealed through my study, Black teachers are not only capable of providing effect classroom instruction, but they also may serve as excellent, empathetic role models for all students; however for parents and students to understand this, they must first know their teachers. Thus one recommendation for parents and students, particularly White parents and students, is to attempt to resist the stereotypes and assumptions that Black teachers who work in mostly White schools are not as qualified as their White counterparts. Additionally, parents and students should be open to the idea of learning from teachers who bring different racial or cultural perspectives to the classroom. Such teachers, as indicated by the findings of my study, are often more likely to utilize culturally relevant teaching tactics to not only enhance lessons but to also better appeal the learning styles of all students. One suggestion to help parents and students in predominantly White schools and districts resist stereotyping Black teachers is for parent organizations (e.g. Parent Teacher Associations or Organizations) and student leaders (i.e. student government officers) to provide informal opportunities for parents and students to interact with teachers. Events such as a “Get to Know The Teacher Night”, perhaps prior to the beginning the school year, and similar occurrences held periodically throughout the school year, may allow
parents, students, and teachers to establish and maintain relationships. Additionally, such parent and student groups can also actively welcome new Black teachers who are hired by predominantly White schools. Even through simple gestures as greeting cards or welcome letters, parents and students can help these teachers feel more at ease and counteract the perception some Black teachers have of mostly White schools as unwelcoming.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

There are several suggestions for additional research based upon the limitations of this phenomenological research. First this study was limited because of its qualitative design and the time and resources available to the researcher. However future studies with expanded resources could address the overall research question of this study through different methods. For instance, by using a mixed methodology a future researcher could first gather survey data from a larger set of participants; the surveys may be structured using Likert scale questions focused on the some of the themes revealed through this study (i.e. opportunities encountered, challenges faced, and methods of coping with job difficulties). Specifically, the survey questions could ask the teachers to reflectively evaluate their life experiences and the extent to which those experiences influence where they teach, the degree to which the teachers encounter racism in their schools, the extent to which they perceive themselves as a token, and their level of job satisfaction. Next, the researcher could select some of the survey’s participants to conduct a yearlong study employing a phenomenological protocol similar to the one used in my study. However, to get a more thorough understanding of the participants’ experiences, the future
researcher may also conduct field observations. By witnessing the teachers’ experiences in their respective contexts, the researcher can compare what was reported through the survey data with what he or she sees in order to better understand and define the phenomenon.

Another suggestion for further study is to consider a different theoretical framework to investigate the experiences of Black teachers in mostly White schools. Intersectionality, a more recent theory, may be used singularly or in conjunction with Critical Race, Tokenism, and Racial Identity. Intersectionality maintains that a one’s identity may be determined by the interaction of several social identities (i.e. race, gender, class, etc.), and it could address the phenomenon of Black teachers’ experiences in White schools by considering all of the potential identities of those teachers, and examining how those identities are integral in shaping their experiences. Moreover, Intersectionality may explore research questions that were beyond the scope of this study such as the following:

- To what extent does gender shape the experiences of Black teachers in predominantly White schools?
- How do Black teachers make sense of the socio-economic disparity between them and the mostly White schools districts in which they teach?

Lastly, a limited view of Tokenism theory was used to define the contextual parameters of this study. All of teachers who participated in this researched worked in racially skewed schools (i.e. schools with 85:15 ratio of White teachers to Black teachers). In such environments the effects of tokenism are believed to be strongest
(Kanter, 1977). However, Kanter also theorized about the experiences of individuals in “tilted groups” where the dominant group outnumbers the minority by a 65:35 ratio. Thus, another area of potential future study is to re-examine this study’s primary research question with a focus on Black teachers who work in schools that closely resemble the ratio of tilted groups. In that regard, it would be interesting to see if teachers in tilted groups have experiences that resemble those in skewed groups. Potentially, the results of such a study could challenge or augment research regarding Tokenism and race.

