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Studies regarding Black male teachers' experiences working in predominantly White schools are rarely found in academic literature. This is especially true of retired Black male teachers who worked in predominantly White settings. The pronounced absence of profiles of these men is a concern, since less than three percent of classroom teachers are Black men.

Using an oral history methodology, I share the life stories of three retired, Black male teachers who spent their teaching careers in predominantly White schools. These schools employed 80% or more White teaching faculty and served 60% or more White student population. I used semi-structured interviews to examine how my research participants navigated Whiteness, maintained their cultural and racial identities, and learned lessons from their experiences.

I report my findings in the form of extended profiles of each of my participants. In my analysis, I examined similarities and differences in the way Whiteness affected each man professionally. I also provide recommendations for ways in which America may be able to increase the number of Black male classroom teachers in predominantly White schools or any other school setting.

A STORY TO TELL: CHRONICLING RETIRED, BLACK MALE TEACHERS'

LIVED EXPERIENCES WITH WHITENESS

IN THE WORKPLACE

by

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Approved by:

_____
Committee Chair

I dedicate this dissertation to my late mother, Dorothy Scott. It is because of you that I am a practitioner and scholar. You encouraged me to value education, set goals for myself, and follow-through until completion. I regret that you are not here to see me complete my academic journey, but I have no doubt that you are immensely proud. Thanks, Mama,…for everything!

APPROVAL PAGE

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I am grateful for my immediate and church families for giving me the space to step away as needed to ensure that I was meeting my deadlines and goals. More importantly, I appreciate your prayers. It's not just a cliché; prayer does what no other power can do.

Finally, Rand, Chuck, and Ray, you gentlemen inspired me in ways you will never know. For you three to be willing to share your ENTIRE, UNFILTERED life with me still makes me shake my head. You trusted me to tell your stories, and I hope you are proud. Rand, I had met you years ago, but I had never had a conversation with you. Chuck, you and I worked in the same building for a few years. Although we were always cordial, we never exchanged any more than a "Good morning" or a "How are you today?" Ray, my first interview with you was my first time meeting you.

During our meetings, I could clearly see and feel the gamut of emotions when you would share certain memories. The rise and fall of our voices, the laughs, the pauses, the stares, and the tears. Your story became my story. I FELT your pain then, and I FEEL your pain now! I hope our paths will cross again, but even if they don't…know that our stories matter.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Within the last ten years, there has been a fair amount of conversation and research regarding the lack of male teachers in K-12 schools. In the United States, teaching continues to be the career of choice primarily for White women (Coulter & Harper, 2005; Llewllyn & Smyth, 2019; Loweus, 2011). According to the National Center for Education Statistics, as of 2017, only twenty one percent of men are classroom teachers. Black male teachers account for a small fraction of that twenty-one percent (Loewus, 2017). There are approximately 3.8 million classroom teachers in our country. Approximately 76,000 of those teachers are Black men. That is only two percent. Educational scholars agree that more Black men are needed to lead America's classrooms (Chmelynski, 2006; Gaspard, 2019; Skelton, 2009).

Having been both a classroom teacher and an administrator, I am troubled by our pronounced absence. Although we have degrees and meet teacher certification requirements, the Black male teacher void remains a current concern. For those of us that have chosen teaching as a career, our voices are much less prominent in educational scholarship and literature (Bristol, 2018; Hyndman, 2009; Moss, Racusin, & Johnson, 2016).

When examining the staffing demographics of most U.S. schools, Black male faculty members are typically around two percent. According to Dani McClain (2016), "Minorities now make up a majority of students in public schools" (p. 1). Knowing this, it is unfortunate that so few minority students are exposed to Black male teachers (Brockenbrough, 2018; Johnson et al. 2019; Kunjufu, 2013). Of equal or even greater concern, White students are consistently taught by Whites and rarely exposed to teachers who represent other races and cultures. As a result of our absence, White students are rarely exposed to the intelligence and creativity of Black male teachers in classrooms (Hasberry, 2013; Jones, 2016; Kelly, 2007).

I designed my study to reiterate Black male teachers' expectation and desire for respect and appreciation in the professional workplace. We are often stereotyped and victims of anti-biases and racism, when working in predominantly White settings. These additional obstacles we face as classroom teachers in White schools directly influence each school district's ability to recruit and retain Black men (Ekwelum, 2019; Gaspard, 2019; Jay, 2009). Being a classroom teacher is challenging enough. As long as race, politics, hypervisibility, stereotypes, biases, and other factors are present in the workplace, Black men will continue to avoid leading classrooms (Smith et al., 2011; Ware, 2014).

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to share the lived experiences of three retired Black male teachers who vividly and candidly describe their navigation of Whiteness throughout their lifetimes. Black male teachers' experiences in predominantly White work settings such as schools are rarely recorded in educational scholarship. Being a former teacher and administrator in a predominantly White school for a portion of my career, I understand the importance of adding our voices to existing literature. I have been one of very few Black male teachers in a large district, and my experience was different than that of many of my White colleagues. It was also different from my Black colleagues who were surrounded by other Black teachers in their buildings (Bristol, 2018; Fant, 2017). Having access to Black male teachers who have had successful teaching careers may have helped young teachers like me experience more successes and avoid unnecessary pitfalls. If I had had access to more research and scholarly literature that recommended strategies and best practices, I may have learned faster and been more effective (Strayhorn, 2008; Underwood, 2019).

Black men's lived experiences in predominantly White schools and other settings must be shared. This will ensure future generations of Black men who desire to teach have strong mentors who can relate to the encounters they may have with Whiteness in and outside classrooms (Chmelynski, 2006; Jackson et al., 2013; Stanley, 2012).

Research Questions

My research is intended to address one primary question and three ancillary questions. My primary question is: What were the stories and experiences of retired, Black male teachers who taught in predominantly White schools and worked in other predominantly White settings? My ancillary questions are:

1. In what ways did retired, Black male teachers navigate Whiteness in schools and other professional settings?
2. How did they maintain their racial and cultural identities while being one of few Blacks in predominantly White schools and other settings characterized by Whiteness?
3. Were there memorable race-based lessons they learned?

Background Context

When pondering the purpose of my research, I asked myself whose stories I would most want to tell. Initially, I thought I would write an autoethnography, but I know my own story well. As I brainstormed other possibilities, I realized I would rather pay homage to Black men like myself who have impacted the lives of many students throughout their lifetimes. I could think of no greater honor than to share their life history and journey as teachers in predominantly White schools.

There is significant existing research regarding the influence of Black male teachers in schools with high minority populations (Howard et al., 2012; Lynn, 2006; Martino, 2008; Maylor, 2009). There is limited research, however, on Black male teachers in predominantly White schools (Young & Young, 2020). In my lifetime, I have only met a few Black male teachers. In my own K-12 experience, I had a total of two. In addition, I have never read or heard the stories of Black male educators. I have often wondered about their experiences and how they were similar or different from mine. Their stories and experiences are as important as any others, yet the existing gap in literature remains very real. Black voices are unheard and racism and bias against Black males continues to pervade schools (Ladson-Billings and Tate IV, 2016; Ransby, 2015; West, 2017).

I understand the challenges of being a Black man working in a predominantly White school setting. We have to be savvy navigating social and racial politics. Most of my teaching experience has been in the 21st century, but I have often imagined what it must have been like for Black men teaching in White, suburban schools in the 80's and 90's. I assume it was challenging, even tumultuous, for those teaching mostly White students. It is important that they have a platform to share their experiences and takeaways so that future generations can learn from them and grow.

Black men's stories are often untold, underreported, and undervalued (Bryan & Browder, 2013). There is an assault on our humanity, intelligence, and

peace. Not only are we often overlooked in workplaces characterized by Whiteness, but narrow-minded Whites continue to spew misinformation that perpetuates violence against Blacks. Ahmaud Arbery and George Floyd were two Black men recently killed by White men for no legitimate reasons. Floyd was killed by White police officers whose mission is to serve and protect. The system of Whiteness is designed in this way. Black boys like Tamir Rice and Trayvon Martin senselessly and unnecessarily died at the hands of Whites. They never had the opportunity to grow into their manhood.

The fear that many Whites have of Black males remains all too real. Black men continue to be slaughtered for no justifiable reason other than the unfavorable stereotypes and groundless, race-based biases (West, 2017). Many of us who are Black men are at a point where we are tired and angry. In *Between the World and Me*, TaNehisi Coates (2015) writes about the realities of being a Black man in America. In a conversation with his son, Coates said, "It is truly hard to understand yourself as the essential below of your country" and he further stated, "You have been cast into a race in which the wind is always at your face and the hounds are always at your heels" (pp. 106-07). This is a cold, hard reality for life for me and others who are Black men in America. Regardless of financial status, community, degrees, profession, athleticism, or any other personal attribute, no Black man in America is shielded from the perils of Whiteness.

Historically, race has always been a controversial topic. While the 13th Amendment outlawed slavery and Jim Crow laws have also ceased, our country has yet to dismantle systemic and institutional barriers prohibiting Black Americans from advancing like Whites. This disparity has continued to increase the division between the two races (Delpit, 2012; Ransby 2015). Current docuseries like *When They See Us* or *Time: The Khalief Browder Story*, as well as movies like *Birth of a Nation* and *Just Mercy* highlight the chronic and inhumane treatment of our people. The injustices we have experienced both historically and currently continue to be a source of constant tension in America. We are now at a breaking point and our level of frustration and pain has become intolerable and it is manifesting in cities across the nation. Whether you are an intellectual like Cornel West, an athlete like LeBron James, or a creative genius like Jay-Z, the reality once again is that no Black man is exempt from stereotypes, biases, and other forms of overt and covert racism.

For many Black male teachers in predominantly White schools, their experiences within their buildings mirror the mistreatment of Black men outside their building (Jones, 2016; Ekwelum, 2019). Most agree that we are not as valued and respected in the workplace as our White counterparts. We lack the privileges White teachers receive, even if some White teachers never realize it. This is not surprising. Whiteness is often subtle or unseen (Brockenbrough, 2012; McIntosh, 1988; White & Iasiello, 2010).

Peggy McIntosh (1988) listed some of the most basic entitlements that accompany Whiteness. These "entitlements" require no membership application or annual fee. They are a direct result of being born White-skinned. McIntosh (1988) refers to these entitlements as White Privilege. For many Whites who view their privilege as normalcy, it is difficult to imagine that Black men regularly encounter racial barriers that limit their professional progression. In schools that are overwhelmingly White, you will find few Black male teachers (Jones, 2016; Kelly, 2007). Until advocates for equality and social justice in education push for a more inclusive teaching profession, the White teacher narrative will remain dominant throughout educational research and literature (Bonilla-Silva, 2017; Coulter & Harper, 2005; Williams, 2016). White and Iasiello (2010) explained, "White privilege cannot be left for someone else to worry about–it is something that, whether we like it or not, is a substantial part of our everyday interactions with people" (p. 2). Knowing this, I have a responsibility to provide counternarratives of Black men who have dedicated their lives to teaching in White settings. By doing so, I can stand in opposition to systemic problems like White privilege that otherwise mute the wisdom of Black male educators and their lived experiences (Hymes, 2003; Stefancic & Delgado, 2012).

W.E.B. DuBois (1935) wrote about power that excludes Blacks but includes Whites. Today, oppressive powers remain a danger to the Black community. Singleton and Linton (2006) emphasize that if America desires to make right the many wrongs that have been done to Blacks, it will be necessary

that Whites recognize and own their privilege and consistently advocate for universal equality. If America's classrooms desire to increase Black male teacher representation, Black male teachers must have more frequent opportunities to share their stories (Chmelynski, 2006; McClain, 2016).

Methodology

The research methodology I chose is oral history. In the past, some scholars believed oral history lacked the authenticity and specificity that history should contain (Sharpless, 2008). Despite early skepticism regarding oral history, it was eventually validated as a research method. It had even become popular by the start of the 1900's (Abrams, 2016; Hajek, 2014; Leavy 2011). Researchers came to realize that although they had access to historical documents, they lacked access to the personal memories and experiences of those individuals and groups who lived during that time. Defenders of oral history also noted that the research approach adds distinctive details to written versions of a historical event (Chamberlain et al., 2006; Firouzkouhi, 2015; Sitton et al., 2011).

In this study, I was committed to telling the stories of older, educated Black men whose voices have historically been muted by Whiteness. Telling their stories via oral history methodology allowed me to capture their experiences, challenges, and triumphs in their personal and professional lives. It also prompted me to reflect more deeply about my own life's journey and the ways in which Whiteness has personally impacted me.

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After contacting each of my participants by phone and giving them a synopsis of my dissertation interest, I scheduled a total of three interviews with each of them. Each interview followed a semi-structured protocol, and I asked a minimum of ten questions for each scheduled interview. The interview protocol helped to guide our conversation and maintain the focus of each interview. However, each interview evolved organically, and I also asked several unscripted questions.

After the first interviews, I listened to the audio recordings of each man's stories. After having the recording transcribed, I once again listened to the audio recording of each interview and followed along with the professional transcription. I highlighted some specific answers to questions to help me get to know each man better.

Once I reviewed the highlights, I started to formulate codes to help me briefly identify the content of what had been highlighted. For each code I created, I assigned it a color. I highlighted the corresponding statements from the transcript in the same color as the label the statements highlighted. After cutting and pasting all of the statements of a specific color under the heading of the appropriate label, I replicated these steps for the second and third interviews with the participants.

Categories were chosen based on the information shared by the participants. As I listened to the audio recordings and reviewed transcripts, I looked for instances of Whiteness that manifested through isolation, stereotypes,

anti-Black bias, and so forth. Although the participants did not discuss Whiteness as much as I had hoped they would, I categorized the examples they provided accordingly.

After searching for patterns found under each of the labels, I was able to take chunk of relevant information and place it under a theme. Through deductive reasoning, the themes emerged fairly quickly. However, there were changes made due to certain themes not having sufficient information but having a natural fit for the information to be combined with other categories.

Finally, I categorized the themes and placed the participants shared statements under the most appropriate theme. Initially, I had planned to use a coding software like Audacity or Nvivo to assist me with data analysis. After carefully reviewing the categories I had made, however, the information under each category was easy to decipher. I paid careful attention to participants body language, volume, cadence, etc., since I knew that would be very important in helping me to catch the subtleties and nuances of each interview.

At the start of each interview, I reviewed protocols and transitioned by asking the questions I had written. The questions were open-ended and probed each man's experiences with Whiteness throughout their respective lives. I initially anticipated conducting a minimum of twenty hours of interview time, but the total was more hours than I had estimated. Each man explained their perspectives on Whiteness and its impact on them throughout each phase of their life.

Theoretical Framework

Critical Race Theory (CRT) serves as the theoretical framework for my study. In the 1970's while CRT was being developed, advocates Derrick Bell and Alan Freeman were law professors in New York. Their growing concern for people of color within the justice system propelled them to take a more assertive stance against legal and social injustices (Pinder, 2015). Over time, CRT evolved and addressed other facets of inequality among races. Critical Race Theory builds upon the foundation of "Critical Legal Studies and Radical Feminism, to both of which it owes a large debt" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 4).

Race still matters in every facet of our lives (Ransby, 2015; West, 2017; White & Iasiello, 2010). For a Black male teacher working in a predominantly White school, race is paramount in everything we do. It affects where we reside, our employment options, our social capital, our political affiliations, and our options for progress. Race also excludes us from certain professional and social circles (Alexander, 2012; Coates, 2015; Lopez, 1994; McIntosh, 1988). According to Critical Race Theorists, race cannot be separated from a Black man's lived experiences (Bonilla-Silva, 2017; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). For this reason and more, the impact of race on Blacks in the professional workplace should continue to be explored and questioned.

Critical Race Theory advocates for marginalized voices to be heard. CRT underscores the reality that a post racial, colorblind society does not exist in

America; it is a fallacy. Although racism is no longer as blatant as it was in earlier centuries, it remains active and ongoing (Pierterse & Carter, 2007: West, 2017; Williams, 2016). Critical Race Theorists understand that systemic and institutional racism continues to oppress Blacks and other people of color. We continue to experience denials of promotions at work, lack of access to quality health care, relegation to food insecure neighborhoods, and unjustifiable law enforcement brutality and abuse (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Dixson & Rousseau, 2006).

Critical Race Theory combats the ideology of Whiteness. CRT explains that Whiteness is a conscious effort for Whites to maintain their perceived superiority as the dominant race. It also espouses that Whiteness has resulted in legal, financial, and social disparities between Whites and other races. After the Civil Rights Movement progressed and after Jim Crow laws were abolished, CRT emerged. It resulted from legal issues within communities of color. CRT founders came to know that racism and discrimination were not limited to overt Jim Crow segregation laws. Racism was an integral part of the fabric of Western society. If our country is ever going to achieve racial equality and level the playing field for people of all races, we as African Americans must be insistent about sharing our perspectives. In part, this is my rationale for my study.

One of the major ways in which Whiteness asserts itself is by silencing the voices of those with little or no collective power, especially African Americans and other people of color. Counternarratives in teaching are rarely offered, and

we can no longer stand by and watch our perspectives be ignored. Therefore, through the lens of Critical Race Theory, my study acknowledges and amplifies the voices of three Black men who have a combined total of nearly 90 years of teaching mostly White, suburban students. I am hopeful that as more research of this kind is published, historically marginalized voices continue to emerge. I am also hopeful that the dominant Whiteness narrative will decrease as counternarratives increase. In this way, we can decrease racial disparities, resolve inequities, and dismantle systems of oppression that Whiteness perpetuates.

Dyer (1997) asserts that Whiteness is the "human condition." By human condition, he means that there is an underlying assumption within the ideology of Whiteness that Whiteness is normal. He states, "It [Whiteness] defines normality and fully inhabits it" (p. 9). Dyer's theory is plausible. Whites are able to create covert policies that prevent Blacks and other minorities from making forward progress (Bonilla-Silva, 2017; Coates, 2015; Stanley, 2012). Qualitative research in forms like oral history, on the other hand, creates an opportunity for Blacks and other marginalized populations to share their experiences (Creswell &Creswell, 2017; Tracy, 2019; Leavy, 2011). Retired Black men have made significant contributions to the teaching professions. It is time they are given an opportunity to tell their story. They deserve to tell it, and I am excited to share it with the world.

Researcher Perspective

My study is meant to spotlight Black men's desire to be respected and valued like their White counterparts. Our desire for equality and fairness in educational roles or any other professional settings where Whiteness is prevalent, remains a consistent theme in scholarship and research (Kelly, 2007; Jay, 2009; Fant, 2017; Ekwelum, 2019; Gaspard, 2019). With race politics, hypervisibility, stereotypes, biases, and other Whiteness-related issues that Black men must grapple with in the workplace, the mental and emotional strain of teaching has made it an undesirable vocation for many of us (Brockenbrough, 2012; Bryan & Browder, 2018; Gordon, 1994).

Like many people of color, I have certainly encountered my share of racism and Whiteness in my own life. As a small child I grew up in an impoverished community, and for years, I thought things were exactly how they were supposed to be. That is until I was bused into a predominantly White high school, and I was able to see how the other half lived. I was in many organizations and honor societies, and most of my classmates were White. I was invited to certain parties and events at their homes, and I saw that their community was unlike mine.

Their homes were large and ornate. There were pools in the backyard and driveways and streets lined with luxury cars. There was lush greenery throughout their communities, and the smell of magnolias was in the air. Plus, there were a bounty of high-end grocery stores and shopping centers. This had

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not been my lived experience, nor had it been the lived experiences of my neighbors and friends. Yet, each time I visited my White peers homes, I noticed the striking difference.

My mom was smart and a hard worker. My grades were above average, and I was extremely active in my school and community. I didn't understand then why there was such a difference in the way my White friends lived compared to me and my community. As I grew older, I came to know the impact of Whiteness and race on non-Whites. The same disparities that existed when I was a kid remain in effect today, and racism and Whiteness remain an active part of the fabric of America.

I have not only encountered Whiteness in my professional life, but even as a teenager I can recall joining a predominantly White church. The church was large, and there were thousands of members. Every week, they would come into my low income, all Black neighborhood and recruit my friends and I to attend. They would give us candy, and they would send buses to pick us up and drop us off. Since most of my friends were going, I eventually went. The first glaring concern I noticed shortly after my arrival was that all of the Black kids (whom they called "bus" kids) were placed in a room with all Black teachers. This was known as "Children's church."

While I liked the idea of educating young adults about faith in a smaller, peer setting, the White teenagers were not in class with us. They had a different setting, and all of their teachers were White. None of my neighborhood friends

seem to notice or care, but I did. When I inquired with the adults, they said, "Oh, we just do separate classes for our "bus" kids. I then pointed out to them that everyone riding the bus from the inner city was Black. The Black "teacher" in the class said, "Yes they are, but it is not about race. That is just coincidental."

Against my better judgment, I continued to attend that church until I left for college. I did eventually interface with some of the White school age kids and their teachers. They were always extremely amicable. I never forgot, however, our classes were never asked to join theirs' or vice-versa. These personal experiences with Whiteness helped me develop a keen awareness that transcends far broader than acts of racism. When I became an adult and professional, there were instances of racism that soon followed.

I still remember my first day as a new teacher. It was memorable! It was a high school serving different populations of students of color. Most of my students were taller and more formidable than myself. I was dressed professionally, and I can recall greeting them as they walked through my classroom's entrance. When the late bell rang, a few students looked at me and said, "Who are you? Do you know where our teacher is?" I smiled and said, "You are looking at him." One female student responded and said, "Oh, most of us hadn't had a Black, man teacher. You teaching English?" I politely smiled and affirmatively nodded my head.

I've never forgotten that day. I remember in that moment that I wasn't sure how to feel. Should I be glad that I was the only Black male English teacher

in the county, as I found out later that year? Should I be concerned that most of these students had never had a Black teacher in their public school experience? That was when I started to question how much progress we had made as Black people. I couldn't help but mourn the fact that many of these students had matriculated through school and were about to graduate. Yet, most had never been exposed to the intellectual and creative power of Black men leading a classroom.

That first year, I taught a variety of different courses. I was seemingly well-liked by colleagues, students, and administrators, but I was made keenly aware that I was Black. My White, primarily female, colleagues quickly labeled me as a strong, stern disciplinarian, especially with Black students. The teachers would frequently complement me noting that I rarely had any disciplinary issues with challenging students. When I did, my counterparts noted I handled them swiftly. Students did not interrupt me when I addressed them about inappropriate behavior, and they maintained eye contact with me while I conversed with them. I also had personal conversations with students about grooming, manners, and basic interpersonal communication.

My colleagues' observations of my interactions with students were accurate, but I was sorely disappointed at what had not been said about me. There was no mention of the long hours I worked to create high-quality and engaging lessons for my students. There was no discussion of how I worked untiringly to foster an appreciation for literature and language in my teenage

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scholars. I cultivated genuine relationships with my students, and I learned who they were outside of the school setting. As a result of my vested interest in them, students were attentive and performed well, including earning high scores on standardized tests.

Upon reflection, none of those praiseworthy moments were noticed or captured by my White colleagues. It was my first two years teaching, and I wondered was "strong disciplinarian" a pseudonym for brute or a more subtle implication that I was a dressed-up thug. These kinds of assumptions about Black men are regularly made in and outside of professional settings (Ware, 2014; Wilson et. al., 2017).