**Final Thoughts**

In Langston Hughes’s “I, Too”, the speaker juxtaposes the harsh reality of his lived experiences as an outcast in a racist society with the private, expectant hope for his future—a future where he no longer simply “sings” or participates in the choir that is America but actually embodies the words and spirit of the song that is America. Although the unnamed “darker brother” acknowledges the way he is perceived and consequently treated by others, he does not bemoan his current state, choosing instead to “laugh, and eat well, and grow strong.” He hopes he will not only soon earn his place at the table, but also been seen by others the way he sees himself—beautiful.

In the context of this study, the “darker brother” is akin to the Black teachers who work in mostly White schools. These teachers do not bemoan being extreme minorities in a teaching force that annually faces an increasingly diverse student body. They acknowledge their status, understand that they may be misperceived by others, but persist in teaching their students while remaining hopeful that their efforts will change the perspectives of everyone with whom they interact; additionally, like the narrator of
Hughes’s poem, these participants are hopeful for a “tomorrow” where they will not be the only or one a few Black or minority teachers in their mostly White schools.

When I first conceived of this study several years ago, I greatly anticipated two goals—addressing my research questions and successfully completing the dissertation journey. While I am academically satiated with having accomplished these goals, what is personally more rewarding is accomplishing a goal I did not expect—finding myself in this phenomenological research. At the outset, I understood that as a Black teacher I shared some commonalities with my participants. However, the extent to which our collective experiences were similar was a surprising reconciliation with my past and present life as Black man in society. Like my participants, I too had parents who taught me that I would always have to transcend being ordinary just to be considered average. As a Black male teacher, I too am a token—both in my school and in society as a whole. Similarly because of my token status, I have felt the pressure of high visibility, and I too have been misunderstood—often perceived by both Black and White students as “the tall, scary Black guy.” All of these experiences clearly indicate the hopeful promise of Hughes’s tomorrow is not yet fulfilled. Yes, I am “the darker brother,” and like the participants in this study I too am different. However, these differences should not make us outcasts; they should be accepted as beautiful augmentations to this country’s potential because we too are America.
References


Appendix A: IRB Consent Forms

Ohio University Adult Consent Form With Signature

Title of Research: The Experiences of Black Teachers in Predominantly White Schools

Researcher: Sidney Jones, Jr.

You are being asked to participate in research. For you to be able to decide whether you want to participate in this project, you should understand what the project is about, as well as the possible risks and benefits in order to make an informed decision. This process is known as informed consent. This form describes the purpose, procedures, possible benefits, and risks. It also explains how your personal information will be used and protected. Once you have read this form and your questions about the study are answered, you will be asked to sign it. This will allow your participation in this study. You should receive a copy of this document to take with you.

Explanation of Study

This study is being done because there is a lack of information about what it means to be a Black teacher in a school where most of the students and teachers are White.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to participate in a series of three ninety-minute interviews with the researcher. Each interview will have different focus (i.e. life history, school experiences, understanding your role and experiences as a Black teacher), and the interviews will be conducted within a three-week period. Also, if you agree to participate, you agree to have your responses audio taped by the researcher. These responses will be kept confidential and stored on a password protected hard drive. Additionally, after the interviews have been transcribed, you will have an opportunity to review them to ensure accuracy.

You should not participate in this study if:
- you do not wish to have your responses audio recorded.
- you believe the interview questions or topics are too invasive.

Your participation in the study will last a maximum of three weeks; if at any time you wish to cease participation in this study, you may do so without consequence; moreover, you will still be compensated for your time.
Risks and Discomforts
Because this study calls for you to speak candidly about your life history and professional experiences as Black teacher (particularly experiences with students, parents, administrators, and other teachers), there is a possibility you may experience emotional discomfort when retelling incidents involving race and discomfort. To alleviate potential discomfort, the researcher will maintain a professional demeanor when conducting interviews. Moreover, participants have the right to skip or refuse to answer any question. Lastly, all interviews will be at a place and time of your choosing.

Benefits
• This study is important to science/society because it will provide a greater understanding of the experiences of Black teachers in mostly White schools, and by doing so it will add to previously existing body of research. Also, the results of this study may provide insight for educational leaders (i.e. School Superintendents, School Board members, etc.) about how to recruit and retain Black teachers to predominantly White schools; in turn, this may lead to an increase in teacher diversity.

• Individually, you may benefit by gaining a deeper understanding of your role and experiences of a Black teacher.

Confidentiality and Records
Your study information will be kept confidential by the researcher: a pseudonym will be used in place of your real name in the research to best ensure confidentiality. All digitally recorded interviews will be stored on a password-protected computer, and all printed copies of interview transcripts will be kept in a locked fire safe in the researcher’s home. Also all data will be destroyed at conclusion of the researcher’s dissertation process by November 1, 2016.

Additionally, while every effort will be made to keep your study-related information confidential, there may be circumstances where this information must be shared with:
* Federal agencies, for example the Office of Human Research Protections, whose responsibility is to protect human subjects in research;
* Representatives of Ohio University (OU), including the Institutional Review Board, a committee that oversees the research at OU.

Compensation
As compensation for your time/effort, you will receive a $25 amazon.com gift card.

Contact Information
If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact the investigator Sidney Jones, Jr. (sj148305@ohio.edu; 614-905-2923) or the advisor (Dr. Dwan Robinson, robinsd3@ohio.edu; 740-593-0477).

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact Dr. Chris Hayhow, Director of Research Compliance, Ohio University, (740)593-0664 or hayhow@ohio.edu.

By signing below, you are agreeing that:

• you have read this consent form (or it has been read to you) and have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered;
• you have been informed of potential risks and they have been explained to your satisfaction;
• you understand Ohio University has no funds set aside for any injuries you might receive as a result of participating in this study;
• you are 18 years of age or older;
• your participation in this research is completely voluntary;
• you may leave the study at any time; if you decide to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Signature ___________________________ Date ____________

Printed Name ____________________________

Version Date: [11/12/15]
Appendix B: IRB Approval

The following research study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board at Ohio University for the period listed below. This review was conducted through an expedited review procedure as defined in the federal regulations as Category(-ies):

Project Title: Untold Narratives: The Experiences of Black Teachers in Predominantly White Schools

Primary Investigator: Sidney Jones, Jr.
Co-Investigator(s):

Faculty Advisor: Dwan Robinson

Department: Educational Leadership

Office of Research Compliance Staff
Rebecca Cale, AAB, CIP
Shelly Rex, BS
Robin Black, CIP

Approval Date: 11/12/15
Expiration Date: 11/11/16

This approval is valid until the expiration date listed above. If you wish to continue beyond the expiration date, you must submit a periodic review application and obtain approval prior to continuation.

The approval remains in effect provided the study is conducted exactly as described in your approved application. Any additions or modifications to the project must be reviewed and approved by the IRB (as an amendment) prior to implementation.

IRB approval does not supersede other regulatory requirements, such as HIPAA, FERPA, PPRA, etc.

Adverse events/unanticipated problems must be reported to the IRB promptly.
Appendix C: Introductory Email to Participants

Dear ______________________,

I am Sidney Jones, Jr., and ______________ referred me to you. ______ is a close friend and colleague whom I have known for more than fifteen years and with whom I have served on educational panels addressing issues of race and diversity. Currently I am a doctoral candidate at Ohio University and I am working towards the completion of my dissertation. My study is focusing on the experiences of African American/Black teachers who work in predominantly White schools. I believe this research to be imperative because currently educational demographic trends indicate that although public schools collectively are becoming more diverse in student population, the teaching force is not. Through the findings of my research, I hope to emphasize why diversity (especially in terms of African American teachers) is important for the current and future state of public education. Additionally, there has been little research addressing this issue; therefore, I hope to help fill a research void and perhaps encourage others to also investigate and bring more focus to this problem. Mostly importantly, I am a Black teacher. (I currently teach IB English 11-SL and Freshman Humanities at Columbus Alternative High Schools in the Columbus City Schools District.) Thus this is more than research, but it is also an issue that has personal relevance to me.