I had other issues with Whiteness as my career progressed. I left that school after a few years to relocate to another state. After being at my new school about a month, I asked a question about teaching a novel in my world literature class. My colleague, an older White woman, volunteered to give me a lesson or two that she had found while teaching the same novel. I was appreciative of her offer, since I had never read or taught the novel before.

The next week, one of my Black colleagues came by my room and asked me had I had a conversation with a teacher about a novel I would be teaching in the upcoming weeks. I responded that I had, and I wondered how did she know. She explained that the teacher was in the teacher's lounge telling other teachers about my supposedly being this great teacher from another state. Yet, she could not believe that I had not read or taught the novel before. Was I really the "great

teacher" the principal had promised to hire. Needless to say, I was offended and puzzled. After all, she volunteered the few lessons she suggested. The Black colleague, who was also a teacher within our department, had taught the novel many times. She suggested I talk with her or the two other Black teachers in the department, should I have need of literary/lesson resources.

Later that day, I had also found out that the White male who had been hired two days after me had also inquired and received a resource or two from the same White teacher. Interestingly enough, no comments were made about him. It wasn't even mentioned. The Black colleague stopped just short of saying something else, but I stopped her and expressed my appreciation for the notice. She didn't need to say anything further. We both commented, however, that it was interesting that the White female teacher said nothing about the White male colleague of ours, and she had provided him with an abundance of materials, from what I was told. We knew that racism was already rearing its ugly head.

Reflecting on my own work in majority White suburban and Black urban public school classrooms, I believe my dissertation has given me an opportunity to examine my own biases, consider my professional and personal experiences, and engage in active dialogue with other Black men regarding their lived experiences with Whiteness. By exploring the stories, experiences, and perceptions of my study participants, I gained a more complete picture of the ways systemic and institutional racism and anti-Black bias have historically disadvantaged Black male teachers in predominantly White schools.

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Significance of Study

  My research is necessary because of the relative absence of Black male teacher voices in scholarship. White women are the primary demographic leading America's classrooms. There is ample published literature on White women's historical and current roles as classroom teachers (Acker, 1995; Carrington & McPhee, 2008; Coulter & Harper, 2005; Hyndman, 2009). The literature on Black men in teaching, however, often focuses on their absence or exit from the profession (Brockenbrough, 2012; Gordon, 1994; Moss Racusin & Johnson, 2016; Skelton, 2009). Moreover, in comparison to other existing research on teachers, there are few publications that share the perspectives of Black men teaching in predominantly White school setting (Hasberry, 2013; Jones, 2016).

  Sharing the lived experiences of Black men in White, suburban classrooms is beneficial in several ways. First, younger generations of Black boys and men will begin to notice that their knowledge, insights, and intellect are just as relevant and profound as those who are White (Delpit, 2012; Kafele, 2012). Secondly, hearing that other Black men have had successful teaching experiences in White, suburban settings may build the confidence of Black boys and men who may be interested in becoming teachers (McClain, 2016; Singleton & Linton, 2006).

  It is time our stories are shared so that others can learn from us. Pabon (2016) explains that there are many scholars supporting the need for more

narrative research on the unshared life experiences of people of color. Doing so

will increase school districts' understanding of how to be more effective in

recruiting and retaining Black male teachers in predominantly White settings. My

research bolsters the argument that Black male teachers are creative, insightful

assets in their professional capacities.

Summary and Overview of Dissertation Chapters

In this first chapter, I introduced the study and provided background and

specific details regarding the problem motivating my study. I discussed my

research questions and my theoretical framework of Critical Race Theory. I

described the importance of amplifying the voices of Black male teachers, who

have long been absent from literature and research. I also discussed my

rationale for choosing to chronicle lived experiences of retired, Black male

teachers who worked in predominantly White schools.

The second chapter is my review of the literature. In it, I examine the

Black men's experiences teaching in various settings including predominantly

White public and private school settings. I also discuss race and racism in

schools as well as Whiteness and the Hidden Curriculum.

In my third chapter, I discuss the oral history methodology that I used. I

describe how I identified participants, collected data, and analyzed the data. I

also discuss how I ensured trustworthiness.

In chapter four, I offer my findings in the form of descriptive profiles of

each participant. Each man's story reads like a work of historical non-fiction or

biography. Their stories are filled with images, conversations, and vivid details about the ways Whiteness have affected each of them professionally and personally.

In the last chapter, I answer my research questions by reporting my findings. To aid in my analysis, I connect my findings to the existing scholarship. I also revisit my theoretical framework to serve as a lens to help me find deeper meaning in my findings. I describe implications of my research for Black teachers and others who are working or considering working in predominantly White settings. I conclude chapter five by discussing my personal connection to the study. I too am a Black man who has had multiple encounters with Whiteness while serving as a teacher and administrator in predominantly White schools.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

In twenty-first century America, race remains an integral part of everyday life. This is particularly true for Black men. I regularly watch the news and read the newspaper. Often, I see Black men being villainized or victimized in some way. Whether it is a public scandal like Michael Vick, a civil misconduct incident like Clarence Thomas or a criminal trial like that of O.J. Simpson, Black male faces have become synonymous with scandal. When we are not being notoriously portrayed, we are often victims of unwarranted violence and brutality. Eric Garner, Walter Scott, and Botham Jean are just a few of the numerous Black men who have become victims of violence for no other reason than the color of their skin.

The reality is the current President of the United States had several scandals, before and since his election. There were numerous allegations to include racism, misogyny, tax evasion, etc. Not only did he win the election, but he continued to call women names like "Nasty", referred to African countries as "shitholes", and numerous other deplorable acts. In a national debate for reelection, he even refused to denounce White Supremacy or any group that held similar beliefs. All of this, and he remains President and may even be reelected. While noting his recurring mantra, Make America Great Again. To be

clear, what he suggests is that we return to the reign of Whiteness in America and recommit ourselves to the systemic and structural racism that continues to elevate Whites and abase all others.

The intent of this chapter is not meant to present the Black man as a perpetual victim; however, it is incomprehensible for anyone to deny the historical marginalization and degradation of Black men in America. From the perspectives of historical writers like W.E.B. DuBois and James Baldwin, to the more current experiences of Ta-Nahesi Coates and Colin Kaepernick, the lived experiences of Black men continue to be filled with instances of bigotry, inequity, and dehumanization (Alexander, 2012; Coates, 2015; Nelson & Williams, 2019).

In this literature review, I will focus on the struggles of being a Black male. For Black men teaching in predominantly White schools, our voices remain missing or muted in educational scholarship and research (Hasberry, 2013; Jay, 2009; Jones, 2016; Kelly, 2007). The counternarratives of Black male teachers are minimized or altogether omitted when examining our role in predominantly White public schools. It is important to me as a post mid-career practitioner to learn from other Black men who may have had to personally and professionally navigate Whiteness throughout their lives. Regardless of the content of their stories, it is important they have an opportunity to share their takeaways in a vulnerable and authentic way. My study is not for my own selfish reasons; it is for future generations of Black male educators.

I have divided my literature review into several sections exploring scholarship related to the Black male teacher experience in predominantly White schools.

In the first section I examine Whiteness and how it is distinct and broader than acts of racism. I examine that it looks like in everyday life and most importantly looks like in America's schools.

In the second section, I examine how Black teachers have confronted various challenges, including navigating social politics in predominantly White public schools (Kelly, 2007; Maylor 2009; Pande & Drzewiecka 2017). Although there is some research published on the positive impact of Black male teachers who have worked in predominantly Black schools, Black male teachers' lived experiences teaching in White schools have seldom been explored (Jones, 2016; Hasberry, 2013, Jay, 2009). In the final section of the literature review, I explore stereotypes and biases that continue to plague Black men in professional settings such as schools. All too frequently we are notoriously scrutinized (Coates, 2015; McIntosh, 1988; Wilson et al., 2017). These negative depictions of Black men as brutes, criminals, and other unfair stereotypes are also discussed.

History of Race in America

Most people believe that human beings assigned race is a product of their biology, genetics, heredity, etc. In doing so, it is easy to assign a race to anyone based on their physical characteristics such as skin complexion, hair texture, or

bone structure. A person with thick lips, dark skin, and kinky hair may are typically described as Black. If a person's eyes are blue, lips are thin, and hair is straight and blonde, they are typically described as White. Race, however, is not biological. It is sociological (Painter, 2010; Weber, 2010).

President Thomas Jefferson is mostly responsible for America's classification of human beings by race during his Presidential tenure in the early 1800's. Historically, the American financial system was based on black and indigenous slaves from Africa and North America. Because the systems of inequality were so blatant, since Whites were not servants and the slaves work profited their White masters. Jefferson, in an effort to justify the dehumanization of people of Color, touted that the racial difference was a product of science and Whites were clearly superior (Sensoy and DiAngelo, 2012).

In 1865, legal enslavement of another human being, regardless of color, was abolished. This was too little too late, because Whiteness had already become of interest too those migrating to the United States. In the latter part of the century, Whiteness had become immensely popular. The systems of oppression had been clearly established, and those labeled as White received privileges, rights, and resources reserved solely for those that were White. The court systems of the early 1900'w exacerbated the notion of race by skin color. Those that were closer to Whit in complexion were allowed to legally classify themselves as White, even if they had not been considered prior to the court's ruling (Sensoy and DiAngelo, 2012). Fast forward to today, and Whiteness

continues to exalt those identified by Whites and abase all others (Painter, 2010; Sensoy and DiAngelo, 2012).

Whiteness

It is easy for the average person to assume that Whiteness as tantamount to acts of racism. Since "Whiteness" is associated with race and "White" people are the dominant race, it would seem that Whites acts of racism towards Blacks or any non-Whites would be tantamount to Whiteness. Critical race scholars, however, make a clear distinction between the two.

Racism is defined as a "systemic relationship of unequal power between White people and people of Color," while Whiteness explores the "specific dimensions of racism that elevate White people over people of people of Color" (Sensoy and DiAngelo, 2012, p. 119). While some Whites believe the that being White provides no advantage over any other race, no additional access to supports or resources, and assumes normalcy to them is basically the same as any other human being, this is flawed thinking and simply untrue (Johnson, 2018; Sensoy and DiAngelo, 2012). I have personally been in race and equity workshops or professional development and the White man sitting next to me said, "I do not see race. I am born of the human race." I distinctly recall the Black lady sitting two seats down from him looking at him and saying, "Well, that must be nice." I lowered my head and turned it slightly to the left and chuckled. During the break, I saw the same woman, and I high fived her. Reducing race to just "human" is "one of the most powerful and pervasive manifestations of

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Whiteness" (Sensoy and DiAngelo, 2012, p. 119). He didn't realize that the statement he had just made only strengthened the reality that Whiteness is all too real for those who are White.

Blacks have been writing about the reality of Whiteness for over a century. More recently, however, White researchers and scholars have taken an interest in examining critical Whiteness studies. Whiteness, in most recent years has risen to the forefront. White Academicians and allies have come to realize that racism is more than minorities experiencing specific discrimination or disdainful rhetoric disparaging marginalized groups. Rather, there are covert systems that oppress non-Whites and reinforce oppression throughout our everyday lives. It is important to note that the social construction of race is evident in society as Whiteness has become normalization and Whites try to justify their White privilege by acting as if all other races receive the same treatment and experiences (Appleabaum, 2010). This is obviously untrue since there are numerous disparities between Whites and other places when it comes to wealth, housing, education, healthcare and numerous other categories.

As a result of White-skinned persons receiving better treatment and more privileges in everyday life, fairer skinned peoples started to note that they were White. Had they lived in other places where race was not significant, no one's complexion would have been an issue at all. Since in reality, race is a social construction (Johnson, 2018; Painter, 2010). This "social construction" of race is

meaningful in place where they are systems that privilege some and oppress others based solely on the race-identification.

Hidden Curriculum

When we use the teem hidden curriculum in schools. The name sums it up. As a former teacher, it goes without saying that my primary intent was to ensure that was able to articulate, communicate, and create an understanding of the standards for their grade and level. Teachers use standard courses of studies and curriculum mapping through UbD to impart the knowledge and skills necessary to for student success. The course of studies or standards provide lucid and specific expectations of what students should know. However, as teachers, what we teach goes far beyond those specifics. We establish classroom norms and rules that communicate messages to students about what we expect from them not only academically but socially, civically, and otherwise.

Similarly, there is a hidden curriculum of Whiteness designed to communicate expectations and keep the reign of Whiteness in education alive. Through the hidden curriculum, White Supremacy is communicated and affirmed for White students. The primary segue used to emphasize Whiteness in school is through "White investment" (Leonardo, 2009, p.83). The hidden curriculum of Whiteness is always present in schools. School curriculum makes it known that there are differences in the academic and standardized testing success of Black and Hispanic students, but these disparities are reduced to "other" reasons for these gaps. When in fact, "continuity between the past and present",

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"institutional arrangements", and "problems of color-blind discourses" are the actual reasons these disparities between Whites and students of color (Leonardo, 2009, p.83).

Because school systems refuse to do the real work of creating an egalitarian educational system that affords all students the privileges and opportunities to excel, the hidden agenda of Whiteness continues to flourish in American school districts and classrooms. Consequently, Black students are labeled, tracked into special education, or in some way considered problematic. Delpit (2011) provides an example of Whiteness in the hidden curriculum, when she explained how unspoken norms in classrooms benefit White students who quickly become the standard for classroom behavior. Whereas Blacks who may not clearly understand what those expectations are, since they were "hidden" and never explicitly stated, are more likely to be labeled. Delpit (2011) lucidly explained how White students are automatically advantaged by saying, " The rules of the culture of power are a reflection of the rules of the culture who has power" (p. 160). The hidden curriculum is created by White culture, and their students are the ones who know and understand the rules and are able to exalt themselves above those who are unaware.

Black Teachers' Experiences

Black male teacher experiences can vary in many ways. Culture, demographics, community, and leadership can and do affect our classroom teacher experience. Just as our teacher experiences can vary, our encounters

with and responses to Whiteness are not always the same (Kelly, 2007;

Hasberry, 2013; Wingfield & Wingfield, 2014). Although I believe most Black

professionals try not to be presumptuous and immediately think of race as a

factor in their jobs, the truth is race is always a factor. When our professional

credibility is questioned or tested for no apparent reason, and that of our White

counterparts is not, we cannot help but ponder why these incidents are only

germane to our experience. Experiencing such damaging discrimination is

commonplace for many Black male teachers (Ekwelum, 2019; Gaspard, 2019).

As long as Black male teachers' credibility and acumen continue to be

questioned, teaching will remain an unappealing career for Black males.

Recruitment and Retention Barriers

There is a critical shortage of Black male teachers in America's

classrooms. This has been a topic of continual conversation for many years, and

most education scholars acknowledge the need for increased male and minority

teachers (Chmelynski, 2006; McClain, 2016; Whitfield, 2019). Many principals

and district supervisors have started to employ hiring practices that promote

equity and diverse teacher representation.

Gaspard's (2019) study described the experiences of eight Black male

teachers in Dallas. The participants who were interviewed explained that lack of

financial compensation, scarcity of professional resources, minimal support from

administrators and colleagues, and scarcity of Black male teacher counterparts

all contribute to poor retention rates. Yet, Black men feel socially obligated to

positively influence and be a role model for all students. Although keenly aware

of the struggles to recruit and retain Black male teachers, each of Gaspard's

(2019) participants acknowledged the profound impact their own Black male

teachers had on them.

Gaspard's (2019) findings also highlighted many of the barriers to

recruitment and retention of Black male teachers. If America is truly vested in

creating classroom spaces where the demographics of the educators mirror

those of students, more extensive recruitment and retention efforts have to be

made. Accordingly, Gaspard (2019) stated, "The diversity of school populations

is growing at a rapid rate and an understanding of these themes is necessary in

order to attract, employ, and sustain black male teachers in the educational

systems " (p. 92). If not, the White female teacher narrative will continue to

dominate scholarship and educational research.

Recruitment and retention barriers previously discussed obstacles that

face Black men in the teaching profession. Issues like race are frequently a

contentious topic. Black male teachers also noted that microaggressions and

subtle forms of racism are another reason that make the teaching profession

challenging for Blacks (Ekwelum, 2019). Race-based mistreatment concerns

and issues like those spotlighted by Gaspard (2019) and other researchers are

seemingly the norm for Black male teachers in predominantly White settings.

Similar to the previous study, Ekwelum's (2019) study also examined the

barriers to recruitment and retention of Black male teachers. Ekwelum (2019)

chronicled the experiences of five, thirty-something Black men with ten or less years as a classroom teacher who opted to leave the profession. His study specifically focused on the negative experiences of Black male teachers. His participants described challenges such as more work being put on them, concerns about mistreatment because of race, and the overall minimal appreciation for their work as factors contributing factors to Black male attrition.

These challenges, obstacles, and retention problems pervade the research on Black male teacher recruitment and reflect the tainted perspective from which society continues to view Black men. Bryan and Browder (2013) eloquently sum up why there are such small numbers of Black male teachers. They explained, "When African American males enter the teaching profession, they are faced with challenges that occur partly because of how they have been positioned within education and the larger society, especially, media and social media" (p. 145). Despite advances Blacks have made in terms of social justice and equality, this long-standing characterization of us remains problematic.

Black Teachers' Experiences in Predominantly White Private Schools

Researchers like Abigail Hasberry (2013) have published findings on the Black teacher experience in predominantly White private schools. Black males have had similar negative experiences with Whiteness in their respective buildings. Hasberry's (2013) study is particularly relevant today, since there is an increase in options for students exiting public school. These include, but are not limited to, private, charter, or virtual schools. Hasberry's (2013) study examined

the experiences of nine Black teachers. Of those participants, two were Black

men. All of them were secondary level teachers, and they ranged from beginning

teachers of less than four years' experience to teachers with ten or more years of

service. Hasberry (2013) used surveys, interviews, and prompt responses to

collect the data needed for her research.

Hasberry shared her own experiences with race as a Black female having

been adopted and reared by Whites and attending private and public schools

with clear racial boundaries. She chose to pursue education as a vocation,

because she wanted students to be exposed to Black teachers. In her own

upbringing, she was rarely taught by Blacks. Her research examined

experiences with race tokenism, performance pressure, and Black Identity

development in predominantly White private schools. The majority of Hasberry's

(2013) participants explained that they experienced hypervisibility as one of very

few Black teachers in a predominantly White school. Many also felt like they

were the representatives of Blackness or the voice of diversity within their school

community.

The teachers in Hasberry's study primarily came from educational

backgrounds similar to the setting in which they teach. Consequently, Hasberry's

study revealed that the participants were better equipped to adapt to the issues

that arise from being one of few Blacks working in predominantly White schools.

While they admit that the racial issues examined in her study are very real, most

Black teachers found teaching satisfactory enough that they continue to teach in White schools. This was similar to the findings in Kelly's (2007) and Jones' (2016) studies.

Black Teachers' Experiences in Predominantly White Public Schools

Sidney Jones, Jr. (2016) conducted research on Black teachers teaching in predominantly White public schools in Ohio. Jones interviewed six Black teachers consisting of two men and four women who teach at the elementary or secondary grade levels. The majority of the Black teachers enjoyed positive relationships with their students with occasional disciplinary issues that they swiftly addressed. They credited the fact that they fostered fair and respectful relationships with students as a reason that their students excelled. Further, they appreciated the opportunity to infuse their teaching with culturally relevant lessons and diversity-related activities, serve as a role model for their students, and share personal anecdotes with students and staff members.

Jones's (2016) research also affirmed the idea that being one of few Blacks or the only Black meant that the teachers encountered many obstacles. In addition, some noted that their White colleagues and parents sometimes viewed them as threatening and automatically designated them as the go-to teacher for troublesome Black students. Finally, Jones's study showcased how Black teachers felt the need to code-switch or adopt White traits in order to gain credibility from White colleagues. Despite the challenges that Whiteness

presented them, the Black teachers in Jones (2016) study remained committed to their work and their students.

Jones (2016) also captured how his research participants experienced their Blackness in the workplace. His findings were relatively straightforward. Those that grew up in and around Blacks or in diverse areas had deep appreciation for and loyalty to Blackness. They were undeniably and unapologetically appreciative of their heritage and ancestry. Conversely, for the lone Black participant who grew up primarily around Whites, race was not a big deal. That teacher did not believe that race significantly mattered within her school's setting. Some of Hasberry's (2013) participants shared similar philosophies on race. In the end, Jones's (2016) research captures the highs and lows of Black teachers working in predominantly White schools, and his work is similar to other researchers' findings such as Jay (2006), Kelly (2007) and Hasberry (2013).

Black Teachers Navigate Social Politics

Teachers are no stranger to having to acclimate to the culture of the schools where they teach. For Black men teaching in predominantly White school settings, however, we are more likely to feel unappreciated and undervalued (Bristol, 2018). When a Black man accepts a teaching position where the faculty and student demographics are mostly White, he will likely be one of very few double minorities (race and gender) in the building.

Bristol's (2018) study compared and contrasted the experiences of eighty-six Black male teachers and divided them into "Loners" and "Groupers." Loners reflected those participants who were the only Black male teacher in the school. Groupers reflected those participants who had multiple Black males teaching in the school. The groupers' teaching experiences were completely different from the Loners. The groupers were less likely to leave their schools or feel threatened by Whites. On the other hand, Loners reported that their White colleagues were afraid of them and that they were more apt to leave at their first opportunity. Loners did not have the luxury of being surrounded by faces that look like us and were more likely to be a victim of isolation or racelessness (Kelly, 2007; Jones, 2016). These men quickly realize that they may have to learn ways in to mitigate race and culture difference in settings where Whiteness predominates (Pande & Drzewiecka, 2017). Black men who are Loners in their schools may experience racelessness and race tokenism.

Racelessness

When Blacks work in predominantly White settings, some believe it necessary to minimize ethnic traits in order to gain acceptance. Signithia Fordham (1988) conducted a research study of astute Black adolescents. She was interested in learning more about what these students experienced as they strove for academic success.

According to Fordham (1988) and other scholars, these Black students basically denied having any attributes that would be considered ethnic or attributed to Blacks. Fordham stated,

> Some Black Americans have begun to take on attitudes, behaviors, and characteristics that may not generally be attributed to Black Americans….they have adopted personae that indicate a lack of identification with, or a strong identification to, the Black community in response to an implicit institutional mandate: Become "un-black." (58)

Racelessness is one of the factors contributing to the decrease in Black male students entering the teaching field. Although Black students in Fordham's (1988) study grappled with wanting to be successful while maintaining their racial traditions, truth is, each participant in the study found their ethnic mannerisms hindered their professional progress.

Gordon's (1994) article also explored the lack of minorities entering the education field. Some of the participants in her study specifically mentioned racelessness as one of the primary reasons they believe Black students are not interested in becoming teachers. This, along with other factors such as "low pay", "negative image", "absence of role models", and "lack of academic encouragement", were cited by teachers as reasons students lack interest in teaching as a career choice (pp. 349-50).