I am writing to ask for your assistance in my doctoral research. I have chosen to investigate my research question through qualitative means of in-depth interviews. Specifically, I hope to conduct three separate ninety-minute interviews with approximately six teachers who meet demographic parameters of my study. At the conclusion of the interviews, I will code the interview transcripts for themes that address various areas of my research, and write about these findings and research implications in the final two chapters of my dissertation.

For the purposes of this study, I will only interview a total of 6 participants (one of whom will be part of a pilot study to help refine research questions) from 5 different school districts in Central Ohio. Therefore for the sake of time, I may only choose the first qualified respondents. Additionally, the participants must meet the following criteria:

- Be a full-time teacher
- Have a minimum of five years cumulative experience
- Have three years in his or her current teaching placement

Participants in my study will only be referenced by pseudonyms to preserve anonymity, and they will be rewarded for their time with an honorarium (i.e. an Amazon.com gift card). If you meet the previously described criteria, and would be interested in participating in my research (or would like to inquire more about my study before deciding), please contact me at either of the following email addresses, using the subject heading “Doctoral Study”:
sjones9630@columbus.k12.oh.us or sj148305@ohio.edu.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and I hope to hear from you soon.
Appendix D: Semi-structured Interview Questions

Interview 1: Focused Life History

1. Please state your name, age, current occupation, and employer.
2. How many years have you been teacher and how long have you been teaching at your current school?
3. Describe the racial or ethnic make-up of the neighborhood in which you grew up.
4. Describe the K-12 schools you attended as a child.
5. Tell me about a significant experience in your childhood that made you aware of your race, or helped you realize you were racially different from others?
6. Where did you attend college, and how did you come the decision to attend that college?
7. Describe the racial diversity of the college you attended.
8. How did your college experience help shape or confirm how you racially identify or view yourself?
9. Describe the educational path that led you to become a teacher.
10. Tell me about the career decisions that led to your current position of employment.
11. How do you perceive yourself as a Black professional in society?

Interview 2: Details about the Black teacher experience in context

1. How did you decide to take a position at this school?
2. Describe what a normal day at this school looks like for you.
3. How would you describe the expectations of teachers in this school? Do you feel you there are different expectations or pressures placed upon you because of your race?
4. Describe your interactions with administrators and other teachers.
5. Describe your interactions with students and parents.
6. How does your race influence the manner other perceive you as a teacher by others?
7. How do you perceive yourself as a Black teacher in this school?
8. What cultural elements do you implement in your teaching? How do you think students and their parents perceive this?
9. Tell me about an experience where you believe you were perceived or treated differently than a White colleague.
10. Describe how you cope with performance pressures as a teacher in this school.
11. Who are/were your mentors and from whom do you get your support?
12. What would make your experience as a Black teacher more rewarding?
13. Do you think you would do anything differently if you were a Black teacher at a predominantly Black school?
Interview 3: Reflections about the meaning of the experience

1. Recalling the experiences with race that you have shared in previous interviews, what does your racial identity mean to you currently?
2. Considering what you said about your life before becoming a teacher and what you have said about your life as teacher in this school, how do you understand the role of being an educator in this particular setting? What does it mean to you?
3. Based upon what you have shared about college experiences, in particular your teacher training, how do you make sense of the level to which you were prepared to teach in this type of school setting as a Black teacher?
4. How do you understand the role your race plays in your interactions with others (i.e. administrators, other teachers, students, and parents)?
5. In our second interview, you discussed the perceptions others have of you as a Black teacher. What do these perceptions mean to you?
6. In our second interview you described the support you received as teacher in this school. How do you understand the role such support plays for Black teachers in mostly White schools?
7. You discussed expectations of being a teacher at this school. Considering how you identify yourself racially, how do you make sense of these pressures and expectations?
8. You alluded to perceived differences between yourself and your white colleagues in our second interview. How do you make sense of these perceptions? What do they mean to you?
9. Recalling what you shared about student interactions during the second interview, how do you make sense of the role you play as a teacher for Black students as opposed to the role you play for White students?
10. What sense do you make of your decision to take a job teaching at this school as opposed to a predominantly Black school?
Appendix E: Cycle 1 Codebook