Some Blacks use racelessness as a way to make gains in their academic careers, much like the students in Fordham's sample. Others use this strategy in professional settings, including classrooms, to build relationships with White

colleagues, parents, and students. They make every effort to deny their ethnicity so that they blend with the Whites in their work setting and just appear to be one of the guys (or girls).

The research of Davis et al. (2019), Mabokela & Masden (2003), Chapman (2013), and others have found that Blacks feel compelled to adopt norms of their White colleagues. These researchers cite that some Blacks believe it is a necessity to camouflage their ethnic traits as much as possible in order to be more readily accepted. Their research confirms Fordham's (1988) and Gordon's (1994) findings. Regardless of whether Black male teachers adopt White customs or maintain their own cultural identities, they universally experience many pressures, stereotypes, or biases that can potentially discredit their work and worth (Hasberry, 2013; Jay, 2009; Jones, 2016; Kelly, 2007).

Race Tokenism

Race tokenism is another issue of concern. Kelly (2007) completed a study at schools with over 80% white students, two or fewer Black faculty, and less than 5% Black students. Like me, Kelly was interested in gaining insight into Black teachers' experiences in predominantly White schools.   Kelly interviewed six Black teachers in such settings and found that Black teachers had both positive and negative experiences. They were committed to combatting the stereotypes and unfavorable biases that may have contributed to Whites' misperceptions of Black men. In an effort at defying the stereotypes and biases, however, the men became hyper-conformists. They admitted to having lost their

connection to their own cultural heritage. Other scholars like Hasberry (2013) and Jones (2016) corroborate Kelly's (2007) research about race tokenism. Hasberry's (2013) research noted that Blacks in White schools experienced tokenism on a daily basis. Jones (2016) explained in great depth the history of tokens and the different kinds of tokenism that people of color, especially Black teachers in predominantly White schools.

Performance Pressure

One of the negative aspects of being a race token in the White work setting is the pressure to always be your best. If your performance is subpar, there is the possibility that other Blacks may not be considered for future positions (Kelly, 2007; Mabokela & Madsen, 2003; Sato et al., 2013). I relate all too well. For a couple of years, I was the only Black male English teacher in a majority White district. Years later, I relocated to another school district in another state, and I was the only Black male core teacher within the school. Because of my experiences being the only, I empathize with the burden of believing that we must exceed expectations in order to be considered competent.

In Kelly's (2007) research, he noted that two out of the six Black teachers he studied discussed how they have had moments of immense pressure to perform well, because there were so few Black personnel in their predominantly White schools. They knew they were the "Black" representative of their school community, and they knew that some Whites would judge every other Black teacher by the work they did.

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Expectations of Black Males

Black male teachers want to be their best. We understand that Black boys tend to have more incidents of violence, special education referrals, and alarmingly high rates of suspension (Kunjufu, 2013; Milner & Tenore, 2010). Most of us want to decrease these alarming disparities. Whites are accustomed to stereotypes of Black men. They solicit feedback from us when they have concerns with Black male students (Jackson et al., 2013; Johnson et al., 2019).

Milner and Tenore (2010) explain the need for White teachers to develop culturally responsive disciplinary practices in their classrooms. This includes striving to build relationships across racial lines and incorporating more effective management strategies. Kunjufu (2013) noted the importance of White teachers not being antagonistic or overreacting to disciplinary issues that may arise. Both Kunjufu (2013) and Milner and Tenore (2010) assert that Black boys receive far greater numbers of referrals and become victims of extreme discipline measures such as suspensions or expulsions. These negative stereotypes and inequitable treatment Black boys experience in grade schools follow them well into their adulthood. These issues linger even after they have graduated college and transitioned into a successful career.

Dismantling Stereotypes

Blacks have certain pre-conceived labels placed on them that are not necessarily true. Black men who teach or have taught in predominantly White schools understand the need for positive Black male representation. Black male

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teachers in White schools understand that we are perceived as a race representative; therefore, we typically strive to dismantle negative stereotypes and biases (Jay, 2009; Jones, 2016).

In Kelly's (2007) study, Eric, a middle school teacher, explained that for six years he was the only Black teacher in a school that is over 80% White students. Eric emphasized that although he had been stereotyped in the workplace at some point, he believed there was an obligation for him to give students who may never see a Black professional an opportunity to interact with one. This realization provided Eric with an opportunity to showcase the insightfulness and creativity of Black male teachers. If Eric had left the school, he recognized that many of the White students may never have another Black male teacher. Remaining part of the faculty gave him opportunities to redefine how Whites viewed Blacks and dismantle negative stereotypes of Black men.

Eric embraced his role as a mentor for students and a token of Black representation. He believed his purpose was far greater than just being a teacher in a middle school. Unlike some that may have resented being the face of Black America, Eric felt he had an opportunity to take the caricature of a Black man and make him a real person. Students interacted with him every day and learned to view Black men as intelligent and professional rather than men who are exclusively athletes, rappers, or criminals.

Hypervisibility

Hypervisibility was another consequence frequently cited by Black men who were race tokens in the workplace. Similar to women working in predominantly male-dominated professions, many Blacks believed they were consistently watched by their White counterparts. Blacks of both genders noted a greater sense of scrutiny and feelings of being watched while working in mostly White settings (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003; Roscigno, 2007; Wingfield & Wingfield, 2014).

Blacks in predominantly White schools also expressed feelings of hypervisibility. Jay (2009) found in her study that many of the Black teachers she interviewed felt hyper visible among their White colleagues. In her research, she interviewed Black educators about their experiences with race and racism in their schools. Jay, however, went further and provided counsel regarding what Whites can and should do to help counteract racial inequities and discriminatory practices in schools. Similar to other scholars on the subject, she highlights how potentially uncomfortable it can become when a minority is the only person of color in the company of Whites (Jay, 2006).

In sum, then, race tokenism is linked to racelessness, performance pressure, and hypervisibility as being common experiences for Blacks teaching in predominantly White schools.

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Stereotype Threat and Anti-Black Bias

Stereotype Threat

Most Americans are familiar with stereotypes. Stereotypes are oversimplified and presumptuous judgments that are generally offensive to the stereotyped person or group. Although we try to defy or eliminate stereotypes, we also know stereotypes are central to the Black man's experience. Stereotype threat is a different, lesser known phenomenon that is equally damaging. It asserts that members of minority groups are or may become a representation of their groups historically negative stereotype. Studies show that the stereotype threat that minority groups' experience has an adverse effect on their professional work environment. Black employees who experience stereotype threat have noted, however, that they work to disprove negative assumptions made by White students and colleagues (Hasberry, 2013; Jones, 2016). This has also been the experience of many Black male teachers.

Stereotypes and Anti-Black Bias

From the historical Sambo, Uncle Tom, and Coon to the modern-day Mandingo or Thug, Black men are victims of unfavorable stereotypes. These preconceived ideas about Black men perpetuate misunderstandings and fear and they taint our professional image. These and other unfavorable stereotypes have contributed to creating an anti-Black bias in America (Pieterse & Carter, 2007; Smith et al., 2011; Strayhorn, 2008). It is no longer fashionable for Whites to use the "N" word or make overt racist remarks. Anti-Black bias in predominantly

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White work settings is far more subtle and undercover (Wilson et al. 2017; Bonilla-Silva, 2017).

I believe human beings were not born with a propensity to stereotype others. Stereotypes require us to process bits of information and interactions, compartmentalize them, and accept them as a standard. Eventually, how we view groups of people becomes the standard for any individual we deem belongs to that group. Consequently, stereotypes/anti-biases are created (McIntosh, 1988; Ware, 2014; Wilson et. al, 2017).

Whites may be unaware stereotypes and anti-Black bias influence their decisions. Anti-Black bias is most clearly evident when Blacks are overlooked, and Whites are given unmerited advantages. In schools, this may constitute as White teachers teaching advanced placement classes or serving as department chairpersons. Blacks may be assigned students with low attendance, cognitive delays, and/or behavioral challenges (Fant, 2017; Ware, 2014; Whiting, 2010). Black male teachers often find ourselves in these positions. Our classes may reflect those stereotypes and assumptions that have been made about us (Johnson et al. 2019; Maylor, 2009).

Summary

Teachers have evolved throughout the years, and there is now a more diverse selection pool. Most schools have a majority female teaching faculty, but nowadays teachers come from more diversity. Nonetheless, Black male school teachers remain a very small percentage of the teaching workforce (Loweus,

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2017; McClain, 2016). As a result of our absence from classrooms, there is little scholarship published to assist or support future generations of Black male teachers. White narratives remain at the forefront of scholarship and teaching.

We are keenly aware of the barriers that prevent Black males from entering the field of teaching, especially those who are interested in teaching in schools that serve White communities. Black men's abilities and credentials are often covertly questioned (Moss Racusin & Johnson, 2016; Bryan & Browder, 2013). Black men's presence is still intimidating to predominantly White populations (Wilson et al. 2017; Ware, 2014). Tokenism remains a hidden motive for some White supervisors and employees (Hasberry, 2013; Kelly, 2007; Wingfield & Wingfield, 2014). The playing field remains unequal, and Black men are not afforded the same privileges as Whites (Bonilla-Silva, 2017; Chapman, 2013; White & Iasiello, 2010; West, 2017).

In closing, Black male teachers' lived experiences in predominantly White schools have seldom been captured in the academic research or literature (Hasberry, 2013; Jones, 2016; Kelly, 2007). There is a respectable amount of information published on Black teachers' influence in predominantly Black schools (Brockenbrough, 2018; Maylor, 2009; Martino, 2010). There is a large amount of historical and scholarly literature on women's influence in schools (Hyndman, 2009; Coulter & Harper, 2005; Acker, 1995). Publications regarding the struggle to recruit and retain Blacks and males in public school classrooms are also plentiful (Chmelynski, 2006; Llewellyn & Smyth, 2019; McClain, 2016).

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Yet, Black men who have spent their lives teaching in predominantly White schools, where few people looked like them, remain relatively absent in scholarship. Regardless of whether our lived experiences with Whiteness are similar or different from teachers in more homogenous settings, we have important perspectives to share. However, only a few studies focus on the work and experiences of Black male teachers in White settings (Hasberry, 2013; Jay, 2009; Jones, 2016; Kelly, 2007). Allowing us to tell our story is a first step, but that alone will not lead to any long-standing, systemic changes. If the end goal is to recruit and retain Black males in the teaching profession, then there must be a far more concerted effort to provide us with resources, incentives, and support to mitigate the stress and frustration of Whiteness.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The majority of teachers in today's school classrooms are women. Since there are many more White and female teachers, the voices of Black male teachers are easily and frequently overlooked. As I recollect about my own personal experiences as a Black male classroom teacher, I remember wondering if any of my colleagues could relate to how I felt. My opinions were minimized in textbook adoption discussion. I was assigned many of the students with behavioral or psycho-social issues, despite desiring more advanced level classes. My colleagues were nice and seemingly helpful, but it was clear that my experience was solely my own. I am fully aware that not all of my classroom experiences were negative; in fact, I would not discount my journey in any way. I would be untruthful, however, if I denied the sting of Whiteness I felt each time I encountered microaggressions or anti-Black bias that resulted from others' ignorance and privilege.

None of my demoralizing workplace experiences negated my passion for teaching, or my strong relationships with students and their parents. Although that was easy to notice while I was teaching, no one ever asked me about my race-based experiences as a teacher. They were not as frequent as some of the studies I have read, but they were painful whenever they occurred.

I had no Black male mentor or colleague to look to or turn to about my experiences with stereotypes, racism, etc. Had I known more about the experiences of Black male teachers from earlier decades, I may have been more prepared to negotiate and advocate for myself. As I grew older, I eventually learned how to effectively code-switch and adapt to Whiteness settings. However, I never disregarded or diminished my Blackness.

Preliminary Description

Oral history is the methodology I chose to examine and share the lived experiences of my study participants. It allowed me to provide a chronological overview of my participants' lives from their childhoods until their retirements. Each man discussed his encounters with Whiteness in the workplace, and he described how he was able to navigate being one of few Black men surrounded by Whiteness in the workplace.

Initially, I had planned to interview four Black retired male teachers who had taught solely in predominantly White schools. Finding four Black men that met this criteria was more challenging than I had anticipated. Most of the school systems I worked for during my professional tenure were fairly well integrated. Although I had met some Black male teachers employed in predominantly White schools, they were millennials or closer to Generation "X." They were still trying to figure out their next career moves. The older Black male teachers I knew had taught mostly in high minority populations, but I was interested in the perspective

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of those that had worked in predominantly White settings. I had worked in both school settings, and the experience is rarely the same.

Although finding men who met my criteria was difficult, I was committed to interviewing four. However, I was able to secure three. I quickly learned that quality would trump quantity, and I was relieved that the size of the sample was not as important as capturing the information being shared.

Once I secured my third participant, I drafted my plan of execution and pondered my potential interview questions. How many questions should I ask? What processes would I use to extract data? How would I approach asking personal questions to men I did not know? These are a few of the questions I was sorting out in my head, before I scheduled interviews.

I have always had interest in Black men's professional experiences in mostly Whites' spaces. I was curious about how these men adapted to settings characterized by Whiteness. I was certain White Privilege would manifest itself consciously and unconsciously every day. Therefore, my research participants' lived experiences were sure to be interesting. Each participant was at least sixty years of age, had adult children, and some had grandchildren. I knew their stories would be captivating, and I looked forward to each interview.

After securing the participants, I began planning my interview questions. At first, I considered an unstructured interview where I made one statement to each of them: Tell me your life story. I had hoped they would tell me all about their personal and professional lives. When I spoke with them on the phone to

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arrange a time, however, I reflected more on that idea and decision. I needed to craft questions for them, since I knew none of them well. Getting them to be vulnerable may be more challenging, if I did not provide more structure.

After much thought about it, I decided to focus on Whiteness in schools and other professional workplaces. I proceeded to schedule their interviews, and I planned to meet with each research participant every other week. That would have given me a week turnaround time to submit the audio recordings to the transcription service, and then a week to code the transcripts.

I had planned to use coding software, but it was unnecessary. I was only interviewing three participants. I was confident that if I paid attention and drafted a back-up plan for data collection, I would not need to utilize a software program. I had not done this level of research before, but I had done enough research on oral history data collection to know that there were other ways of collecting data that would not require coding software. I was not sure how I would proceed, but I planned a strong back-up plan to ensure my research on each participant's lived experiences provided a clear and accurate portrayal of their lives.

Research Questions

My research was intended to address one primary question and three ancillary questions. My primary question is: What were the stories and experiences of retired, Black male teachers, who taught in predominantly White school buildings and other work settings? My ancillary questions are:

1. In what ways did retired, Black male teachers navigate Whiteness in schools and other professional settings?

2. How did they maintain their racial and cultural identities while being one of few Blacks in predominantly White schools and other settings characterized by Whiteness?

3. Were there memorable race-based lessons they learned?

Methodology

For this research project, I studied the lived experiences of three retired, Black male classroom teachers. Each man taught in a predominantly White schools (in terms of faculty and student demographics). For the purpose of the study, I defined predominantly White as 60% or more of the White student population, and 80% or more of White teaching faculty. Each participant is a retired classroom teacher with at least 25 years' experience teaching in predominantly White schools.

Oral history is used to collect information, opinions, experiences, perceptions, presumptions, and other data from persons or groups. In addition, it gives participants the opportunity to share their recollections of historical events in their lives (Hajek, 2014; Janesick, 2007). My questions were open-ended and required thoughtful, extensive answers from each man (Abrams, 2016; Leavy, 2011; Thompson, 2017). The beauty of oral history is it focuses on exposing unknown facts and narrating an individual or group's lived experiences (Elo et al.,

2014; Hajek, 2014; Thompson, 2017). As the interviewer, I asked free-flowing questions that allowed each participant to explain and elaborate. Oral history can be a catalyst for liberating and empowering those who hope for change. Change is the ultimate goal for me.

Black men who have taught in predominantly White schools and worked in other mostly White settings throughout their careers are often muted and unpublished. In fact, Leavy (2011) makes specific mention of using oral history to give voice to "individuals or groups that historically have been marginalized, silenced, disenfranchised, or otherwise had their experiences and perspectives left out of the historical record, are often sought out for inclusion in oral history projects" (p. 18). I saw using oral history as an opportunity for each man to speak to race and power in an intellectual and informative way. It is an effective tool for generating counternarratives (Janesick, 2007; Sitton et al., 2011). Rather than validate the expected, through oral history the reader encounters "conflicting viewpoints" that prompt the reader to "examine events from multiple perspectives" (p. xiv).

Oral history critics have questioned whether it represents a viable academic research option. They believe that personal accounts of information should not be viewed as truth without science and/or statistics to confirm (Ritchie, 2014). Nonetheless, many believe oral history is a valuable form of research (Hajek, 2014; Leavy, 2011; Thompson, 2017). In fact, I believe oral history may be a uniquely powerful research method. It requires imagination and reciprocal

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discussion to uncover the meanings of one's past experiences. Helping my participants sift through their memories and emotions led to powerful discoveries (Abrams, 2016; Leavy, 2011).

It is a common practice for researchers to have multiple data points and not rely solely on one source. Similarly, oral history examines multiple perspectives of an individual's or group's experiences (Hajek, 2014; Leavy, 2011; Ritchie, 2014). The participant is able to share in a genuine way. My participants were reared in times of segregation. Race relations among Blacks and Whites were strained, separate, and unequal. The participants I interviewed have stories of positive and negative encounters with race. Each man made it clear that Whiteness is always present.

Oral history provided each participant the opportunity to tell his story, and it allowed me to gain perspectives that may have been overlooked. During oral history interviews, the researcher can potentially analyze what is meant by the intonation, volume, speed, and other nuances that can be detected when one is speaking (Elo et al., 2014; Portelli 2009). Clearly, this cannot be done with historical documents. Further, Black men who have taught in predominantly White schools and other work areas surrounded by Whiteness have stories that are rarely mentioned or heard. In my study, I provided each man with an opportunity to present his perspectives on being a Black professional working in predominantly White settings and teaching in predominantly White schools (Hasberry; 2013; Jay, 2009; Jones, 2016; Kelly, 2007).

Setting

I conducted the interviews at the local university library or a local school classroom. I reserved the area for each interview to maintain confidentiality and to reduce any anxiety the participants might potentially experience. There were three interviews held per participant. Each interview was scheduled in the evening of a weekday or the morning of a weekend day. Each interview lasted approximately 2.5 to 3 hours. I felt it important for each participant to relive their issues, feelings, and emotions they felt during their encounters with Whiteness. I was intentional in giving them the time and space to sit in their feelings and speak their truth without judgment. I allotted time for each of them to pause, question, and probe. I became increasingly comfortable with pauses, gazes, and stillness.

Sample Population

Black men's voices are extremely important but often unheard (Smith et. al., 2011; Stanley, 2012). Many school districts have created recruitment or equity campaigns to recruit Black male teachers. University scholarships and minority recruitment fairs are some of the efforts used to increase Black male teacher representation in schools, but there is much more to be done. It is important that school districts not only focus on recruitment of Black male teachers but scrutinize the supports and resources offered to them. In doing so, it potentially improvs retention rates.

Because I knew only a few Black male classroom teachers, I initiated contact with the North Carolina Retired Teachers Association. This is a subset of the North Carolina Retired School Personnel. I spoke with the NCRSP President, and he was unable to assist me. He explained that the association did not keep demographic data on their members. However, he supplied me with the name of one of their association's officers, and he felt that the officer would not only meet my criteria but provide me with more leads. I made contact with that officer. He did not meet the criteria to participate in the study, and he did not know of anyone that did. As one would imagine, I was frustrated and disappointed.

Next, I checked the National Society of Black Educators website. It was also unhelpful. Although I initially desired a diverse sample in terms of grade levels, location, and subject areas, I quickly realized that it would take longer than I preferred to find three men to meet all of the particulars I wanted. As a result, I chose to use convenience sampling in a rigorous, intentional way by inviting people I knew personally to participate (Creswell, 2017; Leavy, 2011). They were male, retired, and had taught in predominantly White school settings during their teaching tenure.

Once I confirmed all three participants, I provided them with a general synopsis of my study. I also assigned each of them a pseudonym. I was excited to learn of their lived experiences with Whiteness. Rand had retired many years ago, before I had ever met him. I had, however, met his son and knew a little

about Rand from what I had heard his son share. I learned that Rand had been a great art influencer at every school in which he had taught. He had primarily taught and worked in White settings, and he was beloved by many. After securing Rand, I contacted Chuck. I had worked with Chuck for a few years, and he had retired about a year prior to my study. I did not know him well. He was an orchestra teacher, and he taught half-days in two predominantly White schools.

The final participant was one I considered to be a wild card. Ray had most recently retired, and he had already met the remainder of my research participant criteria. He had taught in a predominantly White school for many years but had also worked at the university level but in a non-teaching capacity. When I reached out to Ray and explained my research interest and rationale for the subject, he quickly said that he would not only be interested in participating, but he would also be honored. I too felt honored that someone I had never met would be willing to share their lived experiences with Whiteness. I sensed from the warm reception I was given, Ray wanted to tell his story. Black men are rarely granted an opportunity to share and impart their professional knowledge and expertise.

Data Collection and Methods

Once I successfully defended my research proposal, I began collecting data. The process started in 2019 and continued over a 3-6 month period. I understood the necessity of the research participants having total confidence in

the research process. To that end, I scheduled face-to-face meetings with each participant for the interview. This allowed me to gauge their comfort level sharing different aspects of their personal and professional lives and gave me an opportunity to build rapport.

I began each of the interview sessions by sharing my personal experiences as a former classroom teacher and former building level administrator. Each interview consisted of semi-structured interview questions. See Appendices A, B, and C. I began each of the interviews by briefing each man about what he could expect from me and what I expected from him, including the interview protocols to be used during the session (Brinkman & Kvale 2015; Leavy, 2011; Ritchie, 2003).

The first round of interviews focused on the participant's personal background and family life. We discussed their early years, school days, recreational activities, and their lives outside of school. These subjects were examined through the lens of Whiteness and the effects it had on each of them as they were growing up. The second round of interviews focused on the participants' experiences with Whiteness in college, majority White workplaces, and most importantly, as a classroom teacher. The final interview focused on how they were treated in their respective schools and what they learned from their experiences with Whiteness.

For the three participants, I collected approximately 22 hours of interview data. After each interview, within two weeks, I provided an electronic transcript

of the interview to each research participant. Each man confirmed the

transcript's accuracy in terms of wording and sentiment (Brinkman & Kyale,

2015; Leavy, 2011; Ritchie, 2003).   *Go Transcript* and *Rev* were the two

transcription services I used. Rev was more accurate, but Go Transcript was

less expensive. There wasn't a huge difference in the accuracy of their

transcripts, but when I used *Go Transcript*, I found it necessary to be more

focused in my review and cross-referencing. Although *Go Transcript* was more

work for me, it was worth it. The student discount they provided saved me

hundreds of dollars. Plus, both services were easy to use. I uploaded the audio

files and selected a few options. Then, I would await the arrival of the transcript.

Each company was reliable and provided quality customer service.

Finally, there were extended time frames between some of the interviews.

This was primarily because of each of the participant's work and travel

schedules. Although each of them is over sixty, they all lead full, active lives.

Each man's schedule was surprisingly busy, but all of them consistently made

time to meet with me. They were all appreciative of the opportunity to share their

lived experiences with Whiteness in schools and other professional settings.

Data Analysis

For my analysis of the research participants' interview data, I incorporated

a standard method used for oral history data analysis. This method consists of

several components: First, I reviewed the transcripts from each interview and

cross-referenced them with audio files to ensure accuracy. Next, I conducted a

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thematic analysis of the written transcripts. I chose thematic analysis, because it is a more flexible form of analysis. It allowed me to capture broad themes across each participant's life. Using an inductive approach, I was able to sift through large amounts of information and tease out the major lived experiences for greater exploration. After reviewing and cross-referencing the transcripts multiple times, I was able to extract pervasive themes for comparison and contrast (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Tracy, 2019).

After listening to the audio files and comparing them to the transcripts, there were significant themes that were clearly emerging in each man's life. Their early lives, for instance, included two-parent households that emphasized education and faith-based influence. They also chose to attend predominantly White universities. At the same time, however, there were striking differences among the men's lives. Chuck went to a Catholic school for a portion of his elementary years. Ray was passed over for a scholarship opportunity because of his race. Rand was the only Black on his college wrestling team. In my findings chapter, I chose to focus on the commonalities and differences of each participant's experiences, explaining in detail the way each participant navigated Whiteness in their professional lives, both in and outside of the classroom.

In my findings chapter as I chronicled each man's lived experiences from early childhood to post retirement, I was able to weave an authentic portrayal of their lived experiences. It is important that oral history research is filled with rich data analysis so that the stories the researcher tells are honest, sincere, and

satisfying to those who read it (Firouzkouhi & Zargham-Boroujeni, 2015; Leavy, 2011; Thompson, 2017; Tracy, 2019).

Reporting Data

There are two major ways in which a researcher using oral history methodology can share their findings. *Analytical writing* is primarily organized by identifying themes in the data and presenting the information around those themes. *Impressionistic writing* is a more creative approach to sharing oral history (Leavy, 2011; Ritchie, 2003; Thompson, 2017).

I chose the impressionistic approach for my dissertation research. Impressionistic writing allowed me, the researcher, to weave stories like a painter paints a portrait. The emphasis was on creativity and the rich use of language, tone, and imagery and other literary devices. This approach allowed me to create a rich profile of each research participant's lived experiences with Whiteness as children, students, professionals, and most importantly, school teachers. Although impressionistic writing is more artistic in style, it is considered a respected form of writing oral history. According to Leavy (2011), "With the rise in narrative inquiry in the qualitative paradigm, more and more social science researchers conducting oral history research turn to impressionistic forms of writing" (p. 123). Further, she notes, "…both analytical and impressionistic approaches to writing are valid and important ways of writing up oral history research" (p. 123). Finally, with impressionistic writing, there was no required

template I needed to use in composing my findings. Instead, I collected and combined data in an effective way for sharing each participant's story.

Since the purpose of my research was to spotlight the lived experiences of Black male teachers' encounters with Whiteness, I started with their family histories and traced their upbringings through grade school. I provided details about their personal lives with specific emphasis on the role of race in their early years through college. Next, I transitioned to describing their first professional job and/or teaching assignment. Specifically, I discussed their observations about Whiteness, race, culture, stereotypes, bias, hypervisibility, tokenism, etc. in the workplace. After examining Whiteness in the workplace, I explored crucial, race-based conversations and encounters each man experienced during their classroom tenure or at other times during their professional lives. I concluded each man's story by revisiting issues of White Privilege and forms of Black Oppression throughout their lives. During each interview session, I had reminded the participant that if he was not directly impacted by Whiteness, he could include any indirect and subtle Whiteness encounters he had witnessed.

Limitations

My goal was to explore the nuances of the participant's lived experiences with race and culture while working in primarily White schools and other work settings. I limited my investigation to three participants. Their experiences may not represent the typical experience of Black male teachers in White, suburban schools or Black male professionals working in majority White settings. This is a

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small sample of retired, educated Black male teachers. They should not be

considered a representation of the experiences of all Black men who have

worked in majority White settings, including schools. Another limitation is that

participants worked as teachers in the same general locale. Their experiences

may lack the well-roundedness of a study with participants with more location

variance. However, none of the teachers taught in the same subject area, nor

did they teach in any of the same schools at the same time.

Summary

Oral history methodology proved a practical way to gather data related to

and chronologically share my research participant's lived experiences. McLeod

(2016) notes, "Oral history, it is argued, offers a valuable method for

researching emotion because of its capacity to elicit and illuminate narratives

that cross over subjective and socio-cultural dimensions of memory, allowing

exploration of the nexus between private and public feelings" (p. 273).

Impressionistic writing allowed me to illuminate three Black men's encounter

with Whiteness throughout their lifetimes.

CHAPTER IV

PROFILES

The three participants in my study were assigned aliases. In addition, the schools they attended, counties and cities in which they worked and resided, and respective workplaces were either given a false name or no specific name was provided.

As I have grown older, I have become increasingly fascinated by other people's lived experiences. One of the wonders of life is human beings are uniquely different but also universally the same. One of the ways we can discover and explore the universality of humanity is through sharing our lives and building community with others. The knowledge gained when we listen to each other and share our stories is important. Everyone has a voice and something important to say. It is important that each of us are given an opportunity to share our story. We all have something to say.

I believe our most powerful learning experiences have or will likely come from either hearing or reading about others' lived experiences. There is something powerful, even magical about exploring our personal lives. Sharing our stories can affect others in ways that are unimaginable. No amount of coaching can change what we have gleaned and learned from our personal experiences.

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As a Black man who was a classroom teacher for many years, I am honored to share the oral histories of three Black men who have spent a combined total of almost ninety years of classroom teaching in predominantly White schools. Their lived experiences and lessons are a source of inspiration and strength for me and future generations. I was amazed at their continued passion for teaching and learning. I am hopeful that anyone reading this dissertation will benefit from the multitude of experiences these men have had in their personal and professional lives.

Rand, the Imaginative Artist

I stood on the steps of the local university library awaiting the entrance of my first study participant. As my eyes wandered the courtyard area, I saw a small-framed Black man quickly round the corner of the building. He was dressed in loose-fitting, stone-washed jeans and a multi-colored, plaid shirt. As he approached, I noticed he leaned slightly forward while walking. Once he stood before me, we quickly shook hands and were seated. Rand is approximately 5'5" tall with a tapered, gray afro and a somber countenance. He has a quiet intensity that resonates from him. He was polite but initially reserved. We reacquainted ourselves by exchanging brief pleasantries. I had met Rand years earlier and had always heard positive comments about his work, but I had never had the pleasure of working with him as a colleague.

We stared at each other, and there was a brief moment of awkwardness. I raised my eyebrows and broke the ice by asking him about his

upbringing. Rand paused and took a deep breath and slowly began to speak.

As he shared, his eyes lit up and his mouth quickly evolved into a jubilant

smile. Seeing Rand beam as he began speaking softly but passionately,

confirmed the necessity for my research. Rand had a story to tell, and I believe

the rise and fall in his voice indicated how anxious he was to tell it. As I asked

questions about his childhood, I was thinking how humbled I am that he would be

willing to chronicle his lived experiences to someone he barely even knows.

Two-Parent Household

Rand grew up in a two-parent household in the heart of Eastern North

Carolina. His father died in 2005 just a few years shy of turning ninety, but his

mother remained alive and well until she was close to one hundred. She passed

a few years ago at the age of ninety-eight. As Rand discussed his parents, there

was a genuine fondness evident in his face. He cheerfully explained their

powerful influence on his life. Each time I asked him a question about "Mother",

which he affectionately called her, he would clear his throat and think deeply

before he answered the question. At the close of our first interview, Rand

explained that he was deliberate and thoughtful as he discussed each parent,

because he remembered them as "truly remarkable people."

When I asked Rand to focus specifically on his mom, whom I will call May,

and what made her so remarkable, Rand said, "If I had to point to one person

who has had the most to do with me in terms of my ambitions and drive, it would

be my mother. She was not just my mom, she was my best friend." He noted

that "Mother" and his father were married sixty years and successfully raised six hard working, productive children. Rand viewed the children's success as a testament to his parents' magnificent legacy.

Rand considered his mom the "leader of the family." She taught all the children how to cook and clean, and she efficiently ran their home. May strongly emphasized schooling and education, and there was no question of her expectations of all of her children to graduate and become successful in some way. Rand recounted that even as he matriculated into adulthood, his mother was a constant. She was always there for him. He said of May, "I felt comfortable talking with her about anything at any time."

May never ceased to encourage her children to aim high and strive for excellence both in and outside of the classroom. For May, anything less would have been deemed unacceptable. Although she was not a college graduate, she periodically enrolled in post-secondary courses at the local technical institute. For many years, May worked for Social Services. She helped provide and coordinate financial and other related services for the poor. May was not only committed to her children being educated, but she emphasized the importance of them caring for others that were not as fortunate. In short, Rand described May as "the rock of the family."

Rand's hard working and caring father's impact on his life was equally undeniable. Rand described his father, whom I will call Ross, as a "light-skinned" and "debonair" man who was extremely organized and detailed in his personal

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and professional life. Rand explained that his father had been able to secure a position as a bellhop at an upscale hotel.

I thought Rand's verbiage was interesting as he talked about his dad. Rand led the conversation by referring to his father's complexion. I remember thinking at that moment that Rand was implying that being "light-skinned" and "debonair" is what got his father the job as a bellhop. As Rand talked more about Ross, he mentioned how his father lacked articulate speech and formal education, but Ross compensated for lacking in these areas by using common sense and infectious charm.

Ross had exquisite tastes. He would save money over time to purchase a higher quality item, in lieu of making a quick purchase that might eventually cost him more in the long run. Likewise, Ross encouraged his children to exercise similar judgment. Rand remembered how Ross would caution them and prompt them to be mindful that cheap, quick purchases are not always the best. Regardless of whether it was clothes, cars, appliances, etc., Ross strove to provide the best for himself and his family. He had been raised in poverty and wanted to ensure that May and his children had a better life than he did.

Rand's father had grown up trapping muskrats with Rand's grandfather, who was a tenant farmer. Rand chuckled as he talked about Ross's disdain for having to trap rodents while growing up. Ross modeled the importance of hard work and determination for his children. He fostered a solid work ethic in all of them.

As Rand's father aged and could no longer keep up with the demands of being a bellhop, he became a custodian for the local school system. Ross remained a proud man, and he carried himself in a way that although he was a Black man of menial job status, he was respected by his family, community, and employers.

Early Years

Rand grew up in a household filled with love and respect. He had many siblings, and he learned at an early age the importance of group dynamics and getting along with people. Rand had two older brothers, one two years older, the other five years older. One of his brothers is now deceased. Rand had three sisters, one of them is also deceased. Despite mentioning his siblings' deaths, Rand smiled broadly as he reminisced about his early life. His home was filled with youthful chatter and jovial laughter.

Rand was an active child. He loved to climb, run, and play. For as long as he could remember, he had always been fairly athletic. Growing up in his formative years at preschool age, he recalled one of the most impactful and profound lessons he learned.

When Rand became old enough to begin school, there was no Pre-K or Kindergarten. Instead, he and his brother stayed with a babysitter he referred to as Lonnie. During the day, they would sit out on the porch all day. Unless going to use the bathroom or eat lunch, Rand and his older brother were not allowed inside of Lonnie's home. They were confined to the swing on the porch. Rand

longed for "Mother" each day, and he and his brother would run to her as she arrived to take them home.

Although his experience at Lonnie's was not a fond memory, Rand learned the importance of patience and perseverance. Having to stay at Lonnie's every day, against his will, was grueling. Nonetheless, he survived. The importance of adapting to unpleasant circumstances was a skill Rand grew to appreciate as he grew older.

After Rand transitioned out of Lonnie's home and began the next several years in elementary school, Black teachers began to have an influence on his life. According to Rand, they were not friendly nor inviting. They were stern and had high expectations for the students in their classes. Rand said, "I found that the teachers were something different. They dressed and talked differently. They carried themselves with confidence and swagger. Those attributes appealed to me." As a young Black kid in Eastern North Carolina, Rand knew that he wanted to become the kind of adult that his parents and teachers were molding him to be. At that time, he didn't realize he would one day share his stories of walking ten blocks to school each day with his own students.

Elementary school years were a happy time for Rand. He was a curious kid, and he wanted to do well in his classes. He realized early on that if you did well and behaved, you would become the teacher's pet. Rand chuckled and noted "that was a good thing." On the other hand, corporal punishment was allowed in those days. It was understood that teachers would discipline students

and inform the student's parents that they applied corporal punishment when needed. Rand explained that if he received a paddling at school, there would definitely be more following, once he arrived home. Rand knew that his teachers genuinely cared about their students, and the teacher's application for punishment of students was motivated purely by love.

When it came to curriculum, his teachers focused intently on the 3 R's—Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic. For Rand, it all came easy to him. His love for learning has remained with him throughout every stage of his life. Although he is now retired, he still considers himself an avid learner.

Religion

Rand's parents' focus for their children was not limited to academics, character, and appreciation for a better life. They were also intentional in establishing a blueprint of Christian values and ethics for each of their children. Rand heartily laughed as he recalled his mother's straightforwardness, when it came to her children attending church. It was a non-negotiable with May. She required Rand and his siblings attend and participate regularly.

Although Ross and May were Christians and expected their children to be, they also made it clear that they expected their children's friends to be of like faith. As Rand pondered the role of faith and religion in his upbringing, he explained he had to be extremely careful with whom he brought to his home. Ross, Rand's father, was a little more liberal and tolerant of diverse religious beliefs, as long as the person was moral and honest. May, on the other hand,

was according to Rand a "committed Christian." Everyone who knew May knew that she was devoutly religious, and she made it explicitly clear to all of her children that the people they brought into their family home should also be a disciple of Christ.

As Rand talked more about being reared in a Christian household, he squinted as he spoke about how his friends needing to be Christian was a struggle when he was a college student. He would bring home guys of all faiths and races, since he was on the wrestling team. Rand's mom, May, would question any guests of Rand's or his siblings about their relationship with God. If May subsequently asked Rand where a boy or girl friend of his came from, that was May's way of informing Rand that she did not want that friend to return to their home.

Rand's father wasn't initially as consistent as May with church attendance. He and Rand's older brother had work obligations, and they were not always able to attend service with the rest of the family. As Ross aged, however, he became more involved and committed to the Christian church. Rand noted that in Ross's latter years, Ross was an avid church attendant.

Rand remained a disciple of Christ and a member of the church all of his adult life, and he proudly speaks of the powerful influence Christianity was for him as a child and even now as a senior citizen. When he was young, the church was more than just a place of assembly and worship. It was also a place of community. The members of his church were also members of the social

community. Their influence helped to shape Rand into a well-rounded, morally sound, empathetic educator.

Experiences with Whiteness in Grade School

As I concluded my questions on the role of religion in Rand's life and started to question him about his experiences and encounters with Whiteness, Rand took a slow, deliberate breath. This subject has the potential to be painful, especially for older men of color like my research participants. Therefore, I braced myself for what I assumed would be something that will sadden or anger me. To my surprise, however, Rand's facial expression quickly changed after he took a breath. As I waited in silence for him to start speaking, he did something that caused me even greater pause: he smiled.

Rand's earliest encounter with Whiteness was his second-grade year at his local all Black, elementary school. It was early spring and time for the annual Easter egg hunt. White people would come to the campus that time of year, and they would hide eggs in various places for students to find. Each grade level would have an opportunity to hunt for the eggs. When the second graders were released to hunt for the eggs, Rand recalled, "I took off running like everybody else, but it seemed like I was always late getting to the various places where the eggs were hidden. Finally, I just decided, I'm going to cry, because I was frustrated."

A twenty-something White man noticed Rand crying and approached him. He questioned Rand about why he was crying, since all of the other

students were having fun. Rand explained that he was unable to find any eggs.

Moved with compassion, the young White man took Rand to the golden,

Chocolate egg. Instantly, Rand's mood changed. He was relieved and excited

that he had found the egg with the best prize. Rand no longer cared that he

didn't have the tiny plastic eggs filled with candy. Even as Rand told me this

story, his eyes danced back and forth with excitement. He was rarely around

Whites. They didn't live in his community, and schools were segregated. As a

young Black boy, his first up close and personal encounter with Whites was a

positive one.

Experiences with Whiteness in Middle and High School

Rand does not recall any negative encounters with Whiteness of any kind

during his middle school years. His middle school was a neighborhood school

with Black faculty and students, therefore, there was little White presence in

Rand's immediate circle. By the time Rand entered high school, however, it was

the first year the county had integrated schools. Rand would be exposed to more

White people in the near future.

Now that schools were integrated, Rand had the option of attending the

formerly all-White high school in the area. The new option for students was

called *Freedom of Choice*. Rand opted not to attend the previously White high

school the first year. There were only two of Rand's Black peers that chose that

option. The following year, however, an additional ten Black students chose to

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enroll in the no longer segregated Williams High School. Rand, now a sophomore, was one of the ten.

Rand went from being in predominantly Black classroom settings to being surrounded by Whites. He wasn't as uncomfortable being one of a few Blacks in a predominantly White school as I would have been. The primary reason for Rand's minor discomfort was caused by the immediate differences he noticed between his new high school's teachers and their rigorous academic expectations for all of their students.

In the schools Rand previously attended, Rand realized it was more of a regurgitation of information his teachers had expected. As Rand reflected on his new, White math teacher, Mr. Bennett's class, Rand would often wonder how the White kids could correctly solve math problems so quickly.

In hindsight, Rand says, "It was altogether a different experience for me. I had to learn to actually think about things and come up with solutions." "Frankly," Rand said, "The concepts came to me so easily at my former school. I wasn't used to having to critically think and move beyond the obvious."   The other discomfort Rand experienced was caused by his feeling of hyper visibility. The White students and teachers never made him feel like he wasn't as smart, but he felt the pressure of being a Black ambassador for the school. He wanted the teacher, students, and community to understand and know that Black students were just as intelligent as Whites and worthy of being in their schools.

Rand had been fairly athletic most of his life. While at the high school, he soon realized that wrestling was the one sport he not only loved but in which he excelled. Rand was the only Black member of the Williams High School wrestling team. Through his prowess on the mat and charismatic personality, he was able to earn the respect of his teammates. By the time he was a senior, he had been chosen to be the wrestling team's captain. Rand was honored.

I scanned my notes as Rand was talking, and I wanted more information about the hyper visibility Rand recalled experiencing. Rand explained that he felt like he was on display every day. There were only about twelve Blacks in the school, and there was a certain part of the area that remained upset about mandated integration of schools. Further, Rand mentioned how unfriendly some of the White students were by noting that the majority of the White students were "stuck up" and "arrogant". He said, "Believe it or not, my race didn't seem like an issue for the wrestling team. I was obviously Black, but our team knew we had to be unified to beat our opponents. We worked together, and we got along well."

Whiteness on the University Campus

Rand started college in the late 1960's, and he was one of three students that received a full wrestling scholarship to a predominantly White institution. Like high school, Rand was the only Black on the team. When questioning Rand about once again being hyper visible and the only person of color on his wrestling team, Rand said it did not bother him at all. He had already

anticipated the inquiry, since he had wrestled in high school and had personally experienced lack of diversity in the sport.

Rand light-heartedly spoke about being the only Black wrestler on the ECU men's wrestling team. Eventually, he became captain of his university's team, just as he had done in high school. Listening to his story was like deja-vu. While Rand had no race-based problems or concerns about being the lone Black member of his high school or university wrestling teams, he noted that he knew that race was as important of an issue as it is today.

Rand has a theory regarding why he never experienced racial tensions while on the university team. He believed, "We worked hard together. We sweated together. We cried together. When we lost a match, the coach worked us extra hard. There was no time for politics, race, religion, or any other potential divisiveness." As the captain, Rand emphasized the importance of his team functioning as a cohesive unit. It also helped that Rand's relationship with a few of the wrestlers had become more than teammates. He had formed genuine friendships.

Rand was not only exposed to a White only audience on the wrestling mats and in the locker room, he experienced it as an art major. Once he declared art education with an emphasis in sculpture as his major, his classes were once again filled with White faces. Although surrounded by White students, Rand never felt ridiculed or subordinated by any of them. Race was simply not a huge issue.

His White friends and classmates appeared to respect him no less than any of the other students. In fact, Rand said the White students were pretty open to other races and nationalities. When Rand talked about his college peers, he says, "They were flower chewing, long-haired Whites. And although it was the 60's when both King and Kennedy were assassinated, color just wasn't a concern of theirs."

As I begin to conclude the conversation about Rand's relationship with his White peers, Rand abruptly stopped but looked as if he was about to speak. I questioned him about what he wanted to say. Rand slowly shook his head from side to side and said that he did not believe what he was about to say was important or relevant. I encouraged him to share, since everything is potentially important for my purposes. Rand shook his head in agreement and mentioned that he had reconnected with the two White guys that were on wrestling scholarships with him.

A few years ago, there was an event honoring Rand's ECU wrestling coach. It had been at least four decades since Rand had seen his former team members. When they saw each other again, however, it felt like old times. They agreed to keep in touch, and they have done so via social media and through periodic gatherings. Rand slowly began to share that he and the other scholarship recipients all met at one of the wrestler's vacation homes on the beach.

While there, Rand said that they began talking politics and both of his former comrades had morphed into staunch Conservatives. They were very comfortable talking politics in Rand's presence and didn't seem to care that he was not as participatory in the conversation. Rand was stunned, since both had seemed quite progressive at ECU. When I asked Rand why he did not share his views in the political discussion, he quietly said, "I refrained from doing so, but it really opened my eyes. I was just really bothered listening to their views." Then, Rand shook his head and sighed.

Rand's experiences with his White wrestling peers and co-art majors were not Rand's only good memories, he also remembered supportive and kind White faculty at ECU. Even as Rand was preparing to matriculate and move into the workforce, Rand had a White professor who thought very highly of him as a person and as a talented artist. At one point, when Rand was becoming increasingly overburdened with managing the demands of being an athlete and an artist, the professor I will call Dr. Blake, invited Rand to his home for dinner.

While in Dr. Blake's home, he talked with Rand about being a graduate assistant for him. This would be beneficial in multiple ways for Rand. It would allow Rand to continue studying art at the graduate level at no additional cost, and it would allow Rand some time to figure out his next steps. Rand was excited and grateful for the opportunity. Dr. Blake was too. He knew he was getting a great artist and a conscientious assistant.

Rand continued to grow as an artist and increased his marketability, because of his professor pushing Rand to pursue his passion for art. Dr. Blake motivated Rand to work hard for him. His contributions to molding Rand into an amazing artist and teacher, Rand emphasized, was "truly undeniable."

Whiteness in the Workplace

Rand was excited about completing graduate school, and he thought he wanted to be a university art professor. After one interview, however, he immediately realized that being a professor was not for him. It was going to be too much politics and publishing. He had never had any interest in teaching at the secondary level, but when the opportunity presented itself, Rand accepted the challenge to return to his alma mater and teach at the high school from which he graduated. When I asked him about returning to a school that was almost all-White when he started and his experience with Whiteness in his first real job, Rand said that he never felt disrespected nor discriminated, nor did he have any other negative emotion directed towards him due to being a Black man.