1. **Teaching Experiences**: Descriptions of experiences teachers have with students, parents, administrators, and other teachers. These experiences may also include student teaching experiences.

2. **Extra-Curricular Involvement**: Descriptions of experiences where the teacher coaches or advises for extra-curricular activities and clubs.

3. **High Academic Expectations**: Descriptions of experiences in schools that have expectations of students and teachers

4. **Hectic/Busy Schedule**: Teacher describes experiences that indicate a hectic or busy day/life as an educator

5. **Teacher Mentor**: Descriptions of experiences or lack thereof (i.e. frustrations) with having a teacher mentor.

6. **Supportive/Positive Experiences with Peers**: Descriptions of positive incidents of support from other teachers and colleagues

7. **First Year Experience**: Descriptions of experiences during initial year as a full-time teacher

8. **Positive Student Relationships**: Descriptions of positive encounters with students in classroom or school building

9. **Student Conflict**: Experiences of conflict with students

10. **Behavior management**: Descriptions of experiences with student discipline or behavior management

11. **Supportive/Positive Experiences with Administration**: Descriptions of positive incidents of support from principals or assistant principals

12. **Negative relationship/experience with Parent(s)**: Descriptions of conflict or negative interactions with parents
13. **Positive Relationships with Parents**: Descriptions of positive interactions with parents.

14. **[Mid-Atlantic City]**: Mentions or descriptions of experiences in urban district in a Mid-Atlantic city.

15. **Decision to teach**: Descriptions of experiences that were influential in his decision to become a teacher.

16. **Charter School**: Descriptions of charter school experiences.

17. **[Mid-Atlantic Region]**: Descriptions of experiences in urban district in a Mid-Atlantic area.

18. **Traumatic Experience**: Descriptions of traumatic experiences or events as a teacher (i.e. students’ deaths/murders).

19. **Student Conflict**: Experiences of conflict with students.

20. **Predominantly Black schools**: Experiences in schools (as a teacher) with mostly Black students and staff.

21. **Changing School/District Demographics**: The population of students is changing in terms of race or socio-economic status.

22. **Racial Identity**: Experiences that describe how a participant identifies or views oneself as a Black or African American.

23. **Not being Black enough**: Descriptions of experiences where the participant is not perceived to be Black enough.

24. **Predominantly Black/African American Experiences**: Descriptions of experiences in mostly or all Black settings.

25. **Awareness of Cultural/Racial Differences**: Descriptions of experiences where the participant realizes he is different (culturally or racially) from others.

26. **Racial division/Racism Experiences**: Description of experiences with racism or racial division/problems.
27. **Sense of Self**: Describes self awareness and experiences where knowledge of self were influential

28. **Parental/Family Influence**: Descriptions of experiences where parents or other family members influenced actions or gave advice which specifically affected experiences.

29. **Mother**: Descriptions of experiences where his mother seems the most influential

30. **Growing up (K-12 Experiences)**: Descriptions of participants’ childhood experiences

31. **Diverse experiences**: Description/mentions of diverse racial and ethnic life experiences

32. **The Civil Rights Era**: Descriptions of experiences in the Civil Rights Era

33. **[Caribbean Island Nation] Experiences**: Experiences in Barbados

34. **NYC Borough**: Experiences in New York City borough

35. **Experiences in The South**: Descriptions of Experiences in a the Southern region of America

36. **Conservative Political experiences**: Descriptions of experiences with conservative attitudes.