There were Black teachers at the school that had come in as a result of integration too. They had complained about how some of the Whites treated them, including the White principal. Rand, however, said that he got along with the White faculty and the principal. In fact, he could only think of one really unfortunate event that happened during his entire five years at Williams High School. To this day, Rand is still unhappy with himself for allowing other faculty members' experience to influence him to sign a petition to dismiss the principal.

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There was a mass petition of teachers of all demographics that eventually helped to get rid of that principal. Rand explained, "He [the Principal] was an older White guy. He was tolerant, respectful, and supportive of everything I did with my students. I had no business signing that petition to oust him from the school."

Rand admitted that he felt obliged, since the few other Black teachers, and many of the White ones, had signed it. They were adamant that the current principal was not a good fit for the school. When the principal confronted Rand about signing the petition, Rand was saddened. In Rand's heart, he felt that he had been hypocritical in some way. Had the shoe been on the other foot, he would have deemed the principal a racist. By this, Rand meant that the Principal had been doing his job. Of course, some teachers did not like some of the changes he was making, but the Principal always rationalized his strategies and ideas with the faculty. He also frequently garnered faculty input and was personable with everyone. In Rand's opinion, there was no justifiable reason for Rand's colleagues to start that petition and force him out.

Rand stayed at Williams two more years before being recruited to teach at the prestigious Governor's School, where he also taught for about six years. Since this was a school for accelerated students, Rand was challenged to be more creative and innovative in the classroom. The faculty was about 20% Black, and the student demographics were about the same. Rand was able to do some exceptional work with his students. At that time, the faculty lived on

campus with the students. Rand found his colleagues to be warm and caring of each other, as well as with the students. When questioned about experiences with Whiteness at the Governor's School, Rand said he again had no issues.

Rand had recalled when a Black teacher said to him earlier in his career that he was articulate and charismatic in a way that Whites were not intimidated by him. In other words, Rand's demeanor disarmed them. When I questioned Rand about his thoughts on that teacher's statement to him, Rand agreed that he is not the Say it Loud, I'm Black and I'm Proud militant type.   I probed further about how he really felt about the label she had put on him. He said he was used to it. He also said, however, that he had learned early on that he could not be his authentic self with White folks. In other words, Rand understood the importance of code-switching in order to be professionally successful and accepted by Whites.

The prior professional teaching assignments had adequately prepared Rand for what would become his last and most rewarding teaching assignment of all, which was in Raleigh, North Carolina, at Allendale High School. Rand had been recruited to teach at the new school, and he was excited for the opportunity. Although it was one of the greatest joys of his life, it was not a seamless transition. Rather, he encountered Whiteness in power shortly after he had started in the position of art teacher.

By the time Rand began his tenure at Allendale High School, he had established himself as a talented artist and a highly respected teacher. It was

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the first year of the school's opening, and Rand had been handpicked by the school's Principal to serve as the art teacher and wrestling coach. Rand was grateful for this new opportunity. This would mean he would no longer have to reside on school campus, and he would no longer have to commute home to his family on the weekends.

Shortly after his start at the new school, Rand felt isolated and ostracized when he was in group settings with other art teachers in the county. Most of them were White and female. He didn't know why he was being snubbed. Yet, he was certain that they had no reason to dislike him. They would not converse with him, and they would almost act as if he were invisible. This was not the beginning Rand wanted at a brand new, predominantly White, middle class school.

Rand was concerned but hopeful that he would win them over. When Rand received low ratings on his observations from district personnel, however, he began to wonder what they were trying to do to him. Rand went to the district's supervisor of art teachers and voiced his frustration. He showed her work samples and the kind of products his students produced. The supervisor seemed impressed but offered no support, explanation, or solutions. In fact, she implied that Rand would probably benefit from teaching elsewhere. That is when Rand realized that this was not about his teaching abilities or talent, this was about something far more threatening to Whites in power. He was a Black man, and he unapologetically excelled in a traditionally White-dominated field.

Within a few days after his meeting with the district supervisor, Rand went to share his concerns with his principal. Rand recalled saying, "Listen, I appreciate all you've done in choosing me for this position, but I don't think it is going to work out. I may have moved too fast and not done enough research about this area." Rand's principal, whom we will call Mr. Bryson, informed Rand that he had become aware of what was going on. Mr. Bryson explained to Rand that "others" had someone else in mind for the position, but he chose Rand. As a result, Rand's colleagues had been trying to make Rand so unhappy and uncomfortable, he would resign from his position.

The principal assured Rand that he would be fine and that he had made the right decision in coming to his school. He also assured Rand that he would address the problem. In a matter of weeks, Rand began to see immediate improvement in the way his White colleagues and district supervisor treated him. Rand's principal was candid in explaining that the opposition to Rand was due to displaced anger. Those in power had a particular White candidate that they had hoped would get the new art position. When Mr. Bryson chose Rand, they were not happy about it but had no recourse.

As Rand relived his first professional encounter with racism and White privilege, I sensed the experience was painful for Rand. Yet, he ended on a positive note by saying that there were no recurrences. For the next twenty plus years, he served as a Coach and teacher in a predominantly White setting, but Rand never had any other negative encounters with Whiteness during his career.

Chuck, the Passionate Musician

Of the three participants I researched, Chuck is the one participant that I had an opportunity to work with in the same school building. Like the others, he has now retired. He and I worked together for at least three years, and I am pleased to say that Chuck was an exceptional educator and passionate musician. I witnessed him provide many hours of instruction to students during and after school hours. He was frequently heard encouraging them to have an appreciation for the fine arts, particularly stringed instruments. Like Rand, Chuck is one of the few Black men that teach a subject usually taught by Whites. For over twenty-five years, Chuck was an orchestra teacher in predominantly White elementary, middle, and high schools.

As Chuck and I convened at the high school where we both served for years, I see him smiling as he walks through the door. As usual, he was gingerly strolling.   Chuck stands approximately six feet tall with a medium-build and a gray brush cut (a common Black male hairstyle). He was dressed in khakis and a button-down, long-sleeve shirt. He approached me walking slowly with a wide smile across his face. Before we started our conversation, I gave Chuck a moment to look around and survey the environment. We laughed about how some things had changed but even most had remained the same. After explaining the purpose of my research, I asked Chuck to tell me his story.

Two-Parent Household

Like Rand, Chuck was raised in a loving, two parent home. He described his parents as open, educated, hard-working people. They strove to model the importance of education and dedication in both their professional and personal lives. When asked to talk about his parents' influence, Chuck's booming baritone voice began to share. Chuck's father, whom I will call Don, was a man of many talents. Ironically, Chuck laughed, music was not one of them. Don served as a Marine before settling down and starting his family. During Don's time in the military, there was still a huge Black-White divide. Don was never able to excel and reach an officer's status, although he had taken the test and received the second highest score in his class. After Don's time in the military, Chuck noted, "My father went on to graduate from Shaw University and became a teacher. He started by teaching biology. By the time he retired, he had transitioned to teaching industrial arts."

When it came to parenting, Don was an affectionate father. Chuck recalled Don explaining to him and his siblings that he was intentionally expressive and hands-on with them. Chuck noted that his father had shared with them that Chuck's grandfather was not particularly expressive, and Don missed that paternal nurturing. He knew what it felt like to have the void of a father's affection, and Don was determined to intentionally let his children know how much he loved them. He made sure they heard it and felt it from him.

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As Chuck grew older, his father battled alcoholism. Occasionally, Don would leave for days at a time without sharing his whereabouts or checking in with Chuck's mother. Don would always come home after a few days, and he would never be violent or unkind to his children or wife. In fact, one of the things Chuck remembered most about his father was Don's emphasis on the golden rule to his children, and Chuck always kept that in the back of his mind. Chuck said, "I am not saying that I had a perfect life and that sometimes people would not do mean things. And sometimes, I would even do mean things to other people. But for the most part, I always remembered what Dad taught us." Chuck continued, "I still live by that rule even today-*Treat others as you would like to be treated.*"

Chuck's mother, whom I will call Shirley, was raised in rural North Carolina. She was traditional and "old school'' in instilling morals in her children. Shirley was also educated at Shaw University, and she started her career as an English and French teacher. Eventually, she went on to graduate school and became a school counselor and administrator before retiring. Shirley worked in segregated, Black schools. As a teacher and administrator, she had high expectations for her students. Chuck said of his mother, "She did not play. She was loving, and she had a strong moral compass in terms of right and wrong. She raised me and my siblings to have that same integrity and strength of character."

Chuck spoke candidly about how much he appreciated his mother for keeping him honest and upright. He recalled one time when he was in elementary school, he had gone to the corner store. The owner had given him a nickel too much in change, and he mentioned it to his mother. Shirley made Chuck return to the store and give the man back his nickel. She thoroughly explained to Chuck that the extra nickel was not his money.   Therefore, it must be returned to its rightful owner.

Chuck expressed his gratitude to both of his parents during our discussion. He emphasized that no family is perfect, but his parents provided a loving, supportive home for him and his siblings. Similar to Rand's father, Chuck's dad also battled alcoholism. Nonetheless, both participants' fathers were powerfully influential in shaping their sons to be hard working men and active fathers. Their mothers were strong women who relentlessly encouraged their children to exercise integrity and morally sound judgment.

Early Years

Growing up in Raleigh, North Carolina, Chuck fondly remembered his early years. He is the sole research participant that currently resided in the same place he was born. He grew up in a small Black community that was encircled by an all-White community. Luckily, there were never any racial tensions to arise. The Whites stayed in their area, and the Blacks did likewise. Chuck lived in that area until he was approximately eight years old. At which point, he and his family moved in with his grandmother in the southern part of the city. His

family stayed with his grandmother for the next three years, as she was aging and in need of additional care.

For as far back as he could recall, Chuck would see his father getting up early before school and cooking breakfast for their family, that is, Chuck's mother, sister, and older brother. Don was an excellent cook, and he enjoyed feeding his family and making sure his children were nourished so that they could focus and perform well in school. Chuck also had a great relationship with his older brother and sister. The two of them were competitive and frequently argued with each other, and Chuck was their mediator. While a "chubby" kid for his age, Chuck did not allow his size to deter him from competing with the neighborhood boys in sports like recreational football.

Religion

Faith was an integral part of Chuck's upbringing. He and his family were members of a historic, majority Black Baptist Church in Raleigh. It is well-known in the downtown Raleigh area. To this very day, Chuck remains a member of the church of his early years.

God was always the nucleus of Chuck's home. His mother went to church on Sundays, and he and his siblings were also required to attend. His father was also a member of the church, but he wasn't as faithful as Chuck's mother. Nonetheless, Don was adamant about his children attending church until they were of age. While Don may not have been as consistent with church attendance as some fathers, Chuck recalled seeing his father on his knees

praying every night before retiring for the evening. In addition, Chuck

remembered prayer before every meal. "Sometimes," according to Chuck, "Dad

would recite the entire Lord's prayer before supper. He and Mom made sure that

my siblings and I should commit to the service of the good Lord."

When I questioned Chuck about the impact of faith in his life, he quickly

responded, "It has always been essential." Chuck said that one of the things he

wished with his church was that they had more options and opportunities for

school-age kids. He recalled there not being much for kids to do in church. And

even though he was a strong musician during his high school years, the church

seemingly did not appreciate his talent on stringed instruments. They never

asked him to play for any of the church's events, even if they were music-related

events. Chuck was not offended about not being asked to play. He was

saddened that the Black church seemingly did not have an appreciation for any

instruments outside of piano, organs, and drums.

Chuck remains appreciative of his religious foundation, which has always

been and remains sacred to him. Chuck concluded our conversation on religion

by saying, "I recognize God's hand on my life and how it has allowed me to be

successful in a field that is typically not as plentiful and lucrative for Blacks. I do

my best to use it for His glory."

Experiences with Whiteness in Grade School

Chuck began the conversation by saying that not all Whites are bad

people, just as not all Blacks are bad. "It depends," and he noted that he has

had many interactions where he was a victim of White's discriminatory and prejudicial practices, but he has also been a recipient of the blessings of Whites that were and are progressive and respectful of all races.

Chuck was a student at Gray-Cole Elementary School, when he first encountered Whiteness. It was an integrated school with students of all races. That year, he experienced both pleasure and pain during his encounters with Whiteness. Chuck was only a third grader, but he vividly remembered the first time one of his White elementary school teachers isolated him and the other Black students in his class.

It was during a cooperative learning activity where students were paired off. At the start of the activity, the White, female teacher placed each male in the class with a female. Chuck was the only Black male, and there were four Black females on the class roster. That day, all of the Black students were present. Chuck and the Black female students noticed that the teacher had not paired any of them. Instead, they were all left standing in the center of the classroom as a group. Chuck stated, "It was so overt that even the White kids in the class asked the teacher why all the Blacks were in one group, instead of her pairing us off with them. She ignored their question and continued to give instructions."   When he arrived home that day, Chuck informed his mother about the incident at school.   Shirley came to the school and spoke with the principal about the teacher's actions.

The next day, Chuck's third grade teacher split the Blacks up and paired each of them with a White student. The teacher quietly made the comment to the Black students that they should be sure to "act White" for the assignment. When one of the Black female students asked the teacher to repeat what she had said, the teacher responded, "Act right!" Chuck said that all the Black students had clearly heard what she had whispered, but they felt she would only deny it so they never said anything to her about it, nor did they inform their parents.

By the time he finished his fifth-grade year at Gray-Cole, he had had other experiences where he witnessed Whiteness at work. That year, he had seen a talented Black girl not receive the lead part in the school musical. Rather, the part was given to a blue-eyed blonde, who in Chuck's opinion, did not sing half as well as the Black student. In addition, Chuck was also told by one of the fifth-grade students during recess that he did not want to play ball with a "nigger." When Chuck told his White, female fifth grade teacher, she said she would address Chuck's White peer who had made that statement. As Chuck reflected upon it, he is pretty certain that the teacher never questioned or chastised Chuck's White, male classmate about what he had said to Chuck.

Chuck did not let those negative experiences with Whiteness taint his perspective of his elementary experience. He once again noted that there are good White folks in the world, and he would talk about some later in his

story. His negative experiences at Gray-Cole were outshined by his introduction to the violin his fifth-grade year. That exposure was worth more than anything else to Chuck.

To increase participation in the arts, Raleigh City Schools allowed students at the local elementary school to use an instrument for one year free of charge. During that time, Chuck fell in love with the sound of the bow across the strings. He would practice every day after school. Don and Shirley, seeing their son's love for the instrument, invested in private lessons for Chuck. Chuck became an avid violin player, and he would eventually make playing that instrument his career.

Overall, Chuck's experience at Gray-Cole Elementary was a fairly positive one. This is where he fell in love with stringed instruments. Except for a few blatant and racist encounters with Whiteness, he had no other negative encounters with Whites. Chuck wanted me to note that none of his love for the violin excuses or minimizes that "in the moment" pain he felt as a kid. Yet, that White, female teacher who introduced him to strings signified to Chuck that not all White people were one way. Even though that was her job, Chuck could tell by his and his parents' conversations with her that she cared for all kids. Chuck concluded by stating the following: "I had my share of encounters with Whiteness in my life, but I learned to accept people for who they are. There are good White folks, and there are those that are prejudiced. That's with every race." I responded by saying, "Amen!"

Experiences with Whiteness in Middle and High School

Chuck started middle school in the sixth grade, and he immediately met a White woman that he felt embraced all people. Chuck's private music lesson instructor, whom I will call Ms. Smith, was instrumental in encouraging and inspiring Chuck to pursue his passion for the violin. This was a push that Chuck needed, since he was often ridiculed and questioned by the Black community about his love of orchestra music.

Chuck's emotions were visible as he relayed how profound her impact was on his life. He said, "She has always been like a second mother to me. Kids get a feel for adults, and she has never seen me as anything but a kid that loved the strings." Chuck continued, "I visited her this morning. She is now in a nursing facility, and she still emits that maternal love for me that she did almost forty years ago."

Chuck's frequent interactions with Ms. Smith reconfirmed what Chuck has always known. Not all White people are bad. Starting from the time he was a middle schooler to the current moment; Ms. Smith has supported Chuck in all of his endeavors. I watched Chuck's eyes swell with tears as he talked about her. Even today, Ms. Smith obviously means a lot to him.

I asked Chuck a few more questions about his experiences with Whites or Whiteness at the middle and high school level. For the most part, he said that race didn't seem to be as big of a deal. He couldn't think of any negative encounters with Whiteness. If they were egregious like in elementary, Chuck

said that he would have remembered. I, though finding it hard to believe there were no further issues with Whiteness for Chuck during those years, assured him that there were no right or wrong answers. Him saying that there were no encounters with Whiteness was perfectly acceptable.

Chuck and I sat silently for another few seconds. Then, Chuck looked at me and said, "Those peaceful times in middle and high weren't reality. When I went to college, there it was...R-A-C-E. I was a BLACK man, and my racial identity was more prominent than it had ever been." Then, he went silent. I also remained silent. That is when Chuck closed his eyes, bowed his head, and shook it from side to side.

Whiteness on the University Campus

Chuck had gone to music camp several summers at a state university. Now that he was a freshman there, he was already somewhat familiar with the campus. He also anticipated seeing some of his friends who attended summer music camps with him. Some of them had mentioned they would also be attending the university in the fall. Chuck was excited but not for long.

It was the mid 1970's, and Chuck's parents had just moved him into an all-freshman, male dormitory. It was the week all the newcomers were moving in and Chuck was the first to arrive in his room. He looked around with awe and pride. He was becoming a man. Chuck unpacked his things and settled into his new surroundings.

The next day, Chuck's roommate arrived. He was a White male, and he appeared to be annoyed and confused. He proceeded to introduce himself. After doing so, he began to question Chuck and explain that Chuck must have the wrong room. He informed Chuck that he, the White roommate, would be rooming with someone from his old high school. Chuck informed his roommate that he was mistaken. Chuck matter of factly informed the White guy that he (Chuck) was in the correct room.

By this time, the roommate was stuttering and lightly perspiring. Chuck recounted, "This guy was not a good liar. His standoffishness, lack of eye contact, stuttering, perspiring, etc. showed what I would call disdain for Blacks. It was more than obvious, but the guy did not care." To exacerbate matters further, he refused to shake Chuck's hand upon their introduction, and he was huffing and puffing around the room. Chuck was concerned that his new roommate was making himself sick.

Chuck did not see his roommate for the remainder of the day. When Chuck arrived back on campus and entered his dorm that evening, the roommate had removed all of his belongings. Chuck saw him months later, and the former roommate acted as if Chuck was invisible. When Chuck spoke to him and attempted to inquire about what had happened, he kept walking and ignored Chuck. To this day, Chuck believes his former roommate never recognized him, because he had never made eye contact with Chuck. That would not be Chuck's only issue with Whiteness his Freshman year.

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In the spring of that same year, the university's school of music had a dance. While there, Chuck was dancing with a White, female student when a White guy interrupted them and questioned the female about why she was dancing with Chuck. Chuck said, "The guy looked pissed." Not wanting any trouble and still trying to acclimate to campus life, Chuck left without saying anything to either of them. He knew if he had, it could ruin his good standing and scholarship at the university. This second major encounter with Whiteness his first year gave Chuck second thoughts about the university he had grown to love as a result of his summer visits. It was not at all what he had expected. Little did he know, there would be another encounter with Whiteness soon enough.

Chuck had joined the orchestra at the university as soon as he arrived. His freshman year, he was fourth chair (the players are seated based on skill level). The first chair is the best player of that particular instrument. He or she sits closest to the audience and conductor. Chuck was fine with being fourth chair, because he was still becoming acclimated to university life and building his confidence and playing skills.

By his sophomore year, Chuck auditioned for the first chair of strings, and the judges unanimously selected Chuck for it. He was elated. The position had previously been held only by White students. Chuck was the first Black to serve in the historically White position, and some of his peers were unhappy about it.

When Chuck won the first chair position, he won it outright. Nevertheless, within two weeks, two White female upper class violin players expressed

concerns to the Chair of the Music Department about Chuck being selected as the first chair. The department chair, a White man, went to Chuck's professor and demanded a reaudition.

Chuck's professor, a White woman, was furious. Chuck said, "I was so mad, and my professor was too!" Chuck provided more clarity. First, Chuck said that he and his Professor knew he had beaten those girls outright. Secondly, there was a process in place for when challenges of that kind arose. Typically, they would schedule a challenge at a later time; but the department chair had given the directive. The only other alternative the Chair offered Chuck and the Professor was to make it a three-way tie. Chuck immediately refused the last option. He and the White students opposing him would be required to rotate the first chair seat at concerts. Chuck opted for the reaudition. He knew he could beat them again, and he did.

Chuck's friends from music camp knew the students opposing him. They informed Chuck that they had confronted those students and asked them why they chose to challenge Chuck. Chuck's friends also informed him that the opposers felt that as a Black, he did not have the skills and poise they had on strings. Chuck's White friends from summer music camp explained to those girls that Chuck had taken private lessons since he was eleven, and he was a darn good musician.

When the time came, there were multiple judges at the reaudition of the three students. Chuck again won the first chair position…unanimously. Chuck

was relieved but disappointed at the backlash from his initial win. He knew Whiteness was all too real, but he hadn't expected to see it amongst the younger musicians.

Although Chuck had experienced multiple run-ins with Whiteness amongst the student population, he had nothing but positive things to say about his White professors. He found them supportive and not prone to make race-based decisions. He remembered how his White professor had advocated for him when he won first chair. He also remembered how other professors would attend his concerts and rave about his performances. These adults gave Chuck hope that his White peers would one day move beyond their White privilege and learn to appreciate the genius and artistry of all musicians.

Whiteness in the Workplace

Chuck was unable to graduate from that university. He partied a little too hard his second year, and his grades were steadily declining. Eventually, he left school and took a job working on an assembly line. The pay was excellent, but he hated the job. Chuck credited his disdain for that job as his motivation for going back to school and enrolling in a North Carolina HBCU, where he eventually completed his degree in music education.

At this point in Chuck's life he was married with a son, and he was now looking to transition into teaching. Chuck was initially offered and accepted a position in another North Carolina county as an orchestra teacher in four different schools. Chuck described that county as having an underbelly that was

unspoken. There were rumors of Ku Klux Klan groups in the area, but he never saw any of them. However, Chuck also made it clear that he made a consistent effort to arrive home before nightfall.

In addition, Chuck would never allow his wife to attend any of his orchestra concerts. His wife, whom we will call Danielle, is White. As much as he hated to exclude her, he explained to her that if he was going to maintain his position in the county schools, he could not risk the two of them being seen out together at a school function. Chuck taught in that county for four years, and he never had any adverse encounters with White parents. He said, "I treated their children well, and their children liked me." Chuck was keenly aware, however, that not all people were proponents of the races mixing. When his interracial marriage became public knowledge, problems with Whiteness started.

Chuck recalled one specific time that he and his wife were on the cover of a magazine for interracial couples in the community. The principal of one of the elementary schools he worked for confronted Chuck about his wife being White and how he had seen Chuck and Danielle on the magazine's cover. The principal was a White male, and he assured Chuck that "he had no problem with it." Nonetheless, Chuck wondered why he would have even made that statement, if he honestly "had no problem with it."