37. **Public school experiences**: Descriptions of childhood experiences in public schools

38. **Private school experience**: Descriptions of childhood experiences in private schools

39. **High School Experiences**: Description of experiences as a student in high school

40. **Class and Neighborhood Discrimination**: Descriptions of experiences where discrimination or separation seemed based on social economic status and the neighborhood with which one is affiliated.
41. **Migratory experiences**: Description of experiences with moving (from one place/location to another)

42. **Homogenous experiences**: Descriptions of homogenous (i.e. a lack of diversity) in racial or ethnic life experiences

43. **Critical Race**: Descriptions of experiences that correspond the CRT lens; experiences where the participants confronts issues of power as they relate to race

44. **Culturally relevant teaching**: Describes/discusses experiences with culturally relevant or non-traditional teaching tactics and strategies

45. **Mostly Black Students/Mostly White Staff**: Descriptions of experiences in schools (as a teacher) with mostly black students but mostly White teachers and staff

46. **Important of Black/Minority Teachers**: Descriptions of experiences indicating why the participant feels Black or minority teachers are important.

47. **Implicit Bias**: Descriptions of incidents of perceived racial assumptions and stereotyping

48. **Tokenism**: Descriptions of experiences that correspond to Kanter’s definition of (numerical) Tokenism (i.e. performance pressures, social isolation, and role encapsulation)

49. **Predominantly White Experiences**: Descriptions of experiences in mostly White settings or contexts. Maybe be later linked to Homogenous experiences

50. **College Experiences**: Descriptions of experiences in college

51. **[Minority Student College Program]**: Descriptions of experiences in n early orientation program for minority students at [Midwestern University]

52. **EMOTI-CODE “laugh out loud”**: Participant laughs while recalling or re-telling an experience
53. **EMOTI-CODE “astonished” 🙄**: Participant experiences surprise or shock when relating or describing an experience.

54. **EMOTI-CODE “grinning” 😊**: Participant tells a joke or jokingly relates an experience

55. **EMOTI-CODE “sad” 😞**: Instances where the participant appears somber or sad when re-telling experiences

56. **Noema (2nd and 3rd Interviews!):** "how one experiences lived events, and it relies upon noesis to help a person form a perception of current experiences”; THE MEANING of an act; the sense of it

57. **Noesis (1st Interviews!):** "...person’s consciousness or all of the experiences, feelings, and ideas one has had”; What gives meaning to an act

58. **Work/Experience Prior to Teaching**: Professional work Experiences before becoming a teacher

59. **International Experience**: Descriptions of experiences traveling to different countries

60. **“In-Vivo”**: Statements or phrases in the participants’ own words that seem important to the overall experiences of the participants; these are words that may later be used in writing the participants’ profiles
Appendix F: Cycle 2 Codebook

1. **Teaching Experiences**: Descriptions of experiences teachers have with students, parents, administrators, and other teachers. These experiences may also include student teaching experiences

2. **Positive Student Relationships**: Descriptions of positive encounters with students in classroom or school building

3. **Teacher Mentor**: Descriptions of experiences or lack thereof (i.e. frustrations) with having a teacher mentor.

4. **Supportive/Positive Experiences with Administration**: Descriptions of positive incidents of support from principals or assistant principals

5. **Supportive/Positive Experiences with Peers**: Descriptions of positive incidents of support from other teachers and colleagues

6. **Negative relationship/experience with Parent(s)**: Descriptions of conflict or negative interactions with parents

7. **Positive Relationships with Parents**: Descriptions of positive interactions with parents

8. **High Academic Expectations**: Descriptions of school or community’s high academic expectations (of students and teachers)

9. **Behavior management**: Descriptions of experiences with student discipline or behavior management

10. **Extra-Curricular Involvement**: Descriptions of experiences where the teacher involvement with extra-curricular activities and clubs

11. **Student Conflict**: Experiences of conflict with students

12. **Critical Race**: Descriptions of experiences that correspond the CRT lens; experiences where the participants confronts issues of power as they relate to race
13. **Culturally relevant teaching:** Describes/discusses experiences with culturally relevant or non-traditional teaching tactics and strategies

14. **Importance of Black/Minority Teachers:** Descriptions of experiences indicating why the participant feels Black or minority teachers are important.

15. **Racial division/Racism Experiences:** Description of experiences with racism or racial division/problems

16. **Tokenism:** Descriptions of experiences that correspond to Kanter’s definition of Tokenism (i.e. performance pressures, social isolation, and role encapsulation)

17. **Racial Identity:** Experiences that describe how a participants identifies or views oneself as a Black or African American

18. **Growing up: K-12 Experiences:** Descriptions of participants’ childhood experiences

19. **Family Influence:** Descriptions of experiences where parents or other family members influenced actions or gave advice that specifically affected experiences.

20. **College Experiences:** Descriptions of experiences in college (with peers, professors, etc.)
## Appendix G: Researcher Memos

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document name</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Creation date</th>
<th>Memo text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MC Interview 1</td>
<td>Memo 26</td>
<td>01/02/2016 12:40:54</td>
<td>Considering all the places the participant has lived, it is interesting that he considers the DC area “home”. Even though this is the place he attended and graduated high school— an experience he described as “hating”— I think this is interesting. May be this will be explored in a later interviews or maybe it will somehow be connected to other experiences or codes upon later analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MC Interview 1</td>
<td>Memo 31</td>
<td>01/02/2016 13:27:14</td>
<td>I found myself mentally agreeing with this as he was relating his experiences; although we (the participant and I) came to our profession through different paths, I share his passion for what's most important— “the kids”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MC Interview 1</td>
<td>Memo 32</td>
<td>01/02/2016 13:30:46</td>
<td>I have a VERY STRONG feeling that the participant is referring the K.I.P.P. (Knowledge is Power Program)— a nationwide system of Public Charter Schools that promotes high academics and college preparation for its students. Often K.I.P.P. is touted as a better alternative for students in inner cities— particularly areas where the traditional public schools are statistically struggling or perceived to be failing its students. I do find it very interesting that he did not directly identify the school by name, however.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BW Interview 1 Memo 50</td>
<td>01/17/2016 07:18:42</td>
<td>I think it's interesting that agriculture is or has been such an important field of study to his life and here, unconsciously it seems, he uses a agricultural metaphor to describe and explain the meaning of experience.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HL Interview 1 Memo 54</td>
<td>01/24/2016 07:33:27</td>
<td>A sense of “home” seems very important to this participant. She’s mentioned it or alluded to it several times throughout this interview. Home for her seems mean “safe” or “safety”.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HL Interview 1 Memo 55</td>
<td>01/24/2016 07:37:01</td>
<td>This is a feeling a few other participants have also expressed—when in predominantly white settings. In some cases, it was a teacher; in this case, it’s as a student (for this participant). I don’t know if this means anything, yet. I’ll have to see if this feeling persists with other participants and in other interviews.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HL Interview 1 Memo 56</td>
<td>01/24/2016 07:39:53</td>
<td>It’s like she’s a double minority here. A Black student and one of a few being pulled out for tutoring.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HL Interview 1 Memo 57</td>
<td>01/24/2016 07:40:59</td>
<td>Just seeing someone who looked like her was big thing—a type of support, unspoken support.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HL Interview 1 Memo 58</td>
<td>01/24/2016 07:53:11</td>
<td>I’m not sure if this is more Tokenism (the experiences of her children as minorities in a still mostly White, albeit more diverse school system) or Critical Race (racism being experienced but the teachers (mostly White) not knowing how to deal with it.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC</td>
<td>Memo 59</td>
<td>01/24/2016 08:50:04</td>
<td>I may need to explore this further in our second interview; I need to see if I can identify the specific experience that lead to her decision to be a teacher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HE</td>
<td>Memo 69</td>
<td>01/27/2016 17:56:45</td>
<td>I’m sure what exactly to code this as. Is it racial identity? Is a culture specific thing (which would or could be categorized under racial identity)? I’ll have to re-visit this.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MC</td>
<td>Memo 78</td>
<td>01/31/2016 17:15:29</td>
<td>I’m sensing a pattern here— one of silence. Silence as the immediate response to discussions or charges of racial bias, especially in the presence of the participant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HL</td>