A few days later, the faculty had a basketball game versus the fifth-grade students. That same principal went up for a jump ball with a tall Black, male student, and Chuck said that he has never forgotten the look on the principal's

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face when the Black student tried to get the ball from him. At the very moment, Chuck realized, "This guy had a real problem with Black people." Further, the principal was not hiding it well.

Approximately two weeks after Chuck was confronted by the principal, Chuck received a death threat mailed to his home. It said that if Chuck and Danielle were ever seen in public together, they would be killed. To this day, Chuck wonders who could have done such a mean thing. In the back of his mind, Chuck admitted, he believes it was that White male principal who told him he had no problem with interracial marriages. Chuck said, "I have never forgotten the look of pure hate in his eyes, as he told me he had no problem with my wife and I being an interracial relationship."

After Chuck left that county, he was excited to become a part of the seemingly more progressive Lane County Schools. He would learn soon enough that Lane is not as progressive as he had envisioned. His experiences with race in predominantly White schools would become increasingly more overt. Some of his experiences were outrageous! I sat there listening and struggling to understand the unapologetic boldness of Whiteness.

Chuck began his tenure in Lane County teaching at two elementary schools. He was excited to have fewer schools and a much shorter commute. He was living the dream. Much like in his former county, he had White principals and was primarily surrounded by White teachers and students. He loved his schools and served both for approximately nine years. Clearly, Chuck knew his

demographic needs and realized that there were not many Blacks teaching strings. He got along well with faculty, parents, students, etc. He had had no egregious issues with race, that is, until he had been there almost eight years. Then, it happened.

One morning as Chuck entered the mail room to check his mailbox, he saw a White, female instructional assistant he knew from having worked at the school for years. He didn't know her well, but they had spoken before in passing through the hallways of the school. On this particular day, as Chuck walked past her in the mail room and spoke to her, she jumped and gasped. Surprised, Chuck immediately asked her what was wrong. She explained that her mother in law had been attacked a few weeks prior by a Black man. So, when she turned and saw Chuck, it momentarily startled her.

Chuck did not respond, since he did not feel a response worthy of such a foolish explanation. Chuck said to himself, "I have passed you in the hall for years. We speak and chit chat from time to time. All of a sudden, I am reduced to a random Black man that attacked your family member. Come on." Chuck was furious but also saddened, and he knew his response would not be a professional one. Therefore, he said nothing and walked away. That was the last time he ever said anything to her, but it would not be his last encounter with the sting of Whiteness.

After nine years at the elementary school, Chuck spent his remaining time as a middle and high school orchestra teacher. He went on to teach at Simms

Middle and Garvey High in Raleigh, and Chuck beamed with pride as he discussed his career. As I broached the subject of Whiteness again, Chuck recalled an incident as a new teacher at the middle school where he had taught.

Chuck was on his way to the new faculty orientation at the middle school where he was assigned that year. As he approached the entrance to the school's library where the meeting was being held, a White assistant principal said to him, "Hi, may I help you?" Chuck responded, "No thanks, I am just here for the meeting." She responded, "Oh, this is just for faculty here." Chuck responded, "Okay, thanks!" After he walked in and was seated, she came over to him and confronted him again.

By this time, the principal noticed the tension growing between Chuck and the assistant principal. He approached the two of them and immediately informed the assistant principal that Chuck was a new staff member. According to Chuck, the assistant principal turned red, mumbled a half-hearted apology, and hurriedly walked away. The principal, also White, minimized the AP's insinuation and quickly changed the subject. Although that first impression was troubling, Chuck recalled no further extreme issues with Whiteness while working at Simms Middle.

Chuck eventually transitioned and spent the latter part of his career teaching in high schools. Ironically, while teaching at Grace High School, Chuck had an encounter with Whiteness that was similar to the one at the middle school where he had taught. It was after school one day, and the Principal was

providing free ice cream to the faculty as a reward for their hard work. While

standing in line to get his ice cream, a White teacher in front of him turned

backwards to inform Chuck that the ice cream was for faculty. Chuck thanked

her but remained in the line. As they moved closer, the same teacher turned

again and informed him that it was not for him but for teachers. That is when the

teacher standing behind him informed the one standing in front of him that he

was the orchestra teacher.

When I questioned Chuck about why he didn't tell the White teacher that

he was also a teacher, he said, "I had been teaching part-time there for a few

years, and I had on a tie. She was not the hired ice cream police. She should

have assumed I was a teacher, when I did not move." Chuck said that by this

point in his career, he was over the racial incidents. He refused to become irate

or belligerent about them, because he believed it would only reinforce what many

Whites already believed about Black men. Chuck was committed to not abasing

himself to their level.

Throughout his career, Chuck said that the few encounters with

Whiteness, although ridiculous, never made him regret his profession or teaching

in the schools where he had taught. I had to admit that I was not surprised by

the numerous aggressive encounters he had with Whites consistently

disrespecting him. I questioned Chuck about his seemingly cavalier response to

so many egregious acts of racism and anti-Black bias, Chuck responded by

putting his hand on my shoulder and saying," Theron, if I had brought myself

down to retaliating or 'clapping back" as my students would have said, I would have been just as ignorant as them. That is what they wanted, and I wanted them to see that not all Black people were loud and demonstrative when they have been wronged." I sat there for a moment and pondered Chuck's restraint. Although I respected of his rationale, I did not agree with his position. Nonetheless, Chuck felt justified in his response. I guess that was all that really mattered.

He enjoyed working with his students, and he still loves the sound of stringed instruments. Chuck is very candid about his career, "My goal was to foster music appreciation and appreciation for the arts in general. There are few Black male teachers and probably fewer teaching orchestra. I am blessed to have been able to spend my life doing what I love."

Ray, The Innovative Scientist

Of the three research participants, there is one whom I had never met. Although I didn't know the other two participants well, but I had met with both and worked a few years with one of them. However, I did not know Ray at all. I was asking a total stranger to trust me with the intricacies of his life, and I was nervous about it. Although one of my colleagues told me a little about him, I was concerned that he would withhold some of the more personal moments in his life.

While I sat in the library awaiting the arrival of Ray, I saw a dark-skinned, towering gray-haired man rapidly approaching me. He was almost running.

Quite disheveled looking, Ray sat quickly, and apologized for being a little late. He doesn't look as I had imagined in our phone conversations. His almost White hair is too high to be a brush cut and too low to be an afro. He has a big, broad smile that would light up a room. He is dressed comfortably in a polo shirt and oversized khakis. My immediate thought is that he will probably be the gentle giant of the three.

I began by introducing myself and explaining my personal background and my interest in the lived experiences of Black men who have retired from teaching in predominantly White schools. Then, I asked him to trust me and allow me to tell his story. I noticed when we greeted each other that Ray, whose first tenor voice does not match his looming presence, is a fast talker who tends to ramble. I had noticed it when he and I on the phone. After Ray shared his story, I chuckled to myself, thinking that the transcription service is probably going to charge me a little extra for deciphering this recording.

Two-Parent Household

Ray is proud of being an "old country boy" from the rural, mountainous part of western North Carolina. When I started asking him about his parents, he gave them much of the credit for his success. He particularly credits the influence of his mother. Ray noted, "Mom was the kindest woman I had ever known. She was strict, very strict, but she would give to any and everybody. She saw it as doing the Lord's work."

Ray's mother, whom we will call Anne, did not have a formal education or vocation, but her job was creating a warm, loving environment for Ray's father and seven siblings. Because there were so many children, Ray's parents assigned responsibilities to everyone, including themselves. Anne was the homemaker and nurturer. She would cook and clean, but she was also responsible for placing wood in the stove for cooking and warming the home as needed.

Anne was a strong disciplinarian. Ray laughed when he talked about her. He noted, "Once she spoke, that was it for her. Don't press her no more now. You don't press no more. You didn't come back with nothing like these kids do now." Like Rand and Chuck's mothers, Anne also had a strong moral compass, and it was important to her that her children were Christ-centered, hard-working, and well-behaved. Ray said, "People would steal from her, and as her children, we wanted to handle that person so they would know not to do that to our mom." Anne would tell Ray and his siblings that they would do no such thing. She would say, "Well, I hope it does 'em some good." Anne lived to be 94 years old. Ray is confident her longevity was because of her love and compassion for all people. He believed that God had rewarded her with a long, full life.

As I started to transition and question Ray about his father, he asked if he could share a memorable story about his mom. Ray and his siblings were accompanying Anne to the grocery store. On the floor, Ray spotted a penny. He

quickly picked it up and placed it in his pocket. His mother pulled him to the side and scolded him for the deed. She said to Ray, "If these folks see you sneaking something into your pocket, they might think you stealing. You can go to jail for a penny, just like you can for a hundred dollars. Now put that penny back on the floor." Ray noted that his mom was always teaching and encouraging her children to be wise and prudent. He has never forgotten all that he learned from her or his father. In fact, Ray's father, whom I will call Simon, was just as strict as Anne.

Simon was the only parent that worked outside the home. Ray did not specify what his father did, but he described it as hard labor for long hours and little pay. Simon could be accurately described as a no-nonsense Dad. Because there were eight children in the home, Simon and Anne assigned the boys and girls specific chores to keep the house running smoothly. Simon had norms he expected to be followed when it came to the chores, school, behavior, etc. There were few exceptions outside of illness, school-related responsibilities, etc. that Simon would excuse.

To further explain the kind of Dad Simon was, Ray shared a memorable story. One late night, Simon told Ray and the other boys to stop their talking and go to sleep. All the boys slept in one room. One of Ray's older brothers continued to talk, despite being encouraged to stop talking. Ray's brother was about fourteen, and he was the only one who continued to defy their father. Suddenly, Simon burst through the door and grabbed Ray's older brother. Ray

laughed, as he explained how his brother had tried to climb out of the window to escape Simon, but his father grabbed his son's leg and pulled him back in the room. According to Ray, "My dad was a one-time teller. He told you one time," Ray laughed and shared, "And if you did not do as he had requested, you paid a price for it."

Unlike Chuck's father, Simon was not very affectionate with any of his children. Ray explained that in those days, when Simon was a boy, the gender expectations were clear and distinct. Women did the nurturing of the children and the other historically traditional wife/mother tasks such as cooking and cleaning. The men would work and provide money for the home, make home repairs, protect the family, etc. which was most of the men's designated role. As a result, Simon's father did not show affection towards his kids, and Simon mimicked his father's parenting style. He did not show his children much outward affection either. Despite Simon's gruff manner, however, Ray had no doubt about Simon's love for him and his family.

Early Years

Of my three research participants, Ray grew up in the most impoverished conditions. As mentioned earlier, Ray grew up with seven brothers and sisters in a two-parent home. He wore hand-me-downs and used the bathroom in their outhouse. Ray was the baby of the eight children. His siblings, to this day, remind him that he is still the baby. He explained that he and his siblings were having a family discussion last year. When he inserted his opinion to try to keep

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the conversation focused on the issue at hand, they all looked at him and almost said in perfect unison, "You shut up, you the Baby. You don't have an opinion." Ray grinned. Although they meant it affectionately, Ray believed they were serious. It reminded him of his childhood.

As Ray reminisced about the early years, he noted that two words immediately come to his mind: "love and teamwork." At a very young age, every child in the home had assigned chores, and everyone had to fulfill their duty to ensure the house ran as it should. The boys were responsible for bringing in buckets of water from the well and chopping wood for the fire stove, and the girls helped with the gardening of vegetables and meal preparation.

Ray would frequently bring in his share of buckets of water. He also had a specific amount of wood he was expected to chop. Their home had no indoor plumbing, and that water was used for cooking, bathing, laundry, and any other household necessities that required water. The wood was used for cooking and warming the house in the winter. Although the chores would probably not be suitable for young children nowadays, Ray and his siblings gleefully worked together and enjoyed each other's company. According to Ray, "I have never forgotten those times, and I wouldn't take nothing for them."

Religion

Ray was raised a Methodist in the Protestant tradition, and church was a huge part of his upbringing. During our discussion about faith, Ray said, "I was raised in the African Methodist Episcopal (AME Zion) church and going to church

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was mandatory." Ray recalled that when he was in high school, one Saturday night he had been out a little late. His mom woke him that morning and told him she did not care what time he had come in. He would need to get up and prepare for worship service. I asked him about a pass from her on missing that Sunday, since he was out late. Ray responded, "I got up and got dressed. I didn't back talk. If I had, my mama would have given me a two for one. If you had something else to say, she would hit you and make you say another word." Ray heartily laughed.

Living in the mountains, it was a small African American community. Ray said that all of his neighbors and his parents' surrounding friends went to church. In Ray's opinion, church was not only spiritual, it was social too. When he saw the adults that were members of his church out in the community, Ray was sure to be on his best behavior. He would be respectful, but he would also be helpful. That was the way Ray was raised, and he noted how glad he was for the tolerance and temperance he learned through faith. For what Ray would experience in terms of Whiteness, he would need the aid and help of his religion to keep him from losing his Southern manners.

Encounters with Whiteness in Grade School

Ray's K-5 years were at a segregated, all-Black elementary school. All of his teachers were Black. In his community and in his church, everyone was also Black. Astonishingly, Ray had never formally met a White person until he was in

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middle school. Although he had had no face-to-face encounters with Whiteness in the elementary school setting, he recalled an incident that happened at age four while he was at the county fair with his mother and older brother. It was an encounter with a sign, and Ray has never forgotten how the words on that sign made him feel.

Ray had to use the restroom, while out at the county fair. Out of the corner of his eye, he noticed many boys coming out of a door with their parents. Being a precocious preschooler, he ran to enter what he presumed to be the bathroom. Before he could get too far, his mother grabbed him sternly by his coat and told him he could not enter that area. Instead, she had him look at the words on the door. Ray, being a great reader, spoke the words "Whites Only" aloud.

Before having his older brother accompany Ray to the "Colored Only" bathroom all the way on the other side of the fairground, Anne took a few moments and explained what the words "Whites Only" meant. Ray recalled, "I still remember the anguish I saw in my mother's eyes, as she told me why I was not allowed to go into areas designated for Whites." That was Roy's first encounter with a "Whites Only" sign, but it would be far from his last encounter with Whiteness.

Encounters with Whiteness in Middle and High School

Integration in Ray's community came in 1968, when Ray was a sixth grader. Ray did not recall any memorable encounters with Whiteness during his

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sixth, seventh, and eighth grade years. He does remember thinking that school seemed altogether more advanced than it did when he was at the all Black elementary school. Ray wondered if it was because he was now in middle school or if it was because he was in a White school. Either way, Ray excelled at the middle school level, and he went on to be just as academically strong in high school.

By the time Ray entered high school, he had established himself as a formidable student who had a hunger for learning and questioning. He liked his teachers, most of whom were White. He found none of them to be overly friendly. Ray did not care, as long as they would help him understand the material and implement fair grading practices. Ray felt that the teachers did what he expected them to do, and he had no issues of unfair grading or mistreatment by any of his White teachers. He was a scholar and promising football player, and his teachers appeared to respect his intelligence and athletic prowess. At least that is what he thought, until he learned otherwise his senior year. At that time, he learned that what he had perceived as favor from teachers and coaches was not all that he had anticipated.

Ray's last year at Rowing High School was just as his others had been. He had become one of the few popular, prominent Black males within the senior class. He was even more excited as he was being considered for the Morehead-Cain Scholarship. Ray said, "I was excited, because I knew I had

earned the honor. I was number five or six out of a class of one hundred twenty.

I was confident in my grades, and I figured I had a really good shot of winning

it."

On the day of the Morehead-Cain interviews, Ray was at football

practice. When Ray approached his football coach to inquire about his upcoming

interview, his coach said to him, "You don't need to worry about that." Ray was

confused and inquired further about why he no longer needed to worry about it.

That is when Ray's coach informed him that the school had selected another kid

on the team to interview for the scholarship. Ray knew the White teammate that

had been chosen for the interview. He also knew that his White teammate was

not nearly as socially or academically accomplished as Ray had been.

The way that Ray's coach had said it implied that Ray should not ask any

additional questions. Therefore, Ray proceeded back to the practice field without

asking or saying anything else about the scholarship interview. Despite all that

he had going for him, Ray knew why he had not been allowed to interview. He

knew Whiteness had trumped all he had going for him.

Ray's anger and disappointment was palpable, but he refused to express

his outrage in an inappropriate way. By this time in his life, he had begun to

understand race politics. Not receiving the opportunity to interview would not

thwart Ray's intention of attending a predominantly White university. Upon

graduating from Rowing, Ray headed off to a state university. Like my research

participant Chuck, Ray was already enveloped by Whiteness. Nonetheless, there was more to come.

Whiteness on the University Campus

The university campus was quite eye opening for Ray. Of the thousands of students attending during that time, less than 3% of the student population was Black. During his first through third years, Ray stayed in a campus dormitory. When I questioned Ray about his experience as a Black man living in a dormitory on an overwhelmingly White campus, Ray said, "I will tell you what it was like. They had all the Black male students on one floor within one dorm. The White students in the dorm referred to the Black male students' floor as- 'the ghetto'."

Hearing this, I asked Ray did any of the Black males, either individually or collectively, discuss their grouping with any of the school's administration. Ray responded, "We knew they were watching us, and we knew the end goal was to keep us together, since none of the Whites wanted to room with a Black male student." When a group of them, including Ray, brought the segregation issue to the university's leadership, they responded, "Oh, we thought all of you would want to be together." The university never addressed the lodging concern and continued to keep the Black male students on one floor, at least for that year and beyond.

Ray knew what they were doing, as did the other Black male students. Ray was so focused on learning and excelling; however, he never

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revisited the issue of living in what was called "The Ghetto." He knew why the Whites in power had done it, and he was far too focused on his academics to allow the issue to distract or deter him from being a scholar. By the time he became a senior, the Black males were no longer relegated to one floor within a specific dormitory. When he heard the news, Ray thought to himself that minimal progress was better than none.

Although Ray's first few years of being housed in the university's "ghetto" were not ideal, Ray had an amicable relationship with his White professors. As a Biology major taking lots of advanced science courses, Ray noted he was frequently the lone Black person in his classes. The hypervisibility did not deter Ray in any way. Like Rand, another of my research participants, Ray had become accustomed to it. There were times he felt he experienced racism through race-based microaggressions. They wouldn't happen often, but Ray understood that these acts of racism and anti-Black bias were part of the way in which Whiteness subjugates non-whites through acts of oppression and exclusion.

During Ray's sophomore year, one of his many White professors said to Ray that he did not write the way that he spoke. Ray knew that the professor meant it as a compliment, and he responded to the seemingly well-meaning professor by replying, "Doesn't everyone." Ray said, "I really believe I helped change their views of how Blacks were supposed to act and stuff. They would tell me on paper that they couldn't believe that this Black person is literally writing

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like a White person." Ray went on to clarify that his professors did not say those specific words, but that was the point they were trying to make. Ray was driven, and he was committed to ensuring his White professors knew that he was a Black man destined for success.

Ray enjoyed his time at the university, and he recognized that his experience on such a largely White college campus could have been much worse. As he prepared to move on to the workplace, Ray learned that biases against Blacks never seemed to decrease. Not long after Ray graduated and began his first full time job, he had an indirect encounter with Whiteness. It was traumatic for him. He knew that what he witnessed one night happening to a Black man around his age and similarly built, could easily have happened to him.

Whiteness in the Workplace

University Researcher. Ray wasn't altogether sure what he wanted to do with his Biology degree, but he never dreamed that he would begin his career as a marine technologist at a state university. He had never been on a boat before, but he was now working on a boat out at sea for two weeks out of each month. Ray was excited about collecting animals from the bottom of the ocean, researching and analyzing them, and sharing his data findings. Despite his excitement, he was slightly concerned about his all-White co-workers that would be housed with him.

Ray was pleasantly surprised at how liberal and open-minded his new co-workers were. He never experienced any adverse race experiences with any of

them during the time they worked together. Even though he was the only Black,

he felt valued and respected by them. When I probed deeper about Whiteness in

his work environment, Ray replied, "These were Northern Whites. They were not

Southern Whites. For them, race was not a divisive issue. However, they got a

chance to see what it was like for me, as a Black man." Then, Ray began to tell

me about Wilmington. I listened to the beginning of the story and cringed by the

end of it.

Ray recounted a most frightening, indirect experience with Whiteness. It

was the mid-1970's and the boat that Ray worked on had docked off the coast of

Wilmington, North Carolina. About three in the morning he and his co-workers

were finishing their shift. As they headed back to their boat, they saw a Black

male walking down the street, minding his business. Out of nowhere, a police

officer stopped the Black man and began interrogating him. The two exchanged

words, their voices became elevated, and the officer called for backup. Within

minutes, several other police cars had arrived. The policemen eventually

attacked the man and beat him senseless. They hit him with clubs, kicked him,

and stomped him. Ray compared the attack to the beating of the Rodney King

that resulted in the 1992 Los Angeles Riots.

Ray's co-workers were appalled, since they saw that the Black man was

cooperative and not disturbing anyone. Yet, he was savagely beaten by the

police without any justification. As if the traumatic event they had witnessed

wasn't frightening enough, Ray shared with his White co-workers an opinion that

appeared to increase their anxiety about what they had witnessed. He assured them that nothing would be done about it. Ray believed the officers would lie about what the Black man had done to justify their mistreatment of him, and there would be no recovery or justice for the real victim. Ray never forgot what they saw that night, and he felt fortunate to work in a setting where he had true camaraderie with Whites. Although they did not try to remove him from or shelter Ray from watching another Black man treated like an animal, Ray was just glad for their presence and support, once he started working for another organization and Whiteness started working against him.

Ray worked at the university, in that capacity, for two years. Then, he started working for a professor at the same university as an official research scientist. He was now performing some of the same duties he did on the water, but now he was a scientist studying terrestrial plants and animals. Ray was excited about no longer being away from his home two weeks out of every month, especially since he now had a son who was growing up fast.

Ray worked with a team of other scientists, and although he was not the only Black, he soon found out that he was no more than a token. Ray was a lead researcher, and he knew he was doing high quality work. He was frequently sharing his findings and what the findings could mean for the science community. Eventually, he became sought after for his expertise, and that is when he began to see the first signs of Whiteness manifesting.

One year, Ray was asked to present his research at an international conference in another state. It was a huge honor, and Ray was excited. When Ray approached his supervisor to obtain permission, his supervisor laughed at him and dismissed him.

Ray was confused about his supervisor's response. The following day, he spoke with his supervisor in more depth about it, gave him a copy of the invitation he had received, explained the relevance and implications of his research, and formally requested permission to attend. His supervisor not only forbade Ray to take professional leave to present at the conference, but when Ray decided he would use his accrued time and resources, his supervisor refused to approve his personal leave.

At first, Ray was puzzled by his supervisor's actions. He questioned his supervisor about the denial, and his supervisor gave him some inaccurate story about being potentially shorthanded that week. Ray's initial confusion was quickly turning into rage. None of his White counterparts had research data as profound as his. Yet, some of them had been approved to attend far less meritorious events.

Ray knew his supervisor's discriminatory tactics were deliberate, but he was uncertain about the potential backlash, should he try to pursue the matter with Human Resources. Therefore, he decided that he would not press the matter and would instead decline the invitation to attend the conference. Ray called and informed the person who invited him and that explained why he would

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be unable to attend. The Facilitator was disturbed by Ray's explanation. When he informed the Conference Facilitator that he would not be able to attend because of his supervisor's stance, the facilitator intervened. As a result of the intervention, Ray was reluctantly granted permission and professional leave by his supervisor to present at the conference.

In talking with Ray about the ordeal, Ray stated, "I was mad, real mad. I already had been thinking of my next move, but I knew I needed to be a little faster. They were threatened by my work, and I knew he was trying to hold me back." I probed further to find out why he didn't advocate harder for himself, but Ray said that he knew God had bigger plans for him. He knew that his boss would not accept that a Black man was collecting more data and getting more definitive results than his White colleagues.

Finding a job as a scientist was not easy, and Ray worked as a terrestrial scientist for ten years. In that time, he was often a victim of unfair working conditions. He excelled in his research, but whenever he applied for promotions, he was overlooked. To make matters worse, his supervisor would intentionally create an unhealthy work environment for Ray by sending him on "crappy" assignments and preventing him from doing certain tasks while Ray was in graduate school.

Ray's supervisor (and colleagues) did not respect him like his former White team members. Eventually, Ray's supervisor laid him off. Ray knew that he was not the last one hired, and his work exceeded most of his

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counterparts. There was no logical reason for Ray to have been laid off before the others, but Ray was relieved. He believed that regardless of what he did, his Supervisor would always have an ought with him because he was a Black man. Ray said, "He would nitpick everything I would do and find something wrong with it. One day, the White guy in the office next to me called him out on it." When I questioned Ray about wat he meant by that statement, he explained that his White, male co-worker asked his Supervisor why he was always criticizing Ray's work. According to Ray, the co-worker said to the Supervisor that Ray's work was much neater and more precise than his. Yet, the Supervisor never critiqued him. Ray said that his Supervisor never responded, he simply turned and walked away. Overall, Ray was glad that he spoke out against some of the injustices he experienced. If his speaking out against instances of racism and anti-Black bias led to his being laid off, Ray was good with it.

Middle School Teacher. Soon after Ray's departure from his twelve-year stint at the university, Ray enrolled in graduate school to pursue his advanced degree in teaching middle schoolers. Ray had not been looking for a teaching position, but when the opportunity presented itself through an alternative licensing process, Ray knew in his heart that this was God's plan for his life.

Of my three research participants, Ray is the only gentleman who taught in the same predominantly White middle school for thirty years. I not only wanted to hear about Ray's experiences in his school, but I also wondered why he chose to stay at the same school his entire teaching career.

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Ray had no profound explanation for staying at Frankson Middle School, the entire 30 years, other than that he loved teaching and loved the kids. Ray fervently explained, "I knew I was making a difference. I was teaching multiple generations. I had great relationships with colleagues, parents, and the Frankson community. I still hear from some of my students to this day." Ray gives all the credit to God for transitioning his steps into the classroom to work full time with kids. To this day, he has never regretted his decision.

Ray thought long and hard as I interrogated him about his experiences with Whiteness in his predominantly White middle school. He closed his eyes and thought for a few moments. Surprisingly, Ray's experiences with Whiteness while he was a teacher were minimal. Ray rarely had any issues with any students, parents, colleagues, or administrators. He did recall that he had one difficult administrator whose style he did not appreciate, and this was early to middle of his teaching career. Ray described her as "difficult and initially skeptical of my skills and abilities...without cause" and "she rated me low on my annual evaluation one year, but I fought it and won." As he described this administrator's demeanor and personality, I mistakenly presumed she was White, until he said, "and she was Black."

When I asked him to think more deeply about the way or ways in which Whiteness manifested itself in his school, he smiled and realized he did have one troubling parent that made a race-based comment. Ray had assigned a couple of White students sentence writing as a disciplinary consequence. When one of

the students showed up for Ray's class the following day, that student had not written them.

When Ray called the parent to explain the consequence and his son's failure to complete the assignment, the White student's father responded, "My boy ain't writing nothing just to please your black ass." He also informed Ray that he would be coming to see him the following day. Ray immediately informed the school's administration about the implied threat from the parent.

The following day the parent showed up at Ray's door and apologized for his inappropriate and disrespectful response to Ray's request. He informed Ray that his son would complete the assignment as requested. Ray didn't respond one way or the other to the apology. He simply thanked the father for his support. Ray would tell me later in the interview that he did not believe the apology was sincere, and he did not want to lie and tell the man he accepted it. Instead, Ray chose to focus on the end result, which is that the father would require his son to complete the consequence Ray had given. Outside of that issue, Ray did not recall any other direct or indirect issues with Whiteness that affected him.

As we concluded the interview, Ray clarified that he did not always agree with every administrative decision or like every parent at his school. There were definitely times he thought there was a better way to handle certain situations. In terms of race-based biases, however, he didn't have them (outside of the one incident).

For my own curiosity, I asked Ray to speculate why he didn't have more encounters with Whiteness. Ray responded, "I was competent, fair, and consistent. I understood what I was teaching and how to motivate students. Basically, I did what a teacher is paid to do." Ray further noted, "I didn't target kids. I would talk with kids outside of class without getting too personal. Plus, the kids respected me. They knew I wasn't gonna take no stuff."

In hearing Ray's explanation of why he did not have more incidents of racism fueled by Whiteness, he believes it is because of the way he carried himself as a professional. This is how Whiteness oppresses people of color. We began to believe that it must be something that we did or did not do that warrants the chronic and long-standing marginalization and exclusion we have consistently experienced. Truth is, it is no fault of Ray or any Black man who is mistreated while fulfilling their professional duties.

Ray's tenure in education was not without a few downs, but the ups far outweighed the downs. He had many encounters with Whiteness throughout his life, and he is glad the latter part of his career wasn't as riddled with race-based issues and dilemmas. While Ray has retired from teaching, he continues to host his science-based summer camps he has been facilitating for many years. He is now looking to expand from solely focusing on science and STEM to making it more STREAM focused in an effort to incorporate the arts and literacy. It has always been important to Ray that the work he does focuses on providing a "fit for every kid."

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Summary

Rand, Chuck, and Ray have different stories they share, but they agree that if they had to choose all over again, teaching would still be their vocation. Throughout the interviews, the emotions ebbed and flowed as these men recalled their childhoods and upbringing, their college lives, their experiences with race, and the ways their experiences shaped them and directed their paths.

Throughout my interviews with them, my only regret is that they did not share more about their experiences with Whiteness as it relates to structural and institutional racism and privilege. Many of their experiences, the three of them focused more on individual acts of racism and anti-Black bias rather than speaking to the larger systems of oppression when it comes to people of color. That said, I understand the challenge of speaking to those larger issues of race in broad context. Even more so, this men have now retired and had put many of these adverse experiences behind them. I am forever thankful to each of them for their vulnerability and willingness to share their lived experiences. Rather they know it or not, they have a story to tell. I am excited about sharing it.

CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS

There is an absence of Black male teachers in America's classrooms. As of 2019, only two percent of America's classroom teachers are Black men. Despite the belief that students benefit from being exposed to and taught by Black male teachers (Jackson et al., 2013; Maylor, 2009; Whitfield, 2019), the shortage remains critical. When a Black male teacher is hired, it is usually in an urban school with a high number of minority and economically disadvantaged students. We are often considered role models for Black students and often thought to have a better rapport with them (Brockenbrough, 2018; Delpit, 2012; Rezai-Rashti & Martino, 2010). Although Black male teachers working in urban, high minority-populated schools have been featured in research more frequently in recent years (Ekwelum, 2019; Gaspard, 2019), there is a subset of Black male teachers that is less frequently recognized. More specifically, there is more limited research regarding Black men teaching in predominantly White schools (Kelly, 2007; Hasberry, 2013; Jones, 2016).

In my research study, I focused on Black men who have spent their lives working and teaching in predominantly White settings. Their experiences are

different from Black men who teach in urban schools (Bristol, 2018). Focusing on

Black men who prefer working in predominantly White schools gives me the

opportunity to showcase our race and gender in a positive light and defy negative

stereotypes (Hasberry, 2013; Jones, 2016). There is a definite need to hear the

voices and stories of Black men who have taught in predominantly White schools

(Hasberry, 2013; Jones, 2016; Kelly, 2007). A young Black male who is

considering a teaching career in a predominantly White suburban school may

need help in preparing for the obstacles he may encounter. These obstacles will

likely differ from those encountered by Blacks who work in schools with mirroring

student, faculty, and community demographics (Bristol, 2018; Hasberry, 2013;

Jones, 2016).

The purpose of my study was to provide an opportunity for three Black

men who are retired to share the experiences they have had with Whiteness

throughout their lives. The participants in my study served as classroom

teachers in predominantly White schools for a combined total of more years than

I have lived. They had powerful stories to tell about their personal and

professional encounters with Whiteness, including how they triumphed over the

barriers Whiteness had created for them.

In this chapter, I analyze the findings of my study. First, I consider how my

study's participants' stories relate to and address the research questions I

originally posed. To enrich my analysis, I connect my study's findings to themes

and ideas that appear in the existing research literature. In addition, I revisit my

conceptual framework of Critical Race Theory. I aimed to underscore the important role that counternarratives can play in contrasting with and combatting the reign of Whiteness in education. The latter part of Chapter five provides recommendations for increased recruitment and retention of Black male teachers in predominantly White school districts and school. I also offer suggestions for future research. I conclude the chapter with my final thoughts.

Analysis

After my first meeting with my research participants, I began pondering what the final outcomes of the research project might be. Each of them had distinct personalities. Rand was humble and unassuming. Chuck was intuitive and composed. Ray was driven and forthright.

For my study's main question, I asked: What were the stories and experiences of retired, Black male teachers who taught in predominantly White schools and worked in other predominantly White settings? As my profiles in Chapter 4 demonstrate, Rand, Chuck, and Ray were products of loving, two parent homes. Each participant's parents actively encouraged their sons to be academically conscious and socially just. Their parents also communicated their expectations for them to show intelligence and empathy in and outside of the workplace. Their parents also made it clear that Blacks are not always given an equal opportunity, and it is sometimes necessary to advocate on your own behalf. Rand, Chuck, and Ray were adapted to professional expectations in settings characterized by Whiteness.

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The profiles I provided in Chapter 4 are testimonies to the ways that Whiteness and White Supremacy unequivocally nullify, deny, and denounce the work of anyone that is not White. My research more thoughtfully examined Rand, Chuck, and Ray's overall experiences with Whiteness, and there are parallels to Black teachers experiences with Whiteness in predominantly White settings, such as: Kelly (2007), Hasberry (2013), and Jones (2016) studies. Each author's research chronicled Black male and female teachers experiences in White schools. They had a range of Black teachers from beginners to veterans, public and private school settings, and diversified backgrounds and socializations. In addition, there are secondary parallels to Gaspard (2019) and Ekwelum (2019)'s research. Both highlight the absence of and the need for more Black male teacher representation in K-12 schools.

I turn now to answering the three ancillary questions that guided my study.

In what ways did retired, Black male teachers navigate Whiteness in schools and other professional settings?

When I questioned each man about their ability to navigate Whiteness in professional settings, especially as public school teachers, they each talked about the role of religion in their lives. Each explained their parents' expectations of them to attend church on Sundays, accept Christ as their Savior, and live a life that pleases God. These fundamentals were a part of their religious foundation and enabled each man to successfully navigate Whiteness in their respective schools and other professional settings. Whenever they believed they had been

wronged or mistreated, each man noted how their faith in God allowed them to be resilient and persevere.

Black teachers in Kelly's (2007) study also noted the importance of faith and the church in their lives. One of Kelly's participants was a Minister's wife whose upbringing in religious schools helped shape her in addressing issues as a Black woman teaching in an overwhelmingly White school and community. Another teacher Kelly interviewed explained how the Black church is one facet of her Black personal life and separate from her professional life as a teacher in a predominantly White school.

Another similarity found among my research participants was each man's ability to navigate Whiteness by thinking through their actions before making any major decisions, when it came to responding to acts of discrimination or racism that resulted from Whiteness. Rand, Chuck, and Ray understood the necessity of balancing advocacy, professional decorum, and fulfillment of professional responsibilities. They believed such an approach was necessary for acceptance and respect from White students, parents, peers, and Supervisors. In this way, they were able to successfully serve as classroom teachers without any school-based or personnel file-related issues.

Prior research asserts that Black male teachers understand that taking balanced approaches are an essential part of dispelling myths and stereotypes about Black males (Ekwelum, 2019; Jones, 2016). Each of my study participants navigated encounters with Whiteness in ways that were similar and different. It

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depended on when and why the incident occurred. Regardless, all three were savvy enough to maintain their positions as Black male teachers in predominantly White schools and other settings for extended periods of time. That is a victory not just for them but also for our culture.

Chuck had the most aggressive and pervasive issues with Whiteness in college and in the workplace. Both he and Rand experienced blatant acts of racism as Black teachers. Chuck's responses to Whiteness, however, were non-confrontational. Chuck had accepted that his mistreatment was germane to Black men's workplace experiences with Whites. He remained committed to his passion for teaching music, and he accepted that not everyone respected and valued Black men's intelligence and capabilities. Chuck made it clear that although he didn't like racism, bias, stereotypes, and all of the other unpleasant experiences with Whiteness, he believed it best to refrain from being outspoken or belligerent (his words…not mine). It would be abasing himself and potentially putting him and his family in harm's way.

Although outspoken and belligerent are not mutually exclusive, they are two completely different ways of being. Outspoken people directly speaks their mind. Belligerent, on the other hand, signifies that a person is angry and hostile. Chuck chose to put the two adjectives together. He knew that had he been outspoken and countered the mistreatment he experienced, he may have been labeled belligerent and it would have been her word against his. There is a good chance that this would have not turned out well for Chuck, considering systems

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of oppression are always at work against people of Color. Chuck believed his coping strategy was necessary in an effort to maintain his employment status.

Rand, Chuck, and Ray's strategies for navigating Whiteness differed in philosophy and methodology. Unlike Chuck, Rand only had a few toxic encounters with Whiteness throughout his life. When he did, Rand prayed. He believed God answered by giving him favor with his Principal who intervened when Rand was being mistreated. Chuck, on the other hand, prayed and trusted God to give him the grace to endure his trials in silence and seclusion. Ray, who is also actively religious, said that he believed we first have to do our part. Then, God will do the rest. Ray emphasized the verb DO. As Black men, Ray stated, "We cannot rest on our laurels and continue to ignore the obvious, we must stand up for ourselves and our people."

Black male teachers frequently experience these kinds of unwarranted troubles, and it becomes increasingly challenging for us to endure the abuse. Thus, we continue to have high numbers of Black male attrition in K-12 schools (Ekwelum, 2019; Gaspard, 2019). Gaspard's (2019) research explored how Black male teachers process and internalize their experiences with educational systems. In addition to describing low pay, bias in certification testing, and unruly students as issues of concern, Black men noted that the lack of support from colleagues and administrators and blatant racism they encountered were major factors that tainted her participants teaching experiences.

Ray's navigation of Whiteness was what I believed to be the most effective. Ray called it out immediately, when he noticed it. He didn't shy away from confrontation, nor did he allow fear or repercussion of any kind to stifle his voice. Ray's size can be intimidating to some, but he always made sure he was polite but matter of fact and unapologetic when it came to speaking truth to power. Ray was consistent in my interviews with him. He wanted the same educational opportunities, respect, and privileges that Whites had, and he was not settling for anything less. Although Ray explained that navigating Whiteness may have been a little tricky at times, he refused to let it go "unchecked."

Ray's direct way of addressing matters of Whiteness was similar to Rand's. When Ray did not feel that his voice alone would be successful in resolving instances of racism, bias, and other oppressive acts, he went to higher-ups and other allies that would advocate on his behalf to rectify any obvious race-based wrongs. Rand and Ray's ability to garner the support of their administration was invaluable. Research notes that the support from school leaders alone effects whether Black male teachers remain or exit their respective schools (Jones, 2016; Ekwelum, 2019; Gaspard, 2019). It even influences if they choose to stay in the profession.

How did they maintain their racial and cultural identities while being one of few Blacks in White schools and other settings characterized by Whiteness?

The participants' cultural and racial identities were tested in predominantly White schools and other settings. As a result, how their Blackness manifested

itself varied. I found that there was no unilateral approach. This finding from my research aligned with studies of Black male teachers teaching in predominantly White schools (Hasberry, 2013; Jones, 2019; Kelly, 2007). The participant's personality and focus on work were the main determinants of how they expressed their racial identities in the workplace. None of my study's participants went out of their way to push a Black agenda or advocate for Black concerns, but both Rand and Ray would speak out if an issue arose. As reflected in established scholarship, each participant's advocacy depended on their respective personality as well as the culture of their school (Bristol, 2018; Brockenbrough, 2012).

The participants' specific experiences helped illustrate how they maintained their racial and cultural identities. When speaking with Rand about how he maintained his racial and cultural identity, he felt that he had done so throughout his career. He emphasized that maintaining his racial heritage was important to him, and he felt that he never compromised his racial pride. However, Rand also explained that he did not believe he was obligated to "wear his Black racial identity on his sleeve." He always saw himself as a teacher who happened to be a Black man, and he saw no reason the two identities could not peacefully coexist in a work setting characterized by Whiteness.

When I questioned Ray about his belief that he maintained his racial and cultural identity, he explained that by never denouncing it, he believed he maintained it. Rand said, "As a Black man, it was not my place to try to convince

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anyone of my qualifications to be in the space I occupied for almost thirty years."

Further, Rand said that he maintained his integrity and morals and never did

anything that he believed would have adversely represented Black male

teachers. "There were not many of us, Rand noted, and I prided myself on being

a good, Black role model for all students."

Many Blacks surrounded by Whiteness in professional settings take a

stance similar to Rand. In an effort not to be seen as too ethnocentric or to avoid

being accused of "acting Black," they try to stay true to who they are without

being perceived as too ethnic. Instead, they focus on remaining employed and

progressing in their careers. Scholars such as Fries-Britt and Griffiin (2007) and

Rezai-Rashti and Martino (2010) note that it is common for Black professionals to

grapple with race and cultural identity within predominantly White work settings.

When Rand talked about his racial and cultural heritage, he seemed to

have a sense of pride and loyalty. Yet, when he had an opportunity to provide a

different racial or cultural perspective in the midst of White comrades, he

remained silent. I reflected on the fact that Rand said nothing when his White

former wrestling team members from his college days implied they had concerns

with other races during their political conversation. Rand admitted he did not feel

comfortable speaking out and sharing his personal perspective. While I would

have preferred Rand speak his truth at the same level of comfort as his White

peers, research affirms that Black male teachers are stymied and apprehensive

in situations suffused with Whiteness (Ekwelum, 2019; Gaspard, 2019).

Another reason Rand may have chosen to stay silent was he wanted to assimilate. Hasberry's research (2013) highlights the assimilation coping strategy that Rand may have employed in that awkward moment. Rand felt the need to stay silent and conform, because he realized his former team members had become were not the same liberal, progressive Whites they were when they were on the wrestling team. Rand noted how uncomfortable he and his wife were during the reunion. Three of the participants in Hasberry's (2013) study explained how there were times that they took the opportunity to advocate and educate Whites on matters of social commentary, diversity and race. That is the response I would have preferred from Rand.

Rand's conversation with his former team members was about their conservative beliefs, with lots of implications about race and class. He had defended his position earlier in his career with a racist Arts' supervisor, and I had anticipated a similar stance. Rand initially threatened to quit because of her obvious anti-Black bias and racism towards him. By choosing to share his concerns with his Principal and voice his frustrations, Rand never had any additional problems with her. While Rand may have seen himself as affirming his own race and culture with fidelity, I found him to have a minimalist approach. He only spoke out and affirmed it when he believed it was required and the issue affected him directly.

When I questioned Chuck about maintaining his racial and cultural identity, he said that he had always embraced his Black heritage and was very

much a product of his Blackness. He believed that his family would have been proud of the way he represented himself in the face of numerous racial challenges. In the early years of his career, Chuck encountered an episode with a White elementary principal who confronted him about his wife and him being an interracial couple who were on the cover of a magazine. Shortly after the principal spoke with Chuck about it, Chuck and his family received a death threat mailed to their residence and a potential intruder aggressively knocked on their door. In addition to that incident, Chuck had a White colleague chide him about being in a line for ice cream that was solely for staff members. When he did not move, she continued to imply that he was excluded from the treat that was reserved for teachers. She stopped only after one of Chuck's other colleagues, who was a White woman like the woman chiding Chuck, informed her that Chuck was a teacher at the school. The woman bothering Chuck never apologized for her error.

In these instances, Chuck believed it was unnecessary to lower himself and behave in an "ignorant" or uncouth manner. The more I reflected on his reactions, I realize that Chuck was at a crossroads. Whether he confronted or disregarded these appearances of Whiteness, there may have been consequences. He could have responded in a way that further fueled Whites' negative perceptions of Black men. Instead, he chose to ignore the comments and focus on impacting students in the classroom. After all, that is why he had chosen education as his vocation.

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While listening to Chuck tell his stories, I initially thought that Chuck should have swiftly and soberly confronted his colleagues. I kept thinking to myself speak truth to power and let them know you are not going to take it. Because he did not so as I had thought he should, I saw it as a weakness. Much to my chagrin, I was wrong. My perspective of what Chuck should have done only reified the Whiteness agenda. It was tantamount to victim-blaming. Chuck believed he had no choice but to silently endure, since all of his Supervisors were White and he was working in predominantly White settings. Understanding that Chuck was scared and confused, I have come to understand that his understanding of systems of oppression made him believe he didn't have options or support.

Studies show that when Blacks experienced overt racism and anti-Black bias in White settings, some choose to tolerate or minimize it. We do not want to be viewed as stereotypical, angry Blacks who become indignant when challenged. Like Chuck, Black male teachers emphasized their responsibility to dispel myths, defy stereotypes, and combat lies about Black male professionals (Kelly, 2007; Hasberry, 2013; Jones, 2016; Gaspard, 2019). Therefore, Chuck focused on maintaining his employment, providing for his family, and teaching his classes.

As I talked with Ray about how he maintained his cultural and racial identity in White workplaces, he was direct with his responses. Ray said that as a Black man, he would not have compromised his heritage and race identity for

anyone or anything. Even before Ray started teaching, he confronted issues of discrimination and bias in his predominantly White work setting. He was committed to standing up for himself and his race when necessary. Although Ray is a gentle giant kind of guy, he stood strong against systems of oppression. He has always been committed to doing so, even if he has to stand alone (Singleton & Linton, 2006; Bristol, 2018).