<td>Memo 83</td>
<td>02/19/2016 04:36:26</td>
<td>I’m not completely sure how to code this; temporarily, it’s under “High Academic Expectations” but she is specifically speaking about how she pushes Black/African American kids— although I get the impression that she would do the same for any student.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TM</td>
<td>Memo 90</td>
<td>02/23/2016 03:19:59</td>
<td>Interesting note: Here the participant is inferring that attitudes of affluence come from the teachers (her peers) and not the students or parents as other participants have indicated previously</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MC</td>
<td>Memo 93</td>
<td>02/27/2016 06:29:33</td>
<td>Critical Race in regards to he’s describing how the dominant majority refuses to recognize and deal with issues of race, religion, or other “values” particularly as they pertain to minorities. Not sure about this coding, however.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC Interview 3</td>
<td>Memo 97</td>
<td>03/02/2016 15:31:43</td>
<td>Speaks about the difficulty of being hired by such a (high performing, suburban) school district.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BW Interview 3</td>
<td>Memo 137</td>
<td>04/01/2016 08:51:18</td>
<td>White teachers (in mostly White suburbs— and I dare suspect in any school) are able to freely be THEMSELVES. This is the benefit of White skin (maybe privilege?); this is a by-product of systematic racism of sorts because Black teachers (and many in my study) are guarded about being themselves or feel as if they can not freely and fully express who they are without judgment or without being subject to stereotyping.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC Interview 3</td>
<td>Memo 99</td>
<td>03/02/2016 15:58:42</td>
<td>So, the racial make-up of this school parallels the racial make-up of the schools she attended. Can I then conclude that then manner in which she learned to racially view and identify herself as a kid/student is now reflected in the environment in which she currently teaches. Thus, this could explain her comfort level and ability to strong see her self in the Black/minority kids she currently teaches.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MC Interview 1</td>
<td>Memo 18</td>
<td>01/02/2016 07:12:59</td>
<td>The participant’s past experiences with diversity and different people—probably from all of his moving throughout America and Europe—has given him a more open mind and willingness to accept people from different racial or other perspectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MC Interview 1</td>
<td>Memo 10</td>
<td>01/01/2016 14:08:03</td>
<td>The participant seemed to exhibit a slight change in tone when speaking out his experiences in The South. (As a native Southerner (i.e. Louisiana), his comments do not surprise me. The South is notorious for the conservative attitudes of the people who live throughout the region. I’m sure after living in other more accepting areas and cities before moving to this southern state, the attitudes he encountered here were quite a “culture shock”.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Appendix H: Cycle 2 Code Matrix

## Cycle 2 Code System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code System</th>
<th>Frequency of Occurrence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Experiences</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Student Relationships</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Mentor</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive/Positive Experiences with Administration</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative relationship/experience with Parent(s)</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Relationships with Parents</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Academic Expectations</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior management</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra-Curricular Involvement</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Conflict</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Race</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culturally relevant teaching</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of Black/Minority Teachers</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial division/Racism Experiences</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tokenism</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Identity</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growing up: K-12 Experiences</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Influence</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Experiences</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix I: Code Landscapes (Word Clouds)

Participant 1: Michael Charles
Participant 2: Baldwin Williams
Participant 3: Sheryl Chambers
Participant 4: Tanika Morris
Participant 5: Harriet Edwards
Participant 6: Helen Lawrence