Ray noted that he had no problem speaking to any White counterpart, teacher, or supervisor regarding an issue of race-based unfairness. Albeit, he only had the one instance with the father. Ray noted, "They respected me as a teacher. I could get those kids to learn and do without much objection. I wasn't going to compromise who I was for nobody, as long as I knew I was doing what was right." Ray did not recall ever having to use the "race card" in his school, except with one student's parent. While Ray refers to it as him having to use the race card, this was not an example of what he had to do. He had a racist parent that was trying to undermine his authority in the classroom. In short, that is what it was. There was no race card to use.   The father knew that he could talk to and defy Ray in that manner, and he knew that Whiteness would preclude any repercussions. The parent informed Ray that his son was not going to complete the sentence-writing assignment that what he called Ray's "Black ass" had assigned to his son. The next day, that parent visited the school and apologized for what he had said to Ray. Although Ray did not believe the man was

necessarily sincere, he was appreciative of the gesture and the quick response of his school's administration to come to his aid.

Ray was the most consistent of the participants in maintaining and asserting his Blackness and culture. He was unafraid and unapologetic about speaking out against any perceived injustices, even if his speaking out yielded minimum to no change in systems of inequality and unfairness. Just as when Ray chose to advocate for himself and fight systems of oppression, Ray stood his ground as a teacher and did not allow Whiteness to undermine him.

Ray's stance on maintaining his race and cultural identity represented a sharp departure from Chuck's approach. Whereas Chuck chose to internalize his experiences and refrain from addressing any racism and bias, Ray not only called out racism and bias but used whatever means and resources he had to affirm his positions. Throughout the literature, Black male professionals like Ray are less like Ray and more like Rand and Chuck, who chose not to speak out. They tolerate it. Many of us have come to realize that Whiteness is normal for most Black male professionals who work in predominantly White settings (Kelly, 2007; Jay, 2009; Jones, 2016).

Were there memorable race-based lessons they learned?

During our interviews, I questioned my participants about their most memorable experiences as they navigated Whiteness. Each participant had had many experiences with Whiteness throughout their lives. They encountered Whiteness in the professional workplace, but each of them also encountered it in

their childhood and/or young adult lives as well. Although each man had a different lesson they learned from their experiences, they were unanimous that there were salient takeaways regarding racism and mistreatment through Whiteness.

Rand explained that the most powerful lesson he learned about Whiteness was not one he learned as an adult. His most memorable race-based experience occurred when he was a seven-year-old at a school Easter egg hunt. Rand was small and did not move as fast as other kids to find the Easter eggs. Frustrated at his inability to locate the prized-eggs, Rand began to cry. A young White man spotted Rand and asked him why he was crying. Rand explained his situation, and the White man gently escorted Rand over to the coveted chocolate egg. Rand explained how this taught him that despite the future obstacles Whiteness presented for him professionally, he knew that ALL White people were not bad. To this day, Rand still believes this to be true. Whiteness is foul and a societal ill but not all Whites perpetuate systems of oppression. Some are allies, like the young White man who helped Rand during the Easter egg hunt. Chuck also had White allies in his life like Ms. Smith who helped foster his love for the violin.

When I questioned Rand about his most memorable race-based experience as a schoolteacher, he instantaneously began recounting the time he signed the petition to oust the White principal he had liked. Rand said that his desire to not look like a "sell out" amongst his Black peers is ultimately what led

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him to sign the petition. When the Principal confronted Rand and expressed his disappointment, Rand still recalls the look of betrayal he saw in the Principal's watery eyes.

Rand's feelings about the importance of being aligned with Black people are legitimate. This is an even greater expectation in professional settings that are predominantly White. Fordham (1988) refers to this loyalty among people as a "fictive kinship" (p. 56). This phenomenon describes the non-blood related connection of groups of people that are united in other ways. Fordham's (1988) terms makes sense. Rand had said, "It was almost like a reverse racism. I allowed my fear of being the Black outlier to affect my better judgment. When I looked into that man's eyes, I felt this small." He parted his index finger and thumb slightly to show how small he felt.

While some Black men may take issue with Rand's depiction of Whiteness in his personal and professional life, I will not delegitimize Rand's mostly positive experiences with Whiteness, nor his troubling experience with Blacks. Although Rand's description of his experiences with race are dissimilar to mine and the majority of Black men, I applaud Rand for the courage it must have taken to speak out about what he knew moved beyond a simple act of racism. When he spoke with his Principal, he basically informed him that he would be losing a great teacher, whom he recruited, because of Whiteness was at the helm of trying to push him out and keep the status quo and the reign of Whiteness in education. In fact, Rand's experiences are comparable to Hasberry's (2013)

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Black male research participants. Although the Black male teachers in her study acknowledge their occasional encounters with Whiteness, they are respected and make positive strides in providing resources and supports to their White colleagues. The males in Hasberry's (2013) study acknowledge that their upbringings allowed them to frequently socialize with Whites, and their fluidity with code-switching and passion for their crafts allowed them to do well within their respective predominantly White schools.

I understand that Whiteness is complicated. It is not a simple binary in which every White person is a narrow-minded racist, and every Black person is progressive and woke. In fact, I personally know Whites who are more progressive and active in the fight against racism and discrimination than some Blacks. Rand's most memorable race-based lessons are his personal experiences with race, and no one has the right to criticize those lessons because he chose to spotlight his positive encounter with Whiteness. After all, Rand had many more positive than negative experiences with Whites.

Chuck recounted that his most memorable race-based lesson occurred while he was teaching in one of his elementary schools and an instructional assistant he had worked with for years was startled by him. Chuck had not done anything to her but greet her in the mail room, but she explained that he startled her because he was Black. She went on to explain to Chuck that her mother in law had been attacked by a Black man a few weeks prior. Chuck said, "I don't

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even want to talk about this anymore. I am getting mad all over again. I just couldn't believe her."

Chuck had informed me in an earlier interview that he never spoke with her again. The lesson he learned from it, however, was that when a person has deep-seated prejudice and biases in their heart, it takes more than casual conversations and polite hellos to erase what they really feel about Blacks. He said that she had to have known something was wrong. I asked did the Instructional Assistant try and speak with him about what had happened or ask why he was no longer speaking to her. Chuck responded, "She knew, but she didn't care." I related to Chuck's justifiable rage. When he finished speaking, I suggested we take a break. I felt like Chuck needed a moment to gather himself. Quite frankly, I did too.

Throughout my research, I have found that Whiteness is pervasive in professional settings and feeds negative stereotypes about Blacks (Bryan & Browder, 2013, Jackson et. al., 2013; Moss, Racusin, & Johnson, 2016). Whites' earnest feelings about the stereotypes manifest in obvious ways, such as Chuck's encounter with the instructional assistant. The instructional assistant's framing of Chuck with a criminal identity, even though she had positively interfaced with him many times, is an all too familiar stereotype of Black men (Fiarman, 2016; Ware, 2014; Wilson et al., 2017;). I know exactly how Chuck felt. I have also been a victim of an unfavorable stereotype, and I have not always addressed it as I would today. For Chuck to have been treated that way

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is abominable, and I would have liked for him to at the very least spoken with the administration about the inappropriate comment. However, Chuck was not comfortable because regardless of his plan of action, the system is designed to ensure that he does not win.

Chuck, as well as the other participants, consciously or subconsciously knows that he would not have gotten the desired support in these instances. Johnson (2018) explained that even if Whites know that something has happened but do not openly speak out and address the matter, they continue to perpetuate and reinforce the privilege/oppression binary. Had Chuck reported these issues to his principals or HR personnel, which were mostly White, there was a good chance of him not being believed, dehumanized, or victim-blamed. This is how the White-dominance narrative continues. Johnson (2018) mentioned the following, "In systems of privilege, the default is for power to be held by members of the dominant groups, and to be identified with them in ways that make it seem appropriate for them to have it" (p. 76). Knowing this, Chuck made a choice to not waste his time by speaking out.

Ray explained that his encounter with the White male parent who made the comment that his child would not complete the consequence assignment for Ray's "Black ass" was one he has never forgotten. "He was angry," Ray said, "and I didn't understand why. When he said the words 'your Black ass,' the light came on for me. I knew then that it was about his child having to be subject to a Black man."

I offered Ray a different lens by which I viewed that incident. I reiterated that the man apologized and was seemingly remorseful for what he had said and done. Ray's response to my alternative perspective was powerful. He said, "What he said on that phone was in his heart. I believe he was more so embarrassed at how foolish he was, and that's why he apologized. He knew that I would always know who he really is, and for some reason, that bothered him." As I reflected on Ray's statements, perhaps he was correct.

I questioned Ray about what was so memorable about that incident. He said the lesson for him was the next day, when he received the apology from the parent. Ray explained that although he knew the man had said what was in his heart, he had made the man accountable for what he had said and done. Ray made it clear to me that he informed the man that regardless of what he said, his son would be expected to do as Ray had requested and would be subject to consequences for failing to do so. Ray explained that Blacks must hold Whites accountable for their actions and not be afraid to speak out. Ray said that is what Blacks must always remember. I wholeheartedly agree with Ray's take on accountability. He was more assertive, whereas Rand and Chuck's views were more passive and accepting.

An Enlightened Perspective

I have noted previously how interested I was in learning of retired Black male teachers lived experiences, because I believe it is important that their voices are heard. Even though education has evolved through the years and

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they are no longer teaching in classrooms, they remain influencers. Black male professionals are able to look at how these men stood and triumphed over tumultuous circumstances in their professional and personal lives.

Listening to their stories prompted me to further inspect my own experiences and encounters I have had with Whiteness. Initially, I was frustrated at times with Rand and Chuck. I had thought they should have been more absolute and confident in their stand against Whiteness and racism. I expected both Rand and Chuck to stand up and call it out so that their colleagues would know that they were not going to continue to be treated as second class citizens. They did not respond in ways that I had anticipated. In fact, their responses were far more powerful and telling than I would have imagined.

Chuck did not respond to the elementary Principal that made the comment about interracial marriages or the police that never came to help him and his family during a possible him invasion. However, Chuck did not divorce his wife nor relocate his family. That is strength! When the Assistant Principal at the middle school kept explaining the meeting was only for teachers. Chuck was polite, but he entered the room and sat in the meeting despite her objection. When the woman with the fellow teacher badgered him about being in the ice cream line. Chuck stayed, and he never moved out of it. When Rand was in a situation where he was uncomfortable as the old friends discussed conservative politics, he did not respond, but he did not exit the table. He stayed and he continued to engage in conversation, despite whatever discomfort he felt. In

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addition, Rand did not affirm any of what his friends said. He sat there and listened in silence, until they transitioned to the next subject.

Rand and Chuck never overtly stated their old friends and colleagues spoke from a Whiteness as normalcy mindset. Yet, I believe they knew that there was a far larger issue at work than individual acts of racism. The Whites saw nothing wrong with what they said. They meant no offense and expected no defense from Rand or Chuck. The "friends" who marginalized Rand and colleagues of Chuck who did likewise are products Whiteness. It has allotted them benefits and unearned merits that are rooted in a tainted historical paradigm where Whiteness is the pinnacle (Leonardo, 2009; Applebaum, 2010). Having this understanding, I realized that my own ignorance initially prompted me to hold my participants accountable for what they didn't do, rather than hold Whites responsible for what they have done and continue to do.

Just as I had done, this is what many Blacks and other people of color do. We blame ourselves when there is no blame warranted. We began to buy-in to these "pick yourself up by your bootstraps" and "we are responsible for our own destiny" mantras that are touted by the Whiteness agenda. We never stop and survey those around us who like us. Many of us have no boots. Those in power never gave us any or the ones we had were stolen by the oppressors.

Even when I reflected upon my own professional encounters with Whiteness that I write about in an earlier chapter, I did no more than my research participants. I knew that I was one of few, if not the only, in my childhood

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neighborhood that made it out of poverty and became a college graduate. I had

learned throughout the years that the playing field was uneven, and I may not

have been given the same grace as someone White would have been when it

came to complaints or confrontations. Like many Blacks, I chose to focus on

making a difference through my work and not trouble the waters. Through critical

research, however, I have learned much about Whiteness and now have a more

enlightened perspective.

Revisiting the Conceptual Framework:
Critical Race Theory and the Power of Counternarratives

Since starting my research on lived experiences of Black men in

predominantly White schools and other work settings, my desire to provide a

counternarrative to the reign of Whiteness in education has grown. Critical Race

Theory examines the relationship of law, power, and race in American society

(Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Since K-12 schools are a microcosm of America, it

is important that we address the inequities that exist in teaching just as routinely

and assertively as we do in our communities (Chapman, 2013; Ladson-Billings &

Tate, 2016). An essential tenet of CRT is the idea that the counternarratives

provide people of color an avenue to tell their stories in ways that confront

Whiteness.

When I started my research on the lived experiences of Black men

teaching in schools with primarily White staff, students, and school communities,

I did so because for most suburban, middle class White school districts, there are

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a minimal number of Black male faculty members. While I understand that this is partly due to the lack of Black men enrolling in teacher education programs, I also knew that for most Black men would probably choose to teach in schools where their race can be advantageously used to impact future generations of Black students. Black male teachers are often selected to be role models, coaches, mentors and the like for Black male students. In addition, they are often drafted to work in urban schools with high populations of students of color and more disciplinary concerns (Gaspard, 2019; Johnson et al., 2019).

The preceding situation is problematic, because it limits the options and opportunities for Black men and continues to create a system that caters to Whiteness. Many Whites are able to choose to teach where they want. They are selected because of their potential to become a great teacher. Black men are often chosen for their ability to relate to Black students, exercise stern disciplinary practices, and serve as a role model for underrepresented populations (Maylor, 2009; Wingfield & Wingfield, 2014).

Rand, Chuck, and Ray validate the need for more Black male teachers telling their stories. Not only were these men able to build positive relationships with students and become respected throughout the school and community, but they were leaders in their buildings. Their understanding of how to successfully navigate Whiteness in the workplace and break barriers for future generations could help inform young Black male teachers to broaden their teaching options.

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Although Blacks in White settings experience some race-based obstacles, most take pride in knowing they are redefining the perceptions of Whites about Black male teachers in a game-changing way (Hasberry, 2013; Jones, 2016; Kelly, 2007). I wish I had had someone like my participants to help me understand how to rise above the ignorance and racism I encountered as a young teacher. It would have helped me understand that the microaggressions, stigmas, and assumptions I experienced were not personal. They resulted from the systemic and institutional racism and anti-Black male bias that has pervaded predominantly White schools and other work settings for years (Chapman, 2013; West, 2017).

The focus for Rand, Chuck, and Ray was on molding their predominantly White students to become progressive, inclusive scholars and citizens throughout their maturation process. It took me a few weeks to realize that what they shared should have been and should continue to be the focal point for me and all other Black male teachers.

Recommendations for School Districts

Educational bureaucrats, school district central office personnel, principals and classroom teachers reinforce racial oppression and minorities marginalization every day, if they are White (Castagno, 2014). This is not necessarily their intent, but all Whites are guilty of reifying oppression and injustice, even if they well-intended. Applebaum (2010) refers to this as "White complicity," which maintains that Whites through their daily routines of Whiteness

reap privileges, resources, etc. thereby exacerbates systems of oppression against people of Color. Through this lens, school systems should provide monthly trainings on White complicity and social justice education where they teach not just classroom teachers, but school leaders best practices for dismantling racism and providing equitable opportunities for success and advancement of all Black students and Black personnel.

Secondly, district school boards should create policies that affirm racial justice and categorically denounce white supremacy including specific language for both. Leonardo (2009) elaborates by noting that in doing so, this does not in any way minimize the reality of racism but clarifies that in some instances the issues are far beyond racism and are more under the umbrella of white supremacy. With school boards establishing policies that recognize that white supremacy does exist, and color-blindness is a fallacy, it validates and supports Black men and other people of color lived experiences.

There should be legal protections for minority employees who feel they have been victims of overt or covert acts of racism or discrimination and have reported it to Human Resources, Equity Services, or district level personnel. Throughout research, Black men often noted the lack of discomfort they felt in reporting issues to administration or even sharing their experiences with non-Black teachers (Gaspard, 2019; Ekwelum, 2019). Because of the pervasiveness and continued vilifying of people of color, Whiteness systems create an unsafe working environment for people of color (Leonardo, 2009; Applebaum, 2010).

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I would also recommend networking and building community with school systems that are committed to creating systems of equality and dismantling the oppression/privilege paradox. School systems throughout North Carolina have begun to have more critically conscious conversations about race, equity, diversity, and so forth. If school board associations and superintendents would share best practices on strategies used, policies created, and action steps to combat the reign of Whiteness in education.

Future Recommendations for Research

Over the past two decades, there has been an increase in research spotlighting the role of male teachers in classrooms. There are implicit and explicit expectations, especially for Black male teachers, to be role models for their male students (Fant, 2017; Gaspard, 2019; Johnson et al, 2019). In addition, they are expected to exert masculine influence and help in shaping their male students' strong personas. This historical expectation of Black male teachers remains in effect today.

Having been a Black male teacher and administrator in a predominantly White school multiple times in my career, I know and appreciate the influence I have had on Black male students. Yet, there is not much said about the way Black males influence other races and genders. The magnitude of our influence reaches beyond one specific demographic. This is especially true if the school in which we serve is a majority White setting. Scholars should explore in greater

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depth how a Black male teacher's influence is far greater than only empowering Black males.

There should also be more scholarly literature on Black anti-bias and what it looks like in predominantly White work settings. School systems, businesses, companies, and organizations should not expect to build positive rapports with Black men, unless they are willing to offer trainings on diversity, cultural responsiveness, and how these strategies will be faithfully implemented (Chmelynski, 2006; Mabokela & Madsen,2003).

Final Thoughts

I had envisioned this section being the easiest for me to craft. I completed my study, and I am more than ready to graduate. I would be untruthful if I made this study sound easy. It has been a laborious and painstaking endeavor, but I was pleased with all that learned regarding my participants stories. Most importantly, it was filled with lots of surprises and unexpected responses. Many times, I was puzzled, concerned, and angry.

I realized about halfway through my study that my participants may not have been as clear on the term "Whiteness" as I had assumed they would have been. Rather than I elaborate and provide more specific information about what I meant by the term, I allowed them to tell their story through the lens they chose. Unilaterally, they gave me many examples of racism they had experienced through their lives, but they didn't speak to the systems of privilege and supremacy that pervade our school systems as much as I had desired. I

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realized, after the fact, that I should have provided additional guidance and intentional questioning to shape the conversation. I reconsider the amount of latitude given were I able to do this again.

I also noticed specific instances of the White Savior Industrial complex. Whites may be well intentioned when they adapt Black children, give to Black charities, serve in a mentoring capacity, it does not minimize or negate the harm that systems of oppression have cause to people of color for years. It also does not negate that many celebrities and high profile figures spotlight their work and affinity for minorities to appear more socially conscious, morally sound, and different from their White counterparts. Cole (2012) notes that before Whites can absolve themselves from their Whiteness with noble intentions, they must first not cause any trauma to the individual or group.

Rand, Chuck, and Ray all had a White person they credited for their various successes. Ray and Chuck both had older White women that were like second moms to them. Rand had a White professor who took him under his wing and supported him throughout his college experience. There were so sincere when each of them talked about the White person in their life that contributed in meaningful and affirmative ways.

I thought it interesting that outside of their parents, the Whites they mentioned were the only ones that each man singled out. They never discussed any Black peer, supervisor or friend that a major influence in their lives. I also wondered was it coincidental that each of the "White Saviors" chose Black

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students that had no behavioral concerns, were academically strong, came from two parent homes, and were compliant, even to this very day (Chuck and Ray both still regularly communicate with their mentors).

The biggest overall surprise for me was that all the participants were focused on teaching and making impact in the classroom, but there are not more efforts to connect with the Blacks that are in their classes. Each participant made an effort to conform and maintain their status as good, "Black" teachers in schools where Whiteness is the norm and there are small numbers of minority teachers. Research notes this lack of other Black male teachers is a problem for many Black male teachers, since they do not have numbers to stand with them in opposition to the systemic and structural racism in which Whiteness is a root cause (Fant, 2017; Bristol, 2018; Ekwelum, 2019; Gaspard, 2019).

Rand, Chuck, nor Ray were able to focus on being social justice advocates, creating diversity programs, mentoring Black students, or make any strides to combat the systems of oppression they knew all too well. This was not fault of their own. Rather, each man conformed to the culture of their school and did not trouble the waters of injustice in any way.

I am forever grateful to Rand, Chuck, and Ray. They carved out time to meet with me on multiple occasions in libraries, schools, and university campuses. They shared many deeply personal moments, and they answered lots of questions. Those, however, are not the only reasons for my gratitude. I know how hard it is being a classroom teacher, and I know the compensation and

summers off are not ample reward for all of the ours spent planning, prepping, grading, facilitating, advising, prompting, fussing, cheering, attending, and the list goes on and on. Yet, the men in my study persevered, and they did it in workspaces and school communities that were not always welcoming or kind. They did it for kids who did not look like their own children, and for parents that called them names, and for principals that threatened them, and for Supervisors who disrespected and defamed them.

Despite struggles, barriers, discrimination, low compensation, prickly personalities, countless after hours, and all the other reasons many find teaching an undesirable profession, they stayed committed to the work they believe God had called them to do. They did it for all the right reasons for all of those years. I also was fortunate enough to be granted opportunities to influence students that may not look like me but need what I have to offer. Rand, Chuck, and Ray paved the way for me and many other Black male teachers that they will never meet. I will never forget their sacrifices.

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APPENDIX A

FIRST INTERVIEW

1. What is your opinion regarding the way your racial identity impacted your personal life and professional career?

2. When race-based dilemmas were brought-up in your school or work setting, how did you handle the matter(s)?

3. Were there times in your career where you felt excluded because of your race?

4. Could you describe a typical work day for me?

5. How did your professional life impact your personal life?

6. Can you tell me of a time you felt pressured to do or say something that was the opposite of what you really believed?

7. Why did you choose to teach exclusively in schools were students, faculty, and administration were majority White?

8. What role, if any, did stereotypes and/or bias have in your career?

APPENDIX B

SECOND INTERVIEW

1. What crucial conversations did you have with your colleagues and/or supervisors about race?

2. How do you feel you were treated in the workplace setting?

3. What conversations do you have with your children about race in the workplace now that they are adults?

4. What advice do you have for Black men finishing education degrees and looking to teach in a predominantly White, suburban public school?

5. Describe for me a crucial conversation around race in any of your work settings that concluded with a positive outcome?

6. What recommendations would you have for school leaders to better address the needs of Black males who work in predominantly White schools?

7. How did students' parents respond when they saw you were a Black man?

8. Explain your feelings regarding your contributions about race in the professional, workplace setting.

9. Tell me about race tokens and your application of that label to you in your majority White work settings.

APPENDIX C

THIRD INTERVIEW

1. What do you recall being the most memorable race-based lesson or incident during your professional career?

2. Explain any experiences with overt, direct instances of discrimination or bias.

3. Explain any experiences with covert, indirect instances of discrimination or bias.

4. Describe any incident where you witnessed Whites having advantages you were not given.

5. Discuss any moments where you felt hyper visible.

6. In your own words, describe White Privilege in action in your workplace?

7. Why did you to remain a classroom teacher rather than advance your career?

8. Could you describe the bond you had with other persons of color within your school(s)?

9. What was your relationship like with your White co-workers outside of the work setting?

10. How did you meet the diverse needs of students in your classrooms, especially your students of color?

11. What measures did you take to disarm a colleague, student, or parent who

appeared to be uncomfortable with you